

**Henderson County Board of Public Education**  
MINUTES  
October 12, 2021

The Henderson County Board of Public Education held a regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday October 12, 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 October 13, 2021. The meeting was accessible to the public via a livestream link at <http://hcpsnc.org/live>.

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

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

Mr. Craven acknowledged receipt of the meeting agenda and asked for a motion to approve. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt moved that the agenda be approved as presented. Seconded by Mr. Jay Egolf. *(Unanimously approved.)*

**PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT – Sharing the Good News – (Dr. John M. Bryant, Superintendent)**

Superintendent John Bryant noted that while the Board Members have an opportunity to visit schools prior to the Board meeting, it is a pleasure to be able to share the extraordinary things going on in the school system during the first quarter of school year 2021-2022. The school system is approaching the end of the first quarter on October 22. October is National Principals Month. Dr. Bryant stated we are proud to recognize our school leaders who lead with grace, empathy, integrity, and compassion for their school communities. Earlier this month, Dr. Marsha Justice was recognized as the Henderson County Public Schools (HCPS) Principal of the Year. Ms. Amanda Glover was recognized as Exceptional Children (EC) Teacher of the Year. Ms. Haley Staton was recognized as the Beginning Teacher of the Year. Dr. Bryant mentioned that last week was an opportunity to recognize our custodians who are the glue that keeps the school system together. Students showed their appreciation for their school custodians and the work they do within the schools. Dr. Bryant shared a few of the special events within our school such as migrant families at Hillandale Elementary School, Flat Rock Middle School, and East Henderson High School coming together for a meal and lifting up their communities. Muddy Sneakers is an outdoor learning opportunity for fifth grade students that aligns with the science curriculum. The program helps make our students good stewards of the greater community and their environment through the use of hands-on experiences. Dr. Bryant shared the new program, Safety Around Water (SAW), for second grade students has started. Every second-grade student will receive lifesaving instruction through this program. The joy of the students can be seen in the photos shared in the presentation. Dr. Bryant spoke about how we are proud of this partnership with the YMCA. He noted the HCPS school system is bigger and broader than just our school systems. Henderson County Education Foundation and Bullington Gardens are a part of our extended school system family. These organizations are celebrating that they are now their own independent organizations. Dr. Bryant shared photos of kindergarten students receiving their kindergarten t-shirts that show the year they will graduate. There was a time period where students did not receive kindergarten t-shirts. Those students have inquired about being able to receive one with their graduation year. The district is working to make that happen for those students. Dr.

Bryant spoke about the students in the Teaching as a Profession (TAAP) class and the list the students created of the rewards for being an educator. Mr. Ryan Mitchell is the current HCPS Teacher of the Year. Mr. Mitchell is a finalist for the region eight Teacher of the Year.

#### BOARD CHAIR OBSERVATIONS

Mr. Blair Craven said he had no observations.

#### BOARD OBSERVATIONS

Mr. Robert Bridges thanked the public for being in attendance and for voicing their opinions. He talked about his respect for their opinions and the importance of their constitutional right to publicly voice their concerns. He noted as the elected Board of Education, they have difficult decisions to make. Their goal is to make the best decisions for the students. He noted his appreciation for the input the public provides to the Board.

Ms. Dot Case noted the Beginning Teacher of the Year for Henderson County Public Schools for this year, Haley Staton, and last school year, Shanice Hill, are both products of Henderson County Public Schools.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt noted that Mr. Bridges observation was along the same lines as the observation she planned to say. She seconded what Mr. Bridges said.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Blair Craven stated that 60 pre-submitted public comments were received for the October 12, 2021 meeting. The breakdown from the pre-submitted public comments are as follows: 45 to keep mask mandate, seven to end mask mandate, one to remove Stacey Caskey, one in support of Stacey Caskey; one to unmask students and remove Stacey Caskey; one regarding miscommunication between Apple Valley Middle School and Blue Ridge Health; one with information to consider while making mask decision; one regarding anti-quarantine, anti-mask, anti-hypocrisy, and anti-fake science; one regarding bus driver pay; and one to thank the School Board. 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 20 public comments each person will have one and a half minutes per person in order to stay within the Board policy timeframe. Any HCPS student will be allowed the full three minutes to speak.

