

**Henderson County Board of Public Education**  
MINUTES  
September 13, 2021

The Henderson County Board of Public Education held a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, September 13, 2021, beginning at 4:00 pm, at 414 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue West, Hendersonville, NC.

The Board received public comment via email prior to the meeting and during open session. All Public Comment emails were shared with each board member prior to the meeting and then posted to the HCPS website for public access on September 14, 2021. The meeting was accessible to the public via a livestream link at <http://hcpsnc.org/live>.

Board Members Present: Blair Craven, Chairperson; Robert Bridges; Dot Case; Stacey Caskey; Jay Egolf and Kathy Revis.  
Board Member Remote: Amy Lynn Holt, Vice Chairperson.  
Administrative Staff Present: John Bryant, Ed.D., Superintendent; Mr. Scott Rhodes, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Mr. Carl Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer; and Mr. Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer  
Administrative Staff Absent: Wendy Frye, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction; and Mr. Rick Fender; Chief Technology Officer  
Attorney Present: Mr. Chris Campbell  
Board Clerk: Mrs. Stephanie Alfrey

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Blair Craven called the meeting to order at approximately 4:00 pm and led all those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance. Mr. Craven asked for a moment of silence in honor of the twentieth anniversary of September 11. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt joined the meeting via audio at approximately 4:02 pm.

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

Mr. Craven acknowledged receipt of the meeting agenda and asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Robert Bridges moved that the agenda be approved as presented. Seconded by Dr. Kathy Revis. Roll Call vote: Bridges, yes; Case, yes; Egolf, yes; Caskey, yes; Revis, yes; Holt, yes; Craven, yes. (*Unanimously approved.*)

**PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT – HCPS School Mental Health (SMH) Improvement Plan – (Dr. Wendy Frye, Assistant Superintendent, and Mr. Matthew Gruebmeier, Director of Student Services)**

Superintendent John Bryant noted in the absence of Dr. Wendy Frye, he will be presenting for her today. Dr. Bryant said this is the first-year legislation has required a School Mental Health Plan with Board approval. The Board approval is under new business on today’s agenda. He noted this plan is important work that HCPS has been doing for years. The NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI) School Mental Health Improvement Policy is a welcome acknowledgement of the power of supporting the “whole child;” a much anticipated “next step” after so many previous, positive improvements in supporting students and families (School Social Workers, School-Based Therapy and Crisis Services, Youth Mental Health First Aid, Trauma Sensitive Schools); and an opportunity for collaboration with community partners and neighboring school systems. Dr. Bryant spoke of the exceptional work that Matthew Gruebmeier, Director of Student Services, and his team have done to be front runners in the western region of North Carolina.

Mr. Gruebmeier spoke about how the whole child focus approach has been taken in HCPS. The policy from the state is a continuation of work that has already been implemented in HCPS. This policy is an opportunity to continue the work as well as continued collaboration with community partners. Mr. Gruebmeier walked through the background and timeline as follows:

- June 2020, Senate Bill 476, Session Bill 2020-7
- June and July, 2020, HCPS team began work on HCPS Suicide Prevention and Risk Mitigation Protocol
- November 2020, State Board Policy SHLT-003
- May - July, 2021, HCPS school counselors, school social workers, and nurses developed the HCPS plan

- July, 2021: PSUs submitted plans to DPI
- September, 2021: Board Approval Deadline

Mr. Gruebmeier said North Carolina’s initiative to improve school mental health includes first of all a mandate that public schools put all hands-on deck for mental, social and emotional wellness. A positive school climate has the potential to lift the spirits and achievement of all students. A meaningful relationship with a supportive adult is the single most important protective factor when students encounter difficulty. He noted the exact same practices that make for great teaching and learning also promote mental health and wellness for students. Traditional practices, such as welcoming students as they enter our classrooms, help students to learn more, but welcoming rituals also set the stage for students to turn to their teachers when they need help.

Mr. Gruebmeier stated according to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. CASEL states that SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. In the context of school, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) from the North Carolina Healthful Living and Guidance Essential Standards Crosswalk is:

- Illustrating personal responsibility in a variety of settings and situations
- Understanding the relationship between education achievement and career success
- Using effective communication to express and cope with emotions
- Explaining the importance of showing respect for oneself and respect and empathy for others
- Explaining the impact of self-direction, initiative, and self-control on interpersonal relationships
- Using cooperation and communication skills to achieve common goals

Mr. Gruebmeier noted that when students know how to act responsibly, make connections between school and career, communicate especially when communication is difficult, be respectful, be self-directed, and contribute to a team, students, teachers, and schools, schools are more successful and more positive places to be.

He noted since all students are not the same, early intervention is needed to offer additional support for some students. Early invention includes: support for students experiencing difficulty; mental health, social and emotional wellness, substance use; and crisis intervention teams. To that end, all of our schools have Mental Health Leadership Teams, whose task it is to identify students who need more help and build collaborative school teams to provide it. He noted the phrase “Crisis Intervention” may not seem to fit in terms of early intervention. What we have found is that skillful reaction when there is a crisis in our schools or community helps us to support students who may be more vulnerable when there is a student/staff death or other upsetting circumstances.

