

Riverview Gardens School District December 2021 COVID-19 Protocols for Scholars and Staff

The Riverview Gardens School District Special Administrative Board and Administration has collaborated with many local resources to establish appropriate health and safety plans and protocols for the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year. Many lessons were learned from the 2020-2021 school year, as well as from the first semester of the current school year. The District monitors COVID-19 data from various local, state, and federal sources. We also track the number of students and staff excluded from the school environment due to suspected cases or symptoms of COVID-19, as well as the number of positive cases by students and staff members. You can find the District's COVID-19 Dashboard through our District website at: <https://www.rgsd.k12.mo.us/covid19/dashboard>.

With these data points in mind, the SAB has adopted the following plan, which will continue to be periodically reviewed throughout the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year.¹ Please also note that the District is mindful of the recent confirmed presence of the COVID-19 Omicron variant, and we will continue to monitor the variant's impact on our plans.

District COVID-19 Plan At-a-Glance

- Our scholars benefit most from in-person learning, and safely providing in-person instruction is a top priority for the District. However, the District is cognizant of the continued health risks associated with COVID-19.
- Self-monitoring is the first line of defense in our collective efforts to control the spread of the virus. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to conduct a daily health check on their scholar(s) to ensure each scholar is COVID-19 symptom free before sending them to school. Please help us keep everyone safe and healthy!
- Scholars must stay home if they are sick with **any** cold/flu-like symptoms, not just COVID-19 symptoms.
- Masks have shown to be an effective transmission mitigation strategy in our school community, and they will continue to be required while indoors in our schools until this plan is reviewed again in January 2022. Currently, there is **a federal mandate** requiring all students on school buses to wear masks; therefore, masks will be required on school buses at this time.

¹ The District's SAB is authorized by Missouri statute to "make all needful rules and regulations for the organization, grading and government in the school district." MO. REV. STAT. § 171.011.

- The District will continue to use a layered prevention strategy (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) to protect scholars, teachers, staff, visitors, and other members of their households and to support in-person learning.

2021-2022 Return to School Health & Safety Guidelines Summary

As we have updated the 2021-2022 Return to School Health & Safety Guidelines, please refer to the updated information and strategies contained in this document. These guidelines and strategies described in this plan are intended to mitigate, not eliminate, risk. No single action or set of actions will completely eliminate the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission, but the implementation of several coordinated interventions can greatly reduce the risk. Your cooperation with these guidelines will help us minimize disruptions to the in-person learning process as much as possible. We appreciate your help in this team effort to keep our scholars healthy and safe!

Attendance and Sickness

We all know the importance of school attendance and the impact it has on learning. However, given the continuing issues presented by COVID-19, **SCHOLARS MUST STAY HOME IF THEY ARE SICK**. Parents/Guardians, you are our first line of defense as we work to control the spread of this virus and your help with keeping sick scholars home is critical to the health of our scholars, staff, and families. *We are asking each parent/guardian to do a daily health check on their scholar(s) to ensure each scholar is COVID-19 symptom-free before sending them to school.* You only need to report the results of your daily health check if your scholar is symptomatic. [Symptoms of COVID-19 may](#) include (* = high-risk symptoms):

- Cough*
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing*
- Fever ($\geq 100.0^{\circ}$ F)
- Chills
- Muscle or body aches
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- New loss of taste or smell*

Families and staff should contact the building nurse as soon as possible if they, or someone in their household, have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, are awaiting test results, or test positive for COVID-19. Families should also contact their health care provider for advice on managing illness. Please see the section regarding Exclusions for more information.

Masks and Face Coverings

- Masks and/or face coverings are required for all staff, scholars (5 years old and over), and visitors regardless of vaccination status at all times while inside District schools and buildings, except as outlined below.
- Scholars may remove their masks in the following situations:
 - While at recess or in physical education, as long as scholars are at least 6 feet apart;
 - While consuming food or drink as long as scholars are at least 6 feet apart; and
 - While participating in hand, choir, or music class, as long as scholars are at least 6 feet apart.
 - For athletes while participating in strenuous physical activity indoors.
- Proper mask wearing may reduce exclusion time or eliminate it completely.
- The SAB and District Administration will continue to review face covering requirements depending on various factors, including data and information such as COVID positivity rates at District buildings, community spread, etc.
- Appropriate accommodations will be made for children with disabilities with respect to masks or other health and safety protocols.
- Currently, there is a **federal mandate** requiring all students on school buses to wear masks; therefore, masks will be required on school buses at this time.
- The CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend children wear masks in school, regardless of vaccination status, when there is high community transmission of cases locally.

