



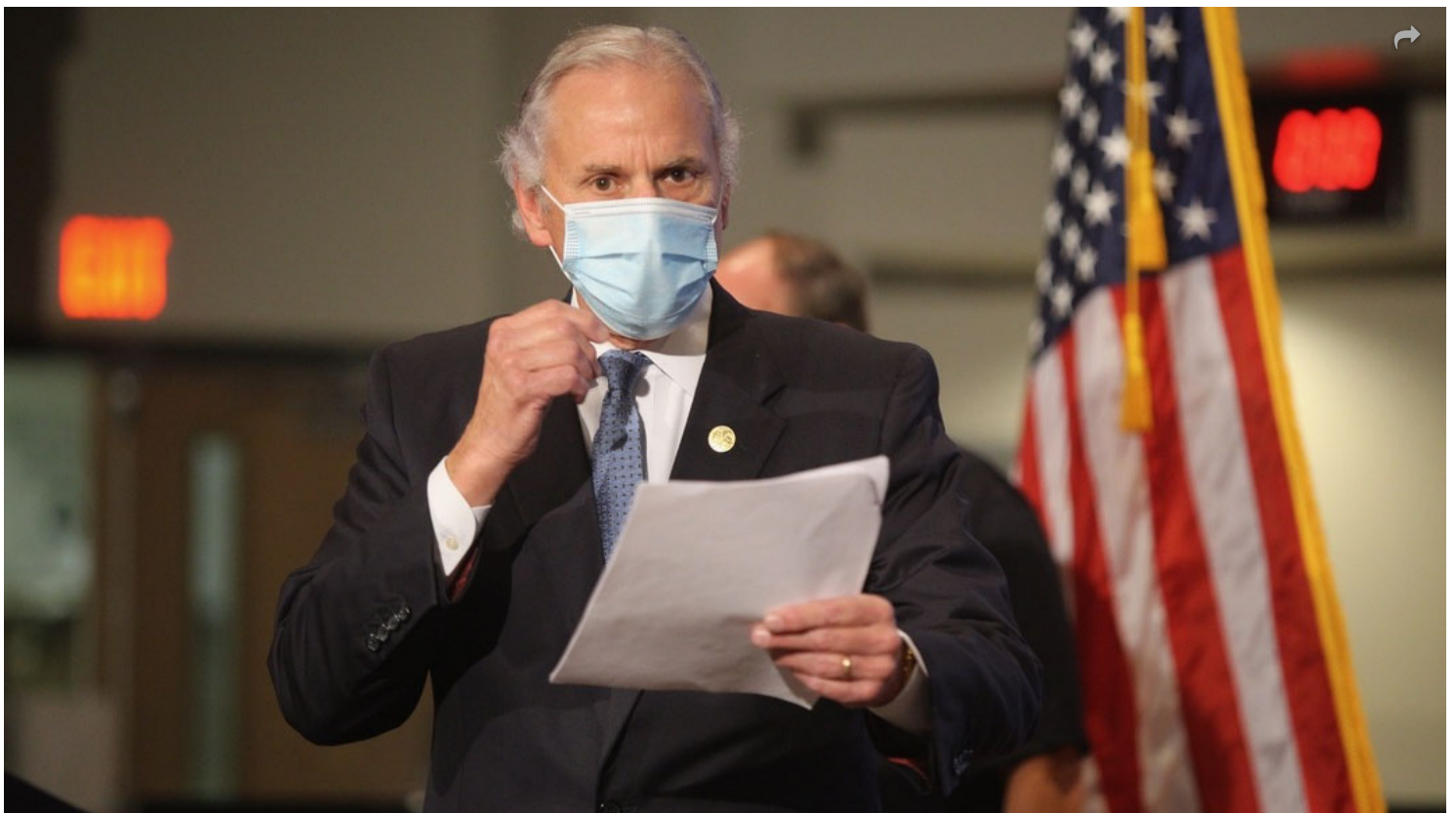
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EDUCATION

Mask up, SC students and teachers. Face coverings now required for new school year

