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Contact: Courtney Crumley

Email: ccrumley@rcs.rome.ga.us

Phone: 706-506-8868

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rome City Schools Calls Special Board Meeting to Discuss COVID-19 Procedures

ROME, GA— Rome City Schools called a special Board meeting to discuss the emerging concerns surrounding a recent rise in Northwest Georgia COVID-19 infections.

System leadership released two surveys last week giving community members the option to weigh in about COVID-19 procedures and the most current suggestions from the CDC concerning masks or face coverings in schools.

To begin the meeting, The RCS School Board heard from local health care professionals who all addressed the serious nature of the new Delta variant of COVID-19. They voiced their concerns because the new variant of the disease spreads rapidly between hosts and medical reports say it is far more contagious.

Superintendent Louis Byars then presented the Board with feedback from the surveys completed by community members before detailing a three-phase plan explaining how the system would respond to a rise in COVID-19 infections. Byars reported that those community members who completed the mask mandate survey were split roughly down the middle, about 54 percent in favor of the mandate and 46 percent who were against face coverings in classroom settings.

Byars then passed on his concerns that with a new mask mandate, the urgency to be vaccinated would decline based on the incentive to attend school mask-free.

It is because this line of thinking, the system's three-phase plan is aggressive in the response to a rise in infections. The information is as follows:

Phase One:

- RCS highly recommends that faculty, staff and students wear a mask indoors, however it is not required. Drivers and passengers will be required to wear a mask on all RCS school buses.
- Students will eat meals in the cafeteria
- Visitors will be allowed on a limited basis

Phase Two: If one percent of the total school population reports positive COVID-19 cases within a seven-day period, the school will transition to phase two for a minimum of two weeks.

- All faculty, staff and students will be required to wear masks indoors, and on RCS school buses.

- Students will eat ALL meals in the classroom.
- All visitors will be restricted from the school's campus.

Phase Three: Any additional restrictions or changes per school or district will be made as needed based on COVID-19 data.

Rome City Schools, after deliberation and comments from the Board members, passed the system's three-phase plan the system will use a guidance upon return to classes on August 5.

This information will be available on the system's social media pages and on the system website. Parents and students will also be given copies of the three-phase plan on or before the first day of classes.

RCS will continually review updates and provided guidance. Current COVID-19 data will be available on the Rome City Schools website starting August 6, 2021.