



# Henderson County Public Schools Board of Education Digital Public Comment Submissions

01/10/2022 Meeting

144 Submission Records

Submission #1

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/04/22 1:02pm

Subject: Mask Mandate

Submitted By: Maureen Johnson - Mrjohnson@hcpsnc.org

Please reinstate the mask mandate while community numbers are this high. You can see by our own data that the number of students out has increased a great deal since the mask mandate was lifted. Several staff members are out sick and substitutes are hard to find. Teachers are giving up planning to cover classes. If you would like to keep the students in school and not virtual then please reinstate the mask mandate to protect our students and staff. If you look to colleges and other k-12 schools in surrounding counties you will see that they have mandated masks. Please do the right thing for the safety of our students and staff.

Submission #2

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/04/22 1:56pm

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: John Hill - jkh2md@bellsouth.net

We are in the midst of a surge in Covid cases. The prudent, medically sound decision would be to reinstate mandatory masks for the time being. As a physician who works with immune compromised patients, it is of utmost importance that my children remain free of infection.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/04/22 1:59pm

Subject: Reinstate Masks to Keep Schools Open

Submitted By: Dawn Steed - dawn.steed@mdcasheville.org

HCPS Board of Education,

As the Omicron variant spreads like wildfire around our country and county, I ask you to take the guidance issued by medical professionals and require masking in schools where children do not have the privilege of social distance or ventilated air. It is the right thing to do, regardless of vaccination status. Hospitals, clinics, and testing sites are overwhelmed with the rapid spread of this virus variant. We cannot contribute to its exponential spread.

Please reinstate the mask mandate for all schools. If everyone is masked, it minimizes the spread of airborne particles that carry this virus. This variant even needs stronger masks to properly stop the particles, but if everyone is masked at all, it helps!

My family is fully vaccinated. We have the privilege of trusting that if we do get sick, the odds are in our favor to suffer only mildly and recover afterward. But that doesn't mean we want to be infected to make ourselves ill at all; nor do we wish to carry and spread the germs to others who may not be fortunate to have strong immune systems, including our extended family.

I ask you: Don't bear the burden of making this decision personally and instead, trust the medical advice of our Board of Health and NCDHHS, the CDC, Hospital and Medical leaders, and scientists.

Happy New Year — may we all stay safe & healthy in 2022 and beyond.

Submission #4

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/04/22 2:09pm

Subject: January 10 Public Input

Submitted By: Aaron Corbin - aaronjcorbin@yahoo.com

As a parent of an HCPS student I am concerned there is a very high risk of disruption to in-person learning based on the current community spread of Covid in Henderson County.

During past remote learning many students were unable to receive the education they require. Many faced setbacks that still affect their growth while others dropped out completely and did not return.

For these reasons I believe that universal masking should be re-instated at all HCPS facilities for all students, staff & visitors to mitigate the risk of future disruptions to education.

Respectfully,  
Aaron Corbin

Submission #5

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/04/22 2:56pm

Subject: Online learning

Submitted By: Donna loure Wake - frankwake144@gmail.com

I'm concerned about my Kids and their health and believe it the safest option to let them stay home. I wish the school board would show they care about our kids because by keeping them at school you put many at risk. My kids have respiratory issues and they could die. Make a wise choice and allow parents the option to keep their kids safe at home.

Submission #6

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/04/22 3:01pm

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: ROBERT HERRMANN - bobherrmann59@gmail.com

Please do all you can to protect the children.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/04/22 3:08pm

Subject: Keep masks mandated

Submitted By: Gail Elliott - gmcelliott@gmail.com

Dear HCPS Board Members,

As a nurse, an educator, and a parent, I ask that HCPS continue to follow the Centers for Disease (CDC) and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) continue with their recommendation for universal masking of individuals indoors. Masking is a simple and effective method to combat the spread of COVID.

According to published recommendations from these experts, all students over the age of 2 years and all school staff should wear face masks at school (unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit use). I ask that you please follow this guidance. This will also help keep all individuals healthier allowing kids to remain in school learning rather than out sick and under quarantine.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#:~:text=%E2%80%A2%20Due%20to%20the%20circulating,regardless%20of%20vaccination%20status>.

Thank you for taking into consideration and following recommendations by scientific experts from the CDC, AAP, and NCDHHS to help provide a safe learning environment for all.

Sincerely, Dr. Gail Elliott PhD RN

Submission #8

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/04/22 5:13pm

Subject: Reinstate universal masks

Submitted By: Anna Hoy - amshoy@gmail.com

Please follow public health guidance and reinstate universal masks for all grades.

Anna Hoy

Mother of Bruce Drysdale 1st Grader

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/04/22 5:17pm

Subject: In support of masks for all

Submitted By: Michelle Detwiler - detwiler29@gmail.com

Dear Dr. Bryant and Board Members,

As a fervent supporter of wearing masks and getting vaccinated against Covid-19, I have a confession to make: I know that the Omicron variant is not that serious.

I know numerous careful people - people who have been fully vaccinated and boosted - who have contracted Covid in the last few weeks and who have said it was "just like having a cold". Surely, few people are afraid of getting the common cold, because although it's uncomfortable, it's not that hard to deal with. It's survivable, it's a nuisance, and it might make you feel miserable for a few days. Just like this latest strain of Covid.

However, what does scare me - has actually made me lose sleep worrying about - is what happens after contracting Covid. If you have a "mild" case of Covid, will you develop "long Covid" down the road? Worse yet, could a child who has a mild case or no symptoms end up with MIS-C (multisystem inflammatory syndrome) weeks or months later?

According to the CDC, MIS-C is "a rare but serious condition associated with COVID-19 in which different body parts become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs". THAT scares me.

Obviously, not every child will contract it, and I've vaccinated my children to avoid not only Covid but also to alleviate the risk of getting something as dire as MIS-C. However, as has been evident in the last few weeks, Omicron spreads fast, spreads to vaccinated people, and spreads throughout families. Masks may not stop the spread, but at least they can provide an extra barrier of protection.

Please help me further protect my children by requiring masks for just a few weeks more - at least until everything has settled down after the holidays.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Michelle Detwiler

Submission #10

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/04/22 5:24pm

Subject: Masks in Schools

Submitted By: Carol Weaver - carolweaver108@gmail.com

I understand masking students and staff will be a subject of discussion at the Jan. 10 School Board meeting. While the Omicron strain of covid-19 is so active in our community, relaxing masking at this time is unwise. Thank you.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/04/22 6:03pm

Subject: Students, teachers and admin at risk

Submitted By: Mary Rogers - maryrrogers64@gmail.com

I believe that given the rising numbers of positive Covid cases, especially at North Henderson where I teach, there needs to be a clear decision by the board to protect students, staff and admin by a temporary return to virtual schooling. (2-3 weeks) After an outbreak at North the week of 12/13 and people traveling or hosting family from out of town, there is likely to be another rise in numbers in January. Every day that we are in person, people's lives are being placed at risk! The week of 12/13 (when I was also exposed to Covid) students were coming to school with symptoms and not wearing masks, thus exposing many people to this virus. Please do what is best for the majority of students, staff and admin--make decisions that help keep us safe!

Submission #12

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/04/22 8:06pm

Subject: MASK POLICY

Submitted By: Noelia Garcia - nogarcia59@gmail.com

Please take inconsideration the number of people testing positive for Covid-19. You are all putting our kids at high risk for not mandating mask again.

Submission #13

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/05/22 6:37am

Subject: Masks for all public schools including all staff

Submitted By: emilie cole - kathykoenigcole@gmail.com

Please support masks for all in our schools in Henderson County. Our children are our assets don't let them down. Protect the children, teachers and staff.  
Thank you for your service to Henderson County Public Schools.  
Emilie Cole

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/05/22 9:58am

Subject: Please reinstate mandatory masks for all public school buildings.

Submitted By: Mary Beth Davis - hokiemd@vt.edu

I appreciate all the school board, administrators, and teachers have done in Henderson county to try and keep our schools safe. I hope, in 2022, you will continue to follow the science in regards to protecting children, staff, and county residents. At this point with the Omicron variant sweeping the US, and particularly NC, we should be doubling down on known, and scientifically proven, measures of protection — vaccinations, boosters, masking, testing, and distancing.

No one isolated item is perfect, yet we know that masks help significantly to stop the spread of the virus. With only 58% of Henderson county residents fully vaccinated, we must do everything we can to slow the spread of this very contagious variant of Omicron. It's not a time to ignore the data that masks cut down both transmitting and catching the virus. With a significantly low vaccination rate in our county, masking in indoor spaces becomes essential. We must also think about the burden risky behaviors are placing on our community medical facilities.

To add to this problem right now, it's difficult to find a Covid-19 test. Pharmacies are overwhelmed and only limited antigen tests can be found in stores or online. If we allow individuals to be unmasked along with added strain on testing, we may be looking at closing in person learning in a few weeks and filling our hospitals within our community. Let's do our best to slow the rate of transmission and care for our community by requiring masks in indoor spaces.

Thank you for your consideration and concern for our community.

Mary Beth Davis  
HokieMD@vt.edu  
704-840-2184

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/05/22 10:38am

Subject: Continue with Care

Submitted By: Greg Williams - gregb79williams@gmail.com

Thank you for your ongoing conversations and considerations about in-person classes in the face of ever-changing COVID situations.

My understanding of the teachings of Jesus compels me to always consider the weak, vulnerable, and outcasts in my actions. I encourage and implore you to do the same in caring for staff and students of the HCPS by: 1- encouraging vaccinations/boosters; 2 - testing to return from quarantine; 3 - required wearing of masks to protect students & staff with health issues.

Thank you in advance for your serious consideration.

Rev. Greg Williams

Submission #16

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/05/22 10:45am

Subject: Online option

Submitted By: Edward Newman - gomane44@gmail.com

LET KIDS STAY HOME!!!!!!

Submission #17

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/05/22 8:29pm

Subject: Keep our kids in school

Submitted By: Ann Corbin - awcorbin@hcpsnc.org

At one of my schools the quarantine numbers have jumped from 10 to 63 in less than 24 hours, as a result of exposure to 4 COVID positive students. If the goal is to keep kids in school, I fear we're really really not on the right track.

Please reconsider preventative measures in schools to keep us all safe, and able to come to work/school.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/05/22 9:01pm

Subject: Mandates

Submitted By: Anthony Catania - anthonymusiccarpenter@gmail.com

Dear Board Members:

Wishing you a healthy and happy new year!

I won't be able to attend as my family has met Omicron and it's not the devil many may imagine. Remember the times, long ago when we would get sick? Our parents, our children, ourselves all subject to the winds of life, both good and bad. We simply can not continue to be so pompous, self righteous and misguided as to imagine we can control nature, God or however you choose to name it. All of us must live life and not hide from it.

No mandates, no social engineering, I implore you.

Thank you

Anthony

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/06/22 8:39am

Subject: Please maximize all COVID precautions through this surge

Submitted By: Sarah Kowalak - sarahkowalak@gmail.com

Members of the Board,

I urge you to listen to the health experts and do everything in your power to put reasonable safety measures in place to minimize the spread of COVID -19. The current variant is extremely contagious and can still be extremely dangerous to our community. We want to prevent hospitals from being overburdened, workforce disruptions, and -most importantly - unnecessary severe illnesses and even deaths. It appears that this variant will be short-lived. I urge you to double down on the available tools - distancing, ventilation, high-risk activities, and, yes, masking - for the next month. These are reasonable actions that can keep our schools open and our kids in face to face learning, which is what we ALL want. Next month, you can see what the current situation is and make another decision accordingly. I believe that most reasonable people would far prefer that you make the best decisions possible with the information you have in front of you each time you meet.