BY SARAH ELLIS

JULY 31, 2020 03:00 PM, UPDATED AUGUST 06, 2020 10:31 AM



"We're all in the same boat. There is no special group," Governor Henry McMaster responded to South Carolina teachers who fear for their health due to schools reopening despite the spike in COVID -19 cases. BY SOUTH CAROLINA ETV



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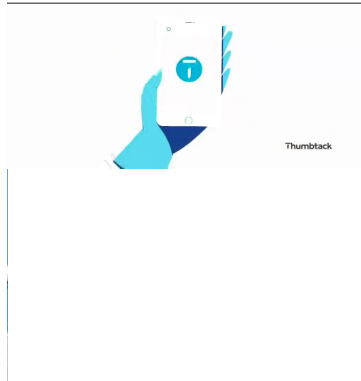
Face masks will be required in all South Carolina public school facilities at the start of the fall semester, as state education leaders approved dozens of school district reopening plans Friday, including Richland 1.

“As we prepare to welcome students and teachers back to South Carolina classrooms for face to face instruction, it is imperative that we implement measures that are proven to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus,” state superintendent Molly Spearman said in a news release. “Requiring the use of face masks for everyone in our school buildings in combination with other mitigation tactics will help ensure that we have safe learning environments even when optimal social distancing is not feasible.”

Earlier this week, Spearman announced that face coverings would be required on all public school buses.

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The new face mask requirement for public schools will apply to all students and staff except for those who have trouble breathing or are unable to remove a face covering without assistance. The requirement will go into place as students and staff return to classrooms for so-called “LEAP” days at the start of the semester.

The state Department of Education will provide five cloth face masks for every teacher, bus driver, custodian and food service worker. The state already has purchased cloth masks for students and staff taking part in summer Academic Recovery Camps.

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Along with Friday's announcement about face masks in schools, Spearman also issued approval for an additional 36 school districts' reopening plans, including Richland 1. State officials also approved the reopening plans for the two residential Governor's Schools, which include hybrid and online options.

A total of 67 school district reopening plans have been approved so far. The state's criteria for approved reopening plans include offering both a virtual and a face-to-face option for students with a time table for moving toward five-day-a-week in-person instruction.

[Richland 1's reopening plan](#) includes in-person LEAP days for students at the start of the semester, with all classes officially starting online Aug. 31. Starting Sept. 14, students will have the choice to come to school in-person one day a week, but they can choose to continue fully online. The district will later transition to holding two days of in-person classes and three days online once coronavirus spread decreases. Eventually, students may return to in-person class five days a week.

The district is also offering a fully online instructional option for the full year for students who apply by Aug. 4.

Several other Midlands school districts received approval for their reopening plans earlier this week, including Lexington 1, Lexington 2, Lexington 3, Lexington 4 and Lexington-Richland 5, as well as Aiken, Calhoun, Edgefield, Kershaw, Lancaster, Newberry and Orangeburg counties.

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These are the 36 districts whose reopening plans were approved Friday:

- Anderson School District One
- Anderson School District Two
- Anderson School District Three
- Anderson School District 4
- Bamberg School District One
- Bamberg School District 2
- Williston School District 29 (Barnwell 29)
- Barnwell School District 45
- Charleston County School District
- Cherokee County School District
- Chesterfield County School District
- Clarendon School District One
- Clarendon County School District Three

- Dillon School District Three
- Dillon School District Four
- Dorchester School District Two
- Dorchester School District Four
- Florence Public School District One
- Florence County School District Four
- Florence County School District Five
- Georgetown County School District
- Hampton County School District 2
- Jasper County School District
- Laurens County School District 55
- Lee County School District
- Marion County School District (Marion 10)
- Marlboro County School District
- McCormick County School District
- Richland County School District One
- Spartanburg School District One
- Spartanburg School District Three
- Spartanburg School District Four
- Spartanburg School District Five
- Spartanburg School District Six
- Spartanburg School District 7
- Union County Schools

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SARAH ELLIS

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Sarah Ellis covers Columbia and Richland County for The State. A graduate of the University of South Carolina, she has made South Carolina's capital her home for the past decade. Since 2014, her work at The State has earned multiple awards from the S.C. Press Association, including best Short Story.

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