

COVID-19 and Schools Fact Sheet: The Top 10 Facts Every School District Employee Needs to Know

(source: The ABC Science Collaborative; October 2020)

Fact #1: Strict adherence to the “3 Ws” (wear mask, wash hands, wait 6 feet apart) will greatly mitigate secondary spread of the Coronavirus.

- *Supporting statement: This has been shown in school districts educating hundreds of thousands of students throughout the state. This ‘safe-school’ experience has been shown in school districts that are small (<5,000 students e.g., Mt Airy), mid-sized (5,000-15,000 e.g., Yadkin), and large (>15,000 e.g., Iredell-Statesville and Gaston). In addition, this has been shown in schools educating millions of children worldwide including Australia, Asia, and Europe.*
- *Supporting statement: Failure to adhere to masking will lead to an unsafe work environment and is behavior that is both irresponsible and unacceptable outside of the adapted curriculum.*

Fact #2: If cloth masks and surgical masks that fit over the nose/mouth/chin are used, then distant transmission will be entirely avoided or a rare event.

- *Supporting statement: Based on the data from hundreds of hospital systems across hundreds of thousands of patients and other school districts within North Carolina and the country as well as around the globe. To date, in the public-school setting, early data strongly supports that transmission will be avoided provided that masking is enforced as evidenced in schools with at least 99% mask enforcement.*

Fact #3: Per the CDC, transmission beyond 6’ is possible—likely scenarios where this might occur include singing, aerosolizing medical procedures, and high intensity exercise without a mask.

- *Supporting statement: If masking (cloth masks and surgical masks that fit over the nose/mouth/chin) is strictly enforced and high-risk activities are avoided airborne transmission can be interrupted as evidenced by the data from hundreds of hospital systems across hundreds of thousands of patients and other school districts. Early data strongly supports that transmission will be avoided provided that masking is enforced in the public-school setting.*

Fact#4: N95 Masks are not necessary in the typical public school and district worksite settings.

- *Supporting statement: Successful school districts are not using N95 masks. In addition, hospitals and clinics provide strong supporting evidence to support this statement. The following circumstances are similar between private clinics, free clinics, health department clinics, and schools:*
 1. *Employees and children are asymptomatic (this will be provided by attestation in schools and local clinics require the same attestations) and provide routine medical care to patients*
 2. *Children wear a cloth mask*
 3. *Employees wear a medical or cloth mask*

Then transmission has been limited primarily to breaks in mask protocol

Fact #5: Whether the percent of positive cases (one of the 4 metrics the district is monitoring) is above or below 5%, assume that there will always be infected people in every school and work site every day.

- *Supporting statement: Regardless of the amount of the number of people infected per day in the county, school policies should assume that there will always be infected people in every building throughout the 2020-2021 school year. This is a hallmark of infection control.*

Fact #6: HEPA filters and ventilation have not been shown to reduce or eliminate transmission of the Coronavirus. Even in the setting of poor ventilation, masking is demonstrated to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

- *Supporting statement: There are no scientific data to support that the use of HEPA filters and ventilation work to prevent spread of COVID-19. To date, interventions around indoor ventilation (i.e. opening windows) have not been shown to be helpful to prevent the transmission of the Coronavirus if people are masking. A cloth or surgical mask is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of the virus.*

Fact #7: Time spent in large or small groups in enclosed spaces should be minimized without masks or when compliance to mask wearing is less than 100% or cannot be ensured.

- *Supporting statement: There is a higher risk of transmission when people are unmasked.*

Fact #8: A viable vaccine is not projected to be available for widespread use in children until 2022-2023.

- *Supporting statement: As of the end of calendar year 2020, no child younger than 16 has been enrolled in a vaccine trial. This testing will need to occur to show that the vaccine is safe in younger children prior to widespread uptake of a vaccine in school-aged children.*

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Fact #9: Success is possible!

