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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Health, Safety Top Priority as Students Return to Schools

STAUNTON, Va., JANUARY 13, 2021 — With a return to in-person learning scheduled for Jan. 19, Staunton City Schools (SCS) is releasing a summary of health and safety protocols for families, students and the public to help everyone understand the mitigation measures in place to keep our schools safe.

These health and safety measures have been developed in coordination with the Virginia Department of Health. They are also based on the guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control, Virginia Department of Education, and the American Pediatric Association.

“These health and safety guidelines have been proven highly effective in the prevention of the spread of COVID-19, and have resulted in very few outbreaks in the school setting when strictly followed,” said Dr. Garrett Smith, superintendent of Staunton City Schools. “We will make every effort to ensure we maintain vigilance in keeping with these guidelines for the safety of everyone who enters our schools.”

Detailed instructional, virus mitigation, and health and safety plans are available on the [SCS website](#).

Parent & Guardian Responsibilities

Parents and guardians are the first line of defense to keep COVID-19 out of our schools.

- Keep your child(ren) at home if they’ve had a fever in the last 24 hours or if anyone in your household has been exposed to a COVID-19 positive person.
- Keep your child(ren) at home when not feeling well and notify the school.
- Notify the school if you or someone in your home has been exposed to or is diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Provide your child(ren) with a clean face covering for school each day.

SCS Health & Safety Mitigation Measures

SCS has distributed medical-grade PPE in all schools for the protection of students and staff. The following mitigation measures are also being implemented:

Face Coverings

- Everyone is required to wear a mask at all times in all school buildings.
- All transportation staff will wear masks when transporting students in buses and school vehicles.
- Families should contact their school nurse with any specific questions regarding wearing masks.

Temperature Checks

- Clinic staff will organize temperature check routines for all students and staff, and all visitors must undergo a temperature check.

Social Distancing

- Classrooms, buses and hallways have been measured to maximize physical distancing, and six-foot social distancing will be used in classrooms and hallways.
- Teachers and classroom staff will establish distancing visuals using tape, stickers, etc., to help students maintain social distancing and plan activities to keep students in the same group as much as possible.
- Students will be positioned six feet apart when removing their mask to eat at mealtimes.
- Outdoor learning spaces will be raised at each school to help maintain distancing.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- Free-standing hand sanitizers will be available in hallways, and hand sanitizer available in all classrooms.
- No-touch toilets and sinks are being installed in all school buildings to limit touched surfaces.
- Air purifiers have been installed in every classroom to support healthy air quality.
- School meals will be pre-packaged to limit the handling of food by school nutrition staff.
- Teachers and classroom staff will remind students to sanitize their hands before and after leaving their desks, before meals and when moving to new locations throughout the day.

Disinfecting & Sanitation

- Custodial staff will sanitize all high-traffic areas every hour, empty trash receptacles frequently throughout the day and immediately after meals, and thoroughly clean the entire school building after dismissal using CDC guidance.
- Teachers and classroom staff will wipe down all classroom surfaces and technology materials.

Bus Safety

- HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filters, which trap 99.7% of small particles, have been installed in all Staunton school buses. SCS is one of few school divisions in the state to do so.
- Two additional buses have been purchased to reduce the number of students on buses.
- Transportation staff will maintain a seating chart that minimizes students passing one another when loading and unloading a bus.
- Bus windows will be kept open whenever practical.
- Students must wear their face covering at the bus stop and during their ride.

Virus Notifications

- Families and staff will be notified when there's been potential and known direct exposure to COVID-19 by email, School Messenger, Remind app, and phone.
- SCS will maintain contact tracing in collaboration with the local health department as required.
- Designated school staff will work with the local health department to monitor virus transmission in the community and determine which conditions trigger a reduction in in-person classes.

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