

Letter from Superintendent Parent Update - August 28, 2021

Dear Parents and Community,

The first day of school for students is quickly approaching on Thursday, September 9th. Our Reopening Committee met again yesterday to review the status of our Reopening Plan; although we are confident that we have many necessary pieces in place, there are still some unknowns that need to be ironed out. Governor Hochul has stepped up with what looks like a comprehensive plan that will be shared shortly by New York State, and the New York State Department of Health is now back in the picture and expected to issue guidance for schools. We welcome this leadership, of course, but it has put us back into a position where we are awaiting guidance from both the State and County.

We have updated our [Reopening Plan](#) based on what we know currently; however, this plan will more than likely continue to be revised. Please review this document since it contains important information related to the following aspects of reopening our schools:

- Instructional Program
- State and County Guidance
- Health and Safety Prevention Strategies
- Vaccination Guidelines
- Mask Requirements - including a link to the CDC guidance for properly fitting masks
- Physical Distancing
- Surveillance Testing
- Contact Tracing and Quarantining
- Lunch and Mealtime Procedures
- Busing
- Ventilation and Facility Cleaning
- Hand Washing and Respiratory Etiquette

Surveillance Testing

Yesterday, we were assigned to a vendor by the Westchester County Department of Health for our surveillance testing program. We will be working with Quadrant Biosciences and will share the services of this vendor with the other Rivertown school districts.

We hope to receive the following in the week ahead:

- Introductory Letter for parents/staff
- Consent Forms (with FAQ) for parents, teachers/staff
- Contacts for Parents who have questions
- Quadrant Biosciences Onboarding Materials

COVID-19 Tests

It is unclear what New York State has in mind related to school-based testing and whether they plan to provide resources to schools for on-site COVID testing for students and staff who may have been exposed to an infected individual. We will share information on this once we have some clarity and concrete information.

For purposes of return to school following an exposure, our schools will accept any PCR test, rapid test or home test results.

Reporting

In line with the guidance of the CDC and the advice of our school medical director, we will no longer utilize a daily health attestation or random temperature checks. Instead, we will rely on an honor system with parents, students and staff to be vigilant about NOT coming to school when they are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19. We will continue to remind everyone regularly of this serious responsibility as part of our regular COVID reporting. As we did last year, parents will be informed when there has been a positive COVID-19 case in their child's grade but not in their specific class. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protections do not allow us to provide this level of detail since it would easily allow one to identify the child who has been infected.

School Meals

We are happy to announce that the District has applied for and received an extension of the federal grant that has allowed us to supply free school meals to all students. This includes both breakfast and lunch and includes both hot and cold meals along with Grab-and-Go options. The program will begin on the first day of school - September 9th.

Vaccinations

Health and medical experts across the country continue to stress that vaccination is our strongest defense against COVID-19. We encourage all adults and children 12 years of age and older to get vaccinated in order to keep themselves and others as safe as possible. Over 95% of our staff is vaccinated. We will be collecting information on student vaccination status for purposes of quarantine. This information is voluntary. Any student 12 years of age or older for whom we do not have vaccination status will be considered as unvaccinated for purposes of quarantine.

Lastly, we look forward to welcoming our staff back for Superintendent Conference Days on Wednesday and Thursday of this week. Although we are still finishing major construction projects on both campuses, we expect that all will be substantially completed and ready when we greet our students upon their return.

We will continue to keep parents updated as we approach September 9th and extend our best wishes for the weekend ahead.

Sincerely,

Lisa Brady, Ed.D.
Superintendent