



September 2, 2021

Dear Families, Faculty, Staff, Administrators, School pastors and Board members,

Over the past several days, the Catholic Schools Office and school administrators have heard from people who oppose the mandate issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Health requiring all students and staff in Pre-K-12 schools to wear masks. As you are aware, we issued a statement on August 20 listing several recommendations for schools entering the 2021-22 academic year. Among them: "All schools will be required to follow mandates that may be issued from government agencies, including masking."

I stand firmly behind this decision. We are doing this for the health and welfare of our students, faculty, staff and administrators, and our lawyers have confirmed the mandate is a legally binding order.

I am aware of the strong opinions for and against mask wearing. I cannot convince people one way or another in a letter. But after much study and a proven track record from last year, we believe the best option for continuing in-person education — a priority educators strongly support — is to follow the guidance of the CDC and the order issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

Although many have expressed gratitude for our decision and have supported their local administrators, I am disappointed in the level of vitriol being used by some who do not support it. Every family in our schools is important to us, so I am sorry people are threatening to walk away from the opportunities and value of a Catholic education over the approach we are taking to ensure health and safety.

Generations of families, teachers and administrators have made Catholic education possible in the Diocese of Erie. That legacy continues today because of the hard work and commitment of administrators, faculty and staff as well as the sacrifice of parents. Their efforts during the pandemic have been that much more impressive. Even though it could put that legacy at risk for some of our schools, we cannot let enrollment issues drive the decision to follow the mask mandate. Please remember this is a temporary situation and that our recommendations provide enough leeway for schools to make decisions once the government mandates are lifted.



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Until that time, our position on following government mandates is not up for debate. It is essential that we now allow Catholic schools to focus on their priorities including academics and helping students develop into young men and women prepared to contribute to society with a solid, faith-filled foundation.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Lawrence T. Persico

The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, JCL
Bishop of Erie

P.S. On the question of exemptions: It is not possible to use a religious exemption regarding masks, as they are not against the teachings of the Catholic faith. Students with documented medical conditions from a licensed medical professional will need to work directly with school administrators to explore what accommodations can and cannot be made in their school for this purpose.



VENANGO REGION CATHOLIC SCHOOL

TO: Venango Region Catholic School Families and Employees

FROM: President Laura Blake and Venango Region Catholic School Board of Directors

DATE: August 31, 2021

RE: COVID-19 Update

This correspondence is to inform you of the following:

- On Tuesday, August 31, 2021, a mask mandate for K-12 schools, public and private, was issued.
 - The Pennsylvania Department of Health order will take effect Tuesday, September 7, 2021.
 - <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/Documents/Diseases%20and%20Conditions/Order%20of%20the%20Acting%20Secretary%20Directing%20Face%20Coverings%20in%20Schools.pdf>
- Regardless of vaccination status, all students, teachers, and staff will be required to wear a mask indoors at both St. Stephen School and Venango Catholic Jr/Sr High School.
- The order will not apply to student-athletes while in active play. Players will be required to mask on the bench and sidelines.
- All parents and visitors to our schools are required per the August 31 mandate to wear a mask while on a school campus this includes sporting events.
- Please remember VRCS is required to follow all masking orders mandated by federal, state, or local government.
- VRCS is required to contact trace positive COVID-19 cases, notify close contacts, and require individuals to quarantine from school.
- Staff, parents, and students should know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
 - People with COVID-19 have reported a wide range of symptoms (including no symptoms) ranging from mild to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. The symptoms include:
 - Fever or chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea



VENANGO REGION CATHOLIC SCHOOL

- Symptoms such as fever, sore throat, cough, diarrhea, nausea or vomiting, severe headache may be caused by an illness that can spread to others. Anyone with these symptoms should:
 - Stay home
 - Get tested for COVID-19 (PCR Test)
- If the test is negative, stay home until symptoms have been gone for 24 hours without the use of medication.
- If the test is positive, you must isolate for ten days from symptom onset or a positive test.
- If someone is showing any of these signs, seek emergency medical care immediately:
 - Trouble breathing
 - Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
 - New confusion
 - Inability to wake or stay awake
 - Pale, gray, or blue-colored skin, lips, or nail beds, depending on skin tone
- Students, staff, and visitors who are exhibiting COVID-19 signs and symptoms will be immediately sent home.
- If spread requires a school closure, all education will immediately transition to online learning.
- VRCS will not ask students, staff, visitors, or parents to prove vaccination status but will ask vaccination status to conduct contact tracing accurately. VRCS strongly encourages all individuals eligible to get the vaccine to consider vaccination.
- All COVID-19 information for VRCS is available on our website, venangocatholic.org, under the Return to School tab.
- VRCS will continue to work with state and local health officials to monitor community transmission and the spread of COVID-19 and reserves the right to modify mitigation efforts and guidelines.

COVID-19 WAIVER, RELEASE, AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK FORM

School Information	
School Name: Venango Region Catholic School (St. Stephen and VCHS Campuses)	
School Address: 1505 West First St. Oil City, PA	Telephone: 814-677-3098
Contact Name: Laura Blake	Facsimile:
<i>NOTICE TO ALL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS- THE COVID-19 WAIVER FORM MUST BE KEPT ON FILE AT THE SCHOOL. IF AN INCIDENT DOES OCCUR, PLEASE REPORT ALL INCIDENTS TO THE DIOCESAN INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGER, WITHIN 24 HOURS.</i>	
Personal Information	
Student Name:	Date of Birth:
Homeroom Teacher:	Grade:
Parent/Legal Guardian Name:	Telephone:
Home Address:	Email:
Emergency Contact Name:	Telephone:
Emergency Contact Name:	Telephone:
Waiver Authorization	
<i>FORM MUST BE COMPLETED IN ALL RESPECTS, SIGNED AND DATED TO AUTHORIZE THE WAIVER.</i>	
<p>The novel coronavirus and its variants (collectively "COVID-19") continue to be highly infectious, life-threatening disease which remains a global pandemic. While there are vaccines currently available for COVID-19, they have not yet been approved for all age groups, and children under the age of 12 years are not currently eligible for vaccination. COVID-19's highly contagious nature means that contact with others can lead to infection. Additionally, individuals who may have been infected with COVID-19 may be asymptomatic for a period of time or may never become symptomatic at all. Because of its highly contagious and sometimes "hidden" nature, it is currently very difficult to control the spread of COVID-19 or to determine whether, where, or how a specific individual may have been exposed to the disease.</p> <p>I acknowledge the contagious nature of COVID-19, the fact that it can be difficult to identify in another person, and the inherent risks of exposure to those who may be infected with COVID-19. I voluntarily assume the risk that I/my child/my household members may be exposed to or infected by COVID-19 as a result of or in connection with my child's attendance at school and that such exposure or infection may result in personal injury, illness, permanent disability, and/or even death.</p> <p>I acknowledge that the CDC and many other public health authorities continue to recommend vaccination for eligible persons, face covering, social distancing and other protective measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which may be updated at any time. I acknowledge that I/my child/my household members must comply with all set procedures to reduce the spread of COVID-19.</p>	

Full policy is on website: Venangocatholic.org
Under Parent tab

**Venango Region Catholic School
Technology Lease Agreement Acknowledgment**

I agree to abide by all terms of the Technology Lease Agreement and Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy.

I understand that by accepting this device, I am responsible for any damages that occur to the device or accessories. I understand that the device belongs to the school and is being loaned to me.

I understand that the device is covered under an extended accidental warranty at the cost of \$50 per year. Should an accident occur that requires a repair, I will be responsible for making the \$50 deductible payment. If the repair is not covered under warranty, I will be responsible for paying for the replacement of the device or accessories.