Mr. Gruebmeier said complying with these new expectations from DPI is easy with so many forward-thinking and collaborative partners. He spoke about the work that started years prior to improve access to school and community-based mental health services. The County Commissioners of Henderson County and this School Board helped the school system to secure school social workers, school-based therapists from Crossnore, and a school-based crisis counselor from Blue Ridge Health. He noted gratitude as well to the School Nurses, School Social Workers, and School Counselors who have been such powerful architects and advocates for safety planning and taking good care of HCPS students returning from hospitalization or crisis. Unfortunately, as the Suicide Prevention Board Resolution at the start of the Board meeting illustrates, youth suicide continues to be a significant and scary issue in our country and community. Mr. Gruebmeier noted the help of our many community partners, including the Health Department, Vaya, Family Preservation Services, the Hope Coalition, and our own Student Services colleagues, we have been successful creating a comprehensive guide to address students experiencing mental illness and/or suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

Mr. Gruebmeier noted the HCPS Suicide Prevention and Risk Protocol is

- All Staff
  - Prevention and Early Identification
  - Referring to School Specialists
- Student Services Staff
  - Assessment
  - Referring to Community Partner Providers
- All Staff

- Follow-up and Continuing Support

He mentioned the protocol is comprised of five sections. Parts one and two help teachers and other school staff create positive environments for students, recognize early warning signs of suicide and refer to school colleagues for extra help. Parts three and four help our Student Services staff assess student risk and refer to crisis centers and other mental health providers. Part five helps every adult in a student's circle to follow up a crisis with care, compassion and continuing support.

Mr. Gruebmeier said the state legislation and state board policy require that Public School Units offer comprehensive training on a variety of student safety and mental health topics, including an overview of mental health as it relates to youth, youth suicide prevention, substance use, teen dating violence, and the prevention of child physical abuse, sexual abuse, and sex trafficking. In addition, state recommendations include additional, specialized training for Student Services personnel on these same topics. The professional development and training plans for HCPS are the following. The required audience is teachers, instructional support personnel, principals, and assistant principals. The topics are youth mental health, suicide prevention, substance abuse, teenage dating violence, child sexual abuse prevention, and sex trafficking prevention. The training is initially six required hours and two hours thereafter. The platform for the training is Vector Solutions Online. Additionally, the training for the Student Services Staff has specialized content and collaboration.

Mr. Gruebmeier noted SEL is helping students to manage school. Students need the tools to be able to meet the high expectations that are set for them. He spoke about the variety of ways referrals are paid for depending on the circumstances.

Mr. Gruebmeier concluded with the School Mental Health Improvement Team Vision:

SMHI Beliefs Statement, HCPS School Mental Health Improvement Sub-Committee, Summer, 2021

“We believe that a student's individual circumstances and family history have a direct bearing on a student's future, as does the student's wellness, available resources, and current academic achievement. Especially because school is often the longest standing and consistent presence in a child's life, effectively supporting the whole child while in school can be essential in helping children to become not only successful students, but also to have meaningful opportunities as adults and parents themselves. Schools and communities wishing to support students must be intentional about helping all staff to teach their content, establish and maintain relationships with students and families, build resilience and capacity in our youth to overcome the barriers to achievement, and collaborate with and care for their colleagues and community partners. By doing so, we envision a community in which more students reach their full potential through educational achievement, demonstrate resilience in the face of adverse experiences, and maintain their health and wellness even in challenging times.”

Dr. Bryant noted one of the strengths is the highly skilled training of the staff. This plan is about the relationships we have in our school communities and helping to overcome and remove barriers for students. He applauded Mr. Gruebmeier, his team, School Social Workers, School Counselors, Classroom Teachers, and everyone supporting this work.

#### BOARD CHAIR OBSERVATIONS

Mr. Blair Craven said he had no observations at this time.

#### BOARD OBSERVATIONS

Board members noted they do not have any observations.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Blair Craven stated that 72 pre-submitted public comments were received for the September 13, 2021 meeting. The breakdown from the pre-submitted public comments was 42 to keep the mask mandate in schools, two to remove mask mandate in schools, 19 in favor of naming the Hendersonville High School auditorium after Tom Orr, two for virtual school, one for vaccine mandate, two noting appreciation to the Board, and one that the Henderson County Health Department is not doing their job. All emails were shared with Board members prior to the meeting and will be posted to the Henderson County Board of Public Education website for public access after the meeting. Mr. Craven noted with approximately 50 public comments each person will have one minute per person in order to stay within the Board policy timeframe. Any HCPS student will be allowed the full three minutes to speak.

Eric Gash spoke about his appreciation of the school staff as well as his support of the Leadership Team and the Board. He talked about Congressman Cawthorn's experience regarding matters of the school system.

Maggie Brindell-Watt said the children need to be unmasked in schools.

Ann Eudy Ferguson spoke in favor of naming the Hendersonville High School Auditorium after Tom Orr.

Aaron Fishler spoke about why the mask mandate needs to continue in the schools.

Sandee Morgan Carpenter spoke in favor of naming the Hendersonville High School Auditorium after Tom Orr.

Heather Reed thanked the Board for requiring masks in school and spoke on why the mask mandate needs to remain in place.

Fletcher Griffith spoke in favor of naming the Hendersonville High School Auditorium after Tom Orr.

John Brandon Olsen spoke about why the mask mandate needs to remain in schools.

Thomas Hill spoke in favor of naming the Hendersonville High School Auditorium after Tom Orr.