Social Distancing

Social distancing, or physical distancing, to the greatest extent possible will be used as one of many transmission mitigation strategies. Schools will do their best to design processes and procedures that limit the opportunity for close contact among staff and scholars and allow for social distancing to the greatest extent possible. The District will also integrate additional mitigation strategies to help build layers of protection, including:

- In schools and classrooms, seating and activities will allow for social distancing of at least three feet whenever possible.
- Students will be encouraged to use their own supplies and materials when possible.
- Hand hygiene routines will be incorporated into daily procedures.

- Students will stay together in small groups/classrooms as much as possible and there will be limited mixing of student and staff groups.
- Increased cleaning and disinfecting measures.

Contact Tracing

Riverview Gardens School District will continue to work as a partner with the St. Louis County Department of Public Health to conduct contact tracing in our schools. The District will communicate immediately with families and employees through email, calls, and/or texts to notify anyone who has been identified as a close contact to someone who has tested positive or is presumed positive for COVID-19. A notification will also be emailed to school families and staff when a positive case is identified on campus.

“Close contact” is defined as anyone with prolonged contact with a positive case (defined as within 6 feet for more than 15 cumulative minutes) or someone who is directly exposed to the respiratory droplets of a case (e.g., contact between two individuals not wearing masks). Additional factors are taken into consideration when identifying cases in school settings, such as whether the case was symptomatic (and what the symptoms were); total duration of time spent with and distance from the case; nature of the contact; room size; mask use; other social and physical distancing measures; airflow and ventilation; and situation-specific details.

Cleaning and Disinfecting of Facilities

The District will use enhanced disinfection protocols for sanitation of restrooms and other high-touch surfaces, such as door handles/push plates, light switches, faucets, elevator buttons, tables, countertops, desks, chairs, benches, and computers. The District will also address air ventilation through regular cleaning and replacement of air filters and HVAC upgrades.

Suspected Cases of COVID-19: Scholars

After a nurse has identified a scholar that may have a suspected case of COVID-19:

- Scholars must be isolated in an area outside of the nurse’s office. Each building principal will identify an appropriate location within his or her building that would ensure the scholar is not left unattended. The expectation is that scholars will be picked up by a parent/guardian within 1 hour of the phone call from the school that their scholar must go home.
- The waiting room will be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Scholars with a suspected case or confirmed case of COVID-19 will be sent home.

- Any siblings or additional scholars of the same household of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, will be evaluated by the school nurse and will be sent home. Before siblings or additional scholars of the same household may return to school, the family will need to produce a negative COVID-19 test.
- Suspected cases should be tested to confirm a positive case of COVID-19.
 - If confirmed, the building principal should be notified immediately.
 - Parents/guardians should also contact the St. Louis County Department of Health (SLCDPH) at (877) 435-8411 or (314) 615-2660.
- District custodial staff will adhere to proper, elevated sanitation protocols to clean and disinfect classrooms where positive COVID-19 cases have been identified.
- Building leadership will follow District procedures to notify families if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a scholar’s classroom.

Exclusions²

Positive COVID-19 Cases

Scholars and employees testing positive for COVID-19 will be excluded from the school environment for an amount of time aligned with recommended guidance from local, state, and national sources, regardless of vaccination status.

Currently, the CDC recommends that individuals who have a positive case of COVID-19 (or who are showing symptoms and waiting for test results) need to isolate for **at least 10 calendar days**. Day 0 is the day symptoms began or the day the person took a test that had a positive result.

Virtual learning options will be provided to scholars during their isolation period if the scholars feel well enough to participate. The building principal and teaching staff will also provide support to scholars to catch up on academic work upon return to school.

A person diagnosed with COVID-19 can be around others when:

- At least 10 days have passed since their symptoms began, or since the date of their initial positive test if they did not develop symptoms; AND
- The last 24 hours of the 10-day period were fever-free without fever-reducing medication; AND
- Other symptoms have improved (excluding loss of taste and smell, which may persist but need not delay the end of isolation).

