

November 10, 2021

Dear Catholic School Families,

Over the past two months the Department of Catholic Schools has received numerous emails and phone calls regarding the COVID-19 vaccine mandate for students. Most communications have been reflections of the love, care, and concern you have for your children and other families who share your opinions. Thank you for your respectful approach and prayerful posture as we unpack this issue.

As a result of last week's decision by the FDA and CDC to extend Emergency Use Authorization (EAU) to the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to individuals five years old and up, we want to share that the Archdiocese of San Francisco does not require students ages five and up to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. We continue to encourage parents and guardians to seek advice from a health care professional about the COVID-19 vaccine for their children.

We anticipate the state legislature will take up a bill in January 2022 to decide if the COVID-19 vaccine should be added to the existing list of 10 required vaccines and if, unlike the current ten required vaccinations, a religious or personal belief exemption will be permitted. It is fair to say that this legislation will receive much debate as it moves through the state assembly and senate. The public will have an opportunity to voice their opinion to their respective state representatives throughout the legislative process. I encourage those who have strong feelings on this matter to contact your state representative to voice any concerns or thoughts you may have on this issue. In implementing any legal mandate for COVID vaccinations that includes a personal belief exemption, the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of San Francisco will accept any parent request for exemption as valid. In addition to state legislation, the FDA and CDC must still consider full general use approval of the vaccine for individuals 5 to 15 years old.

The Archdiocese of San Francisco is dedicated to balancing the need to protect the health of our students, teachers, and staff with the rights of parents to make decisions on issues vital to their children. I am closely monitoring this situation and will continue to communicate as additional information becomes available.

At this time of Thanksgiving, I am immensely thankful for the leadership of our principals, teachers, staff, and pastors. Despite the Delta variant, our schools have navigated the complexities of returning to in-person instruction and have kept caseloads below 0.04% this school year. This data is a testament to their dedication and commitment to the ministry of Catholic education. They deserve an extraordinary amount of gratitude for what they have done to keep our school communities safe.

Thank you all for your prayers, support, patience, and advocacy for Catholic education.

Sincerely,



Pamela Lyons  
Superintendent of Schools