



SCHOOL OPENING PLAN

Richland County Community Unit 1

2021 - 2022

Information Guide for the opening of school for the 2021 - 2022 school year based on guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Department of Public Health, and the Centers for Disease Control. The conditions affecting the opening and day to day operation of school can change, so it may become necessary for this plan to be modified at any time.

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Executive Summary

The 2020-2021 school year is widely considered to be the most challenging year students, teachers, parents, and administrators have faced in the last several years. The challenges tested student and staff resiliency, tested public health measures put in place to help keep students and staff safe and healthy, and it tested the school district's ability to adapt to a situation that was constantly changing. The work of teachers, administrators and support staff, with the cooperation of students, parents, and families, allowed for the Richland County School District to remain open through most of the school year. Though this past year has been challenging, it has created a resolve to come together for improvement and to continue to provide outstanding educational opportunities for students.

In May of 2021, the Illinois State Board of Education passed a resolution prioritizing a return to fully in-person learning. Remote learning will only be provided to students that are subject to a short-term quarantine order from public health officials. This return to full in-person learning will benefit students academically, as there are many challenges to remote school work that have negatively impacted student learning. A return to full in-person learning will also benefit students socially and emotionally as the impact of the pandemic included added levels of stress and anxiety for students. Finally, a return to full in-person learning will benefit families by providing the structure and support that attending school every day allows.

The 2021-2022 school year will begin on Monday, August 16th with a Teacher Institute, followed by the first day of student attendance on Tuesday, August 17th. Not only will student learning be fully in-person, but it will also be on a regular schedule with the posted start and end times found later in this document. Details about each school will also be found later in this document.

If circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic change and guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) dictate, then necessary modifications will be made to this plan. As a public school, it served the needs of students and staff to adhere as closely as possible to the public health guidelines. This adherence to public health guidelines will continue as long as the pandemic exists and may include measures such as social distancing, reduced crowd sizes, use of PPE, including masks, etc.

The top priority of the Richland County School District continues to be the health, safety, and development of our students, which includes the impact COVID-19 had on students' academic growth and development. There is little doubt that all students suffered some negative academic impact from the disruptions to their education over the past several months, and some students had a much more significant negative impact to their academic growth and development. As a result, the assessment of the negative academic impact and the development of strategies to address this is an important piece of the school opening plan.

Current Illinois Department of Public Health/Illinois State Board of Education Guidelines

Guidance related to necessary public health measures is continuing to evolve as the start of the new school year approaches. On July 27, 2021 the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) fully adopted the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools. This guidance was subsequently adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). In addition to other prevention strategies, the guidance included a strong recommendation that everyone, including fully vaccinated individuals, wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas with substantial and high transmission. CDC also recommended universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.

On Tuesday, August 4th Governor JB Pritzker announced a mask mandate for all PreK - 12 schools. This mask mandate is for all indoor settings during the school day, including buses to and from school and extracurricular and athletic programs after the school day. The mandate does not extend to outdoor spaces or outside activities. As a result of this announcement from the Governor, all students, staff and visitors will be required to wear a mask while inside RCCU1 facilities.

The Richland County School District is respectful of the individual's right to make his/her own decision about vaccination. However, the CDC and IDPH state that the primary method to stop the pandemic is through increased numbers of fully vaccinated people. Anyone interested in receiving the vaccination should contact the Richland County Health Office at (618) 392-6241.

Daily Schedule & School Calendar

All schools in the Richland County School District will return to a traditional school schedule with the start and end times outlined in the table below. This schedule may include some modifications from a previous schedule as some changes in bussing and dismissal procedures have been developed.

