

August 6, 2021

Dear Richland Families,

Guidance from federal, state, and local health agencies continues to evolve. The governor's and the state's mandates are subject to change with changing circumstances. On Wednesday, August 4, Governor J.B. Pritzker issued an executive order requiring that **masks must be worn indoors, regardless of vaccination status, by all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to P-12 schools and on school buses**. Additionally, athletes participating in indoor sports will be required to wear masks during indoor practices and competitions. This mandate is an executive order made pursuant to a disaster proclamation and is not subject to School Board nor administration discretion. Fortunately, this new mandate aligns with the plan that the Richland Board of Education approved on Wednesday, July 28, 2021, so our District was prepared in advance of this order.

Instead of "guidance" on best practices that can be interpreted by each community, COVID-19 Executive Order No. 85 has been mandated by the governor as such:

Section 1: School Mitigation Measures. All public and non-public schools in Illinois serving pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade students **must follow** the joint guidance issued by ISBE and IDPH and take proactive measures to ensure the safety of students, staff, and visitors, *including*, but not limited to:

- a. **Requiring the indoor use of face coverings by students, staff, and visitors who are over age two and able to medically tolerate a face covering, regardless of vaccination status, consistent with CDC guidance;** and,
- b. Implementing other layered prevention strategies (such as physical distancing, screening testing, ventilation, handwashing, and respiratory etiquette, advising individuals to stay home when sick and get tested, contact tracing in combination with appropriate quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection) to the greatest extent possible and taking into consideration factors such as community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks, consistent with CDC guidance.

Additional guidance is expected from IDPH and ISBE in response to the governor's mandate. The administration continues to plan for the beginning of the school year. Students will have full-day, in-person instruction, five days per week pursuant to ISBE directives. Absent any significant changes in guidance from ISBE/IDPH, the first student day of attendance remains Wednesday, August 18th.

Sincerely,

Joseph Simpkins, Superintendent