² The District is authorized by Missouri statute to exclude scholars who are “afflicted with any contagious or infectious disease or while liable to transmit such disease after having been exposed to it.” MO. REV. STAT. § 167.191.

After reviewing the above-listed data points with families, a specific return-to-school date will be provided for scholars by the building principal or nurse. Similarly, a specific return-to-work date for employees will be coordinated with the District’s contact tracing nurses.

PLEASE NOTE: These time periods may be impacted if the employee or scholar is experiencing a severe case of COVID-19 or is immunocompromised. Individuals are encouraged to consult with their health care providers to determine the appropriate time to return to work or school after testing positive.

Modified Exclusions for Close Contacts

Studies have shown that, when proper mitigation strategies are in place, classroom settings have relatively lower transmission rates compared with other settings. Riverview Gardens is committed to implementing mitigation practices (e.g., mask wearing, social distancing, screening protocols, and contact tracing) to reduce disruption to in-person instruction.

Based on this information and observations during the 2020-2021 school year and the first semester of the 2021-2022 school year, the District is implementing a “modified exclusion” process that would apply to students in grades K-12. Modified exclusions will only be used when exposures occur **in the classroom** setting because mitigation practices can be assured, and the evidence demonstrates these settings to be relatively lower risk. The SAB and District administration will continue to monitor the effectiveness of this approach, depending on new scientific evidence and local outbreak conditions.

If mask wearing is properly implemented at the scholar’s school, a scholar who is identified as a close contact (within 6 feet of a positive case for 15+ minutes) may be able to continue to attend school if ALL of the following conditions are met:

- The scholar was identified as a close contact following an exposure **at school**;
- The positive case was not exhibiting respiratory symptoms, such as consistent coughing, sneezing, or nasal congestion (leading to the case frequently blowing their nose), **while at school**;
- The positive case and the close contact scholar were both wearing face coverings and were socially distanced; AND
- The close contact scholar does not have symptoms and has tested negative for COVID-19.

If all of those conditions are met, then the scholar may be able to participate in in-person instruction during the regular school day. However, regardless of whether a close contact is allowed to attend school, the scholar may **not** participate in any after-school sports or activities until the scholar has exhibited no symptoms for a period of 10 days or until the scholar provides a negative COVID-19 test within 5-7 days after the possible exposure.

A scholar's principal or school nurse will communicate modified exclusion guidelines to each close contact identified in a setting within his or her school.

Exclusions for Vaccinated Individuals

Updated CDC guidance states that fully vaccinated individuals no longer need to be excluded from the school environment when they are designated as a close contact, but they should isolate if they show any symptoms. This provision will apply to both scholars and staff members.

Students who are unvaccinated and meet the conditions listed in the Modified Exclusions section may be eligible for a modified exclusion.

Employees who are unvaccinated and are identified as a close contact will need to be excluded for 10 days and monitor for symptoms up to 14 days. The District's contact tracing nurses will continue to provide a return-to-work date to employees for all building exposures.

The SAB and District Administration will continue to review and monitor COVID-19 data in our local community and adjust these protocols as necessary or appropriate. The District will also consider additional testing strategies for both employees and students.

Vaccinations

Vaccination is the most effective and long-lasting tool for protection from COVID-19. All individuals who are eligible to get vaccinated against COVID-19 are encouraged to do so to protect all members of our school community.

We encourage families to share their scholar's proof of vaccination with their school nurse. We also encourage our employees to share their proof of vaccination with Human Resources. We will be requesting vaccination records for anyone who may be exposed to COVID-19 while on campus to help determine next steps related to exclusions.

Fully vaccinated scholars and employees who are not symptomatic following an exposure can continue to attend school. Unvaccinated scholars and staff will need to adhere to the modified exclusion guidelines.

In-Person Instruction

Scholars will continue to report to school full-time for in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year.

In the classroom, scholar desks/tables will be placed in a manner to reduce the spread of COVID throughout the classroom to help adhere to social distancing guidelines to the extent possible.

Please note that not all spaces may be able to accommodate full social distancing, but to the extent possible, social distancing will be followed.

Teachers will maintain seating charts to assist with contact tracing should a positive case of COVID-19 be identified.

