



PRINCIPAL'S PAGE

January 12, 2022

Dear St. Celestine School Families,

Free COVID-19 testing will be provided after 11 am Mass on Sunday, January 16 (Noon). Individuals should enter through the Annex door and go to the Gym for the testing.

Registration for the 2022/23 School Year for current families begins now. For your convenience, please register on-line using this link:

<https://stcelestineschool.org/register-current>

Keep in mind many spaces fill up quickly and we want to make sure you are part of the wonderful year ahead.

Please note updated guidance from the Archdiocese of Chicago regarding COVID safety protocols from the letter sent recently. This continues to be a fluid situation and St. Celestine School is doing its best to navigate every aspect of it with safety in mind. **We are waiting to begin after school clubs until COVID numbers begin to fall.** We thank you for your patience as we work together to keep the school healthy and safe.

In the midst of constant change and uncertainty during this pandemic, thank you for continuing to choose a Catholic school for your child. It is never easy to be a parent, even in "normal" times, and the pandemic has placed more demands and stresses on you. In our Catholic schools, we work hard to provide you and your child with a safe, quality school that you can depend on for in-person instruction, even as conditions continually change.

During the past week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) have provided updated guidance and requirements for the management of COVID-19 in schools. As a result, the archdiocese has updated its protocols. This email discusses the following areas:

- *Safety of allowing students to return days 6-10*
- *Updated guidance on lunchtime for isolated/quarantined students*
- *Athletics and extracurricular activities for students returning days 6-10*
- *Temporary recess protocols*
- *Parent options*

Safety of isolated/quarantine students returning days 6 through 10

The CDC and IDPH updated school guidance to recommend that asymptomatic students return to school 6 days post-infection or close contact. This is a shift from the initial 10- to 14-day recommendation set early in the pandemic when incubation and infectious periods were not known. The updated guidance is based on 22 months' experience and numerous studies. These have provided health officials the data needed to reset quarantine lengths that balance returning individuals to critical roles in society while minimizing the spread of the virus.

Health officials agree it is safe to accept students back into our buildings at 6 days, but there are always small risks of an individual remaining contagious longer than expected. Health officials have determined that this minor risk is significantly outweighed by the academic and social and emotional benefits to students who attend school in person. But, because a small risk remains, health officials recommend additional layered protocols – particularly at lunch and during extracurricular activities – to ensure the entire school population remains safe.

Our guidelines reflect the importance of students' returning to the classroom when safe, but add distancing requirements at lunch and exclusion from extracurricular activities to provide one extra layer of safety for our school communities.

Updated lunchtime guidance for isolated/quarantined students

We have updated our lunchtime guidance for recently isolated and quarantined students to better align with the IDPH language and address operational challenges faced by some of our schools. The updated guidance acknowledges that it is safe for students to return to schools on day 6, but reflects prudence in ensuring extra caution is taken when masks are off for lunch.

For recently positive asymptomatic students (positives) returning to school after the required minimum 5-day isolation period as well as those with close contacts (recent close contacts) returning after the minimum 5-day quarantine period:

- *These students must maintain 6 feet of distance from others while their masks are off at lunch. They may eat lunch in the same room as their classmates.*
- *If 6 feet is not possible at lunch, given a school's lunchroom layout, a school may look to use additional rooms in the building that allow the recently positive or quarantined children to space out while eating.*
- *If staffing and spacing do not allow recently positive or quarantined students to maintain 6 feet of distance at lunch, even when considering other rooms, a school should observe the full 10-day isolation or quarantine time for positives or close contacts.*

The above guidelines apply only on days 6 through 10 to those students returning from a recent positive or close contact. Students may return to their normal lunch seating arrangement on day 11.

Athletics and extracurricular activities for students returning days 6-10

Students returning from isolation (recent COVID-19 positive test results) - Our top priority is maintaining an in-person learning environment for our students. Because of this and as an extra precaution to minimize the risk of team quarantines, anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 may not participate in athletic practices/competitions or extracurriculars for 10 days. We understand that the at-home isolation period is 5 days and that they may return to school on day 6 if asymptomatic, but for purposes of team play or any school-organized extracurricular activities (clubs, band, etc.), they must refrain for the full 10 days.

Students returning from quarantine (recent close contacts) - Asymptomatic close contacts may participate in extracurricular activities days 6 through 10 post-exposure, if they have a recent negative test.

- *The negative test must have been taken on or after day 5, and the child may not participate in extracurricular activities while waiting for the test results.*
- *A negative test is required only for participation in extracurricular activities on days 6 through 10. It is not required to return to school*
- *Both PCR or rapid tests are allowable.*

Students who have not obtained a negative test on or after day 5 of exposure may not participate in athletics or extracurricular activities until after 10 days from the date of exposure.

Temporary recess protocols

Due to the more contagious nature of the omicron variant and the close proximity students typically play, we are temporarily requiring that students wear masks during outdoor recess. This is a temporary measure to help inhibit the spread and reduce overall infections. It will be reevaluated in 2 weeks and reversed when cases begin to decline.

Parent options

As a parent, you should also know that you have the option to send your asymptomatic student back to school on day 6, provided they remain masked and follow their school's lunch seating for returning students, but it is not required. If you are uncomfortable sending your child on day 6 – either from a health or privacy perspective – you may always wait until day 11 to send your child back to school.

Thank you for your patience and resolve as we continuously adapt to the changing standards and guidance from health authorities. In the midst of all of the uncertainty and disruption this pandemic is causing in our society, we are pleased to be able to keep our schools open for in-person instruction and blessed to count you as one of our Catholic school families.

Sheila M. Klich
Principal

ST. CELESTINE PARENTS CLUB INVITES YOU TO JOIN US FOR...

Pizza night



Armand's Pizzeria
7650 W North Ave.
Elmwood Park, 60707
708-456-5200



Thursday, January 20th



Noon- 8:00pm

delivery from 12:00 -7:30
pickup available from 12:00-8:00pm

20% OF THE SALES

will go right back to Parents Club

St. Celestine Parents Club & Armand's Pizzeria are teaming up for a Pizza FUNdraising Night! Armand's will donate 20% of sales back to us. Cash donations can be made at the pickup counter!

Bring this flyer or mention SCS!