Ann Corbin thanked the Board for the mask mandate and asked for continuation of the mask mandate.

Phil Grose III spoke in favor of naming the Hendersonville High School Auditorium after Tom Orr.

Grace Smith, a HCPS student, spoke of why masks should not be required in schools.

Anne Smith, a pediatrician, thanked the Board for the mask mandate and asked for the mask mandate to stay in place.

Katy Gash spoke of all the school staff has been through since the start of the pandemic. She thanked the Leadership Team and School Board for rallying around the school staff.

Barbara Blaine spoke in favor of naming the Hendersonville High School Auditorium after Tom Orr.

Kelly Wiggen spoke about why masks should not be mandatory in schools.

Madison May, a HCPS student, spoke about why masks should not be required in schools as well as noting concerns of failing behind in school if she is required to quarantine.

Karen Lynch Thompson spoke in favor of naming the Hendersonville High School Auditorium after Tom Orr.

Aaron Purcell spoke about why Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) should not be taught in the schools.

Savana Kawell, a HCPS student, talked about why masks should not be required in school.

Mike Kawell spoke about why masks should not be mandated in the schools.

Indian Jackson talked about the need for diversity and inclusion in teaching.

Cortney McCall spoke about the reasons why masks should not be mandatory in the schools.

Beverly Henderson spoke on why parents and children should have the right to choose regarding wearing a mask in schools.

William Lance did not show when his name was called for public comment.

Sheraton Shepherd spoke in favor of naming the Hendersonville High School Auditorium after Tom Orr.

Mark Shepherd spoke in favor of naming the Hendersonville High School Auditorium after Tom Orr.

Jay Carey thanked the Board for their hard decision and for continuing to support the mask mandate.

Norie Sanchez thanked the Board for the difficult decisions made. She asked for the continuation of the mask mandate as well as social distancing.

Beth Campbell spoke on why masks should not be required in schools.

Kathy Yurista talked of the reasons children should have choice regarding wearing masks in school.

Ashley Orr Self spoke in favor of naming the Hendersonville High School Auditorium after Tom Orr. She noted almost 600 people have signed the petition to name the auditorium after Tom Orr.

David Knox did not show when his name was called for public comment.

Carey O'Cain spoke in favor of naming the Hendersonville High School Auditorium after Tom Orr.

Christopher Reed talked about reasons to keep the mask mandate in place.

James Lyon spoke of how the mask mandate in schools is helping small businesses to recoup and recover from the pandemic.

Anthony Catania spoke on why masks should be optional in the schools and not mandatory.

Jon Coulman spoke about why masks should remain mandatory and why all school personnel should be vaccinated.

Mary Beth Johnson spoke of her decision to resign from her teaching position with HCPS.

Heather Hefner spoke about how the rules at school during the pandemic are difficult for some children and how that affects the education of these children.

Ron Boyd spoke in favor of naming the Hendersonville High School Auditorium after Tom Orr.

Janice Parker spoke on why the mask mandate should not be in the schools.

Congressman Madison Cawthorn spoke about the mask mandate from Governor Cooper. He urged the Board to do the right thing regardless of the backlash.

#### CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Meeting Schedule
  - 1. HCBPE Regular Business Meeting [*Tuesday, October 12, 2021, 4:00 p.m., (Boardroom)*]
- B. Minutes
  - 1. August 9, 2021 (*Regular Business Meeting*)
- C. Personnel (*as presented in closed session*)
- D. Student Acceptances/Releases (*as presented in closed session*)
- E. Budget Amendment (*as presented in closed session*)
- F. Duke Energy Carolinas Easement (*as presented in closed session*)
- G. Resolution – Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month

The resolution was read into record by Mrs. Stacey Caskey. Mr. Blair Craven called for a motion to approve the consent agenda with the removal of item E due still being in the interim budget. Mrs. Stacey Caskey made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda with removal of item E. Mr. Jay Egolf seconded the motion. Roll Call vote: Bridges, yes; Case, yes; Egolf, yes; Caskey, yes; Revis, yes; Holt, yes; Craven, yes. (*Unanimously approved.*)

#### OLD BUSINESS

- A. 2021 Spring Policy Updates – (Mr. Carl Taylor, Chief Administrative Officer)
  - 1. Approval – Policy 1510/4200/7270, School Safety
  - 2. Approval – Policy 1610/7800, Professional and Staff Development
  - 3. Approval – Policy 1710/4020/7230, Discrimination and Harassment Prohibited by Federal Law
  - 4. Approval – Policy 2310: Public Participation at Meetings
  - 5. Approval – Policy 2440, Policy Review and Evaluation
  - 6. Approval – Policy 3300, School Calendar and Time for Learning
  - 7. Approval – Policy 3460, Graduation Requirements
  - 8. Approval – Policy 3610, Counseling Program
  - 9. Approval – Policy 3620, Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations
  - 10. Approval – Policy 4040/7310, Staff-Student Relations
  - 11. Approval – Policy 4125, Homeless Students
  - 12. Approval – Policy 4240/7312, Child Abuse and Related Threats to Child Safety
  - 13. Approval – Policy 4335, Criminal Behavior
  - 14. Approval – Policy 4400, Attendance
  - 15. Approval – Policy 5000, Schools and the Community
  - 16. Approval – Policy 6120, Student Health Services