As always, I appreciate each one of you and your service to our students, staff, and our community.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/06/22 9:38am

Subject: Public comment for January 10 School Board Meeting

Submitted By: Janet Cameron - jancameron968@gmail.com

Below is a quote from the January 5 issue of the New York Times describing the Covid numbers in Henderson County NC.

“Cases have increased recently and are extremely high. The numbers of hospitalized Covid patients and deaths in the Henderson County area have also risen. The test positivity rate in Henderson County is very high, suggesting that cases are being significantly undercounted.”

Given this scenario and the fact that the Omicron variant appears to be affecting children in larger numbers, I urge the Committee to consider reinstating a mask mandate in our schools in order to protect our children, teachers and all school personnel. While optional masking was a reasonable decision at your last meeting, the realities have changed, and I hope the Committee will respond to these changes.

Thank you.

Janet Cameron

226 Balsam Rd

Hendersonville, NC 28792

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/06/22 12:28pm

Subject: Reinstate masks until surge is over

Submitted By: Karen Buchmueller - karen.buchmueller@gmail.com

Please reinstate mandatory masking until the omicron surge is over. Covid is airborne and masks lower the amount of covid particles spread from a sick individual. Omicron is far more infectious than past variants and even if it results in milder illness for many, due to significantly higher numbers of infected people more individuals will get seriously ill, including children. Please take better care of our students and the people around them. The best way to improve the probability that our children can stay in school and stay healthy is to mask (and vaccinate).

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/06/22 8:58pm

Subject: Mask Mandate Needs to Continue

Submitted By: Vikki Shantz - shantzv@gmail.com

The case rate is up 30%. Today in the US 4,000 children are hospitalized with COVID, doubled in 2 weeks. 25% are on ventilators. Since when is that not a big deal? The unvaccinated parents say kids are immune. The parents are spreading the virus's and expect the kids not to spread it too? No one in the school systems should have to suffer from someone else's mistake. No more options. Mandate masks until this is over.

Thanks.

## New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/07/22 6:37am

Subject: Please reconsider making masks mandatory

Submitted By: Kacie Tilley - kaciedtilley@gmail.com

Please reconsider making masks mandatory at schools again. With case counts soaring, the number of people required to quarantine is rapidly increasing. We need to do everything in our power to keep teachers and students at school, and with quarantine numbers able to remain lower when everyone wears a mask, it is the greatest chance we have to continue in person learning.

Submission #24

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/07/22 6:43am

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Pat Hart - hartpat741@yahoo.vom

Please look at what's going on with community illness spread, the hospitals and think of everyone you know who has recently been sick. This thing is out of control right now and we need school children back and masks until it slows down.

Thanks,  
Pat, aka Nana

Submission #25

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/07/22 8:45am

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Deborah Barwick - djbarwick@gmail.com

It has been scientifically proven that masks decrease the spread of a virus. That includes Covid and its variants.

Please vote for masks in our schools.

Thank you

Submission #26

**New Digital Public Comment Submission** 01/07/22 9:33am

**Subject:** Masks required at public schools!

**Submitted By:** Amy Dalton - dalton.a@att.net

Keep our children and grandchildren safe!

## New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/07/22 10:50am

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Cynthia Nemec - cparlier@gmail.com

I cannot believe that educated people are more afraid of masks than of a virus that can have lasting negative effects. We do not have a natural immunity to this new disease, that apparently everyone will get, like the flu. There is nothing wrong with temporarily mandating masks in such a situation. Such a simple solution can protect so many people. At least the children are in school, and will continue to be in-person, as long as there's not an outbreak, as long as masks are mandatory. Otherwise they'll be remote, which is worse than being in school wearing masks. Of course kids are not going to regulate themselves. They do what is cool, regardless of anything else. So it is up to the adults to protect them from harm, and not to fail them, by leaving them vulnerable to lifelong fatigue and/or heart problems. This is a public school system for the public, where contagions spread rapidly. Of course masks should be required during a pandemic, especially in public facilities, with public workers, and public school students.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/07/22 1:41pm

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Beth Stang - beth.w.stang@nccourts.org

Dear Board,

As you all know, Covid transmission of in Henderson County remains high and masks continue to be recommended indoors. I do hope that you will reinstate the mask requirement in the schools. However, I am focusing this public comment on a more specific, but related subject.

I am asking for you to ensure that teachers and staff have the ability to take reasonable safety precautions with the support of the County .

We now know that cloth and even surgical masks are not the most effective face coverings to protect against the current strain of the coronavirus. Recommendations include that N95 masks, KN95 masks and KF94 masks are better options, however those options are also more expensive and more difficult to obtain than cloth and surgical masks. If teachers wish to follow these recommendations and wear these types of masks, they should have these masks readily available to them. I happen to be an employee of the State of North Carolina and we have had KN95 masks, hand sanitizer, gloves, thermometers, surgical masks and cleaning products available to our staff since 2020. If the State isn't also providing these to our school staff, then I hope that Henderson County will.

If the County does in fact have these supplies on hand, please ensure that administrators and all other staff are aware of this at each school and can easily take advantage of these offerings.

The bottom line is that everyone deserves the opportunity to feel as safe as possible where they work. Please give our teachers this opportunity. Please give our students the best chance at remaining in school for face-to-face instruction and ensure the availability of effective PPE for all staff in our schools.

Beth Stang

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/07/22 1:57pm

Subject: Masks in Schools

Submitted By: Jin Adams Parker - japarker@mail.com

I write to suggest that the Board reinstate Mask Wearing for the next 4 to 6 weeks due to the current severe surge in the Covid-19 virus.

My greatest concern is to protect children in school and their siblings at home under 5 years. Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) is described by Johns Hopkins Medical as “an inflammatory reaction in the body about four weeks after infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The initial symptoms often include fever, rashes, red eyes, diarrhea and vomiting, and may get worse over a few days. The inflammation can affect the heart, blood vessels and other organs, which can make some children very ill and in need of urgent care.” -- Johns Hopkins Medicine.

Updated: December 8, 2021

Thank you for your consideration.

Jin Adams Parker, grandmother of HCPS student

## New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/07/22 6:15pm

Subject: Return to Masks

Submitted By: Amy Geddes - amy.flanagan@gmail.com

My daughter is a freshman at Hendersonville High school and we got a call on Tuesday that she was a direct exposure from an unmasked person. Despite our daughter wearing her masked, because her vaccination was in June and the CDC guidelines changed 24 hours before, she would have to quarantine until Monday and wear a mask until the following Saturday. Now imagine you are that child and you have one of the largest competitions of the season coming up, one that you have been working 15 hours a week since July towards, but you have to miss it due to quarantine. The decision of another child to come to school and use the option to not wear a mask has erased months of hard work and dedication. I am tired of hearing that mask use should be a personal choice because clearly that choice impacts other students. This story has many moving parts and fortunately after further investigation by the school, she was not a close contact and my daughter is now boosted. The science shows masks work and use of masks reduces the need for lost time in and out of the classroom. Why would you want to support giving people the option to make a decision that clearly could have an impact on so many others. I do not envy your decision so thank you for taking the time to hear my side of the story.

Submission #31

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 7:26am

Subject: Masks Optional

Submitted By: Ed Gritsavage - gritsavageea@yahoo.com

I am asking that the policy remains masks optional. With the most recent information that cloth masks are not effective, it would be foolhardy to force our children back to putting them on. All who wanted the vaccine have been able to get it. Those who have chosen to bypass the vaccine have made their decision. Time to get back to living. Thank you for all you do.

Submission #32

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 7:27am

Subject: Face mask

Submitted By: Missy Brock - mjtrbrock@icloud.com

Face mask clearly do not help . Please keep it optional

Submission #33

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 7:31am

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Felicia Arrowood - fhwallin@yahoo.com

Continued optional masks. This virus is here to stay. Thank you!

Submission #34

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 7:32am

Subject: Optional Masks

Submitted By: Tamara Mel - tmel249@gmail.com

I would just like to thank the board for continuing to allow the choice to mask our children be a choice that is decided by the parents. As it should have been all along.

Submission #35

**New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 7:58am**

**Subject: Masks in school**

**Submitted By: Billie Schell - ruckusridgenc@yahoo.com**

The masks do not work, there is scientific proof behind this, and it is causing irreparable damage to our young children, physically and emotionally. Please do away with this practice.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:01am

Subject: Public comment for Monday 1/10

Submitted By: Melissa Reddick - reddickm1983@yahoo.com

Please continue with masks optional. My kids are happier for it and we know that masks are not effective enough to mandate. We also know now that there is physiological and psychological damage caused by these mandates. Covid is an endemic same as the flu, rsv, pertussis, etc.

Also to be proactive here, do not mandate covid vaccines. You will lose a significant portion of students enrolled if you do. My children will not take it along with many others. That's no discussion to be had there. Parents minds are made up by now.

Submission #37

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:02am

Subject: Keep masks off!

Submitted By: Cortney McCall - cortneymccall@ymail.com

Please keep the masks optional; best week we've had all year! Kids were happy, we could see and hear each other, kids worked well together and said it felt like ?normal again??

Submission #38

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:03am

Subject: Optional Masks

Submitted By: Laura Ballard - lballard25@hotmail.com

Hi! I know you guys had said that masks would be optional in January. Please keep this as true. All students who have had Covid have thankfully had cases that aren't serious. Those who wanted to get their children vaccinated have had that chance too. Please give us the choice to choose for our children as well, with the masks option. Thank you for your time!

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:13am

Subject: Board Meeting 1/10/22

Submitted By: Gloria Kimzey - foxfire25@gmail.com

Good day BOE,

First of all, thank you for keeping your word to allow children and staff the choice of wearing a face covering to school after Christmas break. I know my youngest daughter is loving being able to breathe and see her friends and teachers smiling faces, especially since her older sister whom she lives with, shares germs with, and doesn't wear a mask around, was able to go to school without a face covering. I don't have the authority to make up rules though, anyways.

It seems the CDC, that has deemed itself the almighty, has once again, changed its rules on quarantine, how long, and who is exempt. It is almost impossible to get a rapid test and the PCR tests are taking 4-5 days to send results. The recommended quarantine time is now 5 days. So, by the time a parent is able to get an appointment for a test in a timely manner and the student gets a positive test result back, then the school nurse has time to make calls, all of the 'exposed, healthy kids' have technically finished their 'quarantine' at school, playing basketball, visiting family and friends, carrying on with life. It doesn't matter, their vaccine status, their antibody status, and/or if they were wearing a mask, they were able to carry on with life because they weren't sick and no one told them they were possibly exposed until time was up anyways. So, why are we still quarantining healthy children?!?!?! Why are you jerking kids out of class midday, at school, and sending them home after they've been at school all week and around family and friends? Why are vaccinated kids exempt from quarantine when the vaccine has proven it doesn't prevent the person from getting or transmitting the virus? Why are children who carry natural antibodies not able to skip quarantine if the vaccinated kids are? **WHY ARE WE QUARANTINING HEALTHY CHILDREN??** Can Steve Smith and John Bryant give us some insight and answers on their reasoning for this?? Is it virtue signaling, trying to appease the public and parents that you're 'doing your best' to keep the virus at bay??

