



Office of the Superintendent
735 West Main Street • Luray, Virginia 22835
Phone 540.743.6533 • Fax 540.743.7784
www.pagek12.org

Antonia M. Fox, Ed.D., Superintendent

August 20, 2021

Good evening Page County Families and Staff,

Over the past week there has been a lot of different information circulating and we have attempted to communicate that we were working on mask exception forms for parents. This process has obviously taken much more time than we anticipated and has created some confusion in the process.

I need to clarify one piece of information that is inaccurate. Many people, including me, have been using the word exemption when referring to options related to masking. The Health Order issued on August 12 uses the words exception and accommodation, not exemption. Specifically, it states that “any person who declines to wear a mask because of a medical condition or a sincerely held religious objection to wearing a mask in school may request a reasonable accommodation.” This order does not provide for an option where students or staff do not wear a face mask at all.

Additionally, I recognize that some parents have submitted a letter to the division with the expectation that this would automatically allow their child to attend school without a mask. These letters can be a part of the division mask forms which parents can submit but they do not provide a blanket allowance to not wear a mask or use the accommodations provided.

As the division Superintendent, I own this delay and any confusion that has arisen this week. I also know that this message coming to you on a Friday evening is not optimal and may generate some frustration. I simply ask for your grace in knowing that if we could have avoided this timeline we would most certainly have done so.

In order for your child to participate in in-person instruction, they must wear a face mask or have a division approved exception with an accommodation. Not wearing a mask is not an option nor is it an allowable accommodation. Acceptable accommodations are the use of a division approved face shield or the use of a clear face mask. A picture of the division approved face shield is included in this message. PCPS will provide students and staff with the approved face shield.

Parents or Guardians can submit the PCPS Mask Exception and Accommodation Form or a Religious Belief Accommodation Form to request an exception with accommodations if their child has a medical or mental health condition, has a disability, or the family has a religious objection that would prevent them from wearing a face mask. Parents can send the completed and signed form in with their student

or they can submit a scanned copy to this email address infopcps@pagecounty.k12.va.us. Additional details are included on the forms. To access the forms, click on the links below.

[PCPS Mask Exception and Accommodation Form](#)

[Religious Belief Accommodation Form](#)

[Division Approved Face Shield Picture](#)

When your child's exception is approved, school staff coordinate with you. Until the exceptions are approved and accommodations provided, your child will be required to wear a face mask to school. Schools can provide face masks to any student as needed.

Please Note: The federal order requiring masks for transportation, including on school buses and in PCPS owned vehicles, does not grant these same exceptions or accommodations.

If you choose not to have your child use the exception and accommodation that the school division is providing, then you will need to enroll them in our virtual learning program. This program is different from what your children may have experienced last year. By law, PCPS is required to only offer in-person instruction this year, with a virtual option provided on an as needed basis only.

We encourage all parents to talk with their child's principal or counselor before making the decision to move to virtual learning. If you want to complete an application to be considered for the virtual learning program, please submit your child's name [HERE](#). Details about the Virtual Learning Program can be found at the end of this message.

We all hoped that this school year would be one where the pandemic was behind us. Unfortunately, this is not the reality as the Delta variant has thrown us a curveball. As the Superintendent, I have the profound obligation to ensure the health and safety of every single student and staff member each day, all 3,900+ of them. This is not a responsibility that I take lightly. Keeping students in school is a priority and to do that we have to use as many mitigation strategies as possible. We cannot provide as much physical distancing as we did last year as most of our students are back in school, so masking becomes very important.

I recognize that for some parents and guardians, wearing a mask and the issuance of the health order is very, very frustrating. As we begin school, I ask you to please not take your frustrations out on our teachers, staff, and administrators. They are doing what they have been asked to do, and as a division, we are doing what we are required to do.

We want the start of school next week to be one that is uninterrupted and smooth for every single student, parent, and staff member! Sending your child to school maskless in an effort to protest the decisions that have been made may only negatively impact their wellbeing and that of other students. We ask that you sincerely consider this and not impede everyone's ability to focus on academics,

friendships, and getting back to the normal routines of school. Let's work together as partners for our children!

The one thing that I have learned over the past few weeks is that everyone in Page County wants what is best for our children. This is truly an admirable thing and one that is a great source of pride. Please join me in continuing to honor this pride as we begin a new school year.

For any questions that you may have over the weekend, please enter them on this [Google form](#) and we will get back to you as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your continued support and encouragement of our students, teachers, and staff. Here's to a wonderful 2021-2022 school year!

Antonia M. Fox, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Virtual Learning in PCPS

1. Virtual learning will be offered through Edgenuity.
2. Students will learn asynchronously and will have access to a teacher from Edgenuity on a regular basis.
3. All content aligns with the Virginia Standards of Learning and most courses are available to students. Some students may have to select a different elective option.
4. Students will be provided with a PCPS device.
5. Parents need to submit an application which will be reviewed by school division staff to ensure students will be successful learning online.
6. Students need consistent access to the internet or will need to travel daily to one of the available Wi-Fi spots in the county.
7. Students should have a past history of success with learning online both academically and in their participation and attendance.
8. Students will be able to participate in sports and extracurricular activities, but will be required to wear masks when inside the building, and in the locker rooms or other facilities in the school. PCPS is currently not requiring students to wear masks when actively competing on the field or court but we are obligated to do so when competing against school divisions who require a mask when competing or we forfeit the match.
9. Students may return to in-person learning at any point during the school year.

Antonia M. Fox, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Page County Public Schools