17. Approval – Policy 6320, Use of Student Transportation Services
18. Approval – Policy 7232, Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace
19. Approval – Policy 7510, Leave
20. Approval – Policy 7720, Employee Political Activities
21. Approval – Policy 8310, Annual Independent Audit
22. Approval – Policy 8341, Limited Claim Settlement

Mr. Carl Taylor presented the policies for approval. The Board Members had no questions regarding these policy changes. Mr. Jay Egolf moved that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve policies one through 22 as presented. Mr. Robert Bridges seconded the motion. Roll Call vote: Bridges, yes; Case, yes; Egolf, yes; Caskey, yes; Revis, yes; Holt, yes; Craven, yes. *(Unanimously approved.)*

## NEW BUSINESS

### A. Approval – Current Face Covering Guidance and Policy – (Dr. John M. Bryant, Superintendent)

Superintendent John Bryant noted Board Action on whether to maintain or amend the Board’s current face covering policy as required by S.L. 2021-130. Currently, face coverings must be worn by all students ages 2 and up, all teachers, staff, and adult visitors when indoors at all school locations and all HCPS facilities, unless a legal exception applies. Face coverings are also required while traveling on buses or other group transportation settings. Dr. Bryant requested to present the Return to Learn Update from the Board/Superintendent’s Reports prior to the Board voting on face covering guidance and policy. The agenda was modified without objection from the Board members. After Dr. Bryant presented the Return to Learn update, Mr. Blair Craven noted the approval request is for the continuation of the current face covering guidance as presented. He asked for further Board questions prior to a motion. The Board had no further questions.

Mr. Blair Craven moved that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve the continuation of the current face covering guidance as presented. Mrs. Stacey Caskey seconded the motion. Roll Call vote: Bridges, yes; Case, yes; Egolf, yes; Caskey, yes; Revis, yes; Holt, no; Craven, yes. *(Passes 6 to 1).*

### B. Approval – InkJet Incorporated DBA Community Chemical Contract – (Mr. Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer)

Mr. Bernie Sochia stated that pursuant to board policy 6420, Contracts with the Board, any contract in excess of \$90,000 must be approved by the Board. The InkJet, Inc. dba Community Chemical contract was presented for approval of execution. The contract was awarded to the company after a bid process where the company was the lowest bidder for the sanitization wipes.

Dr. Kathy Revis moved that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve the attached contract with the specified vendor. Ms. Dot Case seconded the motion. Roll Call vote: Bridges, yes; Case, yes; Egolf, yes; Caskey, yes; Revis, yes; Holt, yes; Craven, yes. *(Unanimously approved.)*

### C. Approval – UG Micro Purchasing Threshold Increase – (Mr. Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer)

Mr. Bernie Sochia said the current micro-purchase procurement threshold under the Uniform Guidance for the purchase of goods and services with Federal funds is \$10,000. 2CFR § 200.320 provides school districts the ability to raise, via annual self-certification, the micro-purchase threshold to a “higher threshold consistent with State, local, tribal laws and regulations”. In North Carolina, the legal threshold is \$30,000 for the purchase of goods and \$50,000 for service contracts. With the addition of ESSER I, II, and III to the Federal budget, and the increased number of purchases above the \$10,000 threshold, it is requested that Henderson County Public Schools increase the micro-purchase threshold for the fiscal year 2021-22 to expedite the

purchasing process for such purchases to be more consistent with other funding sources, especially as it relates to our response to Covid-19.

Mr. Robert Bridges moved that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve the resolution authorizing the increase of the micro-purchase threshold for the fiscal year 2021-22 as presented. Mrs. Stacey Caskey seconded the motion. Roll Call vote: Bridges, yes; Case, yes; Egolf, yes; Caskey, yes; Revis, yes; Holt, yes; Craven, yes. *(Unanimously approved.)*

D. Approval – Sole Source – (Mr. Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer)

Mr. Bernie Sochia stated the Office of Budget and Management (OMB) issued new Uniform Guidance Procurement Standards (UG) for local governments that receive and expend federal financial assistance. These new guidelines were effective July 1, 2018. All purchases of goods and services that exceed \$10,000.00 require issuing a bid solicitation using the Uniform Guidance ‘micro-purchase’ procedures. One exception to these new guidelines is for ‘noncompetitive procurement’ which means that the item is only available from a single source provider or that a specific item is necessary for continuity of equipment. Procurement under this exception requires annual NCDPI and local Board approval. Mr. Sochia shared the letters of DPI approval for Curriculum Associates and Securly. He noted the Curriculum Associates was previously presented for Board approval. The current approval for Curriculum Associates is to add an additional funding source.

Dr. Kathy Revis moved that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve the specified vendors as vendor under the sole source exemption guidelines. Ms. Dot Case seconded the motion. Roll Call vote: Bridges, yes; Case, yes; Egolf, yes; Caskey, yes; Revis, yes; Holt, yes; Craven, yes. *(Unanimously approved.)*

E. Approval – HCPS School Mental Health (SMH) Improvement Plan – (Dr. Wendy Frye, Assistant Superintendent)

Dr. John Bryant informed the board of the NC State Board of Education Policy SHLT-003, which says that each K-12 public school unit (PSU) shall adopt and implement a plan for promoting student mental health and well-being and for assessing and improving upon the effectiveness of supports for the mental and social-emotional health and substance use needs of its students and staff by September 15, 2021. Mr. Matthew Gruebmeier shared the details of the SMH Improvement Plan during the program highlight. He noted the plan is reviewed every year and he will verify if Board approval is required each year per the law.

