

Hampshire County Board of Education

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Jeffrey Pancione



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September 7, 2021

Parents, Students, and Staff,

It was with great excitement we started a new school year with the hope of returning to a sense of “normalcy” without the requirement of masks. Over the past several weeks, Hampshire County has experienced a surge in COVID-19 related cases. After consulting with local health officials and our head school nurse and reviewing the updated guidance document from the West Virginia Department of Education, the following protocols will go into effect on Wednesday, September 8, 2021.

- All students and staff members will be required to wear face coverings.

Our county Health Department monitors the levels and rate of community transmission along with the status of the DHHR Map each day. Working with the Hampshire County Health Department, the decision has been made to require the use of face covering in our schools and on buses. When the transmission level is ranked in the “substantial” (Orange) or “high” (Red) categories, masks will be required indoors and on buses. When the transmission level is ranked in the “low” (Green) or “moderate” (Yellow or Gold) categories, masks will be highly recommended indoors and on buses but not required.

This is not an easy decision and certainly not what we all hoped for. However, our focus must remain on students and their education. If students and staff are masked, the risk of quarantine and exposure is greatly reduced allowing in-person learning and our educational process to continue. The ultimate goal is to support in-person learning for our students. With a mask requirement in place, the following protocols will be implemented and reduce the number of students being quarantined moving forward:

- Students who have been vaccinated do NOT have to quarantine.
- For schools with a universal mask policy (regardless of DHHR map color) quarantining students, and staff who have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 is NOT required if masks are worn at the point of exposure (including extracurricular activities).

I fully understand the desire to return to normal and not be concerned with wearing masks. We are all tired of COVID. However, we are back to the point where we are all going to have to mask up for a while. I encourage you to focus on the positives of the school year to date. Our staff and students are in school, students are back with their peers and friends, extra-curricular activities are occurring, and we will move forward to keep students in school working collaboratively with our health officials.

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Working together we need to focus on educating our students, keeping our students in school, and keep pressing forward. I pray daily for wisdom and guidance, therefore, I must rely on the expertise and guidance of our health officials. I trust their direction and guidance! I encourage everyone to work together for the children of Hampshire County and continue to focus on the education, safety, and well-being of all.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Pancione, Superintendent