



WESLACO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
THE RIGHT CHOICE

Dr. Cris Valdez
Interim Superintendent of Schools



Board of Trustees

Armando Cuellar, Jr., *President* - Dr. Jaime Rodriguez, *Vice President* - Jesse Trevino, *Secretary*
Marcos De Los Santos - Andrew Gonzalez - Isidoro Nieto - Jaclyn Sustaita

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Meeting:
Place:
Location:
Date:
Time:

EMERGENCY MEETING

WISD Board Room/Virtual
319 W. Fourth Street
August 13, 2021
5:05 P.M.

THIS MEETING WAS POSTED ONLINE FOR AT LEAST 72 HOURS AS PERMITTED BY THE SUSPENDED PORTIONS OF THE TEXAS OPEN MEETINGS ACT AS APPROVED BY GOVERNOR ABBOTT. THE MEETING WAS LIVESTREAMED AT THE FOLLOWING WEB LINK: <https://youtu.be/GtZ0D3lBCwk>

MINUTES

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Armando Cuellar, Board President.

II. Establishment of a Quorum

A full quorum was established. The following board members were present:

Armando Cuellar, President
Dr. Jaime Rodriguez, Vice President
Jesse Trevino, Secretary
Marcos De Los Santos, Trustee
Andrew Gonzalez, Trustee
Isidoro Nieto, Trustee

III. Public Comments

The public had the opportunity to participate in public comments by registering no later than 4:30 p.m. at the following web link: <https://www.wisd.us/superintendentboard/new-page>.

>Corina Braught, 1201 Ambrosia Drive, Weslaco, Texas.

Mrs. Braught's husband addressed the Board regarding the following concerns:

- Will students who have asthma be expected to wear a mask all day at school?
- What kind of protocols are going to be in place for contact tracing and reporting positive cases to parents?

- He has seen information on social media that schools will no longer do any contact tracing or reporting to parents.
- He has not seen any information on contact tracing or reporting to parents on the district's website.

As a parent, Mr. Braught would like to be notified if anyone in his child's classroom has tested positive for Covid.

IV. Discussion and Possible Action for the Board to Consider Hidalgo County Mask Mandate for All Schools in the County

This afternoon, the Hidalgo County Local Health Authority issued an Order for all public school systems related to facial coverings 21-001. The Order was issued by Ivan Melendez, M.D.

Dr. Cris Valdez, Interim Superintendent, read the following resolution.

Whereas, pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 418,108, Hidalgo County Judge Richard Cortez issued a Declaration of Local Disaster for Public Health Emergency on March 17, 2020, due to the imminent threat arising from the Coronavirus (COVID-19); and

Whereas, on March 22, 2020, the Commissioners Court of Hidalgo County issued an Order of Continuance of Declaration of Local Disaster for Public Health Emergency; and

Whereas, pursuant to Chapter 121 of the Texas Health and Safety Code, the County has appointed Dr. Ivan Melendez as the Hidalgo County Local Health Authority and pursuant to his appointment, he has the authority to administer state and local laws relating to public health within the jurisdiction of the County of Hidalgo, Texas; and

Whereas, pursuant to the authority of Section 81.082(a) of the Texas Health and Safety Code, and Title 25, Section 97.6(h) of the Texas Administrative Code, unless specifically preempted by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), the Local Health Authority has supervisory authority and control over the administration of communicable disease control measures within its jurisdiction, to include public and non-parochial private schools systems, when in his opinion control measures are necessary to protect the public health; and

Whereas, the Hidalgo County Local Health Authority continues to evaluate the circumstances regarding the Public Health Emergency related to COVID-19, and the ongoing high and substantial spread of the disease in the community, with a persistent number of active positive cases, hospitalizations, and deaths; and

Whereas, the more highly contagious strains of the COVID-19 virus has led to a record increase reaching the highest level of hospitalizations for school-aged children since the onset of the pandemic, including children younger than 12 years that are not able to receive vaccination, and requiring facial covering is necessary to reduce the spread and transmission of COVID-19 among the unvaccinated and vaccinated;

Now, Therefore, effective immediately, The Hidalgo County Health Authority hereby imposes the following health and safety measures on all public and non-parochial private schools offering instruction to students in any and all grades kindergarten through grade twelve (12) as follows:

- (1) All public and non-parochial private school systems in the County of Hidalgo, Texas offering in-class instruction and/or other indoor activities to students in grades kindergarten through grade twelve (12) shall REQUIRE universal indoor facial coverings for all students, visitors, faculty, and staff regardless of vaccination status, in an effort to continue mitigation of the spread of COVID-19.

