



# School District of Pickens County

*Building success beyond the classroom*

August 4, 2020

Dear Parents,

In our reopening plan for this school year, we announced that masks would be required for all students in grades 3-12. Last week, the South Carolina Department of Education announced a mask requirement for all children over the age of two. The state's requirement advises schools to follow [guidance from the Centers for Disease Control](#) regarding masks in schools.

The mask requirement for students, especially for young children, has created many questions for parents, teachers, and children, which we will attempt to answer below.

First, we want to reiterate that masks are one of the most effective tools for reducing the spread of COVID-19. In the school setting, where social distancing is a challenge, masks are vital to the safety of our students and staff. In the days leading up to school, you as a parent will help set the culture of our schools by the way you talk to your child about wearing a mask.

Wearing a mask is a sign of respect for the people around us. It prevents the spread of COVID-19 primarily not by protecting the person wearing it, but by limiting the extent to which the wearer can spread the virus. Accepting limits on our own behavior for the safety of others is an essential lesson that children learn in school.

However, enforcement of the mask requirement for young children will be a challenge, which is acknowledged in the CDC guidance for educators. With that in mind, please be aware of several points about how the mask requirement will be implemented.

1. CDC guidance acknowledges that requiring elementary-aged children to wear masks for extended periods of time may not be feasible, and allows for adaptations. Students in Kindergarten through 2nd grade should expect to be asked to wear a mask during transitions, arrival, and drop-off, but not during the entirety of class time or during recess. Older students also may be allowed to remove masks when at least six feet of social distance can be ensured.
2. At this time, per guidance from the CDC, the requirement for masks will be promoted through positive reinforcement, and specific disciplinary penalties are not attached. This is subject to change. Students and parents should keep in mind that while students do not currently face disciplinary action for failure to wear a mask, school disturbances or bullying related to the mask requirement will be subject to discipline.

3. Students who fail to wear a mask may be prevented from participating in activities that do not allow for social distancing. Students who intentionally violate the recommended social distancing space of others, whether wearing a mask or not, may be disciplined.
4. Medical exemptions from masks will be respected when the student can provide a doctor's note.
5. Current dress code prohibitions against inappropriate language or images on apparel apply to masks as well.
6. By state order, masks are required for all students riding buses.
7. SDPC has ordered at least one cloth mask to be provided for every student and staff member.

The school year ahead will not be easy, but the value of bringing students and teachers together to learn will be worth it. Building a safe school environment has always required teamwork and sacrifice. This year, masks are a visible symbol of the teamwork that creates a successful school community. If your child is returning to face-to-face instruction, we thank you for entrusting us with your child's safety. Please partner with us to ensure that the safety measures our state has put in place for children and staff can be effective.

Best Regards,

John Eby

SDPC Coordinator of Communication