When are we all ,parents, teachers, board, staff, going to stand up and say **ENOUGH?!?!?** This virus has turned into a crappy cold. People are over it and expected back to work before the 5 day quarantine is even over. How many students or staff in Henderson County Public Schools have actually been a confirmed Covid case that resulted from an exposure at school?? How many students or staff have been hospitalized from an exposure that turned positive in a school building? Does no one think it's odd that school nurses, who are exposed all day to these Covid positive kids, are never themselves, quarantined?? I've seen **SEVERAL** teachers and their kids, students and their parents, and board members, out in crowded indoor public places without a face covering (some over Christmas break).....the same ones who are mask advocates in school. Why the hypocrisy? If you're going to be terrified of kid germs and Covid at school, shouldn't you be terrified in a busy brewery where no one is wearing a mask and people aren't vaccinated, slam packed gymnasium with kids who are making physical contact with others with their sweat and spit who aren't wearing masks or vaccinated, or traveling to see family and friends that aren't wearing masks and aren't vaccinated?

We've done the masks over and over and over. That didn't work. You pushed for kids to have time to get vaccinated. That's not keeping anyone from getting the virus, but, that was your goal, done. You've got tons of kids who've had the virus and now carry natural antibodies. In fact, I still have mine from 2020. At what point are you going to allow kids to get back to normal life. They're going to get sick and when they do, they can stay home until they're well, just like any other sickness. This madness has to end.

Do NOT bring back the masks.

Please STOP quarantining healthy children.

Let our kids try and get back to living and learning they way they should.

Thank you,  
Gloria Kimzey

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:15am

Subject: Mask

Submitted By: Kimberly Harkins - kimharkins49@gmail.com

I have 2 boys one in north Henderson and the other in Fletcher elementary. I believe that you should still do mask optional because it is the parents and kids choice to make if we want to mask our kids or not and they are not working. People are still getting covid with masks and vaccinated. my kids don't come home with headaches anymore and can breathe. It's a wonderful feeling. This whole untire time my kids have not wore a mask and they do combat sports where they are face to face with someone else not wearing a mask and not once have they gotten covid. I'm not saying they can't but eventually everyone will have covid it's a lot like flu. Covid is here to stay and we have to live our lives the way we want. So no masks I'm not going to go threw the dangers of the masks for children or adults because you should have already learned and have many other parents giving you that info. So PLEASE DON'T MASK our CHILDREN ANYMORE. I have sent many emails to all of you guys every school board meeting. But now it's getting to be how my children don't want to go to if they can't breathe. And I don't blame them. Thank you.

Submission #41

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:26am

Subject: Thank you

Submitted By: Kendall LeDuc - medkendall@gmail.com

Thank you so much for making masks optional for elementary kids. It affects their mental health and so much of their day... it's literally a breath of fresh air! Looking forward to continued progress in letting them be normal kids, not pandemic kids!

Submission #42

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:39am

Subject: Mask optional

Submitted By: Amanda Blackwell - amandabl@att.net

Please keep masks optional, my son has not complained a with headache all week. It's been great.

Submission #43

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:39am

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Hill Lisa - lisahill111@hotmail.com

I am writing to ask you to keep masks optional.  
Thank you.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:42am

Subject: No masks.

Submitted By: Ryan Snowden - rmsnowden81@gmail.com

Simply put, this is America. We have the freedom to wear masks, or to not wear masks. Masks are not needed for me and my family. Stop overstepping your boundaries Henderson County Public School Board. Stop wasting your time on stupid decisions like this. If this is all our public school board can think of to talk about, then please. All of you step down, let someone take your place who actually cares for our children, and can make a difference in Henderson County Public Schools.

Unfortunately our children are directly affected by your decisions. There are so many other matters that need attention. But yet you waste your time on a subject that truly doesn't matter because it doesn't work. You are not dictators and you do not have the right to take our children's freedom away. Again, masks should be the choice of each individual.

Thank you for your time,  
Ryan Snowden

Submission #45

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:44am

Subject: No masks

Submitted By: Pam Travis - potravis@bellsouth.net

Just want to say I am against masks. I think they do more harm than good. Let these kids have a life without them.

Submission #46

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:45am

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Karen Johnson - kbj.stuff@gmail.com

Keep masks optional. Local Covid numbers support my request.

Submission #47

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:50am

Subject: Masking

Submitted By: Julie Schlegel - jschleg223@gmail.com

Board,

Please reinstate masks during this time of unprecedented case counts to help our community and healthcare system.

Submission #48

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:52am

Subject: Mask requirements

Submitted By: Holly Henson - hollypurcell89@gmail.com

Please continue to allow our county's parents the right to choose whether or not they send their children to school in masks.

Submission #49

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:59am

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Tiffany Gordon - ctacgordon15@gmail.com

I will make this short and straight to the point. Please do not vote to put our kids back in masks. I have a 7th grader and 1st grader and since they have been able to go to school without masks they have been so happy. Smiles every morning getting out of the car. Please do not take their right to choice away again.

Submission #50

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:59am

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Tricia McClure - tricialmcclure@gmail.com

I appreciate everything the board has done to keep our children safe and IN school. Thank you for all of your efforts. With that said, it is my opinion that masks should continue to be optional. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Submission #51

**New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 9:18am**

**Subject: Masks optional**

**Submitted By: Tiffany Hannah - thehannahfamily07@gmail.com**

Please continue to give us the option to wear masks or not wear masks. Thank you for your consideration.

Submission #52

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 9:19am

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Amber Barfield - cutebabygirl1225@yahoo.com

Masks should be optional! We are the parents and it's our choice!

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 9:25am

Subject: Masks Optional/sufficient heat in classroom trailers

Submitted By: Lynette Staton - ljbstaton@gmail.com

I strongly agree with masks remaining optional, families to decide what is right for their child/children.

With the low temperatures, you would think that the temperatures in the trailers at HHS would be controlled so that the children that got stuck in the trailers for a class are not walking into a freezer in the am hours!

Submission #54

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 9:33am

Subject: Mask policy

Submitted By: Rebecca Mccall - rebecca4091@att.net

Please keep masks optional. It's time to move forward and not take steps backward.

## New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 9:43am

Subject: Masking mandate

Submitted By: Jennifer Beam - blacklabjazz@yahoo.com

It is time! Personal choice should now come into play as children have had the opportunity to be vaccinated and still, hospitalizations are very low. Kids aren't being exposed to what builds their immune systems in the public school setting. Common sense... wash hands, stay out of peoples faces, etc should help. Vaccinated, bolstered, non vaccinated... all are getting the virus in one form or another and we can't keep doing this . It's time for parents to make the call

Submission #56

**New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 10:09am**

**Subject: Masks**

**Submitted By: Cathy Shelton - cathymshelton7@gmail.com**

Please keep masks optional,

Submission #57

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 10:44am

Subject: Mask policy

Submitted By: Melissa Fausto - melissafausto1229@gmail.com

As a parent with children in three separate Henderson County public schools I would like for them to continue to be maskless during school instruction and all school activities. Thank you

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 10:59am

Subject: School Mask Policy

Submitted By: Duane Hoover - drhoover1134@gmail.com

According to one doctor on ABC news recently, "Cloth masks are little more than facial decorations." It has become widely accepted that cloth masks do not work to stop the spread of Covid 19. And anyone who has observed how kids wear and handle their masks could not legitimately argue against this. Masks should be kept optional at most. Please maintain the current policy. Thank you for your time!

Submission #59

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 11:02am

Subject: Statement from AMA

Submitted By: April Holsinger - aholsinger1@gmail.com

In case anyone on the board missed it this week; the American Medical Association says that the CDC's quarantine and isolation guidelines are not only confusing but counterproductive. Thank you for giving us parents the option to choose what's best for our families.

Submission #60

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 11:39am

Subject: Mask

Submitted By: Jama Koenig - jamakoenig07@gmail.com

Please keep mask optional in all schools! I have seen such a big improvement in my sons demeanor and attitude about school. I believe the mental health of the children should be top priority. I would also like to encourage the board to further explore the test to stay option mentioned in the last meeting. Without this option it feels like a board is trying to dictate whether or not our children are vaccinated or not. That is not a decision that should be made by your board. Thank you!!

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 12:02pm

Subject: Mask optional

Submitted By: Vanessa Barlow - vanwingerdenva@gmail.com

To: School Board Members

Thank you for giving me the parent the choice to make the decision that is right for my children. Both of my boys are happier and excited to go to school when masks are optional. I have been able to help in both of their classes this year(kindergarten and 2nd) and none of the children wear the masks "appropriately". I noticed when I'm in the school I touch my mouth and nose constantly where otherwise I wouldn't have because it's so uncomfortable wearing a mask. My oldest son sucks on his mask and I can assure you there is nothing about that preventing disease. The emotional toll put on children is also unnecessary and unfair. What damage are we doing to them all because we want to possibly prevent a disease that isn't even prevented by masks? Please be consistent and give parents the option to make the choice for their children to mask or not. The importance of consistency is something I use as a parent and would like to be able to say the same for the school board. Please make a decision and stick with it. One way or the other there will always be people who don't like your decisions but have the backbone to stick with what you said. Thank you for your hard work.

Vanessa Barlow

Submission #62

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 12:14pm

Subject: 1/10 meeting public comment

Submitted By: Sara Smith - saraseta@gmail.com

Please keep our community safe by following the current fluid data and reinstating masks until the omicron has peaked and waned. Masks don't need to be on forever or off forever. We can follow the trends and see where our hospitals are and follow expert advice. Thank you for all you do.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 3:56pm

Subject: January 10, 2022 School Board Meeting

Submitted By: Sandra Johnson - applechic14@hotmail.com

Dear School Board:

January 8, 2022

First- Thank you for allowing the "Mask Optional" since January 1, 2022 for our students, Teachers and Parents as well.

I am sure the students/ teachers who still wanted to wear a face covering, did so and were not ridiculed or picked on by anyone. I am sure the students/ teachers who chose NOT to wear a face covering did so and felt FREEDOM and NORMAL that we have not had in almost 24 months.

MY hope and prayer is that you please continue with the "Mask Optional" and let the students/ teachers continue to experience a normal day to day existence that I fear we took for granted. I also fear that it may not EVER return to normal if we cow down and go back and forth with these decisions. Moving forward- not continue walking back to what if? Maybe? Move forward.

I also pray at some point our Governor realizes how this state of emergency cannot continue indefinitely.

Our great state has suffered enough and we need to at least save our children. Our Next generation.

Thank you,

Sandra Johnson

Flat Rock, NC

Submission #64

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 3:59pm

Subject: January 10, 2022 School Board Meeting

Submitted By: Eddie Johnson - edjoej17@live.com

Thank you for allowing the "Mask Optional" since January 1, 2022 for our students, Teachers and Parents as well.  
Please continue this option as I feel this benefits the students as well as the teachers.  
We need to get our county and schools back to normal if at all possible.  
Thank you.  
Eddie Johnson  
Flat Rock, NC

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 4:27pm

Subject: Masks optional

Submitted By: Tracy Smith - tracydsmith7774@gmail.com

Please keep masks optional. I picked my daughter up on Tuesday and she said we'll be back in masks next week. I asked her how do you know? She said because that's what they always do, I've got it figured out. These kids are very well aware of your flip flopping on these masks. It's hard to see these kids despondent over being mask free because they think it will only be for a short while. Please let's get this together once and for all and keep it optional, our kids deserve that much after all of the this. Thank you.

Submission #66

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 5:07pm

Subject: Please KEEP MASKS OPTIONAL

Submitted By: Nicole McAbee - 3rdjohnfour@gmail.com

Dear School Board Members,

Please keep masks optional for ALL of our kids grades K-12.

Masks don't work and actually do more harm than good. Our children have suffered enough when they are made to wear something that hinders their success in so many ways.

