



August 16, 2021

Dear Parents and Students,

As we prepare for Unpack your Backpack night and the first day of school, many parents and students are chomping at the bit to know: Will we be masking this Fall? The answer is yes, for at least the first several weeks. Student masking is expected when indoors and when in close proximity for an extended period outside. Please note that parents may apply for a masking waiver for their children.

This decision complies with the new state law and aligns with current recommendations from health industry leaders, local infectious disease specialists, the CDC, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. We will review this policy and look forward to relaxing our masking guidelines when vaccines become available for our age 5-11 student population.

Data shows that vaccines protect well against the Delta variant, yet there are populations within our community for whom the vaccines are not yet approved. Additionally, some people for whom the vaccine has been approved have conditions that prevent them from receiving vaccines. While none of us love masking, it's particularly essential at the beginning of the school year as we are just returning from summer travels. If we want to get back to normal, we need to vaccinate as much of the eligible population as possible. In the meantime, we need to continue other risk mitigation efforts and encourage vaccination.

Requests for a masking waiver must be submitted in writing to Mrs. Paget, who will collect them for review by the senior administrative team. Students approved for a mask waiver will receive individualized distancing and safety requirements that will vary by age, vaccination status, and class size.

Daily, we hear from parents, both returning and new, who are worried about the increasing spread of the Delta variant. Many are choosing Rivermont BECAUSE our independence allows us to take a very cautious approach to this public health crisis. Rivermont will continue to operate as a model of COVID safety.

A robust approach to risk mitigation will help us avoid sharing COVID as part of our students' *What I Did Over The Summer* presentations. Therefore, we will continue with the following specific safety measures:

- Masking is expected for everyone unless they are ten or more feet from students, outdoors, or have received a mask waiver from the administration.
- All students, faculty, staff, and approved guests will check their temperature daily upon arrival.
- Our custodians, teachers, and staff will continue enhanced sanitization measures.
- We will maintain social distancing whenever possible.
- Students for whom the vaccine is not yet available will eat in the cafeteria with plexiglass dividers. Vaccinated students may eat in plexiglass-divided areas or Central Hall, where the tables aid distancing and the air volume is high.
- Students will be taught frequent and thorough handwashing and receive regular reminders throughout the year.
- Guests will be required to show proof of vaccination or wear an unvented N-95-type mask before being allowed into buildings.

'What will be done for students who need to miss school for COVID reasons?' you might ask. Rivermont is not going to ask teachers and students to participate in classes online. Instead, the absence will be treated like any other. There will be a call for homework, which the student will need to complete while he or she is absent. Teachers will coordinate directly with parents and students in making the best plan for each student.

I look forward to seeing you all at Unpack Your Backpack this Thursday night!

Sincerely,

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