

# *River Dell Regional School District*

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[www.riverdell.org](http://www.riverdell.org)

## OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

**PATRICK J. FLETCHER**  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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March 1, 2022

Dear River Dell Community:

As you are aware, Governor Murphy announced the end of mask mandates in New Jersey schools beginning next week. This past week, the CDC updated their guidance regarding masks in schools and on school buses. The most recent Covid-19 Activity Level Index (CALI - [COVID-19 Report Week 2022 7.pdf \(nj.gov\)](#)) shows Bergen County to be in the green or lowest activity zone. We are also fortunate that our vaccination rate for students is 77% and 97% for staff. These factors allow River Dell to transition to a mask optional status in our buildings and school buses effective Monday, March 7, 2022.

Please understand that this decision is and will remain subject to change should public health data change. No administrative rule can "declare an end to COVID". Further, this decision does not mean that face masks will no longer be seen or acceptable in our schools. It simply means that staff, students, parents/guardians, and visitors will make their own choices about whether, and under what circumstances, to wear face masks. These positive steps do not eliminate the need to quarantine should a student or staff member test positive for the virus or is a close contact of someone, especially members of the same household who test positive for the virus.

It is also important to note that removing masks changes the definition of close contact back to "being within 6 feet of someone for 15 minutes during a 24-hour period". As physical distancing cannot be maintained when schools are operating at full capacity, all time in school presents the possibility of exposure to an infected individual. As a result, contact tracing in the schools is no longer reliable and will be extremely limited.

Transitioning away from the universal mask mandate in our schools presents unique challenges because each of us now must make a choice to wear or not wear a mask. At River Dell, we expect that individual choices will be respected by others. Respect for choices made by others that are different from those we make for ourselves is an essential part of good citizenship. These are positive steps for our community, and we expect all staff, students, parents, and community members to treat each other with dignity and respect as we move through every phase of the transition from the public health crisis caused by COVID-19.

We must continue to remain vigilant as we move forward. You must still report to your school nurse and building principal if a student or a family member tests positive or is a close contact so that you may receive appropriate guidance. However, the simplest and most effective way to keep everyone safe is to stay home if you feel sick. As always, do not return to school until fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

Thank you for helping us keep our children safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "PJF", written over a white background.

Patrick J. Fletcher  
Superintendent of Schools

PJF/le