



Marion County School District COVID -19 Update

Monday, August 30, 2021

Amidst these unique times, we wish to take a moment to thank everyone who played a role in making the first eight (8) days of school a success! As we anticipated, virus activity is already hitting many of our South Carolina schools and more specifically our Marion County School District (MCSD) facilities. Our diligence in following the outlined health and safety protocols is paramount to helping our students to remain in the traditional learning environment.

To keep you informed, below are a few quick facts pertaining to MCSD and COVID:

- Proviso 1.108 is the state law which prohibits school districts from enforcing a face mask mandate. Currently, there are an estimated 78 school districts in the state of South Carolina, with around four (4) districts with current mask mandates in place.
- Marion County School District strongly encourages wearing masks and is fortunate that an estimated 95% of our students are masked in our schools. School masks are required for all state-owned buses.
- The Supreme Court is scheduled to decide on the injunction filed by Richland Two this week. Districts are hopeful that this will bring favorable response and provide some relief from the mask mandate. District administration and the Board of Education are closely following the litigation this week and will reevaluate next steps needed to keep our staff and students safe.
- Marion County School District was among the 34 districts, out of the estimated 78 districts, that submitted application and was granted approval for a virtual learning program. All virtual programs are capped at five (5) percent of the district's total student population by state mandate.
- Overview of state guidance on classroom, school and/or district closures as of Tuesday, August 24:
 - Districts and schools are not permitted to offer only virtual instruction unless the district or school can no longer safely operate and provide face to face instruction due to staffing shortages resulting from COVID-19 or a similar infectious disease.
 - Should staffing shortages exist and the school or district feels it cannot safely offer face to face instruction, the school or district should contact the local or regional public health office and allow public health officials to assess the situation and provide a recommendation on current operations and additional options for infection control.
 - Should all local or regional public health recommendations for transmission reduction be exhausted and/or are unable to be implemented and the number of positive cases, quarantines, and relevant public health data warrant it, the school or district is permitted to move temporarily to a virtual mode of instruction.
 - The decision making on closures should be handled on a school-by-school basis rather than district wide unless the staffing shortages exist district wide and district wide closure is recommended by public health officials. The school or district must move back to face to face instruction as soon as staff becomes available. The school or district should also notify the SCDE prior to announcement of the move to temporary virtual only instruction.
- Marion County School District is following the state's guidance on closures. To date, in several schools, we have transitioned some classes to remote/virtual learning. We are prepared to transition individual schools to remote/virtual on a case-by-case basis, if the virus activity continues the current trend.
- To keep stakeholders informed of virus activity, every Monday, the district's COVID Dashboard is updated on our website (marion.k12.sc.us) to reflect virus activity within our system.

School and District administrators receive frequent updates and will continue to keep our staff and families abreast of the impact and protocols associated with virus activity in our schools. We appreciate the support of our staff, community and families in our efforts to keep everyone safe.

Dr. Kandace Bethea, Superintendent