

Back to School Safety Protocols

August 2, 2021 - Asheville City Board of Education

Information Current as of August 2, 2021



#StayStrongNC

StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12)

INTERIM GUIDANCE

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NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES

NC Public Health Toolkit (K-12)

Current Public Health Guidance

What we know about COVID-19 in the School Settings

Prevention Strategies

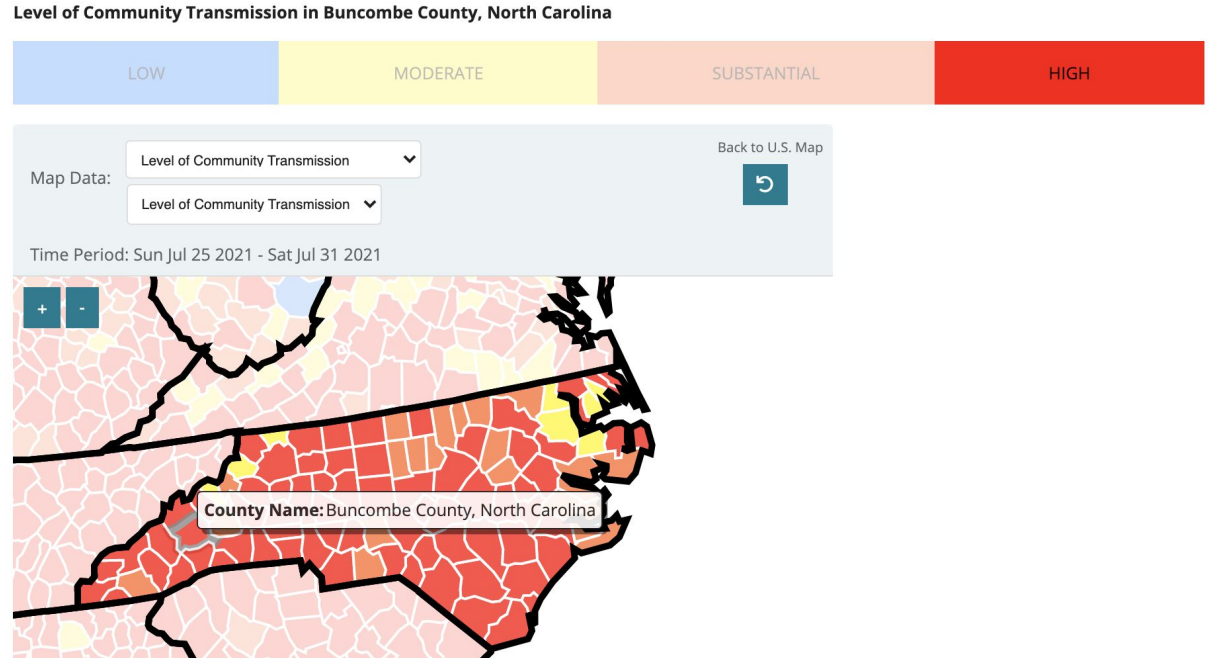
- Should vs. Required
- Could vs. Recommended
- NCDHHS strongly advises that school leaders adopt all the strategies in the SHOULD sections.

We encourage families and staff to use this tool to better understand how to keep our schools safe and healthy as possible.

Information Current as of August 2, 2021

CDC - Level of Community Transmission

- [COVID-19 Integrated County View - covid.cdc.org](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-action/#/county-view)
- This site provides an integrated, county view of key data for monitoring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.



COVID-19 Vaccines / Minimizing Exposures

Vaccination

Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. **(Toolkit Page 2)**

People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are at low risk of symptomatic or severe illness, including hospitalization or death. **(Toolkit Page 7)**

A [growing body of evidence](#) suggests that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are also less likely to have an asymptomatic infection or transmit COVID-19 to others than people who are not fully vaccinated. **(Toolkit Page 7)**

→ → → **Upcoming [Vaccine Events in Buncombe County](#)**

Physical Distancing & Minimizing Exposure

As found of **Page 11** of the Toolkit:

- The CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms, combined with indoor mask wearing by people who are not fully vaccinated, to reduce transmission risk.
- For people who are not fully vaccinated, it is particularly important that face coverings be worn when physical distance cannot be maintained.
- A distance of at least 6 feet is recommended between students and teachers/staff, and between teachers/staff who are not fully vaccinated.

