

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Haywood County Schools – School Board Votes for Optional Masking  
Haywood County, North Carolina – July 27, 2021**

On Wednesday, July 21, 2021, Governor Cooper and NC Health and Human Services announced changes in the state Toolkit for schools in conjunction with an expiring executive order. These actions dropped state masking requirements for schools and other locations. Masking will become a local School Board decision effective at 5 p.m. on July, 30, 2021. The updated state Toolkit suggests that masking indoors “should be required” in K-8 schools. However, there is no longer a statewide mask mandate in effect for schools. Local school boards are now responsible for determining when to mask and under what circumstances.

Following the Governor’s press conference on July 21, the Haywood County Schools Board of Education called a Special Called Board Meeting to discuss masking and other topics. The Special Called Meeting on Tuesday, July 27, 2021 included a public comment section and a public health update to assist the Board in considering mask use.

After discussion and consideration, the Board unanimously passed a motion to make masks optional. The motion read, “The Haywood County Consolidated School System following termination of the current mask mandate on July 30, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. will make mask wearing optional for all personnel, students and visitors to schools and facilities in Haywood County Schools.”

The Board’s masking decision does not change previously established procedures for COVID-19 notification, contact tracing and quarantine requirements. Employees and students (parents) are still expected to promptly notify principals or supervisors when they answer “yes” to any of the following questions.

1. Have you had “close contact” with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, or has any health department or health care provider been in contact with you and advised you to quarantine or isolate?
2. Since you were last at school/work, have you had COVID-19 symptoms (fever of 100.4, new loss of taste or smell, etc.)?
3. Since you were last at school/work, have you been diagnosed with COVID-19?

Prompt notification should also occur when a household member:

1. Has a confirmed case of COVID-19
2. Has symptoms (fever of 100.4 or higher, new loss of taste or smell, etc.)
3. Is awaiting COVID-19 test results AND is symptomatic

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