



Diocese of Brownsville Pastoral Center

Office of the Superintendent

January 16, 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Happy New Year!

I am writing this letter to inform you that our Catholic Schools have made some slight changes to their protocols. Even though CDC has made some significant changes in the time of quarantine regarding close contact, vaccinated and unvaccinated students and staff, we have only made a slight change to accommodate families. Our goal is to make sure that all students and staff are protected at all times when they are on campus.

Since the return of our students to campus, each school has been dealing with many challenges at their school and each day it is a new case, a new situation or a combination of issues that affect the whole student body and not to mention our staff members. Each principal is doing their best to provide a safe environment on a daily basis.

Before our Christmas break, we had the opportunity to let go of a few protocols as the percentage of infection in the Valley were low. After coming back to a new year, we now see a spike across the United States as well as Internationally with the new variant Omicron.

This spike has forced us to go back to our re-opening plans and put back some of those protocols and also to enforce them on a daily basis to make sure each student and staff member is safe on our campuses.

We did have people return from International travel and many travelled to places of interest in the US without following protocols as they vacationed. We felt free, a time to get out of the house and be with family, go to large gatherings and do things we were not able to do. However, this new variant has come into our lives and those fun things we did, some of us, even though vaccinated, have tested positive for Covid. When does it stop...when does it end...and when will be free again? None of us have any answers to those questions, however, what we do have is the solution to help in this time of uncertainty...we can follow all the guidelines and protocols...we can get vaccinated, we can wear the proper masks, we can sanitize and we can stay home instead of being in large gatherings and keep one another safe.

Our schools, under the direction of our principals, are doing just that. We have continued with our same protocols and have made a few changes to help our families, keeping in mind the safety of everyone. We feel that the same protocols that worked when Covid first came around, will work again.

I ask that our parents work with our schools. Please know that we want the best for your child(ren) and that is why we are keeping to our same standards. We also know that the best place for your child(ren) is in the classroom and we want them to be present everyday, however, we also need to keep everyone safe at all times.

What has been mandated for our parishes and other institutions of the diocese is not the same for our catholic schools. Due to the fact that some classrooms are small in size, we need to find a way to keep our protocols in place to prevent the spreading of the virus as best we can.

There are so many people in our world who are frustrated, angry and are having a hard time with what is being asked of us by CDC, local health authorities, local counties, school policies that sometimes we do not think of what is better for us. Our only goal is to protect our staff and students, to make sure that we can continue to educate your child(ren) by having them on campus for in-person classes where we know they will learn and strive to do their best.

Example of a decision to make:

What does a day look like to a principal when a staff member gets ill and needs to quarantine and there are no substitutes to find. This is how it must be dealt with...principals need to double up classes keeping in mind the social distancing, teachers who have a free period need to fill in for the person out, or the principal needs to teach the class. This is for one

class, what about if two to three teachers are out sick? We just can't leave students in the classroom and give assignments, we need to find a way to accommodate them from the time they are dropped off until the time they are picked up. They are not adults, they are children and so when decisions are made and we are not happy with that decision, take the time to look at the whole picture and see the stress that is put on a principal and all staff members at every school.

Please work with our principals, share your difficulties with them however, you must all remember that a decision that is made is made for the good of all. Sometimes these decisions are difficult and for a principal it takes time, pro's/con's need to be sorted out and much prayer is needed to make a decision that is best for the entire campus.

