



We're Back Together!

BACK TO SCHOOL

FALL 2021 WELCOME GUIDE



A MESSAGE

from Dr. Kenneth Bradshaw,
Superintendent of Schools



We're back together for Fall 2021! The start of the school year is an exciting time for us all. Our students, teachers and staff anticipate this time together to learn through prepared lessons and shared experiences. The last year has taught us how to embrace change, adapt to the challenges ahead and be resilient to rise through the toughest of times. The spirit of our school system through the tests of the pandemic is reassuring as we embark on the journey ahead for the 2021-2022 school year. And, yes, we are stronger together!

Our students and families will see the impact of more personalized learning, feel the growth and support of strong social emotional learning enhancements and sense the progress as we launch our system wide 1:1 technology initiative. This school year promises to be one that makes our students, staff and school system even stronger. Many of our parents and community stakeholders have questions about the return to school and my goal is to ensure that our return is a positive experience for our families and community.

This guide contains information about our 2021-2022 Back to School plans. The guide highlights our school system COVID-19 safety protocols, tips for preparing your family for back to school and some helpful checklists. If you need additional information or have specific questions, please reach out to your school. Thank you for your support of our students, teachers, schools and school system!

Let's have a phenomenal school year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Bradshaw". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline.



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SEE YOU IN CLASS!

Richmond County Schools will offer full day in-person instructional programming to all students 5 days a week, on all its campuses.

Early Education and Elementary students will be on campus **5 days a week for a full day of in-person instruction.**

Middle and High School students will be on campus **5 days a week for a full day of in-person instruction.** Students will change from one classroom to another to see all of their teachers.

Check with your student's school to explore after school programming options.

START DATES:

August 5th:

Elementary Schools (Pre K - 5th Grade)

August 9th:

K-8 Schools, Middle Schools, High Schools, eSchool



WHAT'S NEW?

Richmond County Schools will return to a regular school day in August. Students will come back to new and improved programs and services to better serve our students.

LEARNER SUPPORTS

- More opportunities for one-on-one tutoring and targeted tutoring support
- Personalized learning paths to support individualized learning
- New exciting digital content and instructional resources for all
- Increased course offerings for secondary students for enrichment and credit recovery
- Rollout of district 1:1 technology initiative
- K-3 phonics to support reading
- Updated K-5 mathematics instructional resources

STUDENT WELLNESS AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENT GROUPS

- More mental health services will be available for students, such as one-on-one counseling, school-wide wellness campaigns, training for positive school culture, and crisis management
- More staff will be available to connect families with resources and provide ongoing support
- More direct services will be offered for students with learning differences and disabilities



A DAY ON CAMPUS

Spending a day on campus will look and feel very similar to what school was like before the pandemic, but with a few extra precautions to make sure students can learn and play both safely and comfortably.



TRANSPORTATION

School bus transportation to and from campuses will be available and will follow all public health and safety guidelines. **Due to U.S. Department of Transportation mandates, drivers and passengers are required to wear masks on all RCSS school buses.**



RECESS/GYM CLASSES

Students will be able to use playground equipment during recess and enjoy sports during gym classes following the latest public health and safety guidelines.



LUNCH/MEALS

Breakfast will be provided to students in the morning and lunch will be served in the cafeteria. Students will be able to eat meals with friends following the latest public health and safety guidelines.



AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Schools may offer high quality, safe, and supervised academic, enrichment, and recreation programs from the end of the school day until 6 p.m. Programs will offer in-person enrichment activities in four areas of engagement with opportunities for students to learn and thrive physically and mentally, focusing on academic, physical, creative, and social and emotional learning. For more information on how to participate, please call your school.



ATHLETICS

We are excited to continue our normal sports and team schedule! Our athletes will learn the skills they need for their journey in a post-secondary school/career.

OUR COMMITMENT TO SAFETY

We want all our students to learn in a safe and healthy environment, which is why Richmond County Schools are committed to maintaining public health and safety guidelines.

GUIDANCE FROM HEALTH OFFICIALS

RCSS will continue to adhere to the most recent COVID guidelines issued by the Georgia Department of Public Health (GADPH) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

ROBUST SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Robust safety protocols are in place at school campuses and RCSS facilities, including needed personal protective equipment, frequent disinfecting, and hand washing.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Increased staffing to effectively clean and disinfect schools.

