



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
School Board Members

FROM: Molly M. Spearman
State Superintendent of Education

DATE: September 16, 2020

RE: Face to Face Instruction and Notification of Changes in School Operational Status

As we move further into the 2020–21 school year, our focus must be on ensuring students have every opportunity to be successful while maintaining safety conditions in and outside classrooms to mitigate and protect against the spread of the COVID-19 virus. While many students and their families have chosen virtual options and are able to successfully navigate this new instructional environment, others are struggling and desperately need a return to face to face learning as quickly as possible. To this end, I strongly encourage you to prioritize offering a return to face to face learning in as traditional a model as possible for those students who need it the most. These populations include, but are not limited to, students with disabilities, English learners, students who are homeless, in foster care, or group homes, students in kindergarten through fifth grades, students who are academically delayed, and those with poor or intermittent internet connectivity at home. These student populations encompass those who are learning the integral building blocks of their educational futures, including the fundamentals of reading, which simply cannot be taught well virtually as well as those that rely on our public school system for wrap-around and supplemental supports.

Many have expressed concern over the high rate of virus spread in some counties as defined weekly by South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. While these reports are important decision making tools, we cannot make all operational decisions based on any one document. Please also consider parental choice of face to face and virtual learning environments, faculty and staff availability, and personal protective equipment and supplies. Districts operating

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face to face in high spread areas have shown how to do this successfully by strictly following the guidance and safety precautions put forth by public health experts. As you consider this request, I encourage you to call on me and the South Carolina Department of Education to assist you. The agency is willing and able to support you by providing the resources needed.

Please continue to confer with and notify Dr. David Mathis, dmathis@ed.sc.gov, of all reopening plan changes. Unless an emergency warrants an immediate change in the school schedule, the district must provide parents a minimum of five calendar days before changes are implemented.