



# ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

## SECRETARIAT FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

222 North Seventeenth Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103-1299

Telephone: 215-587-3720 • Fax: 215-965-1749 • Email: [amenna@archphila.org](mailto:amenna@archphila.org)

### OFFICE FOR CATECHETICAL FORMATION

**TO:** Directors/Coordinators of Religious Education

**FROM:** Ann M. Menna  
Deputy Secretary

**DATE:** May 27, 2021

**RE:** In-person instruction

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As many prepare for summer and fall in-person instruction for parish religious education programs (PREP), the question of COVID19 guidance surfaces again.

Recently the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued new guidance regarding social distancing, mask wearing and cleaning procedures.

In the state of Pennsylvania, and at the time of this writing, elementary school-age students are still required to wear masks inside a building. Students in many localities, however, are permitted to remove a mask for outside activities. Summer PREP programs which meet in-person should consider the Archdiocesan Catholic Elementary Schools policy which allows for mask removal during all outdoor activities (recess, lunch, etc.)

As the elementary-age PREP students are not vaccinated, the real possibility of the spread of COVID 19 still exists. Over the past 14 months, some best practices for in-person instruction and the mitigation of COVID 19 have been learned. It is highly recommended that programs which are meeting in-person follow these protocols:

1. Cleaning: wiping down desks, tables, door knobs, bathrooms, handrails, cafeteria tables after each session.
2. Supplies: either the parish or families are asked to supply hand sanitizer, cleaning products, tissues, etc.; educational materials which are not to be shared such as crayons, markers, paper products, etc.
3. Seating Charts: keep students in the same desk for each session for COVID 19 tracing.
4. Cohorts: the primary catechist, aide and assigned students form a cohort which is a self-contained grouping which travels together. Guest speakers, etc. should present in the assigned classroom unless they are addressing multiple cohorts in a larger gathering space.
5. Larger Gatherings of multiple cohorts: Accommodate by using large spaces such as a church, auditorium, etc.
6. Social Distancing: keep desks a minimum of 3' from center for social distancing.
7. Protocols: parents/guardians should not send a sick child to PREP.
8. Shared School Buildings: If the parish religious education program shares a building with an Archdiocesan Catholic elementary school, the decision to have PREP classes meet for in-person instruction is strictly a local one and made by the pastor in collaboration with his principal and D/CRE. The Office for Catechetical Formation and the Office of Catholic Education is available for advisement only.

Finally, as policy about COVID 19 is ever-changing and very localized, it is hard to make predictions regarding Fall PREP at this time. The best advice is to consult your local board of health when it comes to mask wearing, social distancing and cleaning.