

Masks required if 3-week average of COVID cases above 20 in schools

The Alexander County Board of Education met on Tuesday, October 13, at the Central Office. Among topics presented was a new procedure to determine the use of face masks as a COVID-19 precaution for students and teachers.

Katie Hanshaw, Amy Robinson, Christa Roseberry, and Shari Wetherspoon made public comments regarding the board's decision to allow parents to make their own decisions about masking. All four urged the Board to let masking be optional for students.

The Board considered a proposed procedure (not policy) to link the requirement for masks in classrooms to the number of current COVID cases. Policy No. 4231/5021/7263 - Face Coverings was ultimately approved by the Board in a 5-2 vote, with those voting in favor being Chairman Harry Schrum, Vice Chairman David Odom, Scott Bowman, Matt Cooksey, and Brigette Rhyne. Members Ramie Robinson and Marty Loudermilt voted against the procedure.

This plan is designed to move the school system in and out of face covering usage based on the average number of positive COVID-19 cases each week.

The Face Covering Metric will be one of the two following scenarios:

a. *Mask Required* - Mask will be required when the number of positive cases in the school system is greater than 20 for a three-week rolling average.

b. *Mask Optional* - Mask will not be required when the number of positive cases in the school system is 20 or less for a three-week rolling average.

The superintendent will receive information on the number of positive cases in the school system each week. The data from the last three weeks school was in session will be used for the rolling average.

The superintendent or designee will notify parents and students if face masks will be required for the week through the school system website, social media, and call system.

This policy will remain in effect for the 2021-2022 school year. At least once a month, the board will review this policy and consider the need for modifications.

Chairman Schrum noted that on the choice of 20 cases as the tipping point for masks, the schools' COVID policy council had asked for metric guidance

from the Alexander County Government COVID Committee. However, the County group met twice and declined to give the school system a firm number. The number 20 was settled upon after looking at Haywood County and other area's policies.

The number of cases of COVID-19 in Alexander County Schools was 20 as of Friday, October 8, 2021. This data came the day after the council settled upon 20 as the metric.

The board continued the mandate for masks in schools and on campus through the next school board meeting.

In other school news: **Auditors' Report for Year Ended June 30, 2021**

Michael Wike of Anderson Smith & Wike PLLC presented the year-end auditor's report indicating a clean audit for the period ending June 30, 2021. This is the highest level of assurance given in the financial report.

Testing and Accountability Update

Testing and Accountability Director Mrs. Jessica Anderson began the report by reminding everyone that ACS had proficiency scores in 2018-2019, no scores in 2019-2020, and modified scores for 2020-2021. All of the state proficiency scores dropped.

Principals' Month

Dr. Hefner asked everyone to celebrate National Principals Month, which recognizes the essential role that principals have in making a school great. Principals are among the hardest working yet often least recognized individuals in education. Principals set the academic tone for their schools, and it is their vision, dedication, and determination that provide the mobilizing force for achieving student success. Each October, we seek to honor these unsung heroes for their tireless efforts to pursue excellence in education. National Principals Month is a widely recognized celebration. The theme this year is Great Schools Have Great Principals.

New ACS COVID Dashboard

Dr. Hefner showcased the new ACS COVID dashboard that will be updated weekly. The dashboard can be found at <http://www.alexander.k12.nc.us/coviddashboard>.

LETRS Professional Development

Dr. Hefner introduced the requirements of the Science of Reading or LETRS training. This training requires two years for

K-5, ESL, EC resource teachers, and instructional coaches. An additional requirement is one year of training for Pre-K teachers and administrators.

"This training is very time-intensive, and this spring consists of 8 modules (60-90 minutes per module), approximately 15 hours of assigned reading, a full day of synchronous training, and 6-8 hours of classroom work and reflection. There is not any additional time to do this training. The Leadership Team has

revisited the elementary PD plan and eliminated all PD not currently a legislative requirement. As you are aware, due to calendar restrictions, we must start and end by a certain date. We could consider hiring subs to do this training, but it involves 329 teachers at the elementary level alone. With the shortage of substitutes, we are already stretched thin. Members of the Leadership Team met with the elementary calendar committee members this afternoon and came up

with three possibilities for calendar changes. These options will be presented to staff Wednesday afternoon, and schools will rank order their preferences and share information with the Leadership Team. The most popular option will be presented to the BOE at the November meeting for your approval. We are required to turn in our dates and plans to Voyager Sopris. The calendar committee will meet earlier in the spring of next semester to draft a calendar for the

2022-23 school year that will better support this training," stated Dr. Hefner.

Sponsorship of Alexander County Public Education Foundation Sports Hall of Fame

The Board of Education members approved a \$5,000 sponsorship of the Sports Hall of Fame based on the request presented by Brigette Rhyne, ACPEF President.

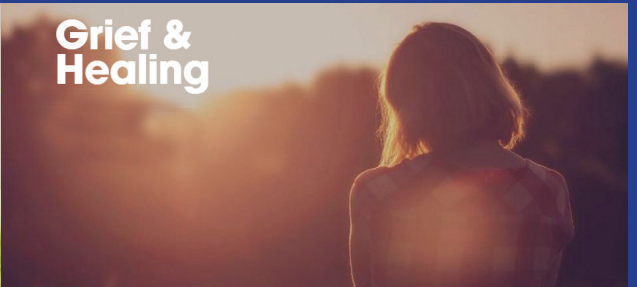
The next meeting of the Board of Education is slated for Tuesday, Nov. 9, at 6:00 p.m. at the Central Office.



ANNOUNCING . . .



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Ross named Director of Instruction at CVCC's Alexander Center

Catawba Valley Community College is increasing its commitment to the Alexander County area it serves, announcing that Donna Ross has been named the Director of Instruction at the college's Alexander Center for Education (ACE).

Ross previously served at CVCC as the Department Head of Humanities.

In this new role with the Alexander Center, Ross serves the instructors at ACE and provides needed support, answers procedural questions including those related to web attendance and Blackboard, provides staff development opportunities, and continually assesses resources needed to achieve student success.

She will also facilitate communication between the Alexander Early College High School administration and CVCC instructors assigned to deliver instruction.

"This communication should result in a more efficient program with a continued focus on student success as our primary goal," Ross said.

Furthermore, Ross will be involved in planning, bringing events typically hosted on CVCC's main campus to the Alexander County service area.

These types of events started in September when students were invited to attend a virtual presentation by Jason Vance entitled, "Kentucky Pack Horse Librarians and Their Scrapbooks." This presentation was aligned with this year's Interdisciplinary Read — "The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek" by Kim Michele Richardson.

"This is an effort to make our Alexander Center offerings mirror those found on main campus," Ross said. "I am excited to be a part of this new endeavor, and I look forward to working with the citizens of Alexander County to enhance educational offerings and opportunities."

For more info, visit www.cvcc.edu/about_us/Campus-Locations/alexander_Center/index.cfm.



ROSS

When is a bank more than a bank?



Shown left to right: Kim Wilcox, Ed Payne, Robin Bumgarner, Carrie Lackey, Sherri Russell, Brenda Watson, and Iris Millsaps.

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