

RIVER DELL REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING THE 2021-22 SCHOOL YEAR

PLEASE NOTE: THAT THESE RECOMMENDATIONS COULD CHANGE AT ANYTIME BASED ON EMERGING GUIDANCE FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL, THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, THE NJ DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, THE NJ DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH OR LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PRACTICES

Is there a mask mandate?

- Yes, on August 6, 2021, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order 251 which requires all school staff, students and visitors to wear a mask while in school buildings with limited exceptions.

Is there a vaccine mandate for students?

- There is no requirement for vaccination by either the State of New Jersey or the River Dell School District. However, there are different quarantine requirements depending on vaccination status. Please see the quarantine procedures below.
- There are three locations in our communities providing access to the vaccine – Walgreens and HNH Fitness in Oradell as well as CVS in River Edge.

Is there a vaccine mandate for staff?

- There is no requirement for vaccination by either the State of New Jersey or the River Dell School District. However, there are different quarantine requirements depending on vaccination status. Please see the quarantine procedures below.
- To date, 83% of staff are fully vaccinated.

If there is no vaccine mandate, why is the district collecting vaccination information?

- Schools are permitted to request the health information of its students and staff. This includes vaccination status for all manner of childhood diseases not just for COVID.
- Quarantine guidelines are different for those who are vaccinated and those who are not. Therefore, the information is essential to the safe operation of the buildings.

Is collecting vaccine information a violation of HIPPA?

- No. The information is kept in a secure file that can only be accessed the school nurse and administration.

What do morning entry procedures look like?

- There will be no special entry procedures for students and staff. Individuals will not be completing a daily COVID questionnaire.
- Individuals are not required to complete a temperature check when entering the school buildings. Screening kiosks are provided for convenience.
- All individuals are encouraged to stay home when feeling sick.
- All individuals will enter the buildings through the newly installed security vestibules during school hours and must be prepared to present identification. Security vestibules are located at the main entrances of both buildings and the gymnasium entrance of the high school.

Will there be transportation for eligible students?

- Yes, however all individuals who utilize district owned or contracted busses are required to wear masks regardless of vaccination status.

How will non-COVID related medical issues be handled?

- The school nurse will support students with non-COVID related medical issues as in any other school year.
- As a rule, we will not use the school nurse's office for COVID related issues.

How will the bathrooms and traffic through the buildings be monitored?

- School personnel will monitor student traffic in the hallways.
- Each building has a building flow plan to encourage social distancing.
- Access to bathrooms will be monitored but there is no limit for usage.
- Custodial staff will service bathrooms more frequently according to our enhanced cleaning protocols.

Will there be any facility enhancements to support the health and safety of the students and staff?

- Public health signage (i.e. importance of hand-washing, social distancing markers) and Plexiglas/similar protective material will remain in place.
- Schools will also be equipped with additional soap, hand sanitizer stations and cleaning supplies.
- All ventilation units are now equipped with ionizer units to cleanse and disinfect incoming air.
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols with devices that use a highly effective, all-natural, organic, non-toxic, non-irritant, environmentally, and ecologically safe solution.

How will we accommodate students in the classrooms and use other spaces to provide the recommended distance between them?

- Social distancing protocols will be observed to the maximum extent possible.
- Each school building will leverage other spaces such as libraries as needed to support social distancing guidelines.
- Due to physical constraints, there will be many times where social distancing protocols cannot be observed.

How will visitors access the buildings?

- All visitors must access the buildings through the newly installed security vestibules during school hours and must be prepared to present identification. Security vestibules are located at the main entrances of both buildings and the gymnasium entrance of the high school.
- If a parent is dropping off material for their child, they will be directed to leave it in a designated area, so they will not need to enter the building.

Are there travel restrictions for students and staff?

- As of May 17, 2021, New Jersey's travel advisory is no longer in effect. The CDC, however, has recommendations for both vaccinated and unvaccinated travelers that the district will follow. Please refer to the CDC webpage - [Travelers' Health | CDC](#) - for specific information.

QUARANTINE PROCEDURES, NOTIFICATIONS AND CONTACT TRACING

What happens if a staff member or student exhibits symptoms or tests positive for COVID?

- Unvaccinated staff and students who exhibit COVID-like symptoms may not attend school until they complete a 10-day quarantine that ends with symptom improvement that includes no fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Fully vaccinated (14 days after receiving both doses of a two-shot vaccine or 14 days after receiving a one-shot vaccine) staff and students who exhibit COVID-like symptoms may return upon receiving a negative test. Either a rapid or PCR test is acceptable.
- Staff and students who test positive will remain in quarantine for 10 days from symptom onset or the date of the positive test if no symptoms are present regardless of vaccination status. Students and staff members must be symptom free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Close contacts will include those individuals who are within 6 feet of the symptomatic or positive person for more than 15 minutes during a 24-hour period regardless of setting.
- Unvaccinated close contacts of individuals who test positive for COVID must quarantine for 10 days from the last known exposure. Quarantine may be shortened to 7 days if a negative test is produced that was collected between 5 and 7 days of exposure. Either a rapid or PCR test is acceptable.
- Fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine because of a close contact as long as they remain asymptomatic.
- Individuals who clinically recovered from COVID do not need to quarantine if the exposure occurs within 90 days of recovery.
- Secondary contacts continue to have no restrictions but should monitor and report any symptoms that may develop.

