

# BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Darryl L. Williams, Ed.D. ♦ Superintendent ♦ 6901 North Charles Street ♦ Towson, MD ♦ 21204

July 28, 2021

Dear BCPS Families and Staff,

After careful consideration and solicitation of feedback from medical experts, including staff from Johns Hopkins, University of Maryland, Baltimore County Department of Health, and in light of the most recent guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the American Academy of Pediatrics, we will be moving to universal masking for all students and staff indoors in schools for the fall of the 2021-2022 school year.

On Tuesday, July 27, 2021, the CDC recommended that everyone in K-12 schools wear a mask indoors, whether they have been vaccinated or not. This includes all students, teachers, staff, and visitors. Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch, Baltimore County Health Officer, states, “We want our children REVVED up (ready, excited, vigilant and vaccinated) for the new school year. Requiring masks is an extra layer of protection for our students, teachers and their families.”

Universal masking will support our overarching goal of keeping students and staff safe as we adapt our mitigation strategies to the changes in the virus and its transmission patterns in our county as well as changes in guidance from public health experts.<sup>1</sup> County Executive Johnny Olszewski, states, “Protecting the health and well-being of our children and educators is a top priority, especially as we approach the beginning of a new school year. With our youngest children not yet able to be vaccinated and with the growing spread of the Delta variant, it’s critically important we take steps to minimize the spread of COVID-19. I applaud the decision by BCPS to adopt the CDC’s latest recommendations, and I encourage every County resident who is eligible to receive a vaccine to do so as soon as possible.”

In addition to monitoring trends in COVID-19 transmission and reviewing updated guidance from federal, state, and local leaders, we have been mindful of the potential impact of quarantine guidelines on student attendance. Data from schools that were open in spring 2021 (including BCPS) demonstrated that masked students rarely transmitted COVID in schools. In consideration of this data, CDC relaxed requirements for quarantine in July 2021. Students who wear masks and are at least three feet apart will not need to quarantine if a classmate develops COVID. Unmasked students within six feet of an infected classmate will need to quarantine for 10 days. Having students universally mask in the classroom will greatly reduce the likelihood that classmates will need to miss school time due to quarantine.

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, July 27, 2021, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Early Release/Vol.70.

Vaccination is still the most effective action we can take to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We continue to urge everyone eligible to get vaccinated. In collaboration with the Baltimore County Department of Health, BCPS will be hosting two COVID vaccination clinics in upcoming weeks:

- August 9, 2021, from 4-7 p.m. at New Town High School
- August 10, 2021, from 4-7 p.m. at Dundalk High School

Pre-registration is not required, and these events are open to students, their family members, and interested community members.

We ask for your continued support to help protect your family and others from COVID-19 by practicing and promoting everyday healthy habits. Students and staff should stay home from school if they are ill, have been diagnosed with COVID, have had close contact with a person with COVID, and if they are awaiting COVID test results.

We want to assure you that we are monitoring the on-going situation closely. Thank you for your continued support.

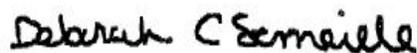
Sincerely,



Darryl Williams, Ed.D.  
Superintendent



Michael J. Zarchin, Ed.D.  
Chief of School Climate and Safety



Deborah C. Somerville  
Director of Office of Health Services