

Attention: Student COVID-19 recommendations

All of us here on the staff are incredibly grateful and excited to be able to come back to school in person. The unbelievable job that our school's administration has done over the past weeks and months must be lauded. If any of you come across Mr. Coco, Dr. Nealey, Ms. Haire, or anyone else in the administration, please thank them for all that they have done to make school even possible.

We support all of the common-sense steps that the school has already taken to help prevent the spread of the virus, from wearing masks and logging into Ascend to the ten-minute breaks between classes, giving teachers the time necessary to coordinate students who can not come to class. However, as the school continues to stay open, and as we all continue to learn and remain safe, we would like to offer some helpful advice for ways that the school might be able to improve.

Being unable to enter the buildings until 7:55 in the morning may not be the best policy. In fact, we think that it may have the opposite effect of what was intended. Students gather outside the building in great clumps or in each other's cars before all going into the building at the exact same time. The result: more students are gathered in a smaller amount of space. If students were allowed inside whenever they arrive, as has been the policy in years past, there would be less "clumping" and more space to spread out.

Once inside, there are several additional factors at work helping to keep students safe. The new air conditioning system that kills COVID-19 particles in a matter of minutes has helped to prevent any spread of the virus at Prep (as far as we know). Mask requirements are easier to enforce inside with teachers everywhere around the building. Students clean their desks and log into Ascend after answering coronavirus-screening questions.

In between classes, students are once again forced outside. This may not be a great policy for the same reason that not letting students inside in the mornings may not be a great policy. If the inside of the senior high was opened during breaks and people were able to be spread out sitting along the hallways while wearing masks, the rules would be more enforceable and students would be safer. As you can see in the picture below, students are forced to clump together outside, usually not wearing masks and especially on rainy days, because the Dining Commons and hallways are closed off.

Keeping everyone safe and continuing in-person learning are obviously Prep's number one priorities. However, in the eyes of students, some of these policies may not work as well as others. We have to remember that preventing students from sitting next to each other in classrooms will not stop the spread. Nothing will work perfectly, and we will all learn what works along the way, and hopefully, this new perspective will help speed up that process. If anyone in the administration reads this editorial, thank you for all that you do. We know that you are trying your best to do what's right based on the best information you have available. We hope that you do not interpret this as us complaining about what you are doing; we want to help you and help our school do the best that it can.

Students, you can use common sense to discern what is safe and what is not when it comes to COVID-19. We have been in a pandemic for months now. You can make good decisions when it comes to public health. Do not make the situation at school get worse.



Unmasked students stand outside clumped together on a damp day. Photo by Cass Rutledge