**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Haywood County Schools: Board Adopts Masking Plan Based on Positive Case Rates**

**Haywood County, North Carolina – August 21, 2021**

The Haywood County Schools’ Board of Education held an Emergency Meeting on Saturday, August 21, 2021. The meeting was held to address the large numbers of isolations and quarantines connected to the first two days of school when masks were optional, but highly recommended. The number of isolations and quarantines, significant public feedback and collaboration with Haywood County Health and Human Services led the Board to adopt a plan that adjusts masking policy based upon weekly averages of positive COVID-19 cases.

The plan uses a traffic light concept with (1) required masking on the “red” light (2) optional masking on the “yellow” light and (3) mask free on the “green light.” The formula is based upon the average number of new positive cases per day on a weekly basis. A visual with descriptions accompanies this press release.

Currently, Haywood County is at the required masking or “Mask Up” level. When the county is at the required masking level, masks are required indoors for all students, staff and visitors. Masks are required outdoors when social distancing is not possible.

“We appreciate the work and collaboration of our public health partners in developing this case-based masking plan,” said Dr. Bill Nolte, Superintendent. “Using this plan should help reduce isolations and quarantines for students and staff. This should keep more of us in in-person learning which is important for academic success and social-emotional well-being.”

“Our first priority is the safety of our students, faculty, and staff as they continue to participate in

in-person learning. We recognize that the situation is ever-changing and we have to overcome and adapt,” said Sarah Henderson, Public Health Director. “Adopting this plan allows us to see the

progress in our community and adjust as needed. This plan gives us an end goal and something to

work toward.”

**Haywood County Schools**

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