

Thank you for these questions.

I am copying our system athletic director and our secondary principals on my response to Now Habersham.

With regard to your specific questions, we moved to a temporary learning from home plan because we were experiencing a shortage of bus drivers, not a shortage of coaches. The shortage of staff in our schools has nothing to do with athletics. The fact of the matter is that our school system has actually fared quite well with regard to COVID-19 and athletics. We have not experienced large-scale quarantining or program shut downs like we have seen in other systems. We have not experienced a significant number of athletes testing positive for the virus. Up to this point, our coaches have generally remained healthy and remain committed to serving our student athletes. There is simply no evidence that athletic activities have become so called "super spreader events". Nearly all school system staff quarantines have been the result of exposure outside the school system, mostly due to exposure within their own families. We are rarely seeing staff placed in quarantine due to exposure at school or school related events such as athletics.

Here is a statement that will address the concerns expressed about athletics:

We will continue to make decisions that we believe are in the best interest of our students, including those who participate in athletics and extracurricular activities.

I have attended both middle school and high school basketball games, wrestling matches, as well as other athletic and extracurricular events. From what I have personally observed, people are generally sitting with those that they are already coming into close contact with. This fact cannot be overlooked. I have also observed that if people are willing to use both sides of the gyms there is usually plenty of room to spread out and stay away from others who are not friends or family.

A primary factor for our decisions related to athletic events is the fact that participation and attendance is completely voluntary. Other factors for consideration have been that events take place outside or in larger spaces like gyms where people have the opportunity to socially distance should they

choose to do so. Perhaps most important is the fact that we must keep our student athletes at the forefront of all decisions that are made and we must take care not to deny opportunities to our students when possible.

The Georgia High School Association, which governs school athletics in our state, has not prohibited athletic practices and events up to this point. This association carries a lot of weight with school administrators and coaches in our state. Their guidance has kept the door open for athletic events to continue.

We will continue to watch this entire situation closely. For now, I expect athletic events to continue in Habersham County.