Thank you,  
Nicole McAbee  
Concerned Parent  
WHHS Parent

Submission #67

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 5:09pm

Subject: Keep Masks OPTIONAL

Submitted By: Kenneth McAbee - kenmcabee@gmail.com

Dear School Board Members,

Please continue to let parents decide whether their child is masked or not. It's the only common sense action to take.

Thank you,  
Kenneth McAbee  
Junior Son at WHHS

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 5:29pm

Subject: Keep Masks Optional

Submitted By: Tucker McAbee - tmcabee6447@stu.hcpsnc.org

Dear School Board Members,

As a student, I beg you to keep masks optional for schools.

As a student, I have personally observed peers going from not wanting to learn to enjoying and engaging in learning more now that masks are gone. It's definitely a way better environment since you voted to make masks optional.

Shouldn't we be able to decide if we need a mask or not? We are not stupid.

Tucker McAbee  
Junior at WHHS

Submission #69

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 7:05pm

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Tatyana Gutierrez - tanyafesiuk@yahoo.com

This has been such a great back to school week with masks being optional. My daughter is much happier as am I! Thank you!

Submission #70

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 7:26pm

Subject: Mask

Submitted By: Joyce Russell - jandjr@bellsouth.net

Please don't put our children back into masks. It should be the parents choice!

Submission #71

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 8:10pm

Subject: Masks and Quarantine

Submitted By: Alice Patterson - patteae@yahoo.com

Enough is enough!!! No mask, no vax, no quarantine mandates!!! Common sense! If you're sick, stay home. If you're worried about your child, you can mask, vax, quarantine your child. No judgment. My other grandchildren in a more sensible state haven't had mandates all year and surprise, they aren't having problems!

Submission #72

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 10:06pm

Subject: Mask mandates for children

Submitted By: Trey Banks - jb494z@hotmail.com

I would like mask to remain optional. My two boys are much happier at school with the choice to go mask less. Thank you.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/08/22 11:40pm

Subject: Masks please!

Submitted By: Brenda Nelson - breezebee@gmail.com

Dear Dr. Bryant and School board members,

Please reinstate the mask mandate as Covid (Omicron variant) is everywhere and school is not a safe place to be for children, teachers and staff without masking at this time. Sure, not all masks are equal, but health experts say something is better than nothing. Please, let's get past this surge and try to be responsible. I would go as far to say we should probably be remote right now due to the amount of spread in the community. The news reported a 30% positivity rate and at the time of this comment, six children are in Mission Hospital battling Covid. I know that's very important to some of you as you usually ask how many children are hospitalized with Covid. Well, now we are seeing children in the hospital. Is that enough for some of you? I'm curious what kind of excuses we will hear as to why wearing a mask is worse than getting Covid. We are all tired of this, but only some of us are willing to do the work to keep ourselves and community safe. Please don't listen to those who "don't understand" and choose instead to listen to those who do, the experts who all agree that vaccinations, masking and social distancing is really our best bet. Please reinstate the mask mandate until our community transmission rate gets under control.

Thank you

Brenda Nelson

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 5:44am

Subject: Face mask

Submitted By: Kim Spachman - kimrhodes.spachman@yagoo.com

I still believe if the board would just think about a compromise of optional mask for both students and faculty you have left the responsibilities in the hands of those where it belongs. The parents that are responsible for THEIR child/children. The faculty member that you hired to be a responsible ADULT to make smart decisions for our child/children during school they should be able to decide for themselves their mask option. You would be making both sides equally feel satisfied because it's their choice. I would think you as a group would feel better not policing a community that frankly has grown tiresome of your ping pong policy. Thank you

Submission #75

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 7:01am

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Abbie Cannon - abbiecannon@gmail.com

As a parent of children attending school here in Henderson county. I prefer to keep masks optional. I also feel strongly that having the antibody test should be included when determining quarantine.

Thank you

Abbie Cannon

Submission #76

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 7:47am

Subject: January 10 Public Input

Submitted By: Heather Reed - hgregg22@yahoo.com

Dear Board of Education,

I'm writing to you again about COVID-19. I'm sure you're sick of hearing about it. I'm sick of having to talk about it. But our community is in bad shape yet again and we need your help. Numbers are extremely high and hospitals are at capacity. Please utilize every tool available to you to help keep students and educators safe, including requiring masks.

Respectfully,  
Heather Reed

Submission #77

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 8:57am

Subject: Mask policy

Submitted By: Aaron Cunningham - aaroncam73@gmail.com

I am for maintaining the mask optional policy going forward.

## New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 9:03am

Subject: Public Comment for January 10th meeting

Submitted By: Amy Johnson - johnsonaamd@hotmail.com

Here is the state of Pardee hospital as of Friday, January 7th. 21 patients admitted with COVID, 7 of them in the ICU, 5 of them on a ventilator, 90% unvaccinated. Omicron is the primary cause of COVID infection in our area and as you are aware, causing the most infections we have seen yet in the country and in our area. While it may cause less severe disease in most people, it still causes severe disease, especially in higher risk populations and the unvaccinated. Due to the sheer number of cases, we are seeing a significant strain on our hospital system and urgent cares. This week Pardee hospital had to put a hold on all elective surgeries because of a need to use the post-op recovery area for ICU patients. UNC health has predicted that our peak will not be until the end of January or early February. This is quite concerning to us in healthcare as we are already feeling the weight of the situation and the worst is yet to come. We need to do everything we can as a community right now to help minimize the spread of COVID, including masking, avoiding indoor crowded places when possible, vaccinating, and boosting those already vaccinated.

Schools really do impact the public health of the community. We have had patients who have contracted COVID from children who came home with COVID during the mask optional policy back in November, one of which is still on oxygen. While not everyone is affected to this extreme, even a mild case in a physician, nurse, pharmacist, or other hospital employee will affect our ability to care for our community. I have 2 children in elementary school who are vaccinated and masking, but they are the minority in their classes. I dread the day that they bring COVID home and I have to cancel patient care for at least a week. As an outpatient family physician I am trying to ease the burden on urgent care and the ER by trying to manage as much as possible in the office. I saw a patient recently with acute heart failure and we were able to treat him without having to send him to the ER. If I can't be there to provide that service, I will be adding to the burden of urgent cares, the ER, and our hospital.

In addition to the burden on our hospital system, optional masking also provides a significant burden to the school nurses and teachers. I have spoken to several school nurses who have indicated what a struggle it is to contact trace, especially in the middle/high school settings with optional masking. In addition, I imagine it is difficult to monitor who should be masking and for how long with the new CDC option to shorten quarantine and isolation with masking until 10 days after exposure/illness. That is lot to put on our already strained nurses and teachers (assuming the teachers are supposed to be monitoring this). Having everyone mask simplifies things significantly.

If nothing else, I ask that you provide education to your staff about effectiveness of vaccines and boosters against Omicron and the importance of masking despite vaccination. So far we know 5-6 months after the initial vaccine series with Pfizer and moderna, the vaccines are only 30% effective against omicron. Having a booster provides 70-80% protection initially. We are seeing by 2 months after the booster, Pfizer protection drops to about 40%, the moderna vaccine seems to hold its

protection better. We will continue to gain more information and data as time moves on, but right now, boosters should be encouraged and your staff should mask especially as they get further from their booster dose. I am not sure if you are providing masks to your staff, but they should be seen as essential part of their work environment, just like they are for us in the medical community. Surgical or KN95 masks are much more effective at protection against omicron than cloth masks from the data we have at the moment. If your goal is to keep school open and to have sufficient staff, you should be providing masks to teachers and require use of masks for everyone.

## New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 9:39am

Subject: 1/10 public comment

Submitted By: Sara Smith - saraseta@gmail.com

I personally know two parents who have removed their kids from HCPS schools due to the mask optional policy. Public institutions and boards should demand public settings like schools are safe for all, especially teachers and staff. Those parents crying out for parental choice should be the ones to remove their kids, they too have options of private, charter and home schooling. If they don't want to protect their children's friends and teachers and the public, they should be the ones to remove their kids. Public is public. I pay just as much in taxes as they do. My choice matters as much as theirs. We put safety measures in place like driving laws and smoking policies to protect the public and employees. Masks during the vast spreading of the omicron variant should not be different. Please vote with the current data and mask until the omicron variant subsides and our regional hospitals reinstate elected surgeries and have open beds for non-Covid patients. Thank you for all you do.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 9:40am

Subject: Public comment for 1/10 Board meeting

Submitted By: Christina H - hawley38osu@yahoo.com

Dear Board Members,

Please make mask mandatory. The omicron variant is so much more contagious. Even though it seems to be more mild for those who are vaccinated, it is still making people sick, especially the unvaccinated. We can't afford to go back to virtual learning. That wasn't good for anyone. But with how contagious this variant is, it's a high probability if we don't utilize all the lines of defense, (Vaccinate, mask, hand washing, disinfecting and proper ventilation), we may be back to virtual. Please listen to our local medical community who have been pleading with you all to make mask mandatory. They are tired and beat down.

Sincerely,  
Christina H.  
Mother of 3 kids

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 9:48am

Subject: Masks Provide Protection

Submitted By: Amy Hertz - aehertz@gmail.com

Dear Board Members,

I'm writing again to urge you to require masks in schools. Cases in the country and here in Henderson County are surging and you've taken away a simple thing (wearing masks) that can help to stop the spread. This is counterintuitive, unsafe, and conflicts the mission statement you should uphold and consider with all your votes.

The mission statement of your board states, "Henderson County Public Schools will provide all students the opportunity to learn and the encouragement to succeed in a safe environment.". By making masks optional, a safe environment is not provided for our students.

Experts warn the mass spread of the omicron variant could shut down our communities. Please do your part to prevent this from happening.

Kind regards,  
Amy Hertz

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 10:29am

Subject: Supporting necessary mask mandates in response to Covid

Submitted By: Paul Weichselbaum - Canela8800@gmail.com

Thank you for your month-to-month decision-making process regarding mask mandates for students, staff, and visitors in Henderson County schools. It is distressing that we are all faced once more with a new Covid-19 variant, Omicron, which has led to the largest surge of cases yet, although perhaps with fewer hospitalizations and deaths per capita than before. In this situation of concern and uncertainty, Omicron presents great risks to Henderson County's school community. There appears to be local and state-wide consensus that school boards should try to sustain in-person education throughout our school systems as much as possible. In order to do so it has become imperative to again institute a mask mandate at all levels, for the health and safety of students, staff, visitors, and the people with whom those individuals come in contact in their homes, neighborhoods, and various activities. I urge you to deliberate carefully and soberly, in order to both keep our schools open and meet the health and safety needs of everyone in the school community.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 10:41am

Subject: Testing, Vaccination, and the Brown University Study

Submitted By: Heather Ray - sowrayconstruction@gmail.com

Board Members,

I am sure you are aware that Covid and Variants will continue to be an ongoing "crisis" in our country. In many ways we have moved on and have found ways to "live with" this virus. We have to keep in mind what has happened in the last 2 years has had a massive impact on our students.

There are a few things that I would like to speak on. PCR tests, Vaccinations, and the negative effects that we have done to our children regarding masking and social distancing.

PCR tests- On December 29th, the CDC withdrew the use of PCR Tests for Covid beginning 2022. They also admitted that the test could NOT differentiate between the flu and the virus. PCR tests are still being used today. On December 29th, the guidelines also stated that the CDC doesn't require testing at the end of isolation because of these PCR tests. Stating that these tests can stay positive for up to 12 weeks. What does that now say about all of the students that have had to quarantine and/or teachers staying home from work? For the past 21 months people sat at home for extra days and weeks because their test came back with an irrelevant positive. We didn't know this 6, 12, 18 months ago? Many have been shouting from the rooftops about this. On January 1st, there was also a report that reported that rapid Covid tests may be less accurate with new variants as well.