Anthony Catania thanked the Board for the time they put in. He spoke in support of optional mask mandate, the right for families to choose to vaccinate or not to vaccinate, and to reject social emotional learning/critical race theory (SEL/CRT).

Sarah Cosgrove spoke about the need for continuation of the mask mandate until all children are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccination.

Sara Smith thanked the Board and spoke in support of the continuation of the mask mandate until younger children can be vaccinated for COVID-19.

Beth Campbell spoke about the need to end the mask mandate, to stop the quarantines, and to not have a COVID-19 vaccination mandate.

Katy Gash talked about the teacher fatigue and how the mask mandate enables schools to continue with in-person learning.

India Smith, a HCPS student, spoke in support of masks in schools despite masks not being ideal.

Cortney McCall spoke about why a mask mandate should not be in the schools.

Melissa Holland talked about constitutional rights in regards to the right to choose to mask or not to mask.

Aaron Fishler spoke in support of a continuation of the mask mandate.

Indian Jackson talked about the why updated and accurate history needs to be taught in the classrooms during Black History Month.

Donald Black, a HCPS student, spoke about students not having an issue with masks and about diversity in schools.

Sarah Hudson talked about the need to stop quarantines in order for the mask mandate to end.

Jay Carey thanked the Board for the mask mandate and suggested masks be added to the dress code.

Kellie Spinks thanked the Board, teachers, and healthcare workers. She asked the Board to vote to keep masks mandatory.

Phil Hanna spoke about why there should not be a mask mandate or critical race theory (CRT) in schools.

Sofi Fernandez, a HCPS student, thanked the Board for the mask mandate. She spoke of why the continuation of the mask mandate is important.

Richard Shaughnessy thanked the Board and spoke about why masks should be a choice and not a mandate.

Bill Miller talked about why masks should not be mandated.

Sheila Dale spoke about why masks should not be in schools.

Kathy Yurista talked about wanting scientific proof from the Henderson County Health Department regarding COVID-19 or HCPS needs to end all mandates for masks, quarantines, and vaccinations.

#### CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Meeting Schedule
  - 1. HCBPE Regular Business Meeting [Monday, November 8, 2021, 4:00 p.m., (Boardroom)]
- B. Minutes
  - 1. September 13, 2021 (Regular Business Meeting)
- C. Personnel (*as presented in closed session*)
- D. Student Acceptances/Releases (*as presented in closed session*)
- E. Leadership Team Contract Addendum (*as presented in closed session*)
- F. Resolution – American Education Week, November 16-20
- G. Resolution – National Homeless Youth Awareness Month, November
- H. Resolution – Veterans Month, November

The American Education Week resolution was read into record by Ms. Dot Case. The National Homeless Youth Awareness Month resolution was read into record by Mrs. Stacey Caskey. The Veterans Month resolution was read into record by Mr. Blair Craven. Mr. Craven called for a motion to approve the consent. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Bridges seconded the motion. (*Unanimously approved.*)

#### OLD BUSINESS

None.

#### NEW BUSINESS

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

Superintendent John Bryant noted Board action is required 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 two 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, the Board members began discussion regarding the current face covering guidance and policy.

Mr. Blair Craven spoke about the downward trend continuing regarding positive case counts and resulting quarantines. He recommends continuation of the mask policy for this month and to look at it again next Board meeting. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt spoke about a discussion at a previous Board meeting regarding staff health information remaining the person's own information. She noted an issue of a teacher requesting students to raise their hands if they were vaccinated. Mrs. Holt asked if that same standard applies to students. Dr. Bryant noted the standard applies to staff and students alike. He said the school system follows up on any case where that vaccination status is not done properly. Disclosure of vaccination is not required. A person has the choice

