



January 14, 2021

Dear RCS Families,

This communication serves to provide our school community with the most current information as it relates to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) updated guidance for in-person instruction. Student-specific information, such as daily schedules, will be provided within the next week.

TIMELINE

As you may be aware, the goal of MDHHS is to have all Michigan school districts offer an in-person learning option for students no later than March 1. We are excited to welcome students back to the buildings by cohorts using the following timeline.

- Jan. 25: Elementary and some special education populations
- Feb. 1: Middle school
- Feb. 8: High school

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

In order to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19, processes and mitigation protocols remain in place in our buildings. To remind children of what to expect when they return to their home school, we encourage families to watch the following video that was created by RCS students for RCS students. To view the video, go to: <https://vimeo.com/464267617>.

In case you missed it, RCS mascots also joined together to share important messages—wear a mask, wash hands, and physical distance! That video can be accessed by going to: <https://vimeo.com/466733761>.

VACCINE

The Oakland County Health Division (OCHD) is asking residents to remain patient during this time due to the overwhelming demand for the COVID-19 vaccine. The health division has scheduled more than 17,000 first- and second-dose appointments through the end of February. Minimal vaccine supply, however, limits the ability to schedule appointments for eligible workers and Oakland County residents who are still waiting to be vaccinated.

Families can use the newly launched “Save Your Spot” link on the Oakland County website by going to <https://oaklandcountyvaccine.com/> to help officials identify individuals who are eligible and interested in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. For anyone unable to complete the form, the upgraded health hotline is available by calling (800) 848-5533.

TERMINOLOGY

Before we highlight actions taken by the district to slow the spread of COVID-19 as they relate to the MDHHS guidance, it may be helpful to review some of the commonly used terms.

- **In-person learning:** Face-to-face instruction where students and teachers are together in a school building.
- **Remote learning environment:** A temporary distance learning environment that is used when in-person learning is not feasible, such as with high risk-level determinations.
- **Hybrid learning model:** Students are divided into cohort groups, with some cohorts attending school in-person and the other cohorts learning asynchronously at home. This is a short-term solution to acclimate students to the buildings and decrease density in schools.
- **Cohorts:** Students joined together to serve as a group.
- **Synchronous online learning:** Live instruction or interaction that takes place in real time with a teacher. RCS is using this terminology to differentiate between online instruction and in-person learning.
- **Asynchronous learning:** Materials are provided by the teacher, and requirements are satisfied by the student at their own pace using an independent, flexible schedule.
- **RCS Virtual Campus:** A full-time, online educational platform that promotes a joint partnership between the student, teacher, and family. K-12 students learn remotely throughout the semester, trimester or year. The RCS Virtual Campus is staffed by RCS educators and replicates the traditional classroom, while providing scheduling flexibility.

RESPONSE TO MDHHS INFECTION CONTROL RECOMMENDATIONS

Our families can be assured that we take the MDHHS recommendations for in-person learning seriously, and we are doing all we can to keep our children and adults as safe as possible. In addition to mask wearing, frequent hand washing, and social distancing, the guidance also emphasizes the following. (This guidance has been numbered for ease in reviewing processes.)

1. When feasible, assign children to cohort groups and limit interactions to their cohorts to reduce the number of contacts.

Initially, RCS will be using a hybrid learning model with cohort groups to decrease density in buildings by 50 percent. The hybrid model allows for greater risk mitigation; provides smaller groups to manage movement; acclimates specific learners first; and re-establishes in-person learning routines and relationships.

Students are divided into cohorts, with some attending school in-person and the others learning asynchronously at home, according to the weekly hybrid schedules.

Cohorts decrease opportunities for exposure to or transmission of the virus; facilitate more efficient contact tracing in the event of a positive case; and allow for targeted testing, quarantine, and isolation of a single cohort in the event of a positive case.

2. Keep individuals six feet from one another to the extent feasible, with creative use of school spaces to facilitate distancing.

Spacing. Students, teachers, and work stations are spaced as far apart as possible, and work stations face the same direction.

Movement. Arrows and floor markers are used to: direct one-way traffic in hallways that allow for it; direct two-way traffic when necessary; and identify ascent/descent staircases if two are accessing the same area. Staggered release times for classes reduce the number of students in hallways, and student lockers are not used to avoid unnecessary hallway interactions. Water fountains are covered and unavailable, but touchless water-filling stations are accessible.

Gatherings. State requirements limit large-scale interactions and groupings for cafeterias, assemblies and extracurricular activities. Recess is conducted outside whenever possible with appropriate distancing and cohorting of students to limit interactions. Field trips will continue to be held virtually.

