



Bristol Tennessee City Schools

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August 19, 2021

Dear BTCS Families and Staff,

Our students, staff, and families experienced numerous challenges last year dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. As we approached the 2021-2022 school year, we eagerly anticipated a return to near normal operations. Unfortunately, just three weeks into the school year, the pandemic is yet again presenting significant challenges.

With the quick rise in COVID-19 cases due to the Delta variant, we recognize the need to strengthen our efforts throughout the district to mitigate the spread of the virus in our schools. As a result, we are also putting in place measures that will allow us to implement temporary protocols should they be deemed necessary for locations in our district experiencing a significant number of cases. This “triage” approach to evaluating needs in our district will allow us to limit disruptions to person-to-person learning for as many students as possible while keeping our students and staff as safe as possible. One of the temporary protocols for schools or areas with significant case numbers will be mandatory masking for students and staff.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends universal indoor masking in K-12 educational settings and emphasizes the importance of wearing masks to reduce transmission of COVID-19 in schools. Many school-aged children are not yet eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, leaving them more susceptible to infection. Therefore, BTCS COVID-19 Protocols continue to strongly recommend that all students and staff wear masks inside all our school buildings. In the event that an individual school is identified by the district administration and the Bristol Tennessee Board of Education as having a significant number of positive cases or community spread within the school, BTCS will expand the protocols and require masks for all staff and students in that particular school to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 for an identified period of time. These measures are designed to be temporary until significant decreases are evidenced by a reduction in positive cases.

Below is a summary of the active COVID-19 positive cases in our schools as of today. As you can see, we have had fewer cases in our elementary schools and more cases in our middle school and high school. Furthermore, there is a significant number of cases and evidence of spread within Tennessee Middle School. You can always access current COVID-19 positive cases on our dashboard located on our website www.btcs.org.

School	Current Total Active Cases
Anderson Elementary	3
Avoca Elementary	8
Fairmount Elementary	3
Haynesfield Elementary	3
Holston View Elementary	3
Tennessee Middle School	46
Tennessee High School	20

Therefore, **students and staff at Tennessee Middle School will be required to wear masks beginning Monday, August 23, through Friday, September 10.** The requirement may be extended beyond September 10 as case numbers continue to be evaluated. Pursuant to Governor Lee's Executive Order No. 84, of August 16, 2021, parent(s)/guardian(s) have the option to opt their child out of any requirements to wear face coverings in schools.

The opt-out form for TMS parents/guardians to complete can be found [here](#). Please submit the opt-out form no later than **Sunday, August 22**. If you require a paper copy, please contact the school office at (423) 652-9449. If you do not return the opt-out form, your child will be expected to wear a mask to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Masks will be available in each classroom if needed. As I have stated numerous times in the past 18 months, I firmly believe the best place for our students to learn is in our classrooms with our teachers. To keep our students in school, it is imperative we all work together to implement the measures known to be effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19: masking, social distancing where possible, and frequent hand washing. You and your eligible child can also take advantage of an opportunity to be vaccinated on August 28, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Tennessee High School. It takes all of us to do these things to make a difference!

I am thankful to our school board for their leadership and support throughout this pandemic, especially as we attempt to navigate this latest challenge. In their Monday, August 16 meeting, several members of the Bristol Tennessee Board of Education expressed regret that they no longer have local control to make decisions based on the needs of our community in light of Governor Lee's Executive Order. However, the board and I remain committed to doing what we believe is in the best interest of our students. We know that adjustments will continue to be necessary as needs arise. The good news is that we have overcome these challenges before, and I know that together we will overcome them once again. We are #BTCSBetterTogether!

Sincerely,



Annette Tudor, Ed.D.
Director of Schools