Board Members remarked that Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is not Critical Race Theory (CRT). The pandemic has highlighted the need for SEL among our students. Mr. Craven voiced the need for diversity in our teaching staff to match the diversity of our student population. Upon request of Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt, Mr. Gruebmeier noted the core of the expectations for SEL is the three signature practices, which are; 1. A welcoming ritual so students feel the warmth, affection, and connection with teachers at the beginning of every school day. This welcoming ritual will help the students learn more and help with the speed at which the students form relationships with the teachers 2. To have engaging instruction that will keep students who may be having a mental health issue more engaged in school, which will help them be successful in school and help remove at least one barrier. When students connect with teachers about instruction, the engagement helps form the relationship that will be a protector factor if the student experiences difficulty 3. The interaction will send students away feeling optimistic that they can be successful. Mr. Gruebmeier shared pro-social behaviors are also being taught. These help students to be good at school and to be successful in life. Mrs. Stacey Caskey noted the sample activities she has seen about SEL are similar to Leader in Me and is about good citizenship for the students. The Board directed Mr. Gruebmeier to get information to parents to provide more transparency on the way SEL is incorporated in school through intentional interactions from staff to students. The social and emotional learning from the North Carolina Healthful Living and Guidance Essential Standards Crosswalk is at the root of SEL. Board Members shared appreciation for the work of Mr. Gruebmeier and the Student Services team.

Mr. Jay Egolf moved that the Henderson County Board of Education approve the HCPS School Mental Health Improvement Plan for SY 2021-22. Mrs. Stacey Caskey seconded the motion. Roll Call vote: Bridges, yes; Case, yes; Egolf, yes; Caskey, yes; Revis, yes; Holt, yes; Craven, yes. *(Unanimously approved.)*

F. Discussion – Naming of Facilities Request HHS Auditorium – (Dr. John M. Bryant, Superintendent)

Dr. John Bryant informed the Board that Ashely Orr Self reached out to him in May of 2021 regarding the process of naming a school facility. Over a hundred letters of support to name the Hendersonville High School Auditorium after Tom Orr in addition to the public comments have been received at this time. In addition, an online petition to name the auditorium after Mr. Orr has collected over 550 signatures. The Board discussed facilities within the school system that are named after a person. The Board noted there are numerous teachers who are deserving of a facility to be named for them. While Mr. Orr is deserving of such an honor, the Board would like to follow the official process of naming facilities. Per Board Policy 9300, the process requires the superintendent to “involve the staff and students assigned to the facility and the students’ parents in the process of identifying possible names for a new school facility.” The board requested that Dr. Bryant research additional stakeholders and present a list of names for their consideration if appropriate, before taking any future action on renaming the auditorium.

G. Approval – Resolution authorizing conveyance of real property to the County of Henderson – (Dr. John M. Bryant, Superintendent)

Dr. John Bryant presented the resolution to convey real property to the County of Henderson. The County of Henderson has requested the Board convey to the County certain portions of Edwards Park specifically the following parcels as marked on Exhibit A: a. The 0.63 acre asphalt parking parcel; and b. The 0.05 acre retaining wall parcel. the County has offered, in exchange and consideration for the parcels, to fund the additional costs associated with the Upward Elementary School construction project, said amount not exceeding \$161,554. The Henderson County Board of Public Education resolves to the following upon approval.

1. The Board hereby authorizes the conveyance of the three parcels listed above and as shown on Exhibit A.
2. The Board’s Chair, Vice Chair, and Superintendent are hereby authorized and directed to execute and deliver an appropriate deed to carry out such conveyance. Such deeds shall be in such form as the Chair or Vice Chair may approve, such officer’s execution and delivery thereof to be conclusive evidence of such approval.
3. The Board hereby authorizes and directs its officers and employees to execute all documents and take and perform such actions as may be necessary or desirable to carry out the purposes of this resolution.
4. This Resolution shall take effect immediately on its adoption.

Dr. Kathy Revis left the meeting at 6:57pm. Mr. Blair Craven moved that the Henderson County Board of Education approve the resolution authorizing conveyance of real property to the County of Henderson. Mr. Jay Egolf seconded the motion. Roll Call vote: Bridges, yes; Case, yes; Egolf, yes; Caskey, yes; Revis, not present in the room; Holt, yes; Craven, yes. *(Passes 6 to 0.)* Dr. Kathy Revis returned to the meeting at 7:00pm.

