



## **RICH TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 227**

20550 South Cicero Avenue  
Matteson, Illinois 60443

708-679-5800 \* [www.rich227.org](http://www.rich227.org)

March 6, 2021

Dear Rich Township Families,

I hope this message finds you and your family well. As we approach the one-year mark of the pandemic, I want to thank our students, parents and staff for your continued support and flexibility throughout this unparalleled, global event. I am pleased with the progress we have made up to this point and am excited for what the future holds. It was a true collaborative effort in returning some of our students to school for in-person classes and I am grateful that we are able to offer this opportunity to our young adults. We will continue this journey together to eventually return all of students to classes, when it is safe to do so. Again, thank you for your continued partnership and unwavering support.

Read more to learn important information regarding parent-teacher conferences, new grading information and more. Please read the following communication in its entirety for additional updates.

[Click here to watch the weekly video message.](#)

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

**Parents:** Beginning **Monday, March 8**, you will be able to register for your appointment slots for parent-teacher conferences. The conferences will be virtual, and each time slot is 10 minutes. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled to take place on **Thursday, March 18 from 5:30 pm to 8:00 pm** and **Friday, March 19 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm**. Click on the link below to reserve your spot.

[Click here to schedule your appointment.](#)

[Click here to view Parent-Teacher Conference Sign Up Instructions](#)

### **Parent University**

The district will hold its Parent University virtually this year on **Saturday, March 27 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm**. The theme will be “Empowering Parents During a Pandemic.” Session topics will include *Bridging COVID-19 Academic Losses* and *Instructional Technology*.

[Click here to register for Parent University](#)

The deadline to register is **Monday, March 22**. The Zoom link will be sent to parents who have RSVP'd after registration closes.

### **Semester 2 Grading**

We are modifying the communication of progress reports and report cards due to the shift to cumulative grading. Just like first semester, second semester will follow a cumulative grading model. This means there will be no grades assigned to third or fourth quarters. The grade reported will be in Semester 2. In the past, there were deadlines for grades and teachers verified the grades at the end of the quarter. The grade term started for the next quarter. Now that we are cumulative, there is no "stop" for grades and by the time the communication reaches home, the grades may have already changed.

In order to accurately convey the grades, **ALL** grade reporting will be communicated through PowerSchool. PowerSchool is our online platform that tracks your student's grades and attendance in real-time. The standard third quarter grade, fourth quarter progress report, and fourth quarter grade will not be mailed home. Instead, you will be receiving a reminder letter to check your student's progress in their courses using PowerSchool in order to assure that you are seeing the most accurate, up-to-date grade as possible.

In addition, there has been a new grading system put in place where the lowest grade a student can receive is 50%. Zeros will no longer be used in the gradebook; instead, a 50% grade along with a "missing" indicator will be put in the system until the student submits the assignment or assessment.

If you are in need of any assistance to obtain your account information to create your parent account that is linked to your student's account, please send an email to [technology@rich227.org](mailto:technology@rich227.org) with the subject: **PowerSchool Parent Account Information**. A representative from the technology department will provide you with the support needed within 24 hours.

### **Graduation**

Due to COVID-19 restrictions in place and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) guidelines, the district will not be able to hold its traditional ceremony for the Class of 2021 at the Tinley Park Convention Center as we have in the past years.

The district has decided to hold off on communicating plans for the Class of 2021 graduation until after the March 16 board meeting. More information regarding graduation, including the RSVP link, will be forthcoming in the next few weeks.

### **FAFSA**

Beginning with the 2020-21 academic year, state law requires all Illinois public high school seniors to complete either the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid (Alternative Application) as

a requirement to receiving a high school diploma. FAFSA helps students secure funds to support their post-secondary endeavors.

This new requirement ensures students have a chance to discover what resources are available to fund their next steps after high school. Completing the FAFSA or Alternative Application counts as an automatic application for a variety of financial aid resources including scholarships offered at many institutions. Financial aid obtained through the FAFSA can also pay for technical or vocational school.

FAFSA forms must be submitted by **April 30** in order to be eligible to participate in the Class of 2021 graduation ceremony. We recognize that completing the FAFSA can be intimidating. Rich Township High School is ready to support our young adults and families in navigating this process. You may also contact your child's counselor or contact one of our College, Career, Military Liaisons for assistance or more information.

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| Ms. Briana Mathews<br>Bmathews@rich227.org | Mr. Duane Willingham<br>Dwillingham@rich227.org |
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Below you will find links for the FAFSA and the Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid:

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| Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)<br><a href="https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa">https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa</a> | Alternative Application for Illinois Financial Aid <a href="https://studentportal.isac.org/en/alternativeapp">https://studentportal.isac.org/en/alternativeapp</a> |
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If you have any questions or need any support, please do not hesitate to contact one of our post-secondary success team members which includes your child's counselor, College, Career, Military liaison, or transition coordinator.

### **Amazon Site Visit Opportunity**

Any student interested in a career in construction, robotics, information technology, or real estate development will have an opportunity to visit the new *Amazon* site in Matteson! Students will be able to visit the site and interact with the development team and see the progress firsthand. All interested students are encouraged to sign up to participate in this opportunity.