	School Day	Bus Drop-off	Bus Pick-up	Walkers/Car Riders
RCES	8:10 am -3:10 pm	7:50-8:00 am	3:00-3:10 pm	3:10 pm
RCMS	8:10 am -3:10 pm	7:55-8:05 am	3:05-3:15 pm	3:10 pm
RCHS	8:00 am -3:00 pm	7:40-7:50 am	3:00 pm	3:00 pm

Due to the renovation project at RCHS, the past two school years have seen a slightly modified calendar to accommodate the construction schedule. Since this project is now complete, the school calendar for this school year is a more typical version from previous years. As a result, the first day of school for the 2021-2022 school year is a Teacher Institute on Monday, August 16th, followed by the first day of student attendance on Tuesday, August 17th. During this first week of school, each building will be on their regular dismissal schedule. There is no early release during the first week of school. Below is a link to the school calendar for the 2021-2022 school year.

https://core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/1319089/2021-2022_District_Calendar.pdf

Instruction

The Richland County School District is in the beginning stages of a multi-year plan for district and school improvement. Within this plan are three improvement priorities, with the first of these priorities related to the process of teaching and learning. This improvement will be accomplished through a systematic and intentional approach that includes alignment of curriculum across grade levels and courses, ongoing professional learning of instructional staff to implement best practices, and appropriate assessment of student learning to identify successes and areas for improvement.

The school closure that occurred in March of 2020 and the modified schedule and remote learning during the 2020-2021 school year has affected student learning. Attempting to measure the impact that COVID-19 has had on student learning is difficult. Just as each student is a unique individual, the school closure, a shortened school day, lost learning opportunities outside of school, and many other factors will not affect each student the same way. Some students may see limited impact, while others will see a more significant impact to their learning.

Responding to this learning loss is a crucial aspect of opening the new school year. It is also important to understand that this will be an ongoing process throughout the new school year and even beyond. A more robust summer school program is planned for the summer of 2021 and 2022. Also, each school in the Richland County School District will respond to learning loss of students in a different way. For example, a young child in the elementary grades may need targeted individual or small group instruction to boost his/her reading comprehension. A student in middle school may need specific instruction to fill in a gap from a math class so that he/she can be successful in the next course in the sequence. If the student is in high school, he/she may need to recover a lost credit(s) to continue moving forward to meet graduation requirements. Whatever the specific circumstances are, identifying and responding to this learning loss is a top priority.

Health & Wellness

The Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Public Health continue to issue updated guidelines that will determine various aspects of how the school district will

operate. As a result, this opening plan will not provide a lot of specific information on some of these components. A lesson learned from the past several months is that the guidelines can change frequently and the school district needs to be responsive to those changes.

As occurred during the previous school year, the Richland County School District will make every effort to adhere to the public health guidelines to protect students and staff. Based on the current conditions it is no longer necessary to do daily symptom screenings and the required length of quarantine has been reduced, but other protocols and requirements may remain. For example, it is still unclear what the guidance will be for visitors and volunteers, special programs and the number of attendees allowed, and other activities that are typically part of the school day. A link to a recently updated Frequently Asked Questions document from the IDPH can be found below.

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IDPH-School-FAQs.pdf>

The issue of wearing a mask in school has become a controversial topic and it remains one of the public health measures that continues to be recommended for the 2021-2022 school year. The statement below was released by IDPH in late July.

“CDC recommends that everyone, including fully vaccinated individuals, wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas with substantial and high transmission. CDC is also recommending universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.”

Since this statement was issued, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker mandated masks in all PreK - 12 schools on August 4th. His statement is copied below.

“In preparation for the start of the upcoming school year and in response to the highly contagious Delta variant, all students, teachers, and staff at pre-kindergarten - 12th grade schools and daycares will be required to wear masks regardless of vaccination status, effective immediately. This guidance is in line with recommendations from the CDC.”

An important part of health and wellness is mental health, which requires that attention be paid to a student’s social and emotional well-being. The way that social and emotional issues are expressed in a young child may be very different from the way these issues are expressed in an adolescent. During the summer months and throughout the 2021-2022 school year, the Richland County School District has the goal of providing specific training on this topic to all faculty and staff that work directly with students.

In order for students to thrive in school, they must feel safe and that they belong. Through the district’s and each individual school’s improvement efforts, this will be a priority for this school year and coming school years. Just as COVID-19 impacted students differently academically, it has also impacted students differently in social and emotional ways. The goal for the school

district is to get each student fully engaged in his/her school academically, socially, and emotionally.

Richland County Elementary School

Richland County Elementary School will follow all of the instruction and health and wellness procedures outlined in the sections above. The information described below is intended to be specific for RCES and help parents and students have a better understanding of the day to day operations of the school.

