



Mecklenburg County Public Schools

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Feb. 2, 2022

To: MCPS parents and staff

From: Paul Nichols, Superintendent

RE: Update on Gov. Youngkin's Executive Order on student masks

You are well aware by now that the Mecklenburg County School Board voted at their January meeting to follow Governor Youngkin's Executive Order allowing parents to determine if their children should wear masks to school or not. This is a very divisive issue within our community, our state, and our nation. All School Boards in Virginia were forced to make a very difficult and brave decision on this issue with whichever choice they made.

Virginia's General Assembly passed legislation last year requiring all schools to be open to all students on a daily basis with an expectation that we follow the CDC's guidelines for safety, **to the fullest extent possible.** These guidelines have been modified on several occasions, particularly the guidance about the quarantine of students and staff that have been exposed to anyone testing positive for the COVID virus. One of the guidelines is that exposure of a student wearing a mask would only need to quarantine for five days if they developed no symptoms, while exposure of a person without a mask could result in quarantine for ten days. **However**, those students can return to school after five days if they agree to wear a mask the remaining five days.

Our initial communication to parents and staff did not include this option. We also presented a flow chart for parents to follow when considering their child's return to school. We apologize for any misleading information that this material may have caused and are updating our guidance flowcharts. Parents may certainly return their children to class with a mask for the last five days if they are symptom free.

It is the responsibility of the MCPS Administration to implement the policies and procedures that the School Board establishes with as much attention to the requirements of state and federal guidelines that are also in place. The Governor's Executive Order places a significant portion of the responsibility for student's health back in the hands of the parents as it gives them the right to determine if their child shall

wear a mask or not. Masking is one of several options that are recommended to reduce risk of spreading COVID or any other disease. Mecklenburg County schools have taken significant steps to put as many of these practices into place as possible. Other mitigation strategies include:

- We recommend that children 5 and older get vaccinated
- We survey our students each day to determine if they have been exposed to anyone with COVID or are symptomatic. We ask parents to do the same, and we insist that students stay at home if they are.
- We provide and encourage frequent hand-washing
- We have students socially distanced as much as possible
- We have provided air-circulation and filtering systems in classes and rooms throughout each school.

We will continue to use all other resources for health and safety that were addressed earlier in this letter, particularly the surveying of all students at the beginning of each school day to determine their state of health. This is a very important step for all parents to take before they send their child to school.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.