Vaccination- On December 30th, it was recorded one of the highest single day increase due to Covid cases in the history of the pandemic. Yet we are more vaccinated than ever. According to the FDA, an additional analysis appears to indicate that incidence of Covid-19 generally increased in each group of study participants with post- Dose 2 at the start of the analysis period. What we can interpret is that if you get the injection, you're more likely to get Covid. Numbers reported are 1.3% if not injected and 4.34% if you were injected. That's over 300%. So, if we are wondering why and how cases are higher than ever, this would be why.

Where have we been hearing all of this disinformation from, you ask? No one has spread more disinformation about Covid than the media, the CDC, The Who, Fauci. Notice how they are never framed as a mistake, not misinformation and then censored.

Remember when The WHO said Covid couldn't be transmitted from person to person? Remember when Biden said you can't get Covid if you got the vaccine? Remember when they said lockdowns work? Remember Fauci saying masks don't work and then saying they work, and now they are saying that the cloth masks don't work? I can go on and on. Almost every government in the world said it would eliminate Covid and bring cases to 0 if we only followed the science and guidance from government and academic public health officials. They achieved mass compliance and mass failure. Let's not forget about the governor of New York

admitting that she misled parents about the magnitude of hospitalizations for Covid-19 among children, explaining that she raised fears of a concerning trend to "motivate" them to get their children vaccinated.

I will save all of my information and data with you until the vaccination issue actually becomes an issue in the state with children, but I encourage you to be educated on the negative effects of the vaccine on children.

Last but not least, the main concern should be the mental wellness of children. Tragic Results from the most recent study on Covid lockdowns and children from Brown University recently stated that "we find that children born during the pandemic have significantly reduced verbal, motor, and overall cognitive performance as compared to children born pre pandemic." Social distancing measures including face masks are suspected of causing young children's development to have drop by up to 23% during the COVID pandemic, according to this study.

Results showed the early learning composite mean result dropped by 23%, from a high of just under 100 in 2019, to around 80 in 2020, and finally 77 in 2021. The verbal development quotient also dropped dramatically, from an average of 100 in 2018 to just below 90 in 2020, and around 70 in 2021. The non-verbal development quotient also experienced a similar dip, from a mean score of around 105 in 2019, to 100 in 2020 and around 80 in 2021. The report also added that masks worn in public settings and in school or daycare settings may impact a range of early developing skills, such as attachment, facial processing, and socioemotional processing. Covid infections tend to be harmless for younger children, with just 731 confirmed Covid deaths recorded for children aged between 0 and 18 from March 2020 to November 24 2021, according to CDC.

As this topic of masks and vaccines SEEM to have lifted restrictions for kids, I encourage us all to be aware of the past so we do not make those same mistakes in our future.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 11:28am

Subject: January 10 Public Input

Submitted By: Rita White - jrwhite@att.net

When there are levels of high transmission, then there should be a mask mandate. It disappoints me that HCPC does not follow CDC guidance to ensure a safe learning environment for our kids. It is further disappointing when children are at home in quarantine that online learning is not an option. Our kids are being deprived of education. At the November emergency Board meeting, one person stated that she forgot about the quarantine rules when they voted to make masks optional. Sounds as if voting is being done without appropriate knowledge on the matter. To keep kids in school and avoid all of the quarantining, a mask mandate should be in place when the virus positivity rate is high.

Sincerely,  
Rita White  
201 Rolling Meadow Rd  
Fletcher NC 28732

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 1:14pm

Subject: Please Revisit Covid Protocols

Submitted By: Elizabeth Baden - sebaden@yahoo.com

Dear Board Members,

I'm reaching out to ask that you please revisit and adjust the current covid protocols in our school buildings. Our schools are seeing more positive cases and quarantines than we have since the beginning of the pandemic. Our top priorities should be to keep our children and staff safe and to keep them physically IN school. This variant has proven to be incredibly contagious, which means masking, distancing, screening temperatures, and enhanced cleaning need to all be revisited. I understand and feel pandemic fatigue, too, but that doesn't change reality. Thank you for your service and dedication to our children.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 2:34pm

Subject: Keeping mask optional

Submitted By: Sarah Hudson - sarahr31@bellsouth.net

I am asking for you to keep the mask optional. I cannot tell you enough how much happier the kids seem at school. I know Covid is on the rise but at this point it's never going to end and we all know that. From personal experience and for MOST people Covid is nothing more than a bad cold. Kids are not the ones spreading it so let's keep their smiles visible . Thank You.

Submission #87

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 2:40pm

Subject: Reinstate masks

Submitted By: Hayley Brian - hklumpp0714@gmail.com

Please reinstate masks for all students staff and visitors for all grades. Covid numbers are rising and more kids are getting hospitalized. We need to keep our staff and students safe. At the rate that kids and staff are getting sick schools are going to shut down without reinstating masks. Please base this decision off of data and not feelings. We're all tired of covid but we need to keep safe.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 3:33pm

Subject: masks in schools

Submitted By: Helen Bell - hanbell@letterboxes.org

HCPS needs to return to requiring masks in Henderson County schools for multiple reasons. Omicron is raging throughout the country. Hospital admissions of children are higher now than they have been at any point in the pandemic. It is cruel, irresponsible, and counterproductive to education to willfully expose children to a virus that may land them in the hospital.

Also the CDC has now identified a link between COVID infections and new onset diabetes for people under the age of 18. Choosing to expose children unnecessarily to COVID also means increasing their risk for developing diabetes, a lifelong condition. Wearing masks is a small matter compared to a life of diabetes. Be responsible please and show your care of our children by requiring masks in our schools.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 4:00pm

Subject: 1/10 public comment

Submitted By: Heather Knapp - hlknapp618@gmail.com

Dear Members of the Board

My family, friends, and colleagues all knew this day was going to come when the decision to make masks optional happened. The day when we received a phone call to let us know that we would have to move back to plan C due to too many staff being out sick or quarantined. If the goal is to keep students in school, then we are failing. We are going against what the CDC recommends and making masks optional is not working. We tried masks optional, it didn't work, its time to make masks mandatory again.

Submission #90

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 4:21pm

Subject: Mask optional

Submitted By: Caitlyn Gordon - caitlyn\_gordon1@hotmail.com

Please continue to keep mask optional for students as well as keeping quarantine times down. This pandemic is not going anywhere and it's time for parents to be able to make the decision for our own children!!!

Submission #91

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 4:31pm

Subject: Masks Optional

Submitted By: Jessica Harris - jessicacharris@gmail.com

Thank you for keeping masks optional. My kids have been so happy to see their classmates faces. We appreciate you respecting a parent's right to be in charge of their child's health. We do not need a board of 6 people to make mandates for our children. Now that we are 2 years into this, you should focus more on how to get kids caught up and how to keep quarantined kids in the loop while at home. Thank you for your time.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 4:42pm

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Andrea Staebell - andrea.staebell@gmail.com

Dear Board Members,

Please consider making masks mandatory again during this omicron surge. While many are thankfully having mild symptoms, some still face the threat of serious illness. We have to join together and do what we can to keep our kids safe, protect those that are most vulnerable, and keep our hospitals from being overwhelmed. Masks in our schools will help slow the spread in our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 4:46pm

Subject: Failure to keep kids in school

Submitted By: Ann Corbin - awcorbin@hcpsnc.org

You are failing the community you have been elected to serve.

At least 15 staff are sick with Covid or pending tests at FRMS, so we will be virtual for at least the next 2 days. You as a board ARE FAILING at a task that is easy to accomplish if you would listen to the science. You are politicizing a purely scientific issue, and it makes me sick that you are using Henderson County students and staff as pawns. It needs to stop.

It is time to do the right thing for this community to ensure the rest of Henderson County students are able to remain in school. Please, base your January vote on science and advice from local health authorities.

Submission #94

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 4:51pm

Subject: January 10 public input

Submitted By: Vicki Huntley - victoriaann81@yahoo.com

We are headed in the right direction to finally reach herd immunity. Please continue to keep masks optional.

Thank you

Submission #95

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 5:13pm

Subject: In person Learning/ Masks

Submitted By: Deborah Barwick - djbarwick@gmail.com

We are not off to a good start with Flat Rock Middle School having to go remote after only 4 days of class without masks. At this rate our students will going virtual sooner than later.

Please initiate masking in our schools to keep in person learning.

Follow the science!

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 5:18pm

Subject: Mask mandates

Submitted By: Lauren Allison - lauren.allison2011@gmail.com

My daughter is a kindergartner at Hillandale Elem. I received the call earlier this week (third call this school year) that she was considered a close contact to a Covid positive student. She did not have to quarantine because she is fully vaccinated and still wears her mask. She came home on Friday and told me there were only TEN students in her class on Friday. How are we protecting and educating our children if they keep being put on quarantine or teachers are having to teach the same material twice due to more than half of the class being out? I have done and will continue to do everything I can to protect my child and I am begging you to do the same thing. Wearing a mask is not HARMING anyone but being exposed to Covid positive individuals in a space that should be considered a "safe place" for them, is most definitely harmful. Please reconsider mask mandates.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 5:26pm

Subject: January 10 Public Input

Submitted By: Sherry Franklin - Sonicmedusa@yahoo.com

To the Henderson County School Board, Particularly Holt and Egolf :

Shame on you people. Your pandering to the Right Wing Base (and the term "base" is SO appropriate for the people you pander to) should fill all Henderson County parents with dread and disgust.

My grandson will NOT be returning to school on January 3 as long as the mask mandate is NOT REINSTATED. I will await until the booster is approved for the 12-16 age group and he is fully vaccinated before making a decision about returning him at all.

Good luck maintaining the teacher and ancillary staffing you will need to run all your schools efficiently over the next month. It is my hope that in all your political endeavors the decisions you have made while on the school board and during this pandemic blow up in your smug faces. Rest well, knowing you are committing countless staff, students, caregivers, grandparents to what can potentially be severe illness and even death.

Sherry Franklin

Henderson County / Flat Rock MS

Submission #98

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 5:34pm

Subject: PLEASE REINSTATE MASK MANDATE

Submitted By: Lois Wilberding - loiswilberding@gmail.com

Please keep our kids and staff safe and our schools open! Vote to reinstate mask mandate until this covid wave subsides.

Regards,  
Lois Wilberding

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 5:57pm

Subject: We're not ready yet

Submitted By: Tim Smith - tim\_smi@outlook.com

Members of the Board, et al,

Firstly, I'd like to recognize and appreciate the diligence, patience, and vigilance of the Board, Superintendent Dr. Bryant, and Board affiliate's throughout this process over the past few years concerning numerous efforts. Especially, the turmoil of mask mandates and COVID protocols.

As a parent and fully conscience adult, I never thought I'd be an individual to write our board of education. Yet, here I am addressing a matter that I feel is obvious.

There are many children that are not vaccinated. My children are vaccinated, yet not without consequence. My oldest child contracted COVID, more than likely from the classroom, after the initial removal of the mask mandate this past November. Thankfully she persevered without serious illness.

We are not out of this. As much as we would like to be, we are not.

I'm hopeful that the board can reinstate a mask requirement in the classroom for faculty, staff, and students for a time period that is reasonable. This is not forever, just for right now.

Schools are closing because of contact and diagnosis.

Masks may be an inconvenience or not ideal, but they work to hinder spread and provide safety.

I'm hopeful the board can align to keep our children and the community safe.

We love Hendersonville County, and have CHOSEN to be a part of this community and raise our children here.