to state if he/she is vaccinated or not in order to less a quarantine time period. Mrs. Holt noted a concern about masks during Physical Education (PE) class. Dr. Bryant said the guidance around masks during aerobic and anaerobic activity has been provided explicitly to PE teachers and coaches. Any specific cases need to be brought to the attention of school administrators and district leadership in order to address the issue. Mrs. Holt referenced an email from EDNC stating that students in kindergarten through third grade are testing low. She recommended students in kindergarten through third grade be able to remove their masks during specific phonics lessons where the forming of the mouth is important and the students can remain in the same pods they eat lunch with each day to lessen issues with contact tracing. Mrs. Holt asked if resources could be allocated to hire reading recovery specialists in addition to what we have in the elementary schools in order to address this learning loss. Mr. Jay Egolf said he volunteers one day a week at one of the elementary schools. He spoke about the learning loss he has seen due to masks being on during phonics lessons. Mr. Egolf asked if students can eat lunch at their desks with their masks off, then why can't they remove their masks for phonics lessons where seeing the formation of the letters is important. He suggested elementary students being able to remove masks while they are at their desks. Mrs. Stacey Caskey agrees that COVID-19 does not take a break for lunch. However, the exposure is being limited by decreasing the amount of time a student is not wearing a mask. She agrees that during phonics students need to be able to see mouths. Mrs. Caskey noted she has visited four elementary schools and, in her experience as a teacher, the students are on track for where they should be at this time in the school year. She agrees that not every child is where they should be; however, overall, the students were on track. Dr. Kathy Revis asked what the testing data from two years ago shows in comparison to the end of last school year. She said we need to look at the data to determine the learning loss and appropriate measures needed. Dr. Bryant noted when you compare year over year data you should expect to see differences during a pandemic with remote learning and a pandemic with in-person learning. In light of this, we are having to target specific instruction for the students who are not progressing on grade level, have gaps in their education, or were challenged by their learning spaces during that time. Some data sets show that students have met or exceeded progress while other students have not because the conditions have not been the same for everyone during that time. That is why in person learning is so profoundly important. Dr. Bryant said it's important to remember that HCPS staff has continued to serve students. The rest of the world was halted just as HCPS was during this time. The school system is committed to serve every child in the school system in the space that child is in. Dr. Wendy Frye added that in the End of Grade (EOG) and End of Course (EOC) data we were above the state average in all areas. Seven of our elementary schools use Title I funds to employee Interventionists to help with reading and math. The Board members discussed where the school system is with testing data and ways to help assist students in the recovery of learning loss. Mr. Egolf said he is in favor of a compromise to allow students who are learning to read to remove their masks during certain lessons if we can't get masks off entirely or while elementary students are at their desk. Mrs. Holt said she wants parent choice regarding masks for their children; however, in light of that not happening, she asked about masks off for elementary students at their desks if they want to remove them. Mr. Robert Bridges said the real questions is how many parents will opt to vaccinate their child when the vaccine is approved for ages five to eleven. Mrs. Caskey noted a school system in South Carolina that has the same demographics as this school system had two teacher deaths and one student death with masks optional policy.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt moved that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve a provision to the mask policy for students to remove their face coverings while receiving phonics instruction, involving the mouth's formation of letters and sounds, for kindergarten through third grade. Mr. Jay Egolf seconded the motion. Mr. Craven asked for any other questions prior to the vote.

Dr. Revis asked for the words direct and explicit phonics instruction to be added to the motion. Ms. Dot Case would like for the motion to note that it would be rescinded if the school system sees a rise in COVID-19 positive cases. Mrs. Caskey asked for clarification that it would be 15-to-20-minute lessons and in the same pods that the students eat lunch with each day. Dr. Bryant noted time is needed in order to provide explicit guidance to schools to ensure the expectations could be met. District administrators will need to provide additional details and frameworks for instruction and student grouping for consistent contact tracing purposes to educators affected by this provision. The Board agreed to Monday, October 18 as the start date for the exception to the mask policy. Dr. Revis spoke about the importance of a child being able to see the word

formation. She noted it would also be important during speech therapy. Mrs. Holt talked about clear masks that do not fog up with use. These masks are being used at Upward Elementary School. She asked about getting those masks for any teacher who does not feel comfortable not wearing a mask during the phonics lessons. Ms. Case asked if teachers are talking about the difficulty during phonics. Dr. Bryant said that all teachers are advocating for the best learning environment possible.