[Click here to sign up](#)

### **Athletics**

We are gearing up to start the Spring season, with Football, Boys Soccer, and Girls Volleyball. Buses are available to pick up remote students to bring them to practices. All practice information can be found by contacting the program coaches:

**Football**

Coach Middlebrook

[cmiddlebrook@rich227.org](mailto:cmiddlebrook@rich227.org)

STEM campus

**Boys Soccer**

Coach Grigsby

[rgrigsby@rich227.org](mailto:rgrigsby@rich227.org)

STEM campus

**Girls Volleyball**

Coach Polensky

[apolensky@rich227.org](mailto:apolensky@rich227.org)

STEM campus

Please contact your campus Athletic Director with any questions or concerns:

Fine Arts and Communications campus: Omari Garrett; [ogarrett@rich227.org](mailto:ogarrett@rich227.org), (708) 679-3159

STEM campus: Keith White; [kwhite@rich227.org](mailto:kwhite@rich227.org), (708) 679-5794

**Transportation**

Information regarding the bus routes is posted on our website. Please refer to the link below for regular updates.

[Click here to view transportation information](#)

Beginning **March 8**, there will be a change in AM pick up and PM drop off times for the following routes:

Consolidated routes:

FAC8, FAC9, & FAC10

Consolidated routes:

STEM3 & STEM4

STEM9 & STEM18

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Ms. Koperski at the Fine Arts and Communications campus at (708) 679-3195 or Ms. Lindholm at the STEM campus at (708) 679-5815.

**Pandemic Electronics Benefits (P-EBT) Information**

The State of Illinois is approved to provide new Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Program (P-EBT) benefits to all eligible Illinois students. Families in our district may qualify for P-EBT

because we are a school that participates in the National School Lunch Program's Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). You do not need to complete an application to receive these benefits. Please note that citizenship status does not affect eligibility.

**What is P-EBT?** The purpose of P-EBT is to provide food assistance to families with students who would have received free or reduced lunch while attending school but are not receiving these meals in school due to COVID-19 restrictions.

**Who is eligible for P-EBT benefits?** All Rich Township School District 227 students are automatically eligible for P-EBT benefits based on the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program that the district qualifies for and participates in. Benefits will be issued based on daily student attendance.

**When will I receive the benefits?** The Department of Human Services should begin issuing **new** P-EBT cards to all known eligible students in March 2021. Please note that all eligible students will receive benefits for all eligible school days, back to the beginning of this school year.

If you have any questions, including your current mailing address on file, please reach out to Betsy Williams at [bwilliams@rich227.org](mailto:bwilliams@rich227.org) or call 708-679-5728.

### **Food Service**

The Food Service Department is currently providing **seven days of FREE breakfast and lunch for any child up to the age of 18 years. Families do not have to live in the community or attend the district schools.** There are no forms to fill out and no income requirements. This program is provided to **ALL** families regardless of their financial situation.

Due to our status as a Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) district, **ALL STUDENTS now qualify for FREE BREAKFAST AND LUNCH DAILY** at school. If your student has selected the Hybrid Learning Model and is attending school in-person, please encourage them to take advantage of the free meals offered to them on these days. We also want to remind parents that meals for alternate days of remote learning can be picked up at the Curbside Meals Distribution Program on a weekly basis. Please see the information below for the scheduled distribution days and times.

Parents may pick up meals without children being present. Meals are distributed through contactless drive through curbside distribution at both the **STEM and Fine Arts and Communications** campuses.

Please note that the location of drive through pick-up station at the STEM campus has been moved to the back of the school building. Vehicles should still line up in the front circle drive on distribution days, and security will direct the traffic, allowing only a few cars at a time to proceed to the back of the school.

***Distribution Days and Hours in March:***

***Monday, March 8 - 10 am – 1 pm and 5 pm - 7 pm***

***Wednesday, March 10 - 10 am – 1 pm***

***Monday, March 15 - 10 am – 1 pm and 5 pm - 7 pm***

***Wednesday, March 17 - 10 am – 1 pm***

***Monday, March 22 - 10 am – 1 pm and 5 pm - 7 pm***

***Wednesday, March 24 - 10 am – 1 pm***

***Monday, March 29 - 10 am – 1 pm and 5 pm - 7 pm***

***Wednesday, March 31 - 10 am – 1 pm***

The next scheduled date for meal distribution is **Monday, March 8.**

***Locations:***

*Fine Arts and Communications – 5000 Sauk Trail – Richton Park, IL*

*STEM Campus – 3600 W. 203<sup>rd</sup> - Olympia Fields, IL*

For more information, visit [www.rich227.org](http://www.rich227.org), call 708-679-5728, or email [bwilliams@rich227.org](mailto:bwilliams@rich227.org)

**WHY PICK UP FREE MEALS FOR YOUR CHILDREN?**

- **Healthy meals help fuel student learning.**
- **It is safe and convenient - curbside grab and go!**
- **Meals are varied and provide healthy daily nutrition.**
- **Save time and money on grocery shopping and preparing meals.**
- **Any child up to 18 years of age are eligible for free meals all school year.**
- **Your participation helps support and strengthen the school nutrition program for all children.**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

Thank you for taking the time to read this important information. Feel free to reach out to the appropriate person if you have additional questions.

**You may also follow us on social media:**

- Facebook: @District227 @richtownships
- Twitter: @District227 @DrJohnnieThomas @richtownships
- Instagram: @district227\_ @richtownships
- Superintendent's Message on our district website:  
<http://www.rich227.org/SuperintendentsMessage.aspx>

Your continued support of Rich Township High School District 227 is appreciated and vital to ensure student success.

Respectfully,

Dr. Johnnie Thomas  
Superintendent