Food service. Touchless food distribution and prepackaged meals limit contact.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). All students in transitional kindergarten through 12th grade are required to wear a face covering in the classroom and on a school bus. This includes general and special education students.

Students may use their own homemade facial covering (which must be washed daily) or disposable level-one, basic surgical masks, which must be disposed of at the end of each day. RCS will supply masks for those who do not have one.

Exceptions are made for anyone who cannot medically tolerate a facial covering, is incapacitated, or is unable to remove the covering without assistance. If a student or staff member requires an exemption, he or she must provide documentation from a qualified medical professional capable of providing the appropriate diagnosis or medical necessity. The documentation should be provided to the building administrator.

3. Provide adequate hand sanitizing supplies and reinforcing proper handwashing techniques.

RCS provides supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors to include, but not limited to: soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for safe use, paper towels, tissues, and signs reinforcing handwashing techniques. Hand sanitizer must be used before entering buses. Students have class-time for added handwashing.

Cleaning protocols include attention to frequently touched surfaces every four hours, cleaning all surfaces with an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution, classroom cleaning after each class ends, and disinfecting buses before and after every transit route. Electrostatic sprayers can be used to thoroughly sanitize hard-to-reach or contaminated surfaces.

4. Improve air ventilation.

Weather-permitting, classroom doors and windows can remain open. Bus drivers are encouraged to keep windows open while the vehicle is in motion, if weather-appropriate and safe.

RCS enlisted a professional testing and air balancing firm to complete a districtwide HVAC assessment that ensured proper air flow and increased the circulation of fresh, outdoor air in each building. Filters and settings have been updated in renovated buildings to maximize ventilation and reduce the concentration of airborne contaminants. Ongoing actions include: more frequent equipment inspections, increased equipment runtime and closer monitoring of air flow and timely adjustments.

5. Have staff and students conduct self-screenings for symptoms at home every day before going to school.

RCS students and staff are encouraged to cooperate with the OCHD screening protocols. Students use a daily screening through StudentVUE and ParentVUE. Employees use the Clear to Go! app.

Each day, individuals should be assessed for illness based on symptoms including: fever (100.4 degrees or greater), chills, sore throat, headache, cough, muscle or body aches, diarrhea (two times in 24 hours), extreme fatigue, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, new loss of taste/smell, nausea or vomiting (two times in 24 hours), or congestion or runny nose.

6. Ensure school plans are in place in coordination with local health departments if there are any positive COVID-19 tests.

RCS cooperates with the OCHD when a confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified. We collect contact information for any close contacts of the affected individual from two days before he or she showed symptoms to the time when he or she was last present at the school.

If a teacher is quarantined or isolated and is feeling well, he or she may be able to teach remotely on a situational basis. If a teacher is absent or sick, a substitute will be needed.

7. Have staff and students who either test positive or are close contacts of those who test positive follow the guidance issued by MDHHS as well as local health departments. Anyone who is considered a close contact of someone who tests positive but does not have symptoms should quarantine for at least 10 days under CDC guidance.

The RCS school nurse works in cooperation with families and administrators to provide proper isolation and quarantine guidance. COVID-19 testing is not mandatory; however, without confirmatory results, a student or staff member may be subject to isolation or quarantine, depending on circumstances, as outlined in the [OCHD guidance](#). Results of confirmatory molecular PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests are currently taking two to three days. If a student or staff member tests positive via a rapid antigen test and has symptoms, the OCHD may open a case depending on circumstances. We highly recommend that individuals voluntarily take a PCR test if there is any potential COVID-19 concern.

According to the OCHD, quarantine keeps someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. It helps prevent the spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are infected with a virus. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow directions from the health department.

Students and staff may be asked to quarantine if there has been close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual, including these scenarios: been within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more; provide care at home to someone who is sick with COVID-19; had direct physical contact with the person (hugged or kissed them); shared eating or drinking utensils; sneezed, coughed, or came in contact with the person's respiratory droplets.

If an individual quarantines, it is recommended that they stay home for at least 14 days after the last contact with a person who has COVID-19. Even if they test negative for COVID-19 or feel healthy, they should continue to stay home (quarantine) since symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after exposure. Isolation refers to an infected individual who may be asked to distance from others for 10 days to avoid spread of the virus.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- [Rochester Community Schools website](#)
- [MDHHS guidelines for operating schools safely](#)
- [OCHD weekly COVID-19 report for Oakland County schools](#)
- [Oakland County dashboard](#)
- [Michigan dashboard](#)
- [Michigan school-related outbreak reporting](#)