Mrs. Holt's motion is a provision for students in kindergarten through third grade to remove their face coverings while receiving explicit and specific instruction, involving the mouth's formation of letters and sounds. This change will be effective Monday, Oct. 18. Roll Call vote: Bridges, yes; Case, yes; Holt, yes; Egolf, yes; Caskey, yes; Revis, yes; Craven, yes. *(Passes 7 to 0)*.

Mr. Craven noted the approval request is for the continuation of the current face covering guidance with the provision for phonics lessons for kindergarten through third grade. Mr. Blair Craven moved that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve the continuation of the current face covering guidance with the provision for students to remove their face coverings while receiving this specific phonics instruction, involving the mouth's formation of letters and sounds, for kindergarten through third grade. Mrs. Stacey Caskey seconded the motion. Mr. Craven asked for further Board questions prior to the vote. Mr. Egolf said the COVID-19 positive cases won't ever be zero; therefore, we can't wait for that to remove masks. Mrs. Holt noted that only 18% of the positive cases are from school transmission. No further Board discussion. Roll Call vote: Bridges, yes; Case, yes; Egolf, no; Caskey, yes; Revis, yes; Holt, no; Craven, yes. *(Passes 5 to 2)*.

Dr. Kathy Revis left the meeting at 5:44pm. Mr. Robert Bridges left the meeting at 5:45pm.

B. 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 that exceed \$30,000 and services that exceed \$50,000 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 North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and local Board approval. Letters of NCDPI approval have been received for Newsela and RTI International. Mr. Sochia noted the RTI International contract had been approved previously. Since that approval was prior to the sole source approval, the RTI International contract is being brought back to the Board for approval again under item C. Dr. Wendy Frye said Newsela is the only source that provides leveled readers in Science and Social Studies. Ms. Dot Case asked if Newsela will be used for one year or additional years. Dr. Frye mentioned Newsela has been written in to ESSER as a three-year commitment.

Mr. Robert Bridges returned to the meeting at 5:47pm.

Mrs. Stacey Caskey moved that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve the specified vendors as vendor under the sole source exemption guidelines. Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt seconded the motion. *(Passes 6 to 0)*

Dr. Kathy Revis returned at 5:49pm.

C. Approval – Contract – *(Mr. Bernie Sochia, Chief Finance Officer)*

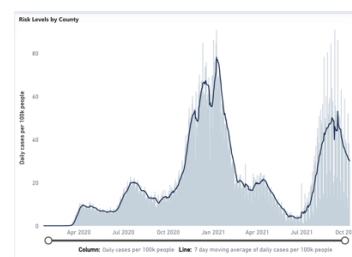
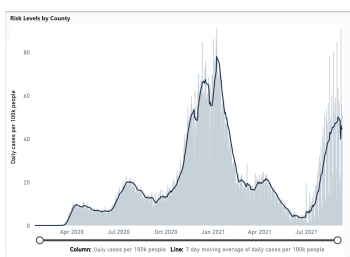
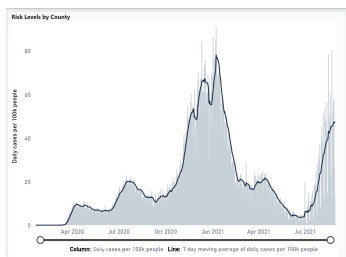
Mr. Bernie Sochia noted that pursuant to board policy 6420, Contracts with the Board, any contract in excess of \$90,000 must be approved by the Board. The Newsela and RTI International contracts are such contracts that require approval of execution.

Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt moved that the Henderson County Board of Public Education approve the specified vendors as vendor under the sole source exemption guidelines. Mr. Jay Egolf seconded the motion. *(Unanimously approved.)*

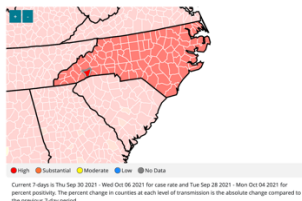
## BOARD / SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORTS

### 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 October 11, 2021, the rolling average in Henderson County was 33/100,000 people. For some perspective, these three graphs show the seven-day rolling average as of August 29, September 9, and October 7, 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. On Friday, October 22, 2021, daily alert call notifications for school affected cases will cease. The COVID-19 district dashboard will continue to be updated each business day. Additionally, the weekly quarantine numbers will be on the COVID-19 district dashboard each Monday. Districtwide notifications for clusters will continue as required by law. A cluster is five positive cases in a school community that are epidemiologically linked. 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:

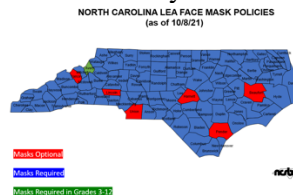
- Conduct contact tracing to identify potential exposure on campus based on proximity, time together, and lack of face covering
- Notify any person identified as a close contact, instruct them to self-quarantine, and provide further guidance on quarantine and testing

We will not:

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

Dr. Bryant 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 October 8, 2021. Currently, there are six school systems with a mask optional policy and one school system with masks required in grades 3-12.



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 October 5, with verbiage and categorizations intended to provide school leaders with greater flexibility in implementing layered prevention strategies based on current COVID-19 trends and updated CDC guidance. Most notably, 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, and strategies that school leaders “COULD” consider adopting.

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 October 4 to October 8, HCPS had 52 school-affected positive case totals, which resulted in 35 quarantines. From the Henderson County Department of Health, the Henderson County Public Schools cases and quarantines are as follows:

- Total of 617 cases among staff and students (since July 9, 2021)
- Total of 596 cases among students (since July 9, 2021)
- Total of 659 student quarantines (since August 30, 2021 forward)
- Ratio of student quarantines to cases is relatively low, at .9 this past week
- % of student quarantines that became positive is 38% (251 of 659)
- Of quarantines that became positive, 167 from household contacts (67%), 38 from community contacts (15%), 46 were school contacts (18%)

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.

Board Members had no questions regarding this information. The Board meeting resumed with item A under new business.

## 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. The Hendersonville High renovation of the Stillwell building is still underway. The pointing work is continuing on the building. Mr. Jay Egolf asked about the contingency funds. Mr. Taylor acknowledged the funding is from Henderson County. To Mr. Taylor’s knowledge, a small amount has been spent from the contingency budget. Mr. Blair Craven noted the spring that runs under the school property is the main reason the contingency budget exists.

The final pieces of the Rugby Middle renovation project are coming closer to completion. Materials on back order have led to delays in that project completion date.

A secure entry renovation at Upward Elementary is scheduled to begin in Spring 2022. Carolina Specialties Construction was awarded the contract for that work.



Paving projects for Apple Valley Middle (drop-off circle), Etowah Elementary (dumpster bin area), Hendersonville Elementary (rear parking lot), North Henderson High (main entrance and drop-off circle), and West Henderson High (front entrance) are also scheduled. Tarheel Paving was awarded the paving contract. Roof replacement projects are planned for East Henderson High and West Henderson High, though start dates may be delayed to March 2022 due to supply shortages. Bonitz Roofing was awarded the contract for the roof replacement projects.

Impending district capital projects include the replacement of auditorium seating at North Henderson High and Apple Valley Middle, and upgrades to auditorium sound and lighting systems at both East and West Henderson high schools. The Request for Proposal (RFP) has been sent out for the replacement of auditorium seating. The RFP for the upgrades to the auditorium sound and lighting systems is in the works.

The renovations to replace the freezer serving HCPS Child Nutrition Services operations are scheduled to be finalized at the end of this month, with the freezer to be restocked and in service by November 1. The freezer takes one week to climatize and be ready for use.

