



Dear Riverview Parents,

At last night's Board Meeting, we delivered the [2021-2022 State of the District Report](#), followed by the recommendation to start the 2021 - 2022 school year with full in-person instruction and a series of mitigation strategies that include ***universal masks to be worn indoors*** for all students, staff and visitors. In order to be fully transparent, the rationale and reasons are listed in their entirety below. We understand that there are competing thoughts regarding masks. Please know that we spent *countless* hours this summer receiving data and information from the medical community in order to make decisions to keep our school community safe; and we take this responsibility incredibly seriously. In addition to providing safety, universal masking also puts us in an advantageous position when it comes to quarantines. According to the changes in the definition of "close contact," if students are masked and 3ft apart, we do not have to quarantine when a positive case comes into the building. This will help us to keep in upwards of 300 students (last year's approximate numbers) from having to quarantine. Therefore, the use of masks will help to keep our students *in school with their teachers*, where they belong.

If transmission rates fall to levels we saw at the beginning of the summer and vaccinations continue to rise and become available to our younger population, we hope that the mask requirement can be reevaluated. We will continue to monitor and assess the situation, and will *always* keep the health and safety of our students and staff as a focal point. In addition, we believe that it is vital that the school and community work as a team, provide similar messages to our youth, encourage safe practices, and get back to the business of school. We thank you in advance for your loyalty and support (as the pandemic is not quite over) as we continue to bend and flex accordingly.

The full [Riverview School District Health and Safety Plan](#) is located on our District website.

**Rationale:**

- This recommendation aligns with the resounding support of the medical community: Allegheny Health Director and Staff, the State Department of Health, and State Department of Education, the Chief of Pediatrics and Head Pediatric Infectious Disease doctors at UPMC, the American Association of Pediatrics, and the CDC

- The vaccination is not yet available to half of our student population
- The Delta Variant is more than twice as contagious, infecting on average 5-8 individuals per case, according to public health officials
- Per the CDC and State and Country Health Departments, students who are masked and would otherwise be considered a “close contact” **do not need to be quarantined** if within 3’ - 6’ of a COVID-19 positive individual. Not having to quarantine students gives us the best opportunity to educate our students without disruption
- In-person learning is the most important shared goal of our community and our educational staff
- Protects the adult population of the school and minimizes the potential need for substitutes
- The number of cases in Allegheny County is commensurate to those in the winter and spring of last year, with substantial and high transmission rates across the State
- Even those vaccinated are currently being infected with the Delta variant
- 15% of all current cases are among children, and these cases in 0-17-year-olds are on the rise
- According to reports this week from UPMC Lead Council, masks do not pose a risk to students, and reduces risk in schools, and ultimately, saves lives
- Although we understand the frustration of the mask issue, and that during the summer masks weren’t universally worn, every student and staff effectively used masks last year with little to no issue or concern

### **Other School Mitigation Measures**

- Home Morning Health Checklist - continued encouragement of staying home when ill, and monitoring symptoms carefully on a daily basis
- Buses – keeping the windows open when possible; masks; increased ridership; parental help to transport if possible
- Classrooms - desks in columns and rows to maximize physical distancing without impacting the educational program; desks facing forward; teacher zone encouraged; availability of sanitizing; seating charts for contact tracing
- Enhanced ventilation and air quality; higher rated filtration devices
- Physical distancing maximized in the cafeteria to keep students and staff safe, seating charts for contact tracing, and protocols to avoid exposure and quarantines
- Visitors and Volunteers limited during the school day with masks required
- Ample cleaning and disinfecting materials available to keep spaces safe
- Athletics/Activities - Masking required indoors (other than active competition); masking outdoors when physical distancing is not possible, masks optional when physical distancing can occur; limited use of locker rooms or changing areas
- Mask optional during outside classes or mask break times when students can maintain physical distance
- The continued encouragement of vaccinations for all students and families as they become available

On a final note, we still need a few more paraprofessionals. If you or anyone you know wants to take on a few extra hours during the school day and would like to help us serve the students, please contact us. This is a rewarding and honorable way to spend your time. Also, if you know of any families that have opted for other schools (cyber, private, parochial schools, etc.), please encourage them to reach out to our office. We would appreciate the opportunity to explain the many benefits of the world class education that Riverview can provide.

Remember, ***the first day of school is Thursday, August 26, 2021.*** Your Principals will be sending out additional information. We are extremely excited for the students to once again fill our spaces with curiosity, laughter, and joy. Although we have to continue to be vigilant, it's going to be a fun and engaging school year! Please enjoy the last week of summer, and continue to stay happy, peaceful, and safe.

Go Raiders!

Sincerely,

The Riverview Administration