



Change in face covering procedures: parent opt out option

January 27, 2022

At their regular school board meeting January 26, the school board voted to allow parents/guardians to decide if their student(s) may go without face coverings in school facilities. Parents/Guardians must provide written permission for their student(s) to not wear a mask.

Students were given the permission forms Thursday, January 27 to bring home.

Completed and signed permission forms should be returned by the student to their homeroom teacher starting Monday, January 31. Students with proper permission forms on file will not be required to wear face coverings while in school facilities. Please note, there are some exceptions to keep in mind.

Masking is still required of all MCPS students, regardless of opt out status, when:

- accessing MCPS school buses or school vehicles.
- exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms while waiting to see the school nurse or administrator
- waiting for parents to pick them up after they have been seen by the nurse or school administrator who determines a mask is necessary for health reasons
- they are required by athletic/academic practice or competition rules; and
- they are visitors to school events that require masks (such as indoor sporting events)

Mecklenburg County is currently at the highest level of community transmission of the COVID-19 virus. The CDC recommends all to wear properly fitting face coverings when inside. We continue to encourage vaccinations for all employees and for those students aged five and above as that has been demonstrated to reduce the chances of serious illness or death due to the virus. We will continue our other mitigation efforts to prevent the spread of the disease.

A few notes:

- **All MCPS Employees must wear properly fitting face coverings at all times.**
- **The definition of close contact that guides contact tracing in schools has not changed.** The following is from the [Interim COVID-19 Guidance](#) issued on Friday, Jan. 21 by the VDOE and VDH:
 - The definition of close contact includes an exception for K-12 settings for the purposes of case investigation and contact tracing. In general, VDH uses proximity of within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more within 24 hours to determine the need for quarantining persons who have had close contact exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. **In K-12 settings, a student who is within 3 to 6 feet of an**

infected student is not considered a close contact as long as both students wore well-fitting masks the entire time.

- **The VDH and VDOE guidance for dealing with positive tests and close contacts has not changed.**
 - Parents can choose whether or not their child wears a mask; however, students who do not wear masks and test positive for COVID-19 or are identified as close contacts will have longer isolation and quarantine periods, per the guidance provided by VDH and VDOE on Friday, Jan. 21: **“VDH recommends a 10-day isolation or quarantine period for students who are not willing to wear a mask in school on days 6-10 after quarantine or isolation.”**

We're happy to work with you to answer your questions and have provided some FAQs on this topic as well.

Be well, and thank you for partnering with us!

Paul C. Nichols, Superintendent