All scholars will be required to wear a mask/face covering while on District property. The District will initially provide each scholar with two face coverings. We encourage families and scholars to take care of their District-provided face coverings, as each additional face covering given out is an added expense. Scholars may also wear their own face coverings as long as the face covering meets scholar handbook guidelines, meaning it is appropriate for the school environment and not disruptive to the school culture or learning environment as determined by school officials. Any scholar who refuses to wear a face covering (and does not have a medical condition or documented medical exemption preventing them from wearing a face covering) will be sent home until the scholar agrees to wear the face covering. Virtual instruction may be discussed with the family as an option if the scholar continues to refuse to wear a face covering.

Scholars will be provided a water container to use at water fill stations. Water fountains are not currently accessible as one of the transmission mitigation measures the District is implementing.

School Closures Due to Inclement Weather or COVID

The District will make every effort to keep schools open on a daily basis while maintaining a safe and healthy learning environment. Despite our best efforts, though, it is possible that a school may temporarily close for a short time due to possible exposure risk, high levels of absenteeism, or for additional sanitation. The District may also need to close due to inclement weather or another emergency. In the event of a temporary closure, scholars and staff will follow an Alternate Methods of Instruction (AMI) plan. More details will be communicated from the District or building principal.

During the implementation of AMI days or days where the schools/District is closed for inclement weather or another emergency, scholars will be provided with a technology device to use at home during days when classes are scheduled for AMI virtual instruction days. Upon request, WIFI hotspots will be distributed to scholars in an effort to provide internet access for families who currently do not have access.

All scholars in grades Kindergarten through grade twelve will use Google Classroom and/or Zoom to engage in instruction on AMI days.

During AMI days, scholars will follow the regular instructional schedule for their assigned school. Schedules may be accessed via the District's website.

Parents/guardians will be notified by the District if the Superintendent decides to implement AMI days during inclement weather.

While scholars are engaged in virtual learning at home, scholars and staff will follow the guidelines outlined in the District's AMI plan available at: [2021-2022 Alternative Methods of Instruction Plan](#).

All scholars should be in classroom sessions daily on AMI days to ensure consistency in classroom and virtual instruction. Michelle Obama Early Childhood Academic Center (MOECAC) scholars will attend full class sessions each day Monday through Friday.

Transportation on School Buses

- Bus drivers and scholars must wear face coverings while riding on the school bus. Any scholar not wearing a face covering will not be allowed on the bus. Buses will be supplied with face coverings for scholars if they show up at the bus stop and do not have one.
- All buses will have hand sanitizer available for use when scholars enter the bus.
- A seating chart will be developed by the District's transportation provider that place the first scholars picked up in the morning at the back of the bus and fills the bus from the back to the front. In the morning, upon arrival at school, the scholars at the front of the bus will exit first and continue this procedure until all scholars have exited the bus. This procedure helps keep scholars from passing each other on the bus and provides another layer of protection for scholars.
- A second seating chart will be developed for the end of the day when scholars are returning home. The seating chart will place scholars on the last bus stop of the route on the bus first and seat them in the back of the bus so scholars with the first bus stops are in the front of the bus.
- Parents/guardians may personally transport their scholars to/from school rather than riding the bus.
- First Student (transportation provider) will establish monthly cleaning protocols for sanitizing each bus.

Visitors

Parents/guardians and visitors are permitted in schools and buildings beyond the school's main office only for essential business and are required to wear masks. Our goal is to limit the number of visitors entering schools on a daily basis. School administration at each site will be responsible for approving visitors.

No parents/guardians or visitors should enter a school site if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, even if they have been approved to enter for essential business.

Athletics & Activities

The District encourages and supports scholar participation in athletics, clubs, and activities. To maintain a safe and healthy environment for scholars, coaches, and sponsors, the District will implement guidelines and recommendations based on guidance from various sources.

Participating in athletics and activities carries the risk of coming into contact with individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 or who are infected with COVID-19. While it is impossible to eliminate the risk that a student could be exposed or infected, the District will attempt to mitigate those risks when possible. Participation in athletics and activities is voluntary and we encourage each family to discuss if participation is right for them.

Scholars who elect to participate in athletics and/or extra/co-curricular activities will need to complete a waiver to participate in the activity or sport. (See Parent Permission and Waiver of Liability for Scholar Participation form).

Additional Questions

If you have additional questions after reading this document, please do not hesitate to contact your scholar's building principal or the District administration for more information about any aspect of the District's updated plan.

Translation or accessibility supports for this document are available upon request.