



Dear Riverview Parents,

Good afternoon. We wanted to touch base with you regarding a few important and timely items:

1. **Masks** – You may have heard of a ruling in the Commonwealth Court regarding masks today. Please know, that the Pennsylvania Department of Health has immediately appealed, which sets a stay order in place until the appeal is heard. Therefore, there is **NO CHANGE TO THE CURRENT DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH MASK ORDER** until the official appeal process takes place. That being said, if and when the PA mask order is lifted, jurisdiction is then abdicated to the local districts (as was in place for most of the pandemic). As you know, Riverview, despite official State orders, has required universal masking for students and staff throughout the entire course of the pandemic. These are the reasons:
 - **Case Counts** – We are still experiencing between 300-500 cases of Covid-19 in Allegheny County per day, approximately 20% of which occur in children (today alone, there have been 599 cases and 12 additional deaths). Although most of our children are not getting seriously ill, there are some children who are, and we want to continue to take the health of our students seriously. Current case levels are as high as they have been since the start of the pandemic, and our students and families are still contracting the virus. Masks protect us from transmission in school.
 - **“Close Contact” Definition Remains** – Under current Allegheny County Health Department, State Health Department, and CDC guidelines, “close contact” is still defined as being less than 6ft from an infected individual, unmasked, for more than 15 minutes. If students are wearing masks, however, the CDC’s definition changes to 3ft of physical distance. This has been a game changer for us. As we have discussed in the past, masks allow all students to be in the building, 3ft apart, without having to send them home for quarantine protocol. If there were no masks, we would be in the same situation as last year, where more than a third of our students were sent home in quarantine protocol. Masks have allowed us to keep students in seats, which allows us to effectively educate them.
 - **Holiday Gatherings** – Last year, cases rose most significantly during the holiday season, which is upon us. Health experts expect there to be a continued rise of cases that will occur over the next couple of months. As such, releasing safety protocols is irresponsible at this time.
 - **Lack of Vaccinations** – Vaccinations for our youngest population were just emergency approved. Therefore, half of our students have not had a chance to be fully immunized. We hope that as more students become immunized, we continue to approach herd immunity and cases decline. However, we are currently nowhere near that

point in time. We hope that families will choose to vaccinate our younger population over the next couple of months.

- **Health Community Recommendations** – School masking remains a necessary public health measure to keep children safe and provide them with as much in-person learning in school as possible. Medical experts, hospitals and healthcare professionals across the state [support the masking requirement](#). They state that requiring masks in schools is helping to keep students in classrooms and the virus out of the classroom and is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- 2. **Free PCR tests for Riverview Students** – As previously discussed, Riverview School District has the ability to provide free PCR tests for students (with parent permission, of course). If your child is symptomatic, you may be contacted by one of our Health Staff to discuss the testing process and to gather the required permissions. This is a great benefit to our students and should help families acquire reliable test results in a relatively short period of time. This should help with quarantine protocol and help to put families at ease.
- 3. **Vaccination Clinics** – We still encourage all students and families to get vaccinated, and/or receive booster shots. Vaccinations and booster shots are proven to be safe and create additional protections from the virus. Vaccinations also get us closer to herd immunity, which may mark the true end of the pandemic. The reason vaccinations are important to schools is that vaccinations allow our students to avoid Covid-19 quarantine protocol. Essentially, if vaccinated students are exposed to Covid-19, they can remain in school as long as they are masked and not experiencing symptoms. Once again, vaccinations and masks allow us to keep students in seats, and students in seats allows us educate effectively. Please know that we come from a purely pragmatic and educational stance. That being said, we understand that this is a parent choice, and will continue to respect that choice. We will be once again partnering with the Plum School District for an upcoming vaccination clinic, but also wanted to publicize one of the Allegheny Health Department vaccine clinics that is occurring at the Mt. Hope Community Presbyterian Church in Penn Hills (this is a 10 minute drive) on Saturday, November 20th, from 10am to 2pm. The information is here: [11.20.21 Mt. Hope Allegheny Health Department Clinic Information](#). Vaccinations are also available at most pharmacies, and vaccine locations can be found at www.vaccines.gov.

We appreciate your continued support of the Riverview School District, and do not take the trust you have bestowed upon us for granted. We know that there are many perspectives and opinions about the current state of the pandemic/masks/vaccinations, but please know that keeping your children safe and in the best position to receive a world class education will always be at the center of our decision-making and priorities. We hope that as cases go down and vaccinations rates rise, the Riverview School District can consider the release of masks in the future and eventually get back to normal operating procedures and protocols. Thank you for your continued patience and cooperation, and please continue to stay happy, peaceful, and safe.

Go Raiders!

Sincerely,

The Riverview Administration