



# DIOCESE OF STOCKTON

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## CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

September 4, 2020

Dear Catholic School Community:

I hope this finds you and yours well and coping with this unprecedented disruption to our customary back-to-school excitement. These last months have surely been a challenge for everyone, and I know I speak for personnel at all of our schools when I say that they miss the energy of students on campus. Effective August 31st, all schools in our diocese are up and running with online instruction. We are excited to be back together, even at a distance, and look forward to the time when we can congregate in person, as our Catholic school community.

In recent days, there have been a few new developments in our counties and state, and I wanted to update you on the most current information as it was presented to us.

### WAIVERS

On August 17th, K - 8 schools submitted waiver applications, per the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) guidelines, to our public health officers in Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties. Here is the status of those applications.

- As of Wednesday, September 2nd, **Stanislaus County** meets the criteria established by the California Department of Public Health to begin approving the school waivers. The county is now below 200 cases / 100,000 population as a 14 day case average. County officials have provided input for revisions on the reopening plans, which are being amended and refiled today. The next step is to receive final approval from the CDPH; this process takes three days.
- On Friday, August 28th, **San Joaquin County** published the county's waiver application form. Principals have completed the new form, and all required documents were submitted on Wednesday, September 2, 2020. In San Joaquin County, applications will be approved once the county case rate is below 200 cases / 100,000 population for seven consecutive days. The county's rate is currently under 200 cases / 100,000 population and the seven day count started on August 31st. Dr. Park will review our applications in the next couple of days and if approved, she will forward them to the CDPH early next week. The state has three days to respond.
- Once schools receive the state's approval, principals will provide you with their reopening date for in-person instruction for grades K - 6 and the school's return to campus transition plans, e.g., hybrid model for a limited time.
- Under the **new county monitoring system**, our students in grades 7 -12 will be able to return to campus for in-person instruction once the county has been in the Substantial (red) tier for at least two weeks. Both San Joaquin County and Stanislaus County are currently in the Widespread (purple) tier.



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### NEW GUIDANCE FOR SMALL SUPERVISED GROUPS OF CHILDREN

On August 25, the CDPH released [updated guidelines](#) authorizing small-group, in-person services at schools in counties on the monitoring list. These guidelines are not intended to allow for in-person direct instruction and are not to be used as a loophole for gathering all students on campus as schools wait for a waiver approval or for the county to come off the watch list.

As noted in the accompanying [FAQ](#), these guidelines allow schools to serve students from vulnerable groups on campus for limited purposes with no more than 25% of the overall enrollment on campus at one time. The state lists those groups in order of priority: students with disabilities; English learners; students at higher risk of further learning loss or not participating in distance learning; students at risk of abuse or neglect; foster youth, and students experiencing homelessness.

Schools will create these cohorts as appropriate for their school and student population, in keeping with state and county guidelines.

As we plan for our return to campus in cohorts, K- 6 or a full return K - 12, we ask all our families to continue to avoid gathering with people outside of your family unit and to wear face coverings and practice social distance when in public. Our plans for safe schools depend on students, families and staff being vigilant at all times.

### GRATITUDE

On behalf of Bishop Cotta and the Catholic Schools Office, I want to take this opportunity to thank all our teachers, staff and principals for their diligence over the summer in preparing, not only for the remote start of school, but also for the eventual return to in-person instruction. I trust that each of you have witnessed the changes to the distance learning program in a commitment to Catholic identity, academic standards, and school communities. I also want to thank you, our parents, for choosing Catholic education and for partnering with us, particularly in these COVID times. We know it has not been easy, but as we are reminded in 2 Chronicles 15:7, *“Be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded”*.

May you and yours be blessed,

Marian DeGroot Graham  
Director for Catholic Schools