

2021-2022 MICS COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols

Updated December 13, 2021

In accordance with the recommendations of the North Carolina Strong Schools Toolkit released on December 7, 2021, MICS will implement updated protocols in support of maximizing learning while maintaining student and staff safety. These protocols will be reviewed throughout the school year in response to state and county updates regarding recommended practices.

Cloth Face Coverings

The school will...

- Require all children and staff in grades K-12th grade to wear face coverings consistently when indoors.
- Require passengers and staff in all grades K-12 to wear a face covering on buses, vans, and other group school transportation, regardless of vaccination status.
- Collect and maintain COVID-19 vaccination documentation from individuals (students, staff, etc.) who are fully vaccinated to ensure proper administration of related health protocols.
- Share guidance and information with teachers, staff, students, and families on the proper use, wearing, removal, and cleaning of cloth face coverings, such as CDC's guidance on wearing and removing cloth face masks and CDC's use of cloth face coverings.
- Provide masks to those students who need them (including on buses), such as students who forgot to bring their mask or whose families are unable to afford them.
- Allow staff that are fully vaccinated to have the option to remove face coverings in private settings apart from students and families, including administrative buildings and empty classrooms.
- Facilitate and document exceptions to face coverings in accordance with the NC Strong Schools Toolkit.
- When community transmission levels in Gaston County decline to "low" levels as defined by the CDC for at least 7 consecutive days, face coverings become optional for everyone. The school will continue to implement face covering protocols described above when Gaston County is at "high", "substantial" or "moderate" levels as defined by the CDC.

Physical Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

The school will...

- Maintain a minimum of three (3) feet of distance between K-12 students who are not fully vaccinated within school settings to the greatest extent possible without excluding students from full-time, in-person learning.
- Maintain a minimum of six (6) feet between adults (teachers/staff/visitors) and students and between adults (teachers/staff/visitors) who are not fully vaccinated within school settings to the greatest extent possible.
- Ensure indoor mask wearing by people who are not fully vaccinated to reduce transmission risk.
- Follow the recommendations outlined in Interim Guidance for Administrators and Participants of Youth, College & Amateur Sports Programs.
- Mark 3 feet of spacing to remind students (K-5) to stay 3 feet apart in lines and at other times when they may congregate.
- Allow visitors and volunteers to resume normal activities if they follow the same protocols as staff and students.

Testing and Handling Possible, Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19

The school will...

- Refer individuals to diagnostic testing who have symptoms of COVID-19 or disclose recent known close contact to a person with COVID-19.
- Have staff perform self-monitoring of symptoms.
- Have families conduct home-based symptom screening for students, following typical school policies to keep children at home when ill. Recommend that families refer children to diagnostic testing who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19.
- Immediately isolate symptomatic individuals to a designated area at the school.
- Require symptomatic persons to wear a cloth face covering or a procedure mask while waiting to leave the facility or be tested.
- Require school nurses or dedicated school staff who provide direct patient care to wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and perform hand hygiene after removing PPE.
- Ensure symptomatic students remain under visual supervision of a staff member who is at least 6 feet away.
- Have a plan for how to transport an ill student or staff member home or to medical care.
- Refer to diagnostic testing individuals who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 at school or disclose recent known close contact to a person with COVID-19.
- Implement cleaning and disinfecting procedures following CDC guidelines.
- Utilize NCDHHS and the CDC quarantine guidance.
- Enforce that staff and students disclose and stay at home or go home if:
 - They are showing COVID-19 symptoms, until they meet criteria for return described in the NC Strong Schools Toolkit
 - They have tested positive for COVID-19, until they meet criteria for return described in the NC Strong Schools Toolkit
- Report to local health authorities any suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases among children and staff (as required by NCGS § 130A-136).
- Implement the approved school Contact Tracing Plan, OR, If directed by Local Health Department, school administrators coordinate with health officials to provide contact information for or notify close contacts of a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case among staff, students, and families while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA, NCGS § 130A-143, and all other state and federal laws.
- Adhere to the CDC antigen algorithm included in the NC Strong Schools Toolkit for interpretation of antigen tests for allowing a student or staff member to return to school.
- Post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who have been symptomatic with fever and/or cough not enter.
- Educate students, families, teachers, and staff about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, when they should stay home, and when they can return to school.

Cleaning and Hygiene

The school will...

- Provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (e.g., soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for safe use by staff and older children, paper towels, and tissues) in alignment with the StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance (K-12) for recommended quantities of infection control supplies and ordering information.
- Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the safe use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol by staff and older children.
- Clean surfaces once a day, prioritizing high-touch surfaces. If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, clean and disinfect the space using an EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19). Ensure safe and correct use

and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including securely storing and using products away from children, and allowing for adequate ventilation when staff use such products.

- Encourage staff and students to cough and sneeze into their elbows, or to cover with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Provide hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) at every building entrance and exit, in the cafeteria, and in every classroom, for safe use by staff and older students.

Transportation

- Ensure that all students ages 5 years and older, and all teachers, staff, and adult visitors wear face coverings when they are on a bus or other transportation vehicle, documented exceptions notwithstanding.
- Enforce that if an individual becomes sick during the day, they do not use group transportation to return home and follow protocols outlined above.
- Enforce if a driver becomes sick during the day, they follow protocols outlined above and not return to drive students until they meet criteria to return.
- Keep windows open while the vehicle is in motion to help reduce spread of the virus by increasing air circulation, if appropriate, safe, and weather permitting.
- Clean transportation vehicles regularly. Children should not be present when a vehicle is being cleaned.
- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from children and adequate ventilation when staff use such products.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces in the vehicle (e.g., surfaces in the driver's cockpit, hard seats, arm rests, door handles, seat belt buckles, light and air controls, doors and windows, and grab handles) prior to morning routes and prior to afternoon routes.
- Keep doors and windows open when cleaning the vehicle and between trips to let the vehicles thoroughly air out.
- Clean equipment including items such as car seats and seat belts, wheelchairs, walkers, and adaptive equipment being transported to schools.
- Create a plan for getting sick students home safely if they are not allowed to board the vehicle.
- Provide hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) to support healthy hygiene behaviors on all school transportation vehicles for safe use by staff and older children.

Water and Ventilation Systems

The school will...

- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods.
- Ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., sink faucets, drinking fountains) are safe to use.
- Observe other Water and Ventilation System recommendations listed in the NC Strong Schools Toolkit.

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

The school will...

- Include possible accommodations on health-related plans to limit risk for exposure for students with special health care needs (e.g., Individual Healthcare Plans, Individual Education Programs, Section 504 Plans).