Please reinstate a reasonable mask requirement for the safety of the community's children, parents, and grandparents.

Thank you again for your time and efforts.

Best,  
Tim Smith

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 6:44pm

Subject: Jan. 10th Public Comment

Submitted By: Jennifer Moore - jen2dm@gmail.com

Dear Board Members,

As many doctors, nurses, and respiratory therapists in the area have communicated in just the past two weeks alone, better safety measures have to be put in place. Masks should be worn and better safety measures during lunch should be taken. Having the children sit every other seat in the cafeterias is it just not cutting it, especially with the rate at which children are getting sick. Even worse is when the kids eat in their classrooms. Parents should not have to pull their children out of school to work from home because of the lack of safety measures in school.

I appreciate everything you all do. Please look at the current numbers and keep the children in Henderson County as safe as you can.

Sincerely,

J. Moore  
Fletcher, NC

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 6:51pm

Subject: Mask up

Submitted By: Melissa Ailiff - melissaailiff@gmail.com

My step son attends Atkinson. Despite everything thing we do to keep him safe, he caught COVID in October. Now the numbers are higher than ever and children need to be protected. As a Board of Education, you are part of that. Many parents demand "unmasking". This is not founded in any science but a resentment of government and authority. Your goal should be to keep our children safe while following science, not politics. Please do what's best for our children, our teachers, our family and community and require masking.

Thank you.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 6:52pm

Subject: Time to Reconsider on Masking

Submitted By: Bree Normandin - bree.normandin@gmail.com

I believe we should reconsider masking at all levels for the next month or so as a temporary measure to help us keep enough staff present in schools for teaching. Implementing a don't ask don't tell policy on infection and positivity will only lead to more infection and continue to overwhelm local medical resources. Let's just mask up until this thing peaks. I believe we're almost on the other side of this. Mask up to keep students learning and staff healthy enough to work!

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 6:52pm

Subject: Covid, masks, science

Submitted By: Lindsay Gajownik - 219lcg219@gmail.com

My 1st grader will be out of school the entirety of this upcoming week due to Covid. 3 members of our household have tested positive in the past few days. 2 are still awaiting results but are exhibiting all the symptoms. I tested negative on an antigen test but I know that I am positive.

Covid is out of control right now. Reinstating a mask mandate is quite literally the least you could do to attempt to control this virus within your school system. I would fully support a return to virtual learning for a few weeks to allow students, teachers and staff to recover from current illnesses and to help curb further spread. Numbers now are worse than they have ever been in our community.

I understand that this version of the virus is not as deadly as previous strains, but the unknown future complications are alarming. Medical experts have just announced a dramatic increase in diabetes (a lifelong and deadly health problem) for children who have experienced Covid 19.

Please, be reasonable, be humble. Listen to health experts. Make wise decisions to protect our children and our community.

Regards,  
Lindsay Gajownik

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 7:04pm

Subject: Please require masks in school

Submitted By: Amy Marietta - amy.marietta@gmail.com

Hello, I write as a physician and mother of two school aged children in Henderson county. I urge the school board to vote to require masks in Henderson county schools.

With omicron surging, masks are an important tool to keep teachers and children safe, keep school open and in person, and to try to get our children back to some semblance of normal. There is an abundance of evidence supporting mask use in schools, so I will not dwell on these points that have been clearly laid out by my state and local public health colleagues.

However, I do want to point out several new bits of evidence that may be new, but likely not surprising:

- children who are infected with COVID are 2.5 times more likely to get diabetes than children who have not been infected.
- pediatric hospitalizations are at an all time high since the start of the pandemic, including locally at mission children's hospital
- healthcare teams are understaffed and worn out. If you need medical care due to COVID, it may not be timely or high quality.
- children are falling way behind in school, particularly children of color, due to closures, online learning, and extracurricular losses due to the pandemic.

We MUST keep our schools open and our staff and children safe. Masks are one of the best tools we have to do this. Please enforce a mask mandate in Henderson county schools.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Amy Marietta

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 7:16pm

Subject: Continue to mask in public school

Submitted By: Emilie Smith - Ems2busy@aol.com

Please continue to require masks in school. I am a 71 year old grandmother with the daily care of my grandchildren who attend Henderson County Public Schools. Wearing masks in public protects us all. We can't afford to let down our guard after coming this far. We can get through this crisis if we all work together. Thank you.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 7:18pm

Subject: Public Comment for January 10, 2022 School Board Meeting

Submitted By: Andrea Detwiler - detwiler96@gmail.com

Please reinstate the mandatory mask requirement for all grades. As a Registered Nurse working in a local hospital, I have seen firsthand that our healthcare system is extremely strained. The current Covid-19 surge has caused many staff to be out sick at the very time our community members need care due to Covid-19 illness. Optional mask-wearing and vaccination are not enough to slow the spread of the Omicron variant. Hospitalizations of children very sick with Covid-19 are increasing and continuing only optional mask-wearing puts the children in our school district and our entire community at unnecessary risk. If the Henderson County Board of Education values in-person learning, then it should make masks mandatory again for all grades and for all school-sponsored indoor events. Just as hospitals need healthy staff to function safely, so do our schools. The lives of our community members are at risk. I am a mother of students in two Henderson County schools, and I urge you to vote for mandatory mask-wearing. Thank you.

Submission #107

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 7:26pm

Subject: Health of school population

Submitted By: Sheila Clendenning - bsheila.nc@gmail.com

Your diligence and dedication in these difficult times are noted with respect and appreciation.

I urge you to reconsider the current masks-optional policy before any other major outbreaks occur, causing more "temporary" remote-learning situations such as is now the case at Flat Rock Middle School.

Thank you.

Sheila Clendenning

.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 7:28pm

Subject: Mask our children and teachers

Submitted By: Sharon Blythe - spblythe61@gmail.com

Good Evening Board & Dr. Bryant,

While it is apparent that COVID-19 continues to spread in our community, at a rate that we haven't seen since the start of the pandemic, people seem to lack understanding about how to slow the spread. We were told that vaccines would slow down the pandemic and now we have Omicron. Every person that our family knows that currently has COVID-19 are completely vaccinated. Okay, what other steps can we take? According to medical providers (which none of you are), we can mask, social distance and wash our hands. So, if you truly want our children to stay in school why don't you consider reimplementing masking, social distancing at 6 feet, and providing the ability for the students and teachers to wash their hands adequately?

It seems that since you already have one school reduced to virtual, you would give serious consideration to what it will take to slow the spread that is occurring in Henderson County. As of today, the percent positive rate in Henderson County (per the CDC high spread map) is 27.96%.

In the last seven days there have been 42 new hospital admissions.

Maybe you go all virtual for a couple of weeks; maybe you go back to Plan B and alternate days; whatever it takes to keep teachers and kids healthy until the wave passes. Planting your feet doesn't seem to be working.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Blythe

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 7:59pm

Subject: Covid Concerns

Submitted By: Mitzi Biney - mitzi.biney@gmail.com

I am a parent of a child at West Henderson and Fletcher. I am also a registered nurse. I feel the board has given up on protecting our children and school staff from Covid. The recent decisions to strip away all covid precautions despite the drastic increase in cases, hospitalizations, and deaths from Omicron is beyond disappointing, it dangerous and irresponsible. Please reinstate the mask mandate or offer a learn from home option for those of us who are doing all we can to fight this virus. As a health care professional I am tired of decisions based on political agendas and conspiracy theories. I am asking you all to please make decisions that protect our community and not decisions that go against all medical recommendations. Thank you.

Submission #110

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 8:02pm

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Jessica Edney - jastepp26@gmail.com

Good evening, thank you all so much for what you do each and every day to support the children of Henderson County. I cannot imagine how difficult serving in this pandemic must be. I'm so sorry for the polarization and attacks against you all. I am writing in support of bringing masks back until this surge has passed. Thank you again,  
Jessica Stepp Edney

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 8:10pm

Subject: Mask Mandate

Submitted By: Lucas Nelson - Inelson3771@stu.hcpsnc.org

Dear School Board Members,

Please reinstate the mask mandate. I had to stay home the first week after break because school was not a safe space with optional masking. I'm in 5th grade and this is my last year at my school and I really want to be at school but I want to feel safe. Why do you not want to make it a safe space? Anti-maskers don't want to go to school wearing a mask because they feel uncomfortable, but I don't feel comfortable getting COVID. Doctors require masks in their offices. We should learn from the experts.

I hope you change your decision and make masks mandatory.

Sincerely, Lucas Nelson, Student at HES

Submission #112

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 8:13pm

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Aaron Purcell - aaronpurcell44@yahoo.com

Continue optional masks. Don't flip flop again for the third time and make yourselves look inadequate. Raise Lions, Not Sheep.

Submission #113

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 8:23pm

Subject: Masks optional

Submitted By: Heather Hefner - heather.hefner75@gmail.com

Dear School Board members,

I would like to comment to keep masks optional. I feel it is fair to give everyone a choice. Leaving masks optional does just that. Also, the most recent announcement from the CDC states that cloth masks do nothing to protect from COVID. Please vote to keep masks optional. Thank you, Heather Hefner

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 8:32pm

Subject: Safety Protocols

Submitted By: Caitie Craig - caitie725@gmail.com

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to ask that Henderson County schools reconsider their current safety protocols regarding COVID. It appears as though your current protocols are not sufficient to curb the spread of the virus (with a middle school being forced to go virtual). I think it is worth having a discussion about reinstating distancing, considering required n95 or equivalent masks, and increased ventilation in classrooms. My daughter's private school has instituted more stringent COVID protocols and they have had ZERO community spread (isolated cases only). My son attends Mills River yet I have been forced to pull him out twice now because basic safety measures are not being taken.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Caitie Craig

Submission #115

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 8:36pm

Subject: Mask Mandate

Submitted By: Phillip Carlin - phillipdcarlin@gmail.com

Universal masking is the simplest and most effective tool we have for keeping our schools open for in-person instruction. Please reinstate the mask mandate.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 8:50pm

Subject: Mask Mandate

Submitted By: Mike Nelson - mnelson005@gmail.com

At this time I would like to ask that the HCPS School Board reconsider the current mask optional policy for public schools and vote to reinstate the mask mandate. We, as a community, are experiencing a massive surge in Covid cases (fueled by the Omicron variant)--over the past week Henderson County has had 988 new cases and we are at an almost 30% positivity rate (CDC Covid data tracker). These high numbers are due not only to the highly transmissible Omicron variant but also the large number of people who got together for the holidays, and the fact that masks are optional in schools where large groups of people are gathering in indoor settings for a lengthy period of time.

We are all tired of this disease and the associated pandemic and its restrictions and we know that masks and vaccines are not foolproof safeguards against Covid, but they do offer a higher degree of protection. The only way to get our lives back to a semblance of normalcy is to stop the spread of Covid and its mutations, so lets be the adults in the room and make the sensible decision to make masks mandatory in our schools in order to keep all students and staff safe.

Submission #117

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 8:59pm

Subject: Please Reinstate Masks

Submitted By: Kelsey Mitchum - kelsmitchum12@gmail.com

HCPS Board Members:

We are seeing the effects of what optional masking is doing not only to our schools and staffing but also how it is affecting our community, children included. Please during this surge of Covid reinstate masks.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 9:00pm

Subject: Please continue to watch the local Covid data.

Submitted By: Angela Bailey - angelabailey88@gmail.com

Dear HCPS Board of Education,

I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas holiday with your loved ones over winter break. As we move into the new year, I again wanted to respectfully request that you do all that you can to protect children, staff and families by using sensible Covid safety protocols when children return to school on January 4th.

