

Henderson County Board of Public Education
EMERGENCY CALLED MEETING
MINUTES
November 22, 2021

The Henderson County Board of Public Education held an emergency meeting on Monday, November 22, 2021, beginning at 11:00 am, at 414 4th Avenue West, Hendersonville, NC. The meeting was accessible to the public via a livestream link at, <http://hcpsnc.org/live>.

Board Members Present: Mr. Blair Craven, Chairperson; Mrs. Amy Lynn Holt, Vice Chairperson; Mr. Robert Bridges; Ms. Dot Case; Mrs. Stacey Caskey; Mr. Jay Egolf and Dr. Kathy Revis.

Administrative Staff Present: Dr. John Bryant, Superintendent; Dr. Wendy Frye, 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: Mr. Chris Campbell

Board Clerk: Mrs. Stephanie Alfrey

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Blair Craven called the meeting to order at approximately 11:00am and led all those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

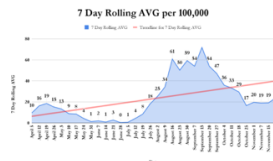
AGENDA APPROVAL

Mr. Blair Craven acknowledged receipt of the meeting agenda and asked for a motion to approve. Mrs. Stacey Caskey moved that the agenda be approved as presented. Seconded by Dr. Kathy Revis. *(Unanimously approved.)*

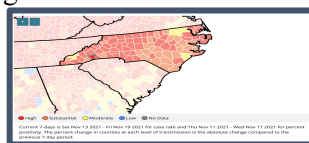
NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval – Return to Learn – (Dr. John M. Bryant, Superintendent)

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 November 21, 2021, the rolling average in Henderson County was 24/100,000 people. For some perspective, this graph shows the seven-day rolling average as of November 21.



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. As of Wednesday, November 17, 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 ceased. 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 HCPS will:

- Report school-affected positives on the COVID-19 District Dashboard each business day
- 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.

- Face coverings are optional for all students, staff, and school visitors in all school settings and on all HCPS properties, as of Monday, November 15.
- Face coverings are still required while traveling on buses and all other group transportation settings, per CDC Order.
- Face coverings are also still required in HCPS Child Care settings, per the Division of Child Development and Early Education with the N.C. Department of Health & Human Services.
- When outside of HCPS facilities, staff and students are expected to comply with local face covering guidelines and policies (e.g. field trips, internships, athletic contests, etc.)

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.

Dr. Bryant shared the resulting quarantine impacts. For the week of November 1 to November 5, HCPS had 15 school-affected positive case totals, which resulted in 18 quarantines. For the week of November 8 to November 12, HCPS had 22 school-affected positive case totals, which resulted in 25 quarantines. For the week of November 15 to November 19, HCPS had 61 school-affected positive case totals, which resulted in 140 quarantines.

According to the StrongSchoolsNC 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 highlighted the section regarding if masks were being worn appropriately and consistently by both the person with COVID-19 and the potentially exposed person in the quarantine guidance from the StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit.

Dr. John Bryant shared that the Henderson County Department of Public Health is taking appointments for COVID-19 vaccinations for children ages five to eleven. The health department's vaccine clinic is taking place Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Blue Ridge Mall. Dr. Bryant reiterated that these vaccines for children ages five to eleven require parental consent, and are not being administered by school nurses in HCPS schools or at any vaccine clinics on school campuses.

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.

The Board discussed the positive cases and resulting quarantines over the past three weeks and the effect on quarantines in grades kindergarten through sixth where children have not had time to be fully vaccinated; the number of sixth graders who are eleven years old; the quarantine guidelines the school system is required to follow by law; whether COVID-19 testing could keep a student from being quarantined; issues with quarantine guidance; if school spread versus community spread could be pinpointed; mental health concerns for students; emails the Board has received regarding face coverings; and the ratio of students ages five to eleven that are likely to get vaccinated.

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

Mr. Blair Craven made a motion for face coverings to be mandatory in pre-K through sixth grade starting on Monday, November 29 for students, staff, and visitors during instructional hours. The face coverings will become optional for pre-K through sixth grade on January 1, 2022. Mrs. Stacey Caskey seconded the motion.

Roll Call vote: Bridges, no; Case, yes; Holt, no; Egolf, no; Caskey, yes; Revis, yes; Craven, yes.

(Passes 4 to 3)

The Board inquired about the process to request accommodations for a staff member who is high risk. Mr. Chris Campbell and Mr. Scott Rhodes noted the process in place for employees. The Board discussed ways to reach out to legislatures to advocate for better quarantine guidelines that would reduce the number of students who are required by law to quarantine. Dr. John Bryant will draft a letter and share it with Board Members.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Dr. Kathy Revis moved that the meeting be adjourned. Seconded by Mrs. Stacey Caskey. *(Unanimously approved at 12:27 pm.)*