- *Supporting statement: In districts that adhere to masking, clusters (5 or more cases at a school) are infrequent (see chart below).*

Clusters in North Carolina Traditional Public Schools

Districts	Clusters	Collaborative Status	Num Clusters	Staff	Students	Population (thousands)
Buncombe	Elementary	No	1	5	0	24
Craven	High School	No	1	0	5	14
Craven	High School	No	1	0	5	14
Macon	High School	No	1	5	2	4
Onslow	High School	No	1	4	1	27
Richmond	Elementary	No	1	3	3	7
Robeson	Elementary	No	1	5	0	23
Wilkes	High School	No	1	4	16	9
Davidson	High School	Yes	1	2	4	19
Gaston	Elementary	Yes	1	5	0	31
Gaston	Elementary	Yes	1	4	1	31
Moore	Elementary	Yes	1	1	5	13
Sampson	Elementary	Yes	1	1	5	8
Total			13	39	47	

Total source population: ~500k students over 9 weeks (Aug 10th-October 10th)

<5,000 Craven

5,000-10,000 Sampson, Wilkes

>10,000 Buncombe, Gaston, Onslow, Robeson

Fact # 10: Secondary transmission is limited in districts that mask. • *Supporting statement: See chart below.*

Example School district
Successful quarter
Many schools 0 infection
Most schools 0 secondary transmission
2 Clusters
15 schools—0 cases
20 schools—1 case
7 schools—2 cases
4 schools—3 cases
1 school—4 cases
3 schools—5 cases
2 schools—6 cases
2 schools—7 cases
1 school—8 cases
1 school—9 cases (*1 case/1,000/week)

COVID 19 Confirmed Cases, Week of August 10	30 Aug	17 Aug	24 Aug	31 Aug	7 Sep	14 Sep	21 Sep	28 Sep	Total
DASHBROOK HIGH				1	1		1		3
DBELMONT CENTRAL ELEMENTARY						1			1
DBELMONT MIDDLE					1		1		2
DBESSMER CITY CENTRAL ELEMENTARY						1			1
DBESSMER CITY HIGH				2	1				3
DBOSTON EARLY COLLEGE HIGH									0
DBESSMER CITY PRIMARY								1	1
DW. BLAINE BEAM INTERMEDIATE									0
DBROOKSIDE ELEMENTARY	1						1	1	3
DCARR ELEMENTARY			1						1
DCATARA HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY									0
DCHEPEL GROVE ELEMENTARY					1				1
DCHERRYVILLE HIGH						2	4	1	7
DCHERRYVILLE ELEMENTARY	1				1				2
DWARDICK ACADEMY									0
DCOSTNER ELEMENTARY					1				1
DSTUART W. CRAMER HIGH				1		1			2
DCRAMERTON MIDDLE			1			1		3	5
DEAST GASTON HIGH								5	5
DSADLER ELEMENTARY									0
DWEBB STREET					1	2	2	1	6
DFORESTVIEW HIGH	1		1	1	1	5	1	2	9
DGARDNER PARK ELEMENTARY					1	1		1	3
DGASTON COUNTY VIRTUAL ACADEMY									0
DGRIFER MIDDLE						1			1
DHAWKS NEST STEAM ACADEMY									0
DHIGHLAND SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY			1					1	2
DHOLBROOK MIDDLE					1				1
DHUNTER HUSS HIGH				1					1
DPAISE PRIMARY						1	1		2
DJOHN CHAVIS MIDDLE							2	2	4
DKUSER ELEMENTARY								1	1
DBESSMER CITY MIDDLE			2						2
DLINGERFELDT ELEMENTARY									0
DLOWELL ELEMENTARY									0
DMCCANNVILLE ELEMENTARY									0
DMOUNT HOLLY MIDDLE							1		1
DNDW HOPE ELEMENTARY								1	1
DNORTH BELMONT ELEMENTARY									0
DNORTH GASTON HIGH	1	1		1		2		3	6
DPRINCEWOOD ELEMENTARY			1						1
DPLEASANT RIDGE ELEMENTARY		2	1		1		1	1	6
DRAWNIN ELEMENTARY									0
DROBINSON ELEMENTARY				1					1
DSHERWOOD ELEMENTARY									0
DH.H. BEAM ELEMENTARY						1			1
DSOUTH POINT HIGH			1			2	2	2	7
DSOUTHWEST MIDDLE			1	1					2
DSPRINGFIELD ELEMENTARY									0
DSTANLEY MIDDLE						1			1
DTRYON ELEMENTARY								1	1
DW.A. BESS ELEMENTARY				1					1
DW.C. FRIDAY MIDDLE					1			1	2
DWOODCHILL ELEMENTARY									0
DYORKCHESTER MIDDLE	1		1				1		3
DCENTRAL OFFICE (includes all central office departments/buildings)	1								1