Preschool

- RCES Preschool will align with the Richland County Elementary School Opening Plan unless otherwise noted below.
- In-person learning is the priority and remote learning is only available to a student during a mandatory quarantine from a public health official.
- Hours of operations:
 - Session 1: 8:00 - 10:30 am (snack provided)
 - Session 2: 12:30 - 3:00 pm (snack provided)
- Busing will be available if needed. Preschool students will adhere to the district transportation health and safety guidelines.
- Based on the most recent guidelines from ISBE and IDPH, masks will be required for preschool. Staff will continue to support and assist students in putting masks on if needed.
- A Back to School event for Preschool is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, August 12, from 4:30 - 6:00 pm (preschool students only).
 - Students are encouraged to attend with parents only and come meet their classroom teacher.
 - Parents will be contacted to schedule a specific time to attend the Back to School event.

Back to School Event

- Back to School Night for Kindergarten - 5th Grade will be on Monday, August 16th from 5:00 - 7:30 pm.
 - Parents will receive a postcard with specific details related to their child's classroom and instructions on how to schedule a 15 minute block of time to attend Back to School Night. This will allow for greater social distancing.
- Students are encouraged to attend, but will be limited to one adult/guardian.

Arrival and Dismissal

- The school day will begin at 8:10 am and end at 3:10 pm. Bus riders will be dismissed first, beginning at 2:55 pm. All other students will be dismissed at 3:10 pm.
- Bus Riders
 - At the beginning of the school day, buses will be unloaded at Exits 2 & 3. Students will report to their classroom upon arrival.
 - At the end of the school day, bus riders will be dismissed at 2:55 pm to begin boarding their bus.
- Non-Bus Riders
 - Students will enter Exit 1 or 12 and report to their classroom. Exit 5 will not be used for non-bus riders to enter the building.
 - At the end of the school day non-bus riders will use Exit 1 and 12.
- Breakfast will be served in the dining hall from 7:00 - 7:40 am for those students that arrive by that time. For students that arrive later, a grab and go style breakfast will be served in the pods from 7:55 - 8:10 am.
- If students arrive prior to 7:45 am, they will report to the dining hall and sit at a designated spot to allow for social distancing.
- Handwashing will be required upon arrival to the classroom and throughout the day.
- Parents are encouraged to not arrive at school prior to 2:55 pm. Exit 5 will not be used for student pickup.

Lunch & Breakfast

- Breakfast will be served in the dining hall from 7:00 - 7:40 am. If a student arrives later, he/she may do a “grab and go” breakfast in the pod.
- During lunch, students will be on a rolling schedule, allowing them to eat in the classroom or dining hall depending on the day.
- The dining hall will be utilized according to the current IDPH guidelines.
- Outside seating may be available, weather permitting.
- If students eat in the classroom, thorough cleaning will be done before and after lunch.
- Handwashing will be required before/after lunch and throughout the day.

Daily Educational Program

At this time the daily educational program will be very similar to a pre-COVID-19 program. Students will be attending special classes such as Physical Education, Music, Art, Library, etc. as their individual classrooms are scheduled. Students will also have recess on the playground. With the possibility of changing guidelines from ISBE and IDPH, any modifications to this program will be worked out with RCES teachers and staff and communicated with parents as quickly as possible.

It has been stated previously in this opening plan that every effort will be made to adhere to the current public health guidelines. This is to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. As a result, students and staff should expect some of the common public health measures that were used during the past school year to continue into the 2021-2022 school year. Examples of

these measures include frequent hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, social distancing, use of face coverings, etc.

Richland County Middle School

Richland County Middle School will follow all of the instruction and health and wellness procedures outlined above. The information described below is intended to be specific for RCMS and help parents and students have a better understanding of the day to day operations of the school.

Back to School Events

- Back to School Night for 6th Grade - 8th Grade will be held on Monday, August 16th from 4:30 - 8:00 pm. A time to attend the Back to School Night will be scheduled based on the information below.
 - 6th Grade students and parents: 4:30 - 6:00 pm
 - 7th Grade students and parents: 5:30 - 7:00 pm
 - 8th Grade students and parents: 6:30 - 8:00 pm
- All 6th Grade students are requested to attend the annual 6th Grade Academy on Monday, August 16th from 9:30 - 11:20 am. This will provide students new to RCMS an additional opportunity to become familiar with their teachers and many of the procedures the school uses.

