



Dear Riverview Parents,

We hope you enjoyed Valentine's Day and are well. It is never a bad time to appreciate those that we love, and those who love us in return. Below are two timely pieces of information for this week:

**1. Health and Safety / Universal Masking** – We know there are competing views and questions around universal masking, which remains the current recommendation of the Pennsylvania Department of Education and State and County Health Departments. To monitor this, the County Superintendents receive weekly “live” reports from the Health Department and, at times, medical experts from our region that detail rates of infection, positivity rates, hospitalizations, deaths, vaccination rates, transmissibility, open hospital beds, current studies, changes in recommendations, and data predictions, etc. They report that although infections are still in [“high transmission,”](#) the data is trending downward and public health experts believe this trend will continue. We are beginning to see trends at Riverview that mirror the projections by public health experts as well. **This is positive news.**

As previously discussed, the administration examines health and safety through a different lens. As we see it, keeping students *in-person* and *in seats* provides us the best opportunity to meet student needs. In this regard, universal masking and vaccinations have allowed us to successfully follow the current recommendations from the State and County Health Departments and significantly decrease the time that infected students have been at home in isolation protocol. This has helped us to avoid *hundreds* of student sick days. Although infection rates during the Omicron surge in December and January were extremely challenging (almost doubling our total cases to 112 at the Jr-Sr HS, 94 at 10<sup>th</sup> Street, and 41 at Verner), we have endured and have done our best to keep students in school. Although it was a difficult stretch, our overall case counts seem to be better than other Districts and the health staff report that students and staff (especially those vaccinated) are experiencing relatively mild symptoms (although a handful have not). **Also, positive news.**

In addition, we are in a much better place than we were two years ago. We have universal access to vaccinations and boosters for all school-aged children and staff, improvements in medical treatments for infected individuals, the ability to provide Covid testing to students and staff in all three schools (with parental consent), improvements in HVAC filtration and efficiency, and the continued focus on health and safety protocols in our buildings. ***Therefore, if County infection rates (and supporting data) continue to improve, we are cautiously optimistic that we will be able to release the universal mask requirement and move to a mask optional environment this spring.*** Please be patient, however, as we do not want to place the health and safety of the school environment at risk by transitioning too soon. Also keep in mind that there is no playbook for this and that families feel strongly on both sides of this issue. However, we will continue to be transparent, analyze the data and current trends, and relay any changes to the health and safety plan in a timely manner. **We believe this is positive news as well!**

**2. Riverview as One** – Finally, please keep in mind that we are not infectious disease specialists, doctors, public health officials, meteorologists, prognosticators, lawyers, psychologists, road crew workers, or politicians. We are *educators* and have had to assume aspects of these roles in managing the many mandates, recommendations, laws, public health guidelines, politics, public dissent, and ever-shifting demands of the pandemic. We have done our best to manage those additional responsibilities and will continue to help as needed, but please remember that we are ultimately here to make you and your children *happy, successful, socially and emotionally well, and well educated*. This is what we are trained to do, and we will continue to take those responsibilities seriously. Ultimately, we want the same things you want and hope you will continue to trust us and see us as your allies and teammates as we continue to support your children. In other words, **we care!**

That is all for this week. We hope that today's bulletin brings some cautious optimism for the spring. As always, please continue to stay happy, peaceful, and safe, and know that we are thankful for your continued support of the Riverview School District.

Go Raiders!

Sincerely,

The Riverview Administration