



MCPS ATHLETICS

RETURN to R.A.I.S.E.

Update—April 30, 2021

Dear MCPS Community:

We appreciate the ongoing efforts across the high school and middle school programs to implement our [Return to R.A.I.S.E. Strategic Plan](#) protocols and procedures. We look forward to building on this momentum and finishing the school year strong! Following is our weekly update, including information regarding mask protocols, quarantine and vaccination guidance, gathering sizes, spring sports and winter engagement competition guidelines, and spring sports schedules.

Mask Protocols

On Tuesday, April 27, the County Council passed an updated [Montgomery County Board of Health Regulation](#), which references [guidelines](#) from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The regulation states that *face masks/coverings are not required for vigorous outdoor exercise during high heat and humidity because it may lead to a safety risk.*

As a result, MCPS will utilize existing [heat/temperature guidelines](#) to implement this exception. If the heat index is 80 degrees or higher, masks may be removed (applies to competition and practices). Weather conditions for the [20877 zip code](#) according to the official National Weather Service/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NWS/NOAA) are used to make this determination.

For outdoor sports, while masks may be removed during high heat and humidity, masks must be worn at all other times (for instance on sidelines, in dugouts, and other times when not engaged in competition or vigorous practice activities).

For indoor sports, masks shall be worn at all times, except for wrestling and gymnastics as noted below (per AAP guidelines).

- Wrestling – during wrestling matches, a mask could become a choking hazard and is discouraged unless an adult coach or official is closely monitoring for safety purposes.
- Gymnastics – masks shall not be worn while on apparatuses.

Quarantine and Vaccination Guidance

On Thursday, April 29, MCPS released [updated guidance](#) regarding quarantine and isolation periods and fully vaccinated exposure exemptions. MCPS Athletics will operate under this guidance.

Gathering Sizes

Gathering sizes have increased to 50 participants indoors and 100 participants outdoors. Additionally, MCPS applied for and was approved for an increased gathering size for 210 participants for track and field meets. Therefore all spring sports and winter engagement opportunities will be able to occur with the full roster of coaches, student-athletes, and support personnel.

Spring Sports and Winter Engagement Competition Guidelines

Competition guidelines for spring sports and winter engagement opportunities are available [here](#). These guidelines are a supplement to the [Return to R.A.I.S.E. Strategic Plan](#). All sports and activities will comply with the latest Montgomery County [Board of Health Regulation](#), the MPSSAA [Winter](#) and [Spring Sports Bulletins](#), and MCPS guidelines that have been established through the COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics. Two spectators will be allowed per student-athlete, if facilities allow, per the approved [spectator plan](#) for MCPS Athletics.

Spring Schedules

Following roster day and two weeks of the spring season, the competition status of teams has been confirmed. As a result, schedules for spring sports have been updated and are available on [countysportszone.com](#). Please be sure to visit the website, as several changes were made to accommodate all schools and programs in order to maximize participation opportunities.

Winter Engagement

MCPS Athletics will provide limited winter engagement opportunities for returning seniors only. A preliminary overview of the engagement plan is available [here](#). Interested returning seniors, who were on a high school roster during the 2019-20 school year, will receive more information directly from their coach. In order to participate in in-person engagement, registration must be completed in [ParentVue](#) by **May 3, 2021**.

Middle School Athletics

Next week is the final week of the fall season sports of cross country and softball. Registration is still open for the spring season on local school webpages, as well as the [Middle School Athletics webpage](#). The spring season (boys' & girls' soccer and basketball) will occur May 11-27, 2021. Program offerings continue to be virtual, in-person or hybrid (a combination of in-person and virtual), depending on the availability of coaches and the registration of student-athletes. All in-person programming and activities will continue to occur in alignment with guidelines and protocols approved by the COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics. More information is available on the [COVID-19 Athletics Information webpage](#). Specific questions should be directed to your school's [athletic coordinator](#) (AC) or coach.

Collective Commitment

We must continue to demonstrate a collective commitment to our [Return to R.A.I.S.E. Strategic Plan](#) COVID-19 protocols and procedures. Student-athletes must do their part and hold each other accountable, coaches must enforce expectations and support student-athletes, and athletics specialists, athletic coordinators, and other staff members need to support the overall administration and operations of the program. Additionally, we need the continued assistance of the community to promote safety protocols throughout the spring.

Communication and Resources

Our COVID-19 Task Force for MCPS Athletics will continue to evaluate and implement the latest safety measures. Updates and guidance from the Task Force will continue to be provided on a weekly basis through each school's athletic department and are available on the [COVID-19 Athletics Information webpage](#). The [Return to R.A.I.S.E. Strategic Plan](#) provides operating procedures and safety protocols that are being utilized; the plan has been updated for the spring season and winter engagement opportunities.

We appreciate the collective commitment to health and safety by the MCPS community. Specific questions should be directed to your school's [athletics specialist \(AD\)](#), [athletic coordinator](#) (AC), or coach.

Montgomery County Public Schools