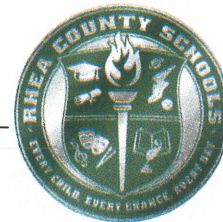


Rhea County Department of Education



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Jesse Messimer, Director
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August 26, 2021

Dear Rhea County Families,

As the district finishes its third week of classes, I want to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to all our students, families, educators, and administrators for helping to successfully launch a new school year.

I know that families have many questions about COVID-19, and I would like to address a few of them. First, I want to acknowledge that RCS has received a great deal of feedback asking for a public release of data regarding the spread of COVID-19 in our schools. With that in mind, we will continue a districtwide COVID dashboard with active student and staff cases confirmed by the Health Department. This dashboard will be updated daily, Monday through Friday at www.rheacounty.org under the COVID-19 Information tab. While COVID-19 remains a challenge, our options to respond are more limited this year. The district last year was able to provide a virtual learning option for students who were in isolation or quarantine and could move schools to virtual learning as needed. Presently, however, the TN State Board of Education does not give districts that option. Secondly, all high traffic areas in schools are wiped down with disinfectant or sprayed with an electrostatic sprayer daily to mitigate the spread of the virus. Buses are also sprayed daily with the electrostatic sprayer.

This year's district calendar includes the traditional 10 inclement weather days, which may also be used throughout the school year in case of illness. If all inclement weather days are used, any school-wide or district-wide instructional days that are lost due to illness must be made up using other days such as fall break, winter break, spring break or by extending the school year.

I would like to emphasize that if your student has tested positive for COVID-19, they are required to isolate and not return to school until they have been quarantined for 10 days from the beginning of their symptoms. Unvaccinated siblings are asked to stay at home as well and observe 10 days of quarantine.

Contact tracing is being led by the Health Department, and we are providing any and all relevant information to assist them in this process. Students will follow the protocol for makeup work provided to them through Google Classroom.

We hope these steps will help you make the best decision for your family. If you have additional COVID-related questions, I encourage you to read our recently updated FAQs, which may be found at www.rheacounty.org under the COVID-19 Information tab. Please be advised that COVID-related protocols are subject to change, and any changes will be made available as they occur.

As always, thank you for your support of Rhea County Schools!

Sincerely,

Jesse Messimer