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Dr. Will Hoffman

# Press Release

Contact: Dr. Will Hoffman

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FACE COVERINGS REQUIRED INDOORS AT ALL SCHOOL FACILITIES WHEN STUDENTS ARE SCHEDULED FOR INSTRUCTION UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

MCS administrators and staff have had a tremendous summer of planning and preparation for the 2021-2022 school year. Over the summer, we have updated digital camera systems, we are adding new roofs at Madison High School and Madison Middle School, we have upgraded our HVAC systems, and we have over 1,100 new computers for our students. We also received a \$450,000 grant for new elementary playgrounds thanks to the support of the Dogwood Health Trust and we have hired new counselors, school nurses and teachers, so we can bridge the COVID gap in academics and focus on the social and emotional well-being of our students. We have School Resource Officers assigned to each of our schools. Our number one priority this year is to have our students in school for face to face instruction. Much has changed over the summer months, particularly in relation to COVID 19. When we left school in early June, transmission rates were at a low point, positivity rates were low and the many safety protocols we had been practicing for 15 months were beginning to ease. Based on information received this morning from Madison County Health Officials, in Madison County, we have a 20% positivity rate, and we have over 30 youth in Madison County who have tested positive between the ages of 0-18, with one of our children currently in the ER.

Like all educators, as Superintendent of schools part of my responsibility is to manage risk for our students and staff. The Board has delegated to me the authority to make decisions when the health and safety of our students and staff is at high risk. This is one of those times. One child who is sick or in the hospital is too many. **With this current data, and the sharp uptick in cases and transmission rates, all students, staff, and visitors will be required to wear face coverings indoors at all school facilities when students are scheduled for instruction until further notice**

We are enacting this face-covering requirement due to two key points: 1) COVID cases are rapidly increasing in Madison County and across North Carolina; and 2) Due to the high transmission rates of the Delta Variant, particularly among children, requiring face coverings gives us the greatest chance to keep our students safe and keep our schools open. In our weekly meeting with the Madison County Health Officials, we will revisit the data each Friday and we will make decisions for the following week regarding face coverings based on updated numbers,

school-affected positives, quarantines, and staffing. Our next scheduled meeting will be Friday, August 20.

School administrators will provide additional information regarding athletics and extracurricular activities based on individual school schedules.