Arrival and Dismissal

- The school day will begin at 8:10 am and end at 3:10 pm.
- Arrival and departure times will be staggered to limit group sizes.
- Arrival Procedures
 - Doors will open at 7:45 am.
 - Students will enter in one of three doors
 - Main Entrance / Cafeteria Doors - Any 6th or 7th grade bus rider and any student who wishes to eat breakfast.
 - Main Entrance - any 8th grade student not wishing to eat breakfast.
 - Exit 11 (by the dumpster) - All non bus riding students. These students have the option of eating breakfast.
 - Upon entry / after breakfast - Students will report to one of three locations:
 - 6th grade - Cafeteria side opposite of trophy case (where breakfast is served).
 - 7th grade - Gym
 - 8th grade - Academic area
- Dismissal Procedures

- RCMS will have a 3:10 pm dismissal schedule. Due to transportation considerations, this process may begin earlier to dismiss students in waves to prevent student gatherings as much as possible.
- Bus riders will be dismissed first and students will be released in three waves.

Lunch & Breakfast

- Breakfast will be provided daily for students. Students will sit in the cafeteria with social distancing guidelines in place. If the designated area in the cafeteria reaches the maximum number, overflow will be on the stage in the gym. Hand sanitizer will be available for students to practice appropriate hand hygiene.
- Lunch periods may be modified to prevent all students from being together in the cafeteria at the same time. Students will travel to designated areas to eat. IDPH guidelines will be followed. Students will practice frequent hand hygiene and use hand sanitizer as needed before lunch procedures.

Daily Educational Program

The daily educational program will more closely resemble a Pre-COVID-19 schedule with some remaining modifications. For example, students will be placed in a modified cohort that will limit possible exposure to transmission of COVID-19. Students will also continue to practice many of the public health measures that were put in place during the 2020-2021 school year. However, students will be issued lockers for use this school year. With the possibility of changing guidelines from ISBE and IDPH, any modifications to this program will be worked out with RCMS teachers and staff and communicated with parents as quickly as possible.

Listed below are a few details related to the daily classes students will take. These details are subject to change based on changes to the guidelines from ISBE and IDPH.

- Physical Education
 - Physical Education will meet every other day.
 - PE uniforms and lockers in the locker room will be issued to students.
 - Weather permitting, Physical Education will be outside as much as possible to allow for social distancing and the removal of masks.
- Library
 - Library services will be provided to students throughout the school day. Students will be allowed to enter the library and check out a maximum of two books at a time.
- Rotation Classes
 - Students will attend their rotation classes for one 9-week term and will rotate to this class at their scheduled time.

It has been stated previously in this opening plan that every effort will be made to adhere to the current public health guidelines. This is to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. As a result, students and staff should expect some of the common public health measures that were used during the past school year to continue into the 2021-2022 school year. Examples of

these measures include frequent hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, social distancing, use of face coverings, etc.

Richland County High School

Richland County High School will follow all of the instruction and health and wellness procedures outlined in the section above. The information described below is intended to be specific for RCHS and help parents and students have a better understanding of the day to day operations of the school.

Back to School Events

- RCHS will host a Back to School Night on Monday, August 16th from 6:00 - 7:30 pm for incoming Freshmen students and any other students new to the high school.
- During the week prior to the first day of school, times will be scheduled to allow any other parents and visitors to view the newly renovated high school facility.

Arrival and Dismissal

- The school day will begin at 8:00 am and end at 3:00 pm.
- Students should plan to arrive no earlier than 7:40 am and classes will begin at 8:00 am.
- Bus Riders
 - Any student that rides a bus to school will be dropped off in the circle drive/bus lane at the north entrance to the school.
 - At the end of the school day, bus riders will be dismissed at 2:55 pm and board their bus in the circle drive/bus lane at the north entrance
- Non-Bus Riders
 - Any student that does not ride a bus should enter the building from the main south entrance.
 - At the end of the school day, any student that does not ride a bus will be dismissed at 3:00 pm.