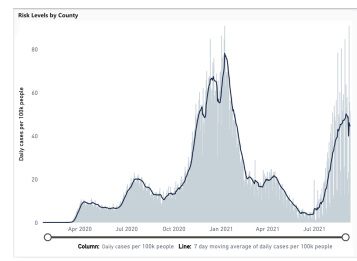
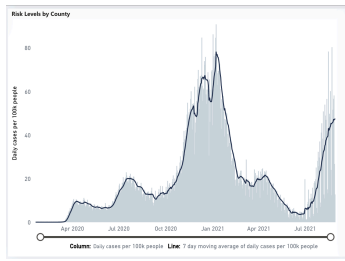
## BOARD / SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORTS

### A. RETURN TO LEARN UPDATE

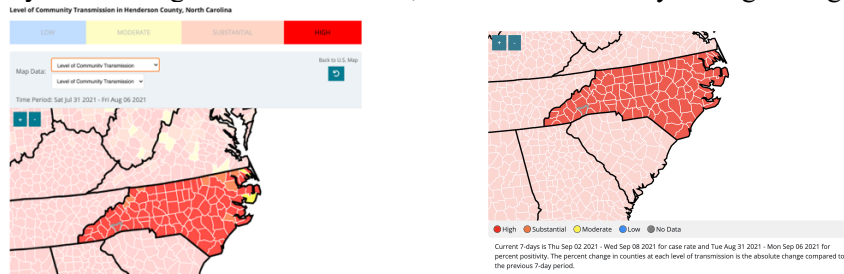
Superintendent John Bryant shared the local health pandemic indicator numbers from the Harvard Global Health Institute. He reminded everyone that research data from the Harvard Global Health Institute (HGHI) indicates risk levels that are calculated based on daily cases per 100,000 people using a seven-day rolling average. As of September 12, 2021, the rolling average in Henderson County was 46.2 /100,000 people. The positive is the data has plateaued in the last several weeks.

For some perspective, these two graphs show the seven-day rolling average as of August 29 and September 9, respectively.





NC DHHS previously provided the NCDHHS County Alert System Report. Beginning August 2, this alert system report has been discontinued. Beginning Aug. 6, 2021, NCDHHS transitioned to using the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s COVID-19 Community Transmission Map to monitor COVID-19 activity in North Carolina counties. This map is updated daily and uses a combination of total cases per 100,000 population and percent positivity in the last 7 days to measure the level of community transmission in counties. Henderson County is in the high transmission area, which is a seven-day rolling average of 25.0 or higher.



Since August 2, 2021, the HCPS district dashboard for COVID-19 cases has been updated. The dashboard reflects individual school positivity case rates and cumulative case rates. The information is updated the business day after at 9 am.

The expectations of the information parents can receive and from who they can receive the information are the same as they were last school year. The expectations are

HCPS will:

- Send a SwiftK12 call to all families in the school when there is a positive case (staff or student)
- Partner with the Henderson County Department of Public Health for contract tracing
- Provide as transparent reporting as possible while still protecting confidentiality
- Temporarily close areas where the infected person spent time for extra cleaning
- Monitor symptoms of students and staff, as well as case counts
- Send student and staff home when they are ill
- Continue to teach and learn from home when under quarantine
- Continue to provide important health and safety information to families

Health Department will:

- Conduct contact tracing to identify potential exposure on campus based on proximity, time together, and lack of face covering
- Notify any person identified as a close contact, instruct them to self-quarantine, and provide further guidance on quarantine and testing

We will not:

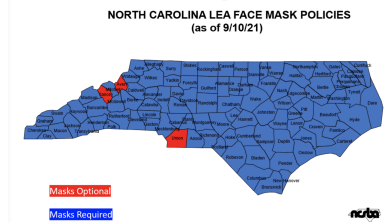
- Provide personally identifiable information of an infected person
- Immediately close school for a positive case

Dr. Bryant mentioned that most recently people have communicated that they are tired of receiving the positive case notification phone calls. While we do not want the phone calls to become white noise, our goal is to make people aware of what is happening in their schools. Dr. Bryant reminded the Board that the positive case phone calls come from the schools’ principals and the cluster notifications come from him at the district level to all parents and staff. HCPS has had three cluster notifications at this time. A cluster is five positive cases in a school community that are epidemiologically linked.

Dr. Bryant detailed the current operations regarding face coverings. Per Board decision, effective Wednesday, September 1, 2021, all Henderson County Public Schools (HCPS) students, staff, and visitors are required to

wear face coverings in all indoor settings, including indoor extracurricular activities on school grounds. This guidance applies to all indoor HCPS locations and properties, except for those with legal exceptions already established by the NCDHHS StrongSchoolsNC Toolkit.

The map below shows the face covering requirement by LEA for face mask policies from information compiled by the NC School Board Association as of September 10, 2021. Currently, there are three school systems with a mask optional policy while the remaining 116 school systems have a mask required policy.



According to Senate Bill 654, local school districts are required to adopt a policy regarding the use of face coverings by employees and students for the 2021-22 school year. The governing body must vote at least once a month about whether or not a face covering policy should be modified. This legislation is why agenda item A under new business exists.

Dr. Bryant shared the StrongSchools NC Public Health Toolkit (K-12) was last updated on August 26. The most significant change was the word should to could. The Toolkit reads “The StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit was updated on July 21 to align to the CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools updated on July 9, 2021. To allow for operational transition time, the provisions of this Toolkit are effective July 30th at 5pm.”

The summary of the major updates to the Toolkit from the previous version:

- Each section of the Toolkit has been organized into categories that prioritize implementation of the strategies that have been shown to be most effective in lowering the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread in school sessions and school activities.
- Strategies that SHOULD be implemented by all schools. These are strategies that, if not implemented, create conditions of high risk for COVID-19 exposure and spread. NCDHHS strongly advises that school leaders adopt all the strategies in the SHOULD sections.
- Strategies that school leaders COULD CONSIDER adopting. These are strategies to provide additional layers of prevention and that, if implemented, will further reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread.