While I had hoped my vaccinated children would be able to unmask after break, my children will continue to mask while in class due to the recent rise in numbers.

Masking in addition to vaccinations is the best way to slow the spread of this this new variant in our schools and it works best when all wear masks.

I am writing to request that whether or not you choose to require masks, that you please implement the distancing and cleaning procedures that were in place last winter, continue to keep children in pods to limit the spread, that you allow teachers to enforce masking in our Elementary schools with written request by parents, and that you consider a virtual option. I know a number of families who are willing to go virtual given the current case numbers in our county. While I realize every classroom and school has individual circumstances, keeping children safe while in school is the board's most fundamental responsibility.

Thank you for thoughtfully considering the thoughts of parents and families in our community. I feel lucky to have my children attend our wonderful Henderson County Public Schools.

With Gratitude,

Angela Bailey

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 9:23pm

Subject: masks

Submitted By: Debbie Lanier - debbielanier5@gmail.com

Dear Henderson County Board of Education Members,

My name is Debbie Lanier. In June of 2020 I retired from HCPS after teaching for 38 years, 12 of which was at Hillandale Elementary. In December of 2020 I was asked to return to HCPS as an interim teacher at Dana Elementary for the spring semester of 2021. Due to the COVID-19 protocols that were in place, I accepted the position because I felt safe for myself, my family and my students. We were mandated to wear masks the entire semester, and that mandate had no negative impact on the students in my classroom. None.

The week before school started in August I was asked again to fill the same position. Knowing that the HCPS Board kept us safe throughout the prior year, I accepted the position. During the fall semester I felt safe.

Last week the spring semester started with masks being optional. In my classes, 50% of my students are not wearing masks. I have become very uneasy about my safety and the safety of my students. With the numbers rising to some of their highest levels since this pandemic began, masks should be mandatory. I cannot understand why we are not mandated to wear masks now when they obviously worked well earlier in this pandemic. Since masks were mandatory last spring when COVID-19 was less prevalent, it seems illogical to not require masks now when the coronavirus is spreading faster than ever before.

As educators we should be listening to the medical professionals and the scientists. They are the experts when it comes to this pandemic. If the science is not followed, we could well end up in a worse situation, with large numbers of students missing class time because they are not in the classroom due to being isolated or quarantined, and schools may have to resort to remote instruction, which is something none of us want.

We are all tired of dealing with this pandemic, and I imagine you, as board members, are tired of having to meet frequently to decide whether or not masks should be mandatory or optional. May I suggest a solution used in other counties – based on the recommendations of the local health department and medical professionals, establish a threshold percentage for COVID-19 cases or positivity rates. Once that number is set – say 5 or 10 % – each Friday county staff could review the number of positive cases in Henderson County and inform parents and staff that night and again on Sunday night whether or not masks are mandatory for the coming week. Since this version of the coronavirus moves so quickly, waiting for a HCPS board meeting every two weeks to make such decision is a dangerous gamble for our students and staff.

I always have been an advocate for students and staff and, for the past 14 years, for the HCPS Board of Education. Please do what you know is right. We must keep our students and staff safe as possible.

Thank you.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 9:34pm

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Lauren Carlin - laurenlongcarlin@gmail.com

I was on board with your last decision to make masks optional after all students had a chance to be vaccinated. It made sense at the time. Things have changed with Omicron and we need to adjust to the current situation. We are four days into masks optional and we have high numbers of kids out due to being sick or quarantined and we have at least one school forced to operate virtually. Masks are our best tool for keeping kids in school. Please reinstate the mask mandate until the rate of spread decreases in our county. Thank you.

Submission #121

**New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 9:46pm**

**Subject: Mask Mandate**

**Submitted By: Sharon Lorenz - mrwendell@mail.com**

Please reinstate the mask mandate.

Submission #122

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 10:03pm

Subject: Covid 19

Submitted By: Tom Buller - ncbuller@gmail.com

Please reinstate the mask mandate. Case numbers in Henderson county are at the highest ever. People can't get tests and we're still twice what we saw in last years wave. Hospitalizations are increasing rapidly and may get to pandemic highs in the next week. As a parent of two children at Glenn Marlow I beg you to do the least and reinstate a mask mandate for the safety of our kids and teachers.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 10:10pm

Subject: Masks are essential!

Submitted By: Barbara Stanley - blstanley@hotmail.com

As we have entered the current omicron wave, please consider my plea for a reinstatement of mask requirements at all grade levels for all students, staff and visitors immediately. As you no doubt know, the new variant is extremely transmissible and is easily transmitted even by vaccinated people. Although vaccines provide protection for most people against severe disease, there are many unvaccinated or immunocompromised students and staff. In addition, many families have loved ones who are immunocompromised and will be vulnerable to transmission outside of school. My husband is one of those, now undergoing treatment for leukemia. Our grandson is a student at Mills River Elementary and we babysit frequently. We had hoped that vaccination would alleviate the risks but with Omicron the risks are still too high to ignore.

I am a public health nurse with 45+ years experience here in Henderson Co. and a strong proponent of science-based strategies for fighting this virus. Consistent use of high-quality masks are one proven strategy. Students who don't have access to these should be assisted to obtain them. We have many health care leaders who are calling for this as a way to reduce transmission. Please listen to the professionals who have the knowledge to advise rather than to the voices of those who are loudest and ill-informed. Parental choice is important when related to issues that affect only their individual child, but this is a situation where their choices can literally mean life or death for others.

This is NOT the time to loosen protective measures. Children are being hospitalized in increasing numbers. Case numbers are skyrocketing and other school systems are requiring masks or going virtual. This latest wave will likely be limited in time and we need to keep everyone as safe as possible while it crashes through. Masks aren't forever, but for now we need to keep our ICU's from crashing and our schools from shutting down because teachers and staff are affected by covid. The crisis of staff shortages has already begun here and the Board has an obligation to address this by taking steps to reduce the impact. Requiring masks is one important step.

Thank you for your service and for your thoughtful consideration for what is best for all those affected by the HCPS policies.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 10:16pm

Subject: Masking

Submitted By: Sarah Wirt - sarahflynn48@gmail.com

Please, please reconsider making masks mandatory. At least until we get through the winter and recover from everyone traveling. My school has to go to virtual this week due to so many staff being out. We had 63 or more students quarantine in one day. We all want students to be in school and learning. If students have to quarantine then they're not there and they're missing on instruction. I have tried really hard to stay in communication with the students, but sometimes if they are home they are babysitting and unable to join google meets. I want my students to be at school and be safe. Let's follow the science and start masking again. We can always reevaluate at a later time. For now we need to put our kids first. Thank you.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 10:47pm

Subject: Public Comment School Board Meeting Monday, January 10, 2022

Submitted By: Deborah Krueger - dkrueger@kruegerassociates.com

Dear Members of the Henderson County Public Schools Board of Education:

I am writing to you once again as you gather to review your decision on masking and other topics in Henderson County Public Schools. First, let me remind you that I have written to you multiple times, and as a result, in November, I was reported to the North Carolina Board of Nursing for spreading misinformation in my role as a nurse. I could have written to you and not included my profession, but I am a nurse, and I come to healthcare concerns in that role.

At the last Board meeting, Mr. Craven stated that masks should revert to mandatory, after a five-day "optional" requirement so that everyone interested could get their children vaccinated. Since then, the Omnicron variant has become the new concern, and the misinformation that I supposedly spread has played out as fact. The CDC finds that cloth masks are worthless and now recommends N-95 fitted tightly (which are not available for children) or a surgical mask with up to three layers or other combinations. Knowing that you will require a specific mask if you continue the mandatory status?

The vaccine is not the solution to COVID-19. Double vaccinated, boosted, and unvaccinated people continue to contract Omnicron, which is more transmissible with milder symptoms. Today, there are around 3500 children hospitalized with the diagnosis of COVID-19, but the head of the CDC cannot provide data as to whether this is "with" the virus or "due to" the virus. A U.S. Supreme Court Judge is guilty of misinformation when she falsely stated over 100,000 children were in "serious" condition from COVID-19. She is not reported to a regulatory board as I was for challenging whether masks worked or whether vaccinations worked. Hospitals are at full capacity due to extreme labor shortages that were present before the pandemic and now increased due to the pandemic. Yes, community spread is up, but the severity of the disease is not. The most impacted group is 25-49 years olds, as you will see from the NC DHHS dashboard.

So you now have another decision to make. I hope you choose wisely and make masks optional in all schools and grades.

Debbie Krueger  
123 Harold Case Drive  
Fletcher, NC 28782  
(336) 462 0507

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 11:04pm

Subject: Requiring Students to Wear Masks

Submitted By: Glen Englam - englam@gmail.com

I oppose any mandatory requirement that students must wear a face mask when attending a Henderson County Public School, especially when such a requirement is against parental wishes.

As noted in a very recent scientific article courtesy of Brownstone.org:

(<https://brownstone.org/articles/more-than-150-comparative-studies-and-articles-on-mask-ineffectiveness-and-harms/>)

masks are at the same time both ineffective and potentially harmful. These studies do not feature the narratives typically recited by unelected public health officials, but rather provide substantive scientific evidence in support of the conclusions rendered. As our elected school board officials, my hope is that you each take the time to study the science as it's developed and now being reported, and that you arrive at sober judgment(s) with respect to how the pandemic ought to be addressed in our classrooms.

Thank you.

## New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/09/22 11:37pm

Subject: Remaining optional

Submitted By: Crystal Watson - crystalbanks06@yahoo.com

First and foremost thank you for all you do weather I agree with it or not I do not envy any of you during these trying times. It is time we start standing up against this tyranny. At this point you have to see it's absolutely insane what we are allowing. Still our kids are not being hospitalized or dying yet we keep messing with their childhood, milestones, and education. We are segregating these kids between Jabbed and unjabbed forcing a vaccine that does not work and now not even considering a child vaccinated unless they've had their booster. What are we going to do when our athletes start having heart attack or little girls having uncontrollable menstrual cycles, these are very real problems that are happening because of the vaccine that the mainstream media is not reporting. The worse thing is the parents are not giving their kids the jab because it's actually in best interest for them but because it's convenient they won't be quarantined. You quarantine kids that have antibodies but allow kids that are positive but "asymptotic" that's had the shot to return to class, but I guess they can't transmit the virus. Kids that have had that test positive (on a PCR test that's proven ineffective) in the past 90 days don't have to quarantine but the nurses don't ask that they simply ask about the shot. I do not understand why as the board you can't adopt our own rules, the health department in the tool kit says what schools "should" do why don't we quarantine those that are actually sick and test positive and allow the positive antibody, the positive covid, and the vaccinated to be excluded from quarantine. Stop with the close contact tracing because it doesn't make since none of it does. The virus is airborne and goes straight through these little cloth mask the kids pack the hall and talk, cough, or sneeze and can transmit it to the 100 kids they pass going to class. You as a board, we as parents, us as a community have to stand up. Enough is enough. This will never end if we don't. Our future depends on our kids and if our kids education is not up to par who will be the teachers, doctors, developers etc.,, in the future. Please stand up. Please keep the mask optional, please let us get back to living.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 1:05am

Subject: Mask Mandate Review for January

Submitted By: Kristi Kicklighter - kekicklighter1@gmail.com

Dear Board Members,

I would respectfully ask that you leave masks optional.