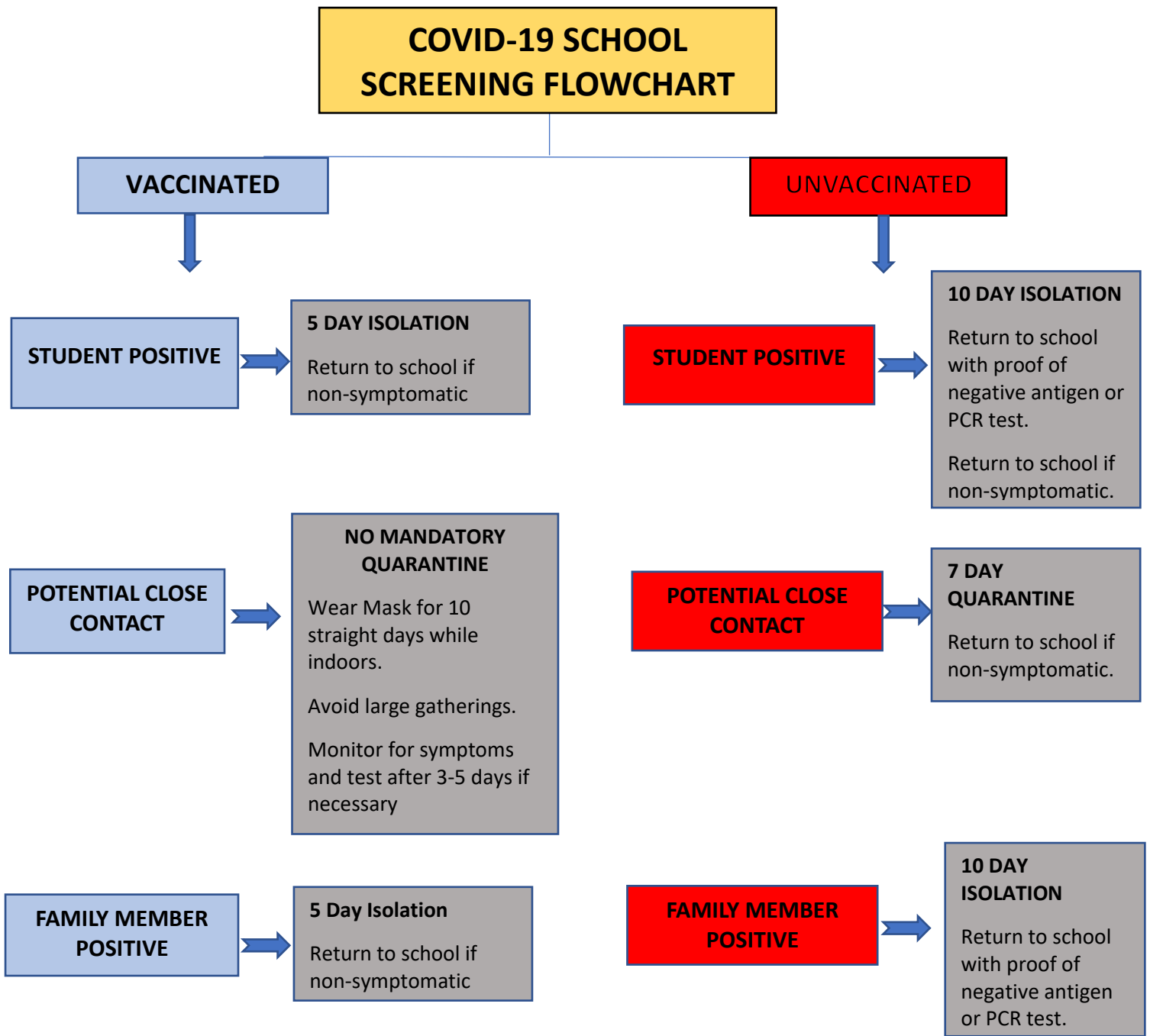
Let us continue to call on the Lord, take the time to pray more, listen to the Gospel messages and simply to thank Him first thing in the morning and to thank Him again before we go to bed at night. Make it a family ritual to bring the family together and to pray that God will bless each one and to especially pray for those who have been affected by the Covid. Only then can we be united as one catholic school family, praying for our needs and the needs of others.

May the Lord continue to bless our Catholic Schools especially our principals who work so hard to provide a safe environment along with their staff so that our students can continue to be educated but mostly that our students will know that God is walking beside them each and every day. Prayer brings all of us together and prayer helps us to accept the things we have no control over. May all of you and your families be safe and well.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sr. Cynthia A. Mello, SSD". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Sr. Cynthia A. Mello, SSD
Superintendent of Schools – Diocese of Brownsville



The flowchart indicates the difference between vaccinated and unvaccinated guidelines.

The School Administration will determine the following depending on each case:

1. Whole class quarantine;
 - Instruction will be virtual or packets depending on the Grade level
2. Length (number of days) of quarantine;
 - Dates will be given for students to return to campus;
3. Negative Covid test, if needed.

As per HIPPA and FERPA regulations, information shared is limited and confidential. Any and all communication will only be from the principal and to the principal.