How will the community receive notification?

- If the exposure is widespread, school officials must provide a general notification to the community of confirmed cases of COVID in students and staff. If it is localized, only those affected will receive notification.
- School officials must notify the New Jersey Department of Education and provide information that is more specific.
- School officials must notify local health officials and provide information that is more specific.
- School officials will advise students and staff who have direct school exposure to a confirmed case.

Who performs contact tracing?

- School officials conduct local contact tracing and then notify the local health department.
- After notification to local health officials, they may initiate and perform additional contact tracing.

Could school be closed because of an outbreak?

- Yes, the NJDOH maintains a color-coded system by region that indicates the status of the virus in New Jersey. [Department of Health | Communicable Disease Service | COVID-19 Weekly CALI and Variant Surveillance Reports \(nj.gov\)](#)
- If local or state virus activity surges to the **RED** or Very High-Risk category, schools may return to remote instruction.
- School administration will inform the school community of the format of remote instruction should a closure occur.

If my child requires quarantine, will they be able to participate in remote instruction?

- Yes, specific procedures will be provided to families on a case-by-case basis.

SCHEDULES

What schedule will students follow?

- Both the middle and high schools will have full-time, in-person instruction beginning in September 2021.
- All students received a full-day schedule in June. Guidance counselors are available over the summer to answer any questions.

How will lunch be handled?

- Grades 7 and 8 have two separate lunch periods built into the schedule.
- Lunch is served in two separate cafeterias.
- Additional spaces - library\media center, gymnasium - may be provided to reduce the number of students in each room.
- Beginning September 2021, grades 9 through 12 will have two separate lunch periods built into the schedule.
- Lunch is served in the main cafeteria and the commons area outside the upper gymnasium.

Will students have electives?

- Yes, students will follow a traditional schedule that will include in-person electives.

Will students use personal lockers to store their belongings?

- Yes, students will have use of personal lockers.

Will students use locker rooms to change for Health and Physical Education?

- Yes, locker rooms will be available so that students may change for PE.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND ATHLETICS

When will co-curricular activities begin?

- Co-curricular activities are built into the daily schedule.
- The beginning of individual programs depends on the specific activity and the grade level(s) of students involved.

Will there be field trips?

- Yes, field trips will return as long as they are essential to the activity.

Will students participate in athletics?

- Yes, the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) resumed regular operations effective July 1, 2021.

Will athletes have access to locker rooms to change for practice and games?

- Yes, locker rooms will be available for athletes to use.

Will there be a separate COVID screening for athletes?

- No, there will not be a special entry procedure for athletes.

Will there be transportation to and from athletic events?

- Carpooling to and from practices is acceptable, but it is recommended to wear masks and stay with the same groups whenever possible.
- Transportation will be provided but social distancing cannot be guaranteed.
- Coaches will be expected to travel on buses with student-athletes anytime those are provided, as always.
- Carpooling and personal travel to away contests, normally not permitted, will be acceptable for student-athletes. However, student athletes CANNOT transport themselves or others, only parents/guardians can provide transportation. District approved forms may be obtained from the Athletic Department office at the high school.
- All individuals who utilize district owned or contracted busses are required to wear masks regardless of vaccination status.

What about Cheering and Marching Band?

- Cheering and Marching Band are not regulated by the NJSIAA but will follow the same local procedures in effect for athletics.

Will spectators be allowed at athletic events?

- Yes, attendance will be permitted at athletic events.

WELLNESS SUPPORT FOR STAFF, STUDENTS & FAMILIES

What resources and supports will be available this year to continually support student and staff mental health?

- The school district will be participating in two federally funded programs called Title I Supplemental Instruction and Teacher Mentor Program. The Title I program is designed to foster student academic growth in both Math and English instruction. While the Teacher Mentor Program is designed to assist students in their social emotional growth, building connections, executive functioning as well as advocacy skills.
- The administration and staff will continue to be available to assist individuals and families in need of referrals for mental health assessments and treatment.
- Beyond our qualified guidance counselors, school social workers, school psychologists and other staff the district maintains a contract with a mental health agency, Care Plus to support additional needs five days per week.
- Ongoing check-ins with students/staff currently identified as struggling will continue throughout school year regardless of in-person and/or remote instruction.
- Teachers will receive enhanced training on how to identify, how to support, and how to refer when needed.
- Trained staff are ready to assist. **Please contact your school's principal for more information or to express a concern.**

How will we meet accommodations for students with special needs?

- If a student who has a current 504 plan is having difficulty, please contact the student's guidance counselor AND the office of the building principal.
- If a student with an IEP is having difficulty, please contact the student's case manager and the office of the Director of Special Services.