



## Mask and Safety Protocols

August 10, 2021

Families,

The safety of our students and staff remains a consistent and high priority in Greene County Public Schools. During Governor Northam's press conference last week, he referenced legislation that was passed by the General Assembly in March. Senate Bill 1303 requires each school division to offer in-person instruction and to do so in a manner that follows the mitigation measures provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Although the Virginia Department of Education's official guidance released July 21, 2021, clearly advised school divisions across the Commonwealth that masking was entirely a local decision, the VDOE sent a memo reiterating the Governor's comments shortly after the press conference and updated its official guidance. As the Delta Variant of the COVID-19 virus spread continues, the most recent (July 27, 2021) guidance from the CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors in schools, regardless of vaccination status. The Virginia Department of Health and our regional district makes the same recommendation. **The Greene County School Board, based on information from our legal counsel and insurer, voted to direct division employees to follow the laws governing the operation of the schools, including the requirements to provide in person instruction to all students according to the conditions and requirements of Senate Bill 1303. Those conditions are explained below.**

### **Masks**

- Local Covid-19 conditions and the advice of our local health department has changed since the week of July 29, 2021. Greene County Public Schools will follow mitigation strategies for in-person instruction that align with the recommendations of the CDC. The CDC states: **“universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors (aged 2 and above) to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.”** This requirement will start on Wednesday, August 11, 2021.
- GCPS will follow the CDC recommendation to maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms to the greatest extent possible and possibly up to 6 feet when feasible. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully reopen while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies. GCPS is providing the following additional strategies:
  - promoting vaccination,
  - upgraded ventilation in our buildings,
  - handwashing and respiratory etiquette,



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- cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities,
- students and staff staying home when sick and/or getting tested, and
- contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine of recommended durations based on vaccination status.
- Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- GCPS Transportation (buses and cars): **all students and drivers, whether vaccinated or not, must wear a mask while on the bus or in an GCPS car.** This is a requirement of federal law.
- Masks are optional in outdoor settings. However, people who are not fully vaccinated should wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people.
- Masks are to be worn except when actively eating or drinking.

#### **Cleaning and Disinfecting** (Based on [6.15.2021 CDC Update](#))

- In general, cleaning once a day is usually enough to sufficiently remove potential viruses that may be on surfaces. GCPS will clean all surfaces once a day.
- If an area is used for eating, cleaning will occur before and after eating.
- If a classroom/area has had a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, GCPS will provide additional cleaning/disinfection for this area.

**Daily Temperature Checks** Daily temperature checks will not occur as they have in the past. Families should monitor temperatures as needed at home (e.g., when there are symptoms of illness or fever) and our school nurses will take temperature checks as needed at school. Students and staff should stay home when sick and/or getting tested.

**Visitors** Visitors are allowed in the building for pre-scheduled meetings in the main office only. Visitors will not be permitted for meal times or classroom visits. All visitors must wear a face covering and follow the mitigation strategies outlined in this communication.

#### **Contact Tracing, Quarantine, and Isolation**



- Contact tracing will be conducted as required.
- For non-students: a contact for purposes of quarantine is any unvaccinated person who was within [6 feet of an infected person](#) (with either laboratory-confirmed or a [clinically compatible illness](#)) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, *three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes in the 24 hour period*). An infected person can spread SARS-CoV-2 starting from 2 days **before** they have any symptoms (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days before the positive specimen collection date) and until they meet criteria for [discontinuing home isolation](#).
- For students in the K–12 indoor classroom setting: an unvaccinated student within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (with either laboratory-confirmed or a [clinically compatible illness](#)) for 15 or more cumulative minutes is **not a close contact** (for purposes of quarantine) **if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) [correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks](#) the entire time of exposure**. This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting. [8.3.2021 CDC Update](#)
- All close contacts will be referred for testing.
- Unvaccinated persons who are close contacts (as defined above) but do not exhibit symptoms or test positive should quarantine for 14 days after the date of last contact. Even if the person is tested for COVID-19 and has a negative test, the person must still stay home for the full 14 days after the last date of contact. This is because it can take up to 14 days after exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19 for an individual to become infected. If no symptoms develop during the whole quarantine period, the person may return to school after they complete quarantine [7.23.21 VDH Guideline](#)
- Vaccinated persons who are close contacts (as defined above) but do not exhibit symptoms or test positive are not required to quarantine. However, fully vaccinated people should get tested 3-5 days after their exposure, even if they don't have symptoms, and should wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until their test result is negative
- Symptomatic persons, regardless of vaccination status, should [isolate themselves from others](#), be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, and tested for SARS-CoV-2 if indicated.
- Any person who tests positive or is identified by a medical professional as being suspected of having COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status and whether or not they exhibit symptoms, should isolate for the period of time applicable to their condition set forth in CDC recommendations.
- Any person who tests positive or is identified by a medical professional as being suspected of having COVID-19 and whose activities might have resulted in exposure to others in the school environment (as defined above) should report their positive status to



GCPS in order to permit contact tracing, to maximize the safety of others and to minimize outbreaks that may interfere with continued in-person instruction.

- GCPS will continue to collaborate with local health departments, to the extent allowable by privacy laws and other applicable laws, to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19. This allows identifying which students, teachers, and staff with positive COVID-19 test results should [isolate](#), and which close contacts should [quarantine](#).
- GCPS will report, to the extent allowable by applicable privacy laws, new diagnoses of COVID-19 to the local health department as soon as the division is informed. To the extent allowable by applicable privacy laws, the division will notify teachers, staff, and families of students who were close contacts as soon as possible after GCPS notified that someone in the school has tested positive.

I do understand the varying opinions and emotions surrounding masking and other COVID-19 mitigation strategies. This has been evident in the reactions from our community as we worked to decide on our mitigation strategies to begin the school year. In order to ensure that our students and staff can begin the school year in a safe and healthy learning environment, we will utilize additional supports from local law enforcement as necessary.

Please understand that this matter is important to myself and members of the GCPS leadership team, especially as it relates to students. As a lifelong educator, however, my priority first and foremost is to provide superior educational opportunities and experiences for all students in our community in a safe and supportive environment. In order to achieve that goal, we must work together to implement measures that will ensure students are able to remain in-person throughout the entire school year, five days a week. I am hopeful that we can come together as a community for our children and focus time and energy on what matters most - student success. Great things happen here in Greene and I am looking forward to another successful year with students, staff, and parents.