In the beginning of this pandemic, I admit I was scared. I have a son in the later stages of ALS. I was petrified by the thought of bringing it home to him. Fast forward two years - three of us got vaccinated for COVID. Two, my son with ALS being one of the two, did not get the vaccination at the recommendation of his specialist at Duke. My son's lung function is about 40% right now. The week before Thanksgiving, he went to a Panthers game, entered early, sat in a friend's private box and caught COVID, which he shared with my whole household. He came through it like a champ. he developed a cough and a touch of pneumonia (more from restrictive movement). Yes, we were scared, but his body did it's job. We got him the monoclonal antibodies and within 2 weeks, he was over it. My daughter, who is vaccinated and wears a mask every day caught it, and it was awful for her. She said given the choice though, she would take the COVID over the mask. She, like me, has asthma and it's hard for her to breathe with a mask.

The point is neither the vaccinations or constant use of masks prevented it from entering my home. It hasn't stopped it from entering our schools or workplaces.

I realize and appreciate that you do what you do because you truly and passionately believe it to be in the best interest of our children, but the CDC pretty much admitted that the "science" and "data" they have been providing you is faulty. PCR tests don't work consistently and can't differentiate between the Coronavirus and the Flu. Whatever it is, this virus is here to stay. The media tells us of the awful results, but they don't report the stories of the medically fragile or even the normally functioning people who have caught it, caught it and recovered.

As a teacher of small children, I want to see their faces, and they need to see mine. They have now had, as we all have, the opportunity to get vaccinated should their parents choose. They have the right to wear a mask and absolutely should if they choose. It's time to put faith over fear and move on with our jobs - educating children. Let their parents parent them, please.

Thank you for your time and for being willing to do a job you couldn't pay most to do over the past two years. My prayers are with you as you consider this subject every month!

Respectfully,  
Kristi Kicklighter

Submission #129

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 6:17am

Subject: Masks

Submitted By: Robin Sherry - thomasherry@morrisbb.net

Please make masks mandatory again before the newest Covid variant shuts down more schools.

Submission #130

**New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 7:17am**

**Subject: Require COVID protocols**

**Submitted By: Jeff Kowalak - jeff.kowalak@gmail.com**

We need more stringent COVID protocols in our schools during this new strain to keep more students in class and healthy.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 7:47am

Subject: January 10 Public Input

Submitted By: Kelly McAnelly - kellymcanelly@gmail.com

Open letter to the Henderson County School Board  
1/10/2022

Members of the Board,

My name is Kelly McAnelly. My family and I live in Hendersonville and our children attend Henderson County Public schools. I am here today to strongly request that the board reinstate the mask mandate in our schools to comply with the recommendations of the American Pediatric Society and the CDC. The data from the most recent Omicron variant indicates a significant increase in transmissibility from other variants, including the Delta variant. Additionally, the research shows an increase in break through cases wherein fully vaccinated people (and children) are becoming infected and in some cases very ill or worse.

The extensive research from the CDC exhibits the effectiveness of mask wearing in preventing uncontrolled spread of covid. The reality is that allowing children and school staff to attend school without masks will result in increased infections, and quarantines for all who have been exposed. This poses a threat to our schools and communities in several ways. First, when infections begin to increase exponentially (as the AAP advises that it will) we will have less and less children physically in school, which threatens the school's ability to remain open for in person learning. We believe that in person attendance at school is critical for child development, academically, socially, and emotionally. Additionally, children without sufficient resources at home will suffer without the support of schools.

Mask wearing in schools is also critical to protect our community at large. As we all know, the number of positive cases within a community directly impacts the spread of the virus, meaning that as cases within a community increase, the probability of becoming infected increases. Hospitals across the nation are already overwhelmed with covid patients and the hospitals are increasingly short staffed as this variant continues surge. Many people are unable to acquire routine medical care because of the extensive strain on the healthcare system and ICU's and pediatric ICUs are becoming overloaded.

On a personal note, we have a child with asthma and medically vulnerable members of our family. We cannot risk sending our child to school even though she is fully vaccinated because of the potential risk to her health and our family's health. Our family is struggling to continue to be able to work while caring for our child at home. Masking is a scientifically proven way to reduce the spread of this virus and has been successfully utilized in schools for months to help schools remain open and protect children and our community. We believe that it is the responsibility of the board to follow the guidelines of the CDC and AAP as they are the experts in epidemiology and children's health and have the data to support their recommendations. We must take action to protect our community and we implore the board to do what is in the best interest of our children and families. Board members, please consider how easy and inexpensive mask wearing is in addition to how effective it is at slowing the spread of infections and keeping more children healthy. The board has the responsibility and power to make decisions that keep our children safe and right now

we do not feel like we are being served well and protected. Please help us keep our children safe and allow them to return to school with masks until this variant is less aggressive and dangerous. This issue can of course be revisited and overturned once the Omicron surge is no longer such a threat.

All the information presented in this statement were derived from the American Association of Pediatrics, The National Institute of Health in Washington DC, and the Centers for Disease control.

Sincerely,

Kelly McAnelly

143 Long Tail Lane

Hendersonville, NC 28739

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 7:51am

Subject: 1/10 public comment

Submitted By: Sara Smith - saraseta@gmail.com

As a public institution, the board needs to do what's best for the public. Please follow the fluid data and reinstate masks mandatory until the current variant subsides (not forever). Public is public. Those who want parental choice should find private institutions that adhere to their desires.

Thank you for your time and choosing the right vote for this unprecedented time. Thank you for caring about our children and our community.

**New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 7:52am**

**Subject: Please reinstate masks to keep schools open**

**Submitted By: Barbara McInerney - barbara.h.mcinerney@gmail.com**

Please reinstate mandatory masks. It is an important layer of protection for keeping schools open and you owe it to your staff and students to do your part to keep people as safe as possible during this surge. Furthermore, I am pleading with you once again to have a member of the health department or another qualified health professional lead mask discussions each month and give a recommendation to the board prior to voting. This seems like common sense to me. Please show your community that you believe in education by letting someone give you facts to make educated decisions around the monthly mask vote. Thank you for your time.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 8:01am

Subject: mandates

Submitted By: Christy Buckner - cgbuckner@hcpsnc.org

Parents should be the ones to decide what is best for their children. Research shows masks are harmful. It shows the adverse effects of the EXPERIMENTAL vaccines are profound and reoccurring. These things should not be mandated. Some parents send their children to school with coats and some do not. It is their choice. My students have been fine since choice has been the protocol. Some wear masks. Some do not. Diversity has and should be accepted. Freedom should ALWAYS be the MANDATE.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 8:14am

Subject: Masking Policy

Submitted By: Nicole Sweat - nsweat08@gmail.com

Please reconsider your decision to make masks optional in light of the spread of this new variant. I would like for you all to consider a rule that makes masks optional under a certain threshold of positivity rates like some other county school systems have done. I would recommend working with the health department to figure out a threshold they are comfortable with and that way masking is up to the science and numbers not on you all as individuals. It would be nice if this argument didn't have to happen every month. Please consider making masks mandatory again and help our children safely remain in their classrooms!

Thank you for your time.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 8:27am

Subject: Public comments 01/10/2022

Submitted By: Dee Dee Chambliss - dchambliss0115@gmail.com

Respectfully asking you, again, to reconsider your mask optional policy. It is still recommended to approach this virus with layers of protection. When you voted for masks optional, you took away the last and only layer of protection you were offering our students, staff and community. Please be part of the solution and not part of the increased transmission. Thank you.

Submission #137

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 8:40am

Subject: Masks optional

Submitted By: Lauren McLennan - le46043@gmail.com

Please continue to keep masks optional. Parents have had plenty of opportunity to have their children vaccinated by now. If you can go out in public without a mask so can our kids. Please stick with your decision for the well being of our children. The masks do more harm than good.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 8:40am

Subject: January 10 Meeting

Submitted By: Megan Lanning - meganlcorn@gmail.com

Please keep masks optional. Do not flip flop for the 3rd time. This should not be a monthly vote. There are many other priorities our elected board members need to focus on.

Just within one week...

- 1) CNN announced cloth masks don't work.
- 2) CDC director announced PCR tests are not reliable.
- 3) Fauci stated 10 day quarantine can be changed to 5 days.
- 4) Biden announced there is no federal solution to beat covid-19. [Remember: He was determined to overcome Covid as well as find the cure for cancer]

Changing the narrative a lot of us have already known since the beginning.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 8:41am

Subject: Quarantine Guidelines

Submitted By: April Holsinger - aholsinger1@gmail.com

My son who attends FRMS was quarantined last week because a student in his art class tested positive for covid. "Susie" was not in his class last week and neither student recalls being in contact with one another after the Christmas break, my son just had his break extended apparently for no valid reason.

## New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 8:46am

Subject: Masks Optional

Submitted By: Amber Hix - adm0914@hotmail.com

Please continue to keep masks optional for our schools. We know that this time of the year cases of all sorts of viruses always increase and masks at school don't keep this from happening. Most cases are from exposure outside of the schools. We saw our pediatrician recently for an unrelated covid appt and he actually even said that every child they have diagnosed with covid had a known adult contact who exposed them to covid. They haven't seen a young child to child transmission case and that this is why we aren't seeing many clusters within schools. Cases in children are mostly from an adult the child has been around (teacher, parent, grandparent, caregiver etc). I'm not saying adults should be required to wear a mask either in the schools. Masks need to remain optional for all, just like we kept hearing the board say at the end of last year...once all ages have had a chance to get vaccinated the required masks are over for good. Case numbers and quarantines will go up for a while as they always do this time of year (and after holiday breaks when people gather with others). Don't think these increased cases this past week are because we went 4 school days with masks being optional. That has nothing to do with the increased cases and quarantines. Please vote to keep masks optional today.

Submission #141

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 8:49am

Subject: face coverings

Submitted By: Elizabeth Jennings - blueghostfirefly@gmail.com

Please do everything you can do to enable in-person learning to continue. Face coverings are not perfect, but they play an important role in an overall plan to prevent the wildfire spread of COVID that is going on right now.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 8:52am

Subject: School masks

Submitted By: Christy Genthner - christy.genthner@gmail.com

I am for masks, especially when the numbers are this high. Have you considered setting a % positivity rate requirement to determine if kids are masks or not? For example, masking when the positivity rate is over 5% and unmasking when it's below 5%.

I work in healthcare and I'm currently required to mask and do 2 covid tests a week. As working parents, it's hard to take time off work every time someone is exposed. By masking, we increase our odds of staying healthy, staying in school, reducing missed days of work and helping reduce the current stress on the medical community.

New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 8:58am

Subject: Mandatory Masks

Submitted By: Linda Herdt - LindaC1101@gmail.com

Good morning,

I have never written in before this time, but would like to respectfully ask you to consider reinstating the mask mandate. Prior to the past few months, it is my feeling that the board has made decisions based off of facts and science. More recently, there has been more pressure politically from different sides, and it is my concern that this has blurred the board's ability to consider the science and local risk factors when making decisions about our children.

I am concerned based on the rapid spread of this COVID19 variant that without temporary mandatory masking in our schools, we will come to a point where children will need to go virtual due to lack of staffing. I am a mental health counselor (LCSW) in this area and have an 8 year old who is in Clear Creek Elementary. My observations have been that children are much more adaptable to masking than virtual school, which is disruptive and has a negative impact on mental health and academics. I would like to board to consider a temporary mandatory masking requirement based on our current numbers and concerns about staffing.

Thank you

Submission #144

**New Digital Public Comment Submission 01/10/22 9:02am**

**Subject: Reinstate masks**

**Submitted By: Clayton Parks - clayton.a.parks@gmail.com**

While other schools districts who have far less covid-19 cases and quarantines than ours have decided to go to a hybrid model, the bare minimum to protect the students of our school district is for the School Board to reinstate masks. Thank you.