COVID-19 Testing

If a student, teacher or staff member has been deemed a close contact to a positive COVID-19 person or if they self report COVID-19 symptoms:

- ACS will refer individuals to diagnostic testing who have symptoms of COVID-19 or individuals that have had a close contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19.
- ACS does offer free rapid (antigen) testing on-site at school to facilitate quick COVID-19 diagnosis, inform school staff of what students may be able to stay in school, and inform the need for quarantine of close contacts.

Health Screenings

Screening

Asheville City Schools will NO LONGER be conducting daily symptom screenings each and every day. Instead, we are asking families and staff to self monitor for COVID-19 symptoms

Students, teachers and staff who have symptoms of COVID-19, should stay home and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and further care. **(Toolkit Page 14)**

Screening - Staff & Students

	Low Transmission	Moderate Transmission	Substantial Transmission	High Transmission
Students	Students do not need to screen	Offer screening testing for students who are not fully vaccinated at least once a week		
Teachers & Staff	Offer screening testing for staff who are not fully vaccinated at least once a week			

Screening - Athletics

	Low Transmission	Moderate Transmission	Substantial Transmission	High Transmission
<p>High Risk Sports Activities</p> <p>High Risk Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Basketball ● Football ● Wrestling <p>Intermediate Risk Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Soccer ● Volleyball 	<p>Recommend screening testing for high-risk sports and extracurricular activities at least once per week for participants who are not fully vaccinated.</p>		<p>Recommend screening testing for high-risk sports and extracurricular activities twice per week for participants who are not fully vaccinated.</p>	<p>Cancel or hold high-risk sports and extracurricular activities virtually to protect in-person learning, unless all participants are fully vaccinated.</p>
<p>Low Risk Sports Activities</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tennis ● Cross Country ● Track 	<p>Do not need to screen students participating</p>	<p>Recommend screening testing for low- and intermediate-risk sports at least once per week for participants who are not fully vaccinated.</p>		

Handling Possible, Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19

Handling Possible, Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19

Symptoms: **Students, teachers, and staff who have symptoms of COVID-19, should stay home and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care. (Toolkit Page 14)**

Occurrence of any of the symptoms below while a student, teacher, or staff member is at school suggests the person may be referred for diagnostic COVID-19 testing or evaluation.

Fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher)	New loss of taste or smell
Sore Throat	Diarrhea or vomiting
Cough (for people with chronic cough due to allergies or asthma, a change in their cough from baseline)	New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever
Difficulty breathing (for people with asthma, a change from their baseline breathing)	

Handling Possible, Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19

Diagnosed: People presumed to have or are diagnosed with COVID-19 must stay home until they meet the criteria for return to school. Staying home when sick with COVID-19 is essential to keeping COVID-19 infections out of schools and preventing spread to others. **(Toolkit Page 14)**

Exposed: It is also essential for people who are not fully vaccinated to quarantine after a recent close contact to someone with COVID-19. **(Toolkit Page 14)**

Handling Possible, Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19

As of 7/29, the CDC added an exception to the need to quarantine in the close contact definition, excluding students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or clinically compatible illness) where:

- Both students were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting face masks; and
- Other K–12 school prevention strategies (such as universal and correct mask use, physical distancing, increased ventilation) were in place in the K–12 school setting.
- This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

(Toolkit Page 14)

Information Current as of August 2, 2021

**Students, teachers, and staff
who have symptoms of
COVID-19, should stay home and
be referred to their healthcare
provider for testing and care.
(Toolkit Page 14)**

Cleaning, Hygiene & Air Quality

Cleaning and Hygiene

- Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of disease. **(Toolkit Page 19)**

- Cleaning surfaces once a day is usually enough to sufficiently remove potential virus that may be on surfaces. Disinfecting removes any remaining germs on surfaces, which further reduces any risk of spreading infection. **(Toolkit Page 19)**

Water and Ventilation Systems

- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. **(Toolkit Page 21)**
- Consider ventilation system upgrades or improvements and other steps to increase the delivery of clean air and dilute potential contaminants in the school. **(Toolkit Page 21)**
- Take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., sink faucets, drinking fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown. **(Toolkit Page 22)**
 - Locally, Asheville City Schools has determined that drinking fountains spouts will continue to be disabled - we encourage students and staff bring reusable water bottles.