From the StrongSchools NC Public Health Toolkit, Operational Flexibility and Planning for Different Scenarios are as follows:

“The Toolkit has been updated to provide school leaders with greater flexibility in implementing the layered prevention strategies based on current COVID-19 trends and updated CDC guidance. School leaders should continue to consult with local public health officials for input on community transmission and vaccine uptake to make local decisions. School leaders should continue to maintain plans for different potential scenarios depending on what restrictions are deemed necessary by state or local public health leaders at any time in the school year to control the spread of the disease. Strategies that SHOULD be implemented by all schools. These are strategies that, if not implemented, create conditions of high risk for COVID-19 exposure and spread. NCDHHS strongly advises that school leaders adopt all the strategies in the SHOULD sections.”

At the August 2 Special Called Meeting, Dr. Bryant noted the Board elected to not do the following:

- HCPS does not require teachers and staff to report vaccination status.
- HCPS does not require teachers and staff who are unvaccinated, or do not disclose vaccine status, participate in screening/testing programs.
- HCPS has not incorporated a screening testing strategy consistent with CDC recommendations, including required screening testing for unvaccinated teachers and staff.

According to the StrongSchools NC Public Health Toolkit, quarantine is required for an individual who has been a close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes cumulatively over a 24-hour period) of someone who is determined positive with COVID-19 either through testing or symptom consistent diagnosis, with the following three exceptions:

- Individuals who are fully vaccinated and do not have symptoms do NOT need to quarantine after a close contact. Individual should get tested 3-5 days after exposure and wear a mask around others until receiving a negative test result.
- People who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered and do not have symptoms do NOT have to quarantine.
- Students who are not fully vaccinated after a close contact in a classroom or other school setting if masks were being worn appropriately and consistently by both the person with COVID-19 and the potentially exposed person do NOT need to quarantine.

Dr. Bryant shared the resulting quarantine impacts. For the week of August 30 to September 3, HCPS had 147 school-affected positive case totals, which resulted in 237 quarantines. The following week of September 6 to September 10, including no school on Monday for Labor Day, resulted in a total of 164 positives and 181 quarantines. Right now, the rate of quarantining is about 1.3% of positive cases. The quarantines often result from situations when students are within 6 feet of each other without a face covering properly in place. The most notable example is during lunch. Some quarantines have resulted from extracurricular activities and in the classroom where lawful medical exemptions to face coverings apply for some students. Dr. Bryant noted that there are students quarantined that are not due to exposure at school. The number of quarantines for students directed by the HCDPH to quarantine are double the quarantines that are school related. Over 1500 students have been directed to quarantine for at least one day. While only 600 of those quarantines are related to school exposure. All of our behaviors during the 24 hours of a day can result in a quarantine not just the hours a student or staff member is in school. Mr. Jay Egolf asked how many of the people directed to quarantine resulted in a positive case. He noted his concern for the education the students that have been directed to quarantine are receiving during that quarantine time period. Dr. Bryant responded that while he doesn't have an exact number, we know the clusters are examples of spread within schools. He talked of how we are continuing to evaluate the best way to track that data set for quarantines that resulted in a positive case. Dr. Bryant said our commitment has been the stable operation of our school system. The low percentage of resulting quarantine numbers show our ability to limit the disruption of the stable learning environment. Mrs. Stacey Caskey spoke about the percentage of quarantines in NC school systems that have a mask option policy compared to almost 1 to 1 ratio for positive cases to quarantines in our schools. Mr. Robert Bridges remarked on the importance that we have managed to keep in person learning for students. Dr. Kathy Revis agreed face to face learning is important. She noted we need to continue to find ways to support students on quarantine while at the same time not going back to the hybrid model due to the difficulties of that model. She asked for the leadership team to find ways to be creative to better support these students who are out of school due to positive case or quarantines. Dr. Bryant spoke of how that topic was center of the conversation when he met with the Superintendent's Teacher Advisory Council (STAC) and ways to better support these students. Every number in the positive cases or resulting quarantines is a student and not just a number.

Dr. Bryant explained that given the current demands of accurate and timely contact tracing, school nurses and/or contact tracers with the Henderson County Department of Public Health (HCDPH) will utilize the SwiftK12 automated messaging system to communicate daily quarantine notifications beginning Tuesday, September 14, 2021. Additionally, school administrators and school level staff will continue to assist with responding to FAQs and quarantine guidance. He noted our current challenges are the scale of positivity rate and necessary contact tracing (quarantined students and staff) and the workforce shortages and stability (transportation, support staff, substitutes). The workforce stability is being tracked and watched on a daily basis to ensure we can safely monitor, instruct, and supervise students. Currently, we are seeing a significant decrease in the pool of substitutes that can be used to back fill positions. Ms. Dot Case asked what is the job description of a quarantine Teacher Assistant Liaison. Dr. Bryant noted these positions are to support students while they are out of school. These positions are liaisons that reach out to the student or parent of the student depending on the age to ensure the student has access to the materials and can get in touch with the teacher if more help is needed for the student. The liaisons ensure the students stay connected during this time. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt spoke of how she would like to see the number of quarantines on the district dashboard each week. She feels the public needs to see the information to better understand how many students are being quarantined each week. Dr. Bryant noted the information could be tracked and added on Monday mornings. Mrs. Holt asked about hiring an additional 22 positions to help School Nurses with the contact tracing and other work related to COVID to help School Nurses because School Nurses do not have enough time to get

