



NEWS RELEASE

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Universal masking in schools, Virtual Learning Program topics of this morning's special Board meeting

TOWSON, MD. – Baltimore County Public Schools staff provided a presentation on universal masking in schools and on Virtual Learning Program registration at this morning's special meeting of the Board of Education of Baltimore County.

As a quorum of the Board was not present, no official Board business was conducted, and no Board actions were taken during the meeting.

Dr. Monique Wheatley-Phillip, BCPS chief accountability and performance management officer, offered a presentation regarding the school system's rationale for requiring universal indoor masking for the fall of the 2021-2022 school year for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors in all BCPS schools.

"We are looking forward to having our students back in our classrooms this fall," said BCPS Superintendent Dr. Darryl L. Williams, "but we must acknowledge that the pandemic is not over. We must take the steps that we can to protect the health of our students, staff, and community."

BCPS staff explained that the universal masking decision is aligned with July 27 guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that everyone in K-12 schools wear a mask while indoors regardless of vaccination status. The CDC noted that while "increasing COVID-19 vaccination coverage remains the most effective means to achieve control of the pandemic, additional layered prevention strategies will be needed in the short-term to minimize preventable morbidity and mortality."

According to BCPS staff, the following factors were considered in instituting universal indoor masking in BCPS schools:

- Emerging evidence suggests that fully vaccinated persons who become infected with the Delta variant are at risk for transmitting it to others.
- From July 1 to July 30, the Baltimore County case rate increased from 4.7 (in the CDC's low transmission range) to 39.2 (in the CDC's moderate transmission range). Medical experts have advised BCPS that Baltimore County will likely experience a continued rise in the rate of transmission in August and will likely reach the CDC's substantial transmission range before mid-month.
- Children under the age of 12 are still not eligible for vaccination.

BCPS staff noted that universal mask wearing is just one of the layered prevention strategies the school system is employing, such as encouraging vaccinations, physical distancing, and handwashing. Staff also shared that universal mask wearing in schools has the support of local leaders including Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski and Baltimore County Health Officer Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch.

The universal masking requirement will end as soon as transmission rates and guidance from health experts support that decision.

The meeting concluded with a response to several public inquiries related to registration for the BCPS Virtual Learning Program. BCPS staff said that BCPS families had the opportunity to register for the program during the last two weeks of May. Then, in response to student needs, the registration window was re-opened from June 4 through July 2. This second deadline, staff explained, was necessary to implement and enforce for planning and staffing purposes. BCPS is no longer accepting enrollments at this time.

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[Baltimore County Public Schools](#), the nation's 25th largest school system, is focused on raising the bar and closing gaps to prepare our students for the future. Thanks to innovative and talented leaders, teachers, staff, and students, BCPS celebrates [many honors](#).