Transportation

Transportation

In alignment with the Toolkit and [CDC](#) requirements, Asheville City Schools will:

- Ensure that all students, teachers, staff, and adult visitors wear face coverings when they are on a bus or other transportation vehicle, unless the person (or family member, for a student) states that an exception applies. **(Toolkit Page 20)**
 - The Toolkit specifies ages 5 & up; however, our Preschool Program has made the local decision to include Pre-K students in the Toolkit recommendations, as it's challenging for staff to enforce separate protocols while in the same school bus.
- Keep windows open while the vehicle is in motion to help reduce spread of the virus by increasing air circulation, if appropriate, safe, and weather permitting. Clean transportation vehicles regularly. **(Toolkit Page 20)**
- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from children and adequate ventilation when staff use such products. **(Toolkit Page 19)**

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

Information Current as of August 2, 2021

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

- ACS will use the Medical Homebound process for any student requesting not to attend school due to medical reason, including those students who have a condition considered high-risk for COVID-19.
- For students who will be out of school for at least a semester, ACS has contracted with a remote learning provider to provide instructional services to students (K-8: Edgenuity, 9-12: NCVPS). This will provide additional support for students above and beyond our typical homebound services.
- Parents should contact their schools for the required paperwork for Homebound services. Schools will also be contacting families that they are aware may have a need for homebound services next school year.
- [Homebound Services Policies & Procedures](#)
- [Remote Learning Provider Information](#)

Campus Guests / Large Gatherings

Limit Campus Guest

Visitors

- No unscheduled visitors to the building during the school day.
- If attending a meeting that includes an invite, guest will check into the main office. Must follow all COVID guidelines.

Volunteers

- No volunteers for first 9 weeks

Outside Organizations

- If part of the curriculum and stays outside (e.x FEAST, Muddy Sneakers)

Afterschool programs

- Allowed with organizations we have a MOU agreeing to follow our COVID protocols (YMCA, BrightIdeas, Roots and Wings, Charlotte Street Kids, ABYSA, IRL, Asheville on Bikes, Parks and Rec, Open Doors, FORTE)

Information Current as of August 2, 2021

Large Gatherings/Field Trips

- Only **assemblies** where 3ft can be maintained for students and 6ft for adults will be considered
- **Meet the teacher/orientation:** Only small gatherings that allow for physical distancing. Schools can organize their meet the teacher/orientation events based on their space and school community.

Field Trips:

- All field trips will follow the procedure for approval
- Outdoor field trips that align to policy are encouraged
- Other field trips will be considered if COVID protocols can be safely followed

Face Coverings

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

The AAP recommends universal masking in school at this time for the following reasons:

- a significant portion of the student population is not eligible for vaccination
- protection of unvaccinated students from COVID-19 and to reduce transmission
- potential difficulty in monitoring or enforcing mask policies for those who are not vaccinated; in the absence of schools being able to conduct this monitoring, universal masking is the best and most effective strategy to create consistent messages, expectations, enforcement, and compliance without the added burden of needing to monitor vaccination status
- possibility of low vaccination uptake within the surrounding school community
- continued concerns for variants that are more easily spread among children, adolescents, and adults

ACS Face Covering

- All **students Pre-K thru 12th Grade** will be required to wear face coverings inside all ACS Campuses (unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit use).
 - The Toolkit specifies ages 5 & up; however, our Preschool Program has made the local decision to include Pre-K students in the Toolkit recommendations, as it's challenging for staff to enforce separate protocols while in the same classroom.
- All **staff**, both school-based and district-wide support, will be required to wear face coverings regardless of their vaccination status.
- All students, Pre-K thru 12th Grade, will be required to wear face coverings **on school buses**.
- Because physical distancing will be maintained, students and staff will not be required to wear face coverings when they're **outside** for recess, PE or when in an outdoor classroom.
 - **Student athletes will be required to wear face coverings when they are not actively engaged in rigorous physical activity.**
- To the greatest extent, physical distancing will be maintained while **actively eating and drinking**

Overview of Recommended ACS COVID-19 Protocols

- ACS will require universal face coverings for all staff and students
Pre-K thru 12th Grade
- Staff and students will maintain physical distancing as much as possible, including during recess
- Families and staff will self monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and stay home when sick, especially with a fever
- Per the health department, quarantine may not be necessary if face coverings and physical distancing are maintained
- Students will no longer exclusively remain in small cohorts
- Schools will not direct the flow of traffic in our hallways as one way or designating certain doors for entrance or exit
- Daily symptom screening will no longer be conducted
- Universal remote learning options will no longer be provided for students unable to be at school due to illness or exposure