NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Update on Guidance for K12 Settings
(Effective June 24, 2022, Updated August 18, 2022)

School leaders are strongly encouraged to continue implementing a layered prevention strategy to reduce the risk of COVID in school settings. Promoting vaccination, implementing a testing strategy, ensuring students and staff know to stay home when they are sick, ventilation and hygiene all remain critical tools to slow the spread and lower the risk of COVID-19 in our communities.

As of June 23, 2022, NCDHHS has sunset the StrongSchools NC Public Health Toolkit. Going forward, school administrators, staff, and families should now refer to the CDC's Operational Guidance for K12 Schools for information on how to lower risk of COVID-19 in school settings.

As we transition from the StrongSchools Toolkit to the CDC guidance, highlights of policies for schools include:

- It is no longer recommended that schools require staff to report their vaccination status and participate in a screening program, if they are unvaccinated
- Masks are recommended at high CDC COVID-19 community levels and also in some other specific situations, including for individuals following exposure or after completing isolation
- It is no longer recommended that schools implement physically distancing strategies (such as keeping students 3ft or 6ft apart)
- Universal contact tracing is not recommended in K12 settings
- Testing, Ventilation and Cleaning remain important layers of protection

While the StrongSchools Toolkit will no longer be in effect, NCDHHS will continue to update and share supplemental materials to help school leaders plan for the upcoming school year. These materials include the Procedures for Response to COVID-19 Cases in K12 Schools, K12 COVID-19 Testing Program Guidance, and Vaccine Operational Guidance for Schools. These documents will provide additional information to help schools operationalization the recommended actions in the CDC Guidance. All resources are available on the NCDHHS Guidance Website.