I understand that if the device is lost or damaged beyond repair, I will be responsible for replacing the device at the cost of \$250.

I understand that upon withdrawing from school, I am required to return the device. If the device is not returned, I will be assessed a fee for the replacement cost of the device.

I hereby release VRCS and its personnel from any and all claims and damages of any nature arising from my child's use of, or inability to use the school technology, including but not limited to claims that may arise from the unauthorized use of the device to purchase products or services.

I understand that it is impossible for VRCS to restrict access to all controversial materials, and I will not hold the school responsible for materials accessed on the network. I also agree to report any inappropriate device use to the school administration. I accept full responsibility if and when my child's use of technology is not in the school setting and understand that my child is subject to the same rules and agreements while not in school.

I understand that VRCS reserves the right to access and disclose the contents of any device or account on its system without prior notice or permission from the user.

I understand that the leased device is only to be used by the assigned VRCS user.

INDEMNIFY AND DEFEND.

The undersigned Parents agrees to indemnify and defend VRCS teachers, employees and agents against, and hold them harmless from any and all claims, causes of action, damages to or destruction of any property of VRCS or any others, injury or death that may result to the undersigned, the undersigned's child, or anyone else, arising out of the actions or inactions of the undersigned's child.

I have read and understand the information in this document and agree to abide by the terms outlined in this document.

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____

**Venango Region Catholic School
Student Pledge for Device Use**

- I will use appropriate language when using emails, journals, or any other forms of communication.
- I will not create or encourage others to create discourteous or abusive content.
- I will not use electronic communication to spread rumors, gossip, or engage in any harmful activity to other persons.
- I understand that my device is subject to inspection at any time without notice and remains the property of VRCS.
- I will follow the policies outlined in the Technology Lease Agreement, Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy, and the VRCS Handbook while at school and home at all times.
- I will take good care of my device and protect it by only transporting it in the case provided.
- I will never leave the device unattended, and I will know where it is at all times.
- I will never loan out my device.
- I will not let anyone else use my device.
- I will charge my device's battery daily and arrive at school with my device charged.
- I will keep food and beverages away from my device since they may cause damage to the device.
- I will clean the screen with a soft, antistatic cloth ONLY, no cleaners.
- I will not disassemble any part of my device or attempt any repairs.
- I will not place decorations (such as stickers, markers, etc.) on the device or accessories or do anything to alter the device or accessories in any way permanently.
- I will not remove or deface the serial number or other identification on my device.
- I will be responsible for all damage or loss caused by neglect or abuse.
- I agree to return the device and all accessories in good working condition at the request of VRCS.
- I agree with the stipulations outlined in the Technology Lease Agreement.
- I will report a damaged, lost, or stolen device to my administration immediately.

Student Name (Please Print): _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (Please Print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____



September 2021 VRCS

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		8/31 First Day	1	2	3	4
5	6 No School Labor Day	7 State Mask Mandate in Effect.	8	9	10 Jeans Day Cost: \$1.00 SS \$5.00 VC Benefits Student Council	11
12	13	14 Open House St. Stephen 6:30 — 7:30	15 Open House VC 6:30 — 7:30	16	17	18
19	20 Grs. K—2 Acadience Testing	21 Grs. K—2 Acadience Testing	22 First day of fall Grs. K—2 Acadience Testing	23 Grs. K—2 Acadience Testing	24 Grs. K—2 Acadience Testing	25
26	27 Grs. 3—9 MAP Growth Testing	28 Grs. 3—9 MAP Growth Testing	29 Grs. 3—9 MAP Growth Testing	30 VC Homecoming 1 St Qtr. Mid-Term Grs. 3—9 MAP Growth Testing	Upcoming Reminders: 1. Oct. 1—No School —vacation day 2. Oct. 8—No School—Teacher In-Service 3. Oct. 12—School Pictures @ Saint Stephen and Venango Catholic	

*All events/dates are subject to change