

June 28, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

I-SS Anticipates Masks to Be Optional

Governor Roy Cooper's current COVID 19 State of Emergency executive order ends June 30, 2021. As such, Iredell-Statesville Schools does not anticipate any state-wide mandate that students wear masks during the 2021-2022 school year. I-SS will continue to work with local and state health officials on appropriate COVID 19 protocols and recommendations, and we will adjust some of the current COVID protocols, provided these changes do not violate any future requirements ordered by State law or by the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Public Instruction.

If there is a new state-wide mandate requiring students and teachers to wear masks in schools for the 2021-2022 school year, the school district will grant good faith religious exemption requests, provided they are documented, and parents or students follow the appropriate paperwork for filing. In addition, the district will grant exceptions based on documented medical or behavioral reasons preventing a student from wearing a mask. This documentation may be provided by a medical provider or a parent.

In addition, temperature screening and COVID question protocols will be suspended. We will continue to request that parents do not send their children to school if the child is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. We will also continue with strict cleaning protocols in each of our schools.

During the 2020-2021 school year, if a student or employee tested positive for COVID-19, any person in close contact (within 6ft. for 15+ minutes) with the student or employee was asked to quarantine. This resulted in several classrooms and schools being temporarily closed and moved to remote learning during the 2020-2021 school year. The CDC now recommends the "six-foot rule" be reduced to three feet. This potential change in how a "close contact" is defined would result in fewer quarantines and school closures. So far, the data has shown that there is little secondary spread in schools and that students are not transmitting COVID-19 in school buildings.

We ask our stakeholders to contact the Governor and legislators to change the definition of close contact from six feet to the CDC-recommended three feet. Unless this rule changes, we will, under current DHHS guidelines, likely need to quarantine more students and staff, which may result in the temporary closure of classrooms and schools throughout the year.

While we want to provide parents and students information on next school year, it is essential to remember that all protocols are subject to change based on future mandates by the State or federal government.