### C. EQUITY UPDATE

Dr. Wendy Frye talked about the partnerships that helped make Summer Learning a success. To recognize those partnerships, the Instructional Services team have spent the past few weeks distributing “Proud Sponsor of HCPS 2021 Summer Learning” plaques to the community partners that collaborated with the district this past summer. Dr. Frye talked about the program evaluation that Hanover Research did for Summer Learning. The Hanover Research program evaluation recommendations are:

- Consider flexible schedules/shorter days
- Increase communication to parents regarding academic ties to experiential learning
- Continue to include community partners
- Clarify goals of summer learning with parents and community partners.

The Hanover Research program evaluation successes are:

- 99% of staff think that after being in Summer Learning 2021, their students were better prepared to start the next grade in the fall.
- Large majorities of both parents and staff agreed that Summer Learning provided students with adequate instructional time, helped students build academic skills, and provided children with one-on-one staff support.
- Most parents and staff agreed that Summer Learning was academically engaging and exposed students to new and interesting course material.
- Most parents and students were satisfied with time for physical activity, the overall experience, field trips, engaging instruction, and on-site activities.

Henderson County Public Schools is being recognized for the 2021 Summer Learning program at a state level and have been asked to present at the AIM 2021 conference. Dr. Frye and the board also discussed the success of our 2nd-graders’ participation in the Safety Around Water program thus far this year, and the positive news of the district’s four-year cohort graduation rate in 2021. She shared the 92.7% graduation rate, which gave HCPS the 10th highest graduation rate in North Carolina last year. She presented an update on the district’s work to remove barriers for students interested in participating in music education programs. For several months, the School Board has held ongoing discussions on how the expense of musical instruments can be cost prohibitive for students interested in band and orchestra programs. Dr. Frye shared with the Board that HCPS has allocated \$200,000 in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III funds to support equity in music education; in addition to purchasing student instruments for band and orchestra programs, the funds can be used to support art fairs at the elementary grade levels to introduce a variety of musical instruments to students at a young age.

### D. Child Care Services Update – *(Mr. Scott Rhodes, Assistant Superintendent)*

Assistant Superintendent, Scott Rhodes, shared the Child Care Update. He stated that the financial projections for September 2021 are: Revenues: \$113,365.00 and Expenses: \$73,581.47 with the FY Operational Profit/(Loss): \$39,783.53. Operational Grant Money from DHHS was received in the amount of \$108,028 in September 2021.

#### E. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Bernie Sochia presented the Financial Statements as of September 20, 2021. He presented the following:

1. The results of operations of the Local Current Expense and Other Restricted Funds for the 2021-22 fiscal year as of September 30, 2021: Revenues received total \$9,311,201 and expenditures made total \$6,057,364. There are still no legislated increases in these expenditures as the State has yet to pass a budget for the current year. Expenditures show increases over last year primarily due to the change back to in-person instruction to begin the year. Again, expenditures are very much in line to those of two years ago. 2. The results of operations of the Capital Outlay Fund for the 2021-22 fiscal year as of September 30, 2021: Revenues received total \$455,072. \$450,000 of which is the County appropriation. Expenditures totaling \$393,015 have been for progress made on the Rugby HVAC replacement, field lighting and Board Room renovations.

#### F. GENERAL OPERATIONS

Dr. John Bryant shared that the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Retention Bonus for HCPS employees will be paid in February 2022. Specific details for all employee groups will be shared in internal communications in the coming days. February 2022 was picked by design. Originally, the State budget had a bonus to be paid in October 2021. The local supplement is paid in November 2021. There is a short payroll turnaround in December 2021. January 2022 has demands on the payroll department as well. Thus, February 2022 is the month the retention bonus will be paid to employees. He noted the following upcoming dates: November 3 HCBPE School Tours, 10:00am at Hendersonville Elementary, Glenn C. Marlow Elementary, and Flat Rock Middle; November 8 HCBPE Regular Meeting, 4:00pm, Closed Session, 3:00pm, Boardroom; November 11 Veterans Day for All Staff and Students; and November 24 - 26 Thanksgiving Break for All Staff and Students. Ms. Dot Case spoke about the Veterans Day celebration at Forest Lawn.

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. Jay Egolf. *(Unanimously approved at 6:14 pm.)*

Minutes approved: November 8, 2021