



ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENTS:
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July 21, 2021

Dear RPS Families,

It's hard to believe summer is winding down, but I hope you and your family are enjoying every last minute of it and are gearing up for a great 2021-22 school year like we are!

We've had a successful and productive summer with excellent participation in Rockford Summer Learning opportunities. The Rockford Reading Bus has also been busy traveling throughout neighborhoods to share the joy of reading with children. These have both been valuable tools in keeping students engaged this summer.

Looking forward to the new school year, I have a few items I'd like to share with you as we prepare for the return of students on Monday, August 23.

School calendar and daily schedule

Next year's school calendar has been established and can be found on our [website](#). Start/dismissal times will be as follows:

	Start	Dismissal
Elementary (DK-5)	8:35AM	3:35PM
Secondary and R1TS (6-12)	7:40AM	2:30PM
River Valley Academy	7:45AM	2:20PM

COVID mitigation plans

As you know, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) lifted all face-covering requirements and gathering restrictions effective June 22, 2021. This has us moving in the right direction to resume normal operations wherever possible.

We will continue with enhanced cleaning measures and encourage handwashing to prevent the spread of illness. Below are a few highlights of our plans for the upcoming school year with more detailed information on the attached FAQ. It is important to understand that these plans may change if we receive public health mandates from the MDHHS or Kent County Health Department (KCHD). We will comply with any lawfully issued public health orders.

- **Instructional delivery.** We look forward to a full year of face-to-face instruction unless we are ordered otherwise through an appropriate legal channel. Rockford Virtual School will again be offered for those families wishing to engage in online learning (more information below).
- **Face coverings/masks.** Currently, the CDC, MDHHS and KCHD are recommending a cloth face covering for unvaccinated individuals indoors and in crowded outdoor spaces. These are

recommendations, not requirements, and my position remains that Rockford Public Schools will provide parent choice whenever possible. Therefore, masks will be left to parent choice when making the decision for their students regarding face coverings.

- Vaccinations and testing. Testing and the decision to vaccinate are also left to parent choice and will not be required in the absence of any public health orders or MHSAA rules (if applicable to your student-athlete.)
- Athletics. Our athletic programs will adhere to rules set forth by both MDHHS and the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA).

Rockford Virtual School

Rockford Public Schools will continue to offer virtual programming for DK-12 students for the 2021-22 school year, with the primary purpose of assisting families who are continuing to navigate COVID as a result of individual circumstances. Characteristics of the programming can be found on the Rockford Virtual webpage located [here](#). The enrollment window is July 21-August 2, and you will receive more information about this later today.

Busing information

If you would like your child assigned to a bus route this year, please submit your request by August 6, 2021, by logging in to your Family Access account and completing the survey in the online forms tab. After August 6, you may contact the Transportation Department directly at 616-863-6328, and your child will be assigned to a route based on availability. Transportation assignments will be posted in Family Access accounts starting August 13.

We have sincerely appreciated your patience and understanding over the past school year as we navigated the changing landscape of the pandemic, and we ask for your continued flexibility should we need to adjust along the way in the future. We are committed to the goal of doing what is best for students.

As always, please reach out to your child's principal or my office if you have any questions. We look forward to seeing students back on the first day of school on August 23!

Sincerely,

Michael S. Shibler, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools



Rockford Public Schools

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2021-22 COVID-19 Protocols FAQs

Will facemasks be required at school and on the school bus?

No. The use of a cloth face covering to prevent the potential spread of the virus will be recommended but not required when students and staff are on campus or a school bus. The decision to wear a face-covering will be left to families to make on an individual basis for what is best for their student(s) and family.

Will students/staff be required to get the COVID-19 vaccine to attend school?

No. It is an individual/family right to choose whether or not to get a vaccination. We cannot and will not require students or staff to show proof of COVID vaccination as a condition of attendance. The COVID-19 vaccine is not listed on the School Required Vaccination List. For more information, please see: [School Required Vaccines for Parents by MDHHS](#)

Will you separate students who are vaccinated from unvaccinated students?

No. Vaccination status is a personal choice.

Will students be in cohorts in the classroom or on the playground?

No. As of June 22, 2021, MDHHS has discontinued all gathering limits for residential and non-residential settings.

Will contact tracing continue?

Schools are required to report communicable diseases to their local health department within 24 hours. Positive or probable COVID-19 cases will be reported to the Kent County Health Department following our [Communicable Disease Board Policy 8450](#) and Michigan Law Act No. 368 of the Public Acts of 1978. For a complete list of reportable diseases, please see the following document: [2021 Reportable Diseases](#). When there is a positive or probable case within a classroom, an exposure letter will be sent home to parent(s), just as we do with other infectious diseases such as chickenpox.

Will Rockford Public Schools quarantine students during the 2021-22 school year?

No. All quarantines will continue to be issued by the student's resident health department.

Will student-athletes need to be tested for COVID-19 to participate?

MDHHS and MHSAA lifted all requirements for student testing as of June 22, 2021. We are not aware of any plans to require testing for the upcoming school year.

Will this change?

Rockford Public Schools will comply with all legally mandated public health orders that hold the force of law. If a public health order is mandated that is contrary to the information above, we may need to alter our plans to reflect those legal requirements.