



RUTHERFORD
COUNTY SCHOOLS

SUPERINTENDENT
David M. Sutton, Ed.D.

382 West Main Street
Forest City, NC 28043

BOARD OF EDUCATION
Phillip Morrow, Chair
Rick Ficklin, Vice Chair
Sherry Bright

Phone: (828) 288-2200
Fax: (828) 288-2490

Brandon Gosey
Angel King
Brandi Nanney
Tracy Short

Friday, February 18, 2022

Updated COVID-19 Mitigation Procedures

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Families:

As the week draws to a close, I want to share two important changes to our school system's COVID-19 response, both beginning Monday, February 21, 2022.

School Exclusions for Students and School Employees in Grades K-12

On Thursday, February 10, 2022, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services announced a significant change to the *StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit* (K-12). That change eliminates the requirement for schools to exclude students and school employees in grades kindergarten through twelve on the basis of **exposure** to COVID-19. Earlier today, the *ChildCareStrongNC Public Health Toolkit* was also revised to reflect the same change for students and school employees in all prekindergarten settings.

Under those new guidelines, persons who are **diagnosed** with COVID-19 and persons who demonstrate **symptoms** of COVID-19 must still be excluded from school, but **exposure** to COVID-19 no longer requires exclusion. The new guidelines **do not** distinguish between *exposure settings, vaccination status, or the use (or nonuse) of face coverings*. Exclusion from school based on exposure to COVID-19 is no longer required regardless of those factors. That change begins statewide on Monday, February 21, 2022.

Face Coverings Within the School Environment

During a specially-called meeting earlier this evening, the Rutherford County Board of Education changed its local policy regarding the use of face coverings within the school environment. Beginning Monday, February 21, 2022, face coverings are **optional** for students, school employees, and visitors to all Rutherford County Schools facilities, both

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In compliance with federal law, Rutherford County Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, or military service in its policies, programs, activities, admissions, or employment.

indoors and outdoors, except as otherwise required by federal orders governing **school buses** and **Head Start programs**.

Our school system's *2021-2022 COVID-19 Mitigation Procedures* resource includes additional information about both changes. That resource was updated this evening and is available on our website at www.rcsnc.org.

Thank you, as always, for the encouragement and support you show your children each day, and thank you for your patience and flexibility as we adjust school operations in response to changing conditions. We are grateful for such a strong and resilient school community, and I wish each of you all the best throughout the school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. M. Sutton', with a stylized, cursive script.

David M. Sutton, Ed.D.
Superintendent