

New Hanover County Schools is committed to protecting the safety of our staff and students. The district will continue to minimize the spread of COVID-19 by requiring face coverings be worn inside all school system buildings. Everyone should avoid close contact, wash hands often, or use hand sanitizer.

At the August 3, 2021, Regular Board Meeting, the New Hanover County Board of Education unanimously voted to implement universal mask requirements across the district. Additionally, the New Hanover County Health and Human Services Board voted to mandate face coverings in all indoor public places. The county-wide mandate applies to anyone 2 years and older, regardless of vaccination status. This message supports our current mask requirements:

MASKS

All adults and students in PreK-12th grade schools will be required to wear cloth face coverings/masks indoors per NHCS Board of Education determination. To appropriately wear a mask or face covering, the nose and mouth must be covered. If a person is unable to wear a mask, the mask exception process must be followed to support appropriate accommodations. Masks are not required to be worn outdoors. Masks are required to be worn on buses by CDC Order. Masks will be provided to students who present at the bus stop or at school without one.

VISITORS

Visitors (including volunteers) are no longer limited from the buildings but must follow all precautions including wearing a mask. It is not recommended to have visitors with students without the use of masks, such as during lunch.

QUARANTINES

All adults and students:

- Fully vaccinated individuals who have no symptoms are not required to quarantine if exposed.
- Individuals who have had COVID 19 and recovered within the past 3 months will not be required to quarantine. This timeline must be confirmed by the school nurse during contact tracing.

Students only:

- Students who mask appropriately do not have to quarantine if exposed, even if not vaccinated. (Specific determinations of appropriate masking will be determined by the school nurse in contact tracing.)

Staff only:

- Staff who have been exposed and have not been vaccinated will have to quarantine regardless of masking. This process will be managed by the school nurse.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Email notifications: In consultation with local health department officials, it has been determined that mass emails to parents and staff regarding COVID cases are not necessary or helpful. Direct communication from health department staff remains the most important and effective method of communication with those involved in a COVID exposure.
- District Dashboard: In consultation with local health department officials, it is not advised that the district maintain a COVID dashboard on the NHCS webpage. To reduce redundancy and utilize the authoritative source, the district will rely on the public health department's database and community dashboard.

IN-PERSON LEARNING is expected unless a student is enrolled in online learning or has a medical exception with a home/hospital plan. Please see the resources at <https://www.nhcs.net/backtoschool> for more information.

If and when the board of education decides to modify these measures, our office of communication and outreach will promptly inform all stakeholders. In the meantime, I appreciate your professionalism and adherence to our COVID protocols.

Dr. Charles Foust
Superintendent
New Hanover County Schools