

## **FACE COVERINGS**

### ***Important Information for Richland One Students, Parents and Staff***

South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster issued an executive order on May 11, 2021 that allows parents to choose to opt out of school/district requirements that students wear masks or other face coverings at school. In light of the governor's action, State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman rescinded the state face covering policy except for the federal requirement that face coverings be worn on school buses. The governor's executive order does not negate that federal requirement.

**NOTE: Parents who want their children to continue to wear masks/face coverings at school still have the right for them to do so.**

### **OPT-OUT FORM**

Richland One parents who do not want their children to wear masks/face coverings at school can complete the opt-out form provided by the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). Parents should sign the completed form and return it to their child's school. The opt-out forms will be effective May 13.

**NOTE: Students ages 18 and above can complete the opt-out form without parental permission.**

Click the link below to access the form:

<https://scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/D-4286.pdf>

### **IMPACT ON STUDENT SEATING**

With the removal of the mask mandate, note that plexiglass desk shields will remain in place. Per DHEC requirements, students divided by plexiglass pods who test positive for COVID-19 and do not wear masks/face coverings will result in a 10-day quarantine for all other students seated in that pod. If a student in a plexiglass pods tests positive but continues to wear a mask/face covering, only unmasked students in the pod will be required to quarantine, per DHEC guidelines. These actions are required by DHEC and are not optional for districts.

Also, note that social distancing and other remaining safety protocols will stay in place.

### **PARENTS CONCERNED ABOUT THE REMOVAL OF THE MASK MANDATE**

Students whose families do not want their children to attend school due to these changes will **not** be moved into the Virtual School Program. We will not be able to accommodate such requests at this time. However, since we cannot maintain recommended protocols, we are still examining options for parents who may want their children to work from home for the remainder of this year