their work not related to the pandemic done. Dr. Bryant noted that while the intent is a strong one, there may be difficulty of finding people to fill those support positions. Some elements would need to be explored before any action could be taken. Dr. Revis suggested the assistance of contact tracing might be work the quarantine Teacher Assistant Liaisons would be able to assist the School Nurse with depending on the number of students out of school due to quarantine. She spoke of the excellent job our school staff is doing to with diligent masking, cleaning high touched surfaces, and other measures to help lessen positive cases and resulting quarantines. Dr. Bryant mentioned our current successes are unwavering focus on the value of in-person learning; energy, enthusiasm, and resilience of our students; commitment, creativity, and resilience of our staff; “stepping up” beyond the job description; the generosity of community partners; and the generosity of school communities for others in need.

Dr. Bryant noted the following summary thoughts:

- Plans will continue to be fluid models and contingent on local health data.
- We will continue to work in close coordination with the Henderson County Department of Public Health and local partner agencies.
- We will respond to questions, concerns, and updated direction from NCDPI, NCDHHS, and other state governing bodies.
- We will continue meeting the instructional obligation to all students every day.

## B. CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Mr. Carl Taylor provided the School Board with status updates on the construction and facility projects currently underway or planned in the near future. At Hendersonville High, the inside demolition of the existing buildings scheduled for renovation is ongoing, as is the repointing of the Stillwell building’s brick and mortar, grading of the courtyard, and exterior window installations. The Board inquired if the contingency funds have been utilized at this time. Mr. Taylor said he would verify if any of those funds had been spent. Rugby Middle has received its certificate of occupancy for the secured entries. The furniture deliveries were delayed. The installation of the furniture began today for the office area. The front desk area furniture is scheduled for next week. The renovations to replace the freezer serving HCPS Child Nutrition Services operations are nearly complete and are scheduled to be finalized October 30.

Mr. Blair Craven inquired if the work at Upward Elementary could be started now that the conveyance of property to the County of Henderson has been approved. Dr. John Bryant noted the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is being sent out for the work at Upward Elementary.

## C. EQUITY UPDATE

Dr. Bryant presented an update on 2021 graduation numbers, based on credits recovered over the summer by high school students. With a total of 1,070 graduates, the Class of 2021 class saw an increase of 104 graduating seniors compared to 2020. Additionally, 581 seniors took at least one Advance Placement, community college, or online course – which was an increase of 125 compared to 2020. The 1,070 graduates in the Class of 2021 include 130 early graduates, and 23 seniors who graduated in the summer upon earning their credits during Summer Learning 2021. Beyond graduate numbers, Summer Learning resulted in 376 total high school students earning 674 recovery credits, resulting in 115 students earning their promotion to the next grade level. Dr. Kathy Revis noted this work highly impacts increasing graduation rate and graduating on time. The Board asked about how many students took an AP class as a freshman, sophomore, or junior and how passed the AP test at the end of the course. Dr. Bryant said he would get with Dr. Wendy Frye to get answers for those two questions to the Board. Dr. Bryant noted according to i-Ready Data, the growth in math during summer learning is equivalent to a half a year’s growth and the growth in reading during summer learning is equivalent to a year’s growth. The time period of summer learning was 20 days.

Dr. Bryant noted the band and strings teachers meet at the beginning of August. These teachers have generated a number of ideas that will help to remove barriers from arts education for students. Dr. Bryant spoke of the removal of deficit language and use the phrase unfinished learning instead of learning loss. We are being far more intentional about how we are supporting students in the linear bridge between courses and subjects. The

multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) are being used to assist with that effort. Face to face learning helps to do this work.

#### D. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Bernie Sochia presented the Financial Statements as of August 31, 2021. He presented the following:

1. Results of operations of the Local Current Expense and Other Restricted Funds for the 2021-22 fiscal year as of August 31, 2021: Revenues received total \$6,131,373 and expenditures made total \$4,104,406. There are no legislated increases in these expenditures as the State has yet to pass a budget for the current year. Expenditures are in line with last year, and even more so with two years ago, when we opened under normal operations.

#### E. GENERAL OPERATIONS

Dr. John Bryant noted the following upcoming dates: October 6 HCBPE School Tours, 10:00am at Fletcher Elementary, Mills River Elementary, and Upward Elementary; October 11 Annual HCEF Golf Classic, Champion Hills; October 12 HCBPE Regular Meeting, 4:00pm, Closed Session, 3:00pm, Boardroom; November 3 HCBPE School Tours, 10:00am at Hendersonville Elementary, Glenn C. Marlow Elementary, and Flat Rock Middle; and November 8 HCBPE Regular Meeting, 4:00pm, Closed Session, 3:00pm, Boardroom. He made note that the Board meeting for October will be on a Tuesday instead of a Monday due to supporting the Henderson County Education Foundation and their annual golf classic on that Monday.

Dr. Bryant said it is an honor and pleasure to serve alongside the Board.

#### ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Dr. Kathy Revis moved that the meeting be adjourned. Seconded by Mr. Robert Bridges. *(Unanimously approved at 7:12 pm.)*

Minutes approved: October 12, 2021