HYGIENE

Restrooms and handwashing sinks in classrooms are stocked with soap and paper towels. Hand sanitizer stations are available in locations throughout all school campuses.

VACCINATIONS

RCSS encourages students ages 12 and older, staff and family members to receive vaccinations through GAPDH, AU Health, or the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program.





STAYING SAFE

HOW CAN I BE SURE MY STUDENTS WILL BE SAFE AT SCHOOL?

1

FACE MASKS

Face masks will be encouraged and available for all students and staff, consistent with CDC recommendations.

2

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Physical distancing will be in place when possible.

3

HAND WASHING

Hygiene will be prioritized. Soap will be available at all sinks and hand sanitizer stations will be placed throughout all schools.

4

CLEANING

Our custodial staff has been trained and our schools have supplies to disinfect high-touch areas regularly.

5

COVID-19 TASK FORCE

Protocols for positive cases and contact tracing will continue.

6

VACCINATIONS

All students ages 12 and older are encouraged to make vaccine appointments at the most convenient location.

BACK TO SCHOOL

CHECKLIST

You can make sure everyone is prepared and ready for the start of school by following the steps below.

- Enroll in and update your contact information in Parent Portal**
This is a great tool for parents and guardians to get in touch with their principal, see their child's grades, and access a number of other resources! You can reach out to your local school or visit www.rcboe.org/parentportal for support on signing up.
- Practice New Routines**
Routines like getting up and getting dressed on time, wearing their mask correctly, eating on a regular schedule, and getting comfortable around other adults and children are all important parts of the transition back
- Bring a Water Bottle**
Water fountains will still be turned off at all schools, so make sure your student brings a water bottle with them. If they do not bring their own water bottle, water will still be available to students on request.
- Make sure your student has a clean face mask to bring to campus.**
Due to U.S. Department of Transportation mandates, drivers and passengers are required to wear masks on all RCSS school buses. If a student needs a mask, one will be provided. Alternative protections may be followed for students with disabilities or those needing accommodations.
- Vaccinations for all eligible family members.**
Vaccinations have been proven safe and effective for anyone age 12 and older. Vaccines are an important part of protecting yourself and others. While vaccines are not required for staff or students, we strongly encourage all eligible community members to get the COVID-19 vaccine.





F.A.Q.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How will this school year be the same as pre-pandemic school?

This school year will feel similar to pre-pandemic school in many ways! All students will have access to a full day of school and enrichment activities. Middle and high school students will be able to change classes taught by in-person teachers. The majority of students and staff will be back on campus.

Why has Richmond County decided to open up school for full days of instruction?

The 2020-2021 school year has shown us that our high standards of health and safety practices and partnership with DPH slow the spread of the virus in schools. More people are being vaccinated and health authorities tell us conditions will improve with diligence. Schools across the country are opening for full, in-person instruction in the Fall. We continue to monitor the status of variants of the virus and vaccine eligibility for young children.

My child is nervous or hesitant about returning to a full day of in-person programming. How can I help them prepare for this change in routine?

Children and adults may feel scared, confused or anxious because of the impact of the pandemic. Practicing routines early and often is very important. If a child is experiencing other mental health challenges, families may contact their local principal or school site administrator or request services from school site providers and local community agencies.



PARENT PORTAL

The school system and schools use the information in Parent Portal to send email, phone calls and text messages to families. Information from the Parent Portal is used to communicate updates in student and school status and provide emergency notifications. Parent Portal also allows you to review your child’s schedule, attendance and report card.

rcboe.org/parentportal



REGISTRATION CENTRAL

If your child is attending a Richmond County school for the first time, welcome! Our school system has an easy, secure, online system for parents and legal guardians to register your child. Students new to Richmond County Schools, including transfers from in-state and out-of-state schools should complete the online registration first. If you would prefer to register in-person, please call your child’s school to schedule an appointment. You can locate your zoned school at <https://rcboe.info/FindYourBusStop> by inputting your address.

rcboe.org/registration



