



PUTNAM COUNTY SCHOOLS PUBLIC RELEASE

September 24, 2021

At a special meeting this morning, the Putnam County Board of Education took action to supplement a universal masking policy approved by unanimous vote earlier in the week.

Under the universal masking policy enacted on September 20, face coverings are optional for Putnam County students and staff unless, in a school with grades 9-12, 25 percent of students test positive for COVID-19 or, in a school with students in grades K-8, 15 percent of students test positive. Under the policy, once that threshold is met, masks will be mandatory for a school's students and staff for at least five days, at which time the situation will be reviewed.

Expanding on that policy, the Board of Education today adopted measures to further address quarantine protocols and responses to COVID outbreaks. The measures, which take effect at the end of the day on Tuesday, September 28, are intended to maximize the ability of students to attend schools during the pandemic.

The Superintendent of Schools is to carry out the universal masking policy and the measures adopted at today's meeting.

These are the measures approved by the Board of Education at today's meeting:

It is the intent of the Board of Education to comply with laws while promulgating the following regarding the motion for Mandating Masks that was approved by a unanimous vote at the Regular Meeting held on September 20, 2021:

- The policy enacted by the Board on September 20 is intended to optimize the education of our students while following all written mandates of the Putnam County Health Board and Chief Medical Officer;
- It is the Board's Opinion that, in view of the Board's Universal Masking Policy, contact tracing is unnecessary as per DHHR policy outlined in the WVDE School Recovery and Guidance Document updated September 3, 2021. In addition, the WVDE does not list Putnam County Schools as a county where masks are optional. Students and staff not wearing a mask at the point of exposure to a positive COVID-19 person, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, are potentially exposed to PCHD contact tracing and possible quarantining.

- Quarantine shall be in accordance with DHHR written directions/state code. The Putnam County Health Department has the quarantine authority as quarantining is a codified jurisdiction of the Putnam County Health Department. Therefore, Putnam County Schools does not have the authority to quarantine students.
- Employees of the Putnam County Board of Education are not required to perform duties outside regular school hours or required to work overtime to assist the Putnam County Health Department with contact tracing. Putnam County School Employees will not perform contact tracing on behalf of Putnam County Health Department while COVID Universal Mask Mandate policy is in effect.
- Establish a COVID positive reporting system/procedure/mailbox/app that administrators utilize to submit positive students names.
- Utilize one single Putnam County Schools employee that will serve as the reporting agent to the Putnam County Health Department contact. This employee shall be the Superintendent or his designee and may change as situations warrant. This is the only employee authorized to communicate student infection/health information to the Putnam County Health Department concerning COVID positive infections.
- Notifications of COVID positives should be made to the Putnam County Health Department via email/written communication at least by 4:00 pm each school day.
- It is the board's strong preference that, in order to avoid misunderstanding and help ensure compliance, all PCHD recommendations and orders be in written format to pivot from one status to the other.
- The policy passed by the Putnam County Board of Education on September does not preclude anyone from wearing a proper health mask as long as the Putnam County Health Department continues to recommend universal mask wearing.
- As long as individual schools are below 15% threshold for elementary and middle schools and 25% threshold for high schools, no seating charts shall be required or maintained. Once above the threshold the superintendent could direct seating charts at his direction.

The Superintendent may take other necessary actions and may implement practices, including but not limited to mitigation measures that he deems necessary in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, provided such actions and practices are consistent with the rules and policies of the Board.