

In service to Jesus Christ, Our Lord, and out of love for our students and families -

We are just a few short weeks away from the start of the school year, and we know students are eager to reconnect with friends and teachers! It's an exciting time but also one for changes and challenges as we navigate through our new reality. As a school board we were tasked with moving forward on what would be the best option for our students, faculty, and staff in regards to face coverings at school. Following a model series, set forth by the Archdiocese of Dubuque of Catholic Schools, St. Mary's School Board had a long and productive discussion about face coverings and their use at St. Mary's School. As a board, we took into strong consideration the results from the survey sent to parents, community response, and directives from the Arch, other school districts, and the Department of Public Health. The board also had useful and positive discussion with representatives from our school's faculty.

While it was not an easy decision, a majority vote of 5/3 favored the option of strongly encouraging the use of face masks to be worn throughout the day and **required** when social distancing is not possible. There will be places, such as, but not limited to: entering and exiting the building at morning arrival and afternoon dismissal, 1:1 help with teacher and student in close proximity, group projects, learning stations (younger grades), guided reading, etc, where face masks would be **required** when social distancing can't be maintained. We feel this decision makes the best attempt to accommodate the various opinions that were received back in the survey.

St. Mary's students will provide their own cloth face covering; however, the school will have a supply of face coverings for students in need. If a student is unable to wear a face covering for a medical reason, a doctor's note is required and a health plan will be created.

Much work and implementation of social distancing efforts are being done at the school. There is great effort in working to keep distancing measures along with creating a positive learning environment. Each student will have a 3-sided sneeze guard at their desk/table. Handwashing and hand sanitation will also be utilized often throughout the day. All of these measures are considered important in order to make an effort to keep both students and faculty healthy so we may continue on with an on-site school year. We will be changing and adjusting based on guidance from Public Health as the school year goes on.

St. Mary's School Board wants to reiterate that this was not an easy decision. We welcome any questions you may have and encourage communication with us via email :  
board@st-marys.pvt.k12.ia.us

We want to thank you for choosing St. Mary's School for your child and we look forward to students being back in the classroom growing in faith & education together.

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St. Mary's School Board