Breakfast/Lunch

- Breakfast will be available as a “grab and go” in the cafeteria/commons area beginning at 7:30 am. A “second chance” breakfast will be available for a student to grab in the Commons between 1st and 2nd Block classes.
- Lunch will be held after 3rd Block. All Freshmen students have closed campus and must report to the cafeteria during the lunch period.
- Open campus is a privilege available to non-Freshmen students, but may be removed for disciplinary reasons.

Technology for In-Person Instruction

- A chromebook will be provided to each student at the beginning of the school year and students will take these devices home.
- Students will be responsible for lost and/or damaged devices and may purchase an insurance plan to cover these types of expenses.

Daily Schedule/Passing Periods

- The Daily Schedule can be found in the table below
- Passing periods between classes are 7 minutes in length to provide adequate time to get to the next class, use the restroom, etc.

Before School	Students may enter the building at 7:40 am
1st Block	8:00 - 9:12 am
One Tiger Academy	9:19 - 9:49
Second Chance Breakfast	9:49 - 9:59
2nd Block	9:59 - 11:11 am
3rd Block	11:18 - 12:30 pm
Lunch	12:30 - 1:10 pm
4th Block	1:10 - 2:22 pm
One Tiger Extension	2:27 - 3:00 pm

Daily Educational Program

The daily educational program will more closely resemble a Pre-COVID-19 schedule with some remaining public health measures that were put in place during the 2020-2021 school year. With the possibility of changing guidelines from ISBE and IDPH, any modifications to this program will be worked out with RCHS teachers and staff and communicated with parents as quickly as possible

- Physical Education
 - Physical Education courses will include the use of locker rooms and the issuance of PE uniforms.
 - As the weather allows, much of the instruction and activities will be conducted outside to allow for better distancing between students and the removal of masks.
- Library

- Students will have open access to all of the materials in the RCHS Library throughout the school day.
- Students will also have access to digital book resources through the Olney Public Library and the Cloud Library of the Illinois Heartland Library System.
- OCC Courses
 - Students enrolled in courses housed at Olney Central College must adhere to the attendance policies, schedules, and guidelines of that institution.
 - The attendance calendar for OCC may look different from that of RCHS and those students will be expected to attend when their course is in session. The first day of classes at OCC will be August 17th.

It has been stated previously in this opening plan that every effort will be made to adhere to the current public health guidelines. This is to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. As a result, students and staff should expect some of the common public health measures that were used during the past school year to continue into the 2021-2022 school year. Examples of these measures include frequent hand washing, use of hand sanitizer, social distancing, use of face coverings, etc

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is remote learning available for my child this school year?
The priority for the Richland County School District is a return to full in-person instruction for all students. Remote learning is available to students on a very limited basis in accordance with guidelines from the Illinois State Board of Education. These guidelines provide for remote learning only for a short period of time when a student is subject to a mandatory quarantine order from public health officials.
2. Are masks still required in schools?
At this time the use of masks are recommended for all students, staff, and visitors by the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Public Health in K-12 schools and childcare facilities. The Richland County School District will make a determination on a week by week basis on mask requirements. If current conditions in Richland County are in the Critical Risk (Red) or High Risk (Orange) category, masks are required for all students, staff, and visitors. If current conditions in Richland County are in the Medium Risk (Yellow) or Low Risk (Green) category, masks are recommended but not required.
3. Will my child still need to quarantine if he/she is exposed to a positive COVID-19 case?
The COVID-19 pandemic had subsided in recent months, but with new variants of the virus it has seen a resurgence as the new school year approaches. Since the possibility of spread and an outbreak does still exist, isolation of infected individuals and quarantine of close contacts is still necessary. The link below provides additional details about quarantine requirements in schools.

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IDPH-School-FAQs.pdf>
4. Is the school resuming a regular dismissal schedule?
Yes. Each school will resume a regular dismissal schedule at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year.
5. Will the COVID vaccine be required for students?
At this time there is no state mandate for the COVID-19 vaccination to attend school. There are several different vaccinations that are required for school attendance and they can be found using the link below.

<https://dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/publications/minimum-immunization-requirement-s-entering-child-care-facility-or-school-illinois-fall-2020.pdf>

6. Will parents be required to self-certify each morning that their children are symptom free or will symptom screening be completed when students enter the school building?
It is no longer a requirement to conduct symptom screening each day. Whether it is COVID-19, influenza, or some other illness, if a person feels ill he/she should stay home.