- (2) A public and/or non-parochial school system may NOT REQUIRE the wearing of facial coverings inside all school buildings, provided however that:
 - a. The school system's governing body, by majority vote, decides to OPT OUT of this Local Health Authority Order
- (3) It is further recommended that schools maintain at least three (3) feet of physical distance between students within classrooms to reduce the spread and transmission of COVID-19.
- (4) The following persons are not required to wear facial coverings:
 - a. Any person younger than 2 years old;
 - b. Any person with a medical condition or disability that prevents wearing a face covering;
 - c. Any person while the person is consuming food or drink, or is seated at a cafeteria or classroom to eat or drink;
 - d. Any person while the person is (i) exercising outdoors or engaging in physical activity outdoors, and (ii) maintaining a safe distance from other people not in the same household;
 - e. Any person obtaining screening services that require temporary removal of the face covering for security, surveillance, screening, or a need for specific access to the face, but only to the extent necessary for the services obtained;
 - f. Any person while the person is in a swimming pool or shower.
- (5) It is highly recommended and encouraged that facial coverings be required at all school-sponsored events and activities, including but not limited to clubs, sports, fairs, exhibitions, and academic or athletic competitions, as well as during transportation to and from schools.
- (6) Each school must notify the Hidalgo County Health and Human Services Department if any individual (student, teacher, or staff) who has been on a school campus is test-confirmed to have COVID-19, in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, including confidentiality requirements. It is recommended that schools notify all teachers, staff, and families of all students in a school if a test-confirmed positive case is identified consistent with school notification requirements for other communicable diseases.
- (7) It is recommended that if there has been an individual that is test-confirmed positive, schools shall close off any area that was heavily used by the individual, until such time as those areas are cleaned and disinfected. Pursuant to Title 25, Section 97.6, the Hidalgo County Local Health Authority reserves the right to take such action and measures as may be necessary to conform with applicable public health and/or control measures, upon the identification of a confirmed-positive COVID-19 case or cases on any campus within a school system, including but not limited to imposing quarantine and closing a school campus.

This order shall remain in full force and effect for a period no less than nine (9) weeks, unless it is extended, modified, rescinded, superseded, or amended by applicable law; the ongoing evaluation of circumstances regarding the Public Health Emergency related to COVID-19 in the County of Hidalgo, Texas; or preempted by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

If any subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or word of this Order, or any application of it to any school system, or circumstance related to this Order is held to be invalid or unconstitutional by a decision of a court of competent jurisdiction, then such decision will not affect the validity of the remaining portions or applications of this Order.


Ivan Melendez, M.D.
Local Health Authority - County of Hidalgo, Texas

Dr. Valdez recommended that the Board of Trustees adhere to the Hidalgo County Health Authority Order issued for all public school systems related to facial coverings 21-001.

Mr. Andrew Gonzalez made the motion for the District to adhere to the Hidalgo County Authority Order issued for all public school systems related to facial coverings 21-001 as recommended by the Administration. Mrs. Jaclyn Sustaita seconded the motion.

Questions/Comments addressed by the Board:

➤Mrs. Jaclyn Sustaita shared that community members had voiced concerns on the safety of their children returning to school. During graduations held last year, people were confused on whether they were supposed to wear masks since the event took place outdoors. She referenced the resolution which states that students in grades K-12 would be required to wear facial coverings in class and at other indoor activities. The resolution also states that masks shall be worn at all school-sponsored events as well as academic and athletic competitions. She wanted to know if the spectators sitting in the stands would be required to wear masks during football games.

Dr. Valdez clarified that masks will be mandated for indoor activities and they are highly recommended and encouraged at all school-sponsored events, competitions, etc., as stated in the resolution. She will meet with the Athletic Director and respective administrative staff to discuss and make a determination on how to proceed with wearing masks at outdoor activities. All protocols to be followed in the district will be presented to the Board and then communicated to everyone accordingly. In addition, staff is currently producing short videos on protocols that will be posted on social media and emailed to all staff. She will make sure that all parents, students, staff, and the entire community receive the same message related to protocols for outdoor activities.

➤Mrs. Sustaita pointed out that parents need to look over the order because it provides information on who is not required to wear masks and other pertinent information.

Dr. Valdez commented that students who have a medical condition like asthma would not be required to wear a mask.

➤Mr. Andrew Gonzalez asked Dr. Valdez to follow up with the parents who addressed the Board during public comments.

➤Mr. Isidoro Nieto wanted to know if the district was going to provide additional masks to students due to the mandate.

- District staff will provide masks to students who need them.

➤Mr. Marcos De Los Santos thanked the Administration for being proactive in taking so many measures to ensure that students, staff, and the community stay safe.

➤Mrs. Sustaita thanked staff for posting Q&A's visuals on social media regarding the process to follow when someone is exposed to the virus.

- Staff has prepared a document on protocols that will be shared with employees at all the campuses. This information will assist employees to relay the same message to parents and be better prepared to answer questions accordingly.

➤Dr. Rodriguez stressed the need to inform parents that the district would still be doing contact tracing.

Mr. Mike De La Rosa explained that the district will continue to do contact tracing in the classroom, but this year staff will only identify parents of children identified as known close contacts. They will not do a call out to the parents of the entire campus as was done last year.

Dr. Valdez shared that the County recommends that schools notify all teachers, staff, and families of all students in the schools if a test confirmed positive case is identified. WISD will be implementing its own protocols on contact tracing. Dr. Valdez assured the Board that district staff is taking all measures to ensure all students and faculty are safe and off to a strong start.

The Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion made by Mr. Andrew Gonzalez and seconded by Mrs. Jaclyn Sustaita for the District to adhere to the Hidalgo County Authority Order issued for all public school systems related to facial coverings 21-001 as recommended by the Administration.

Board President Armando Cuellar announced that this emergency meeting was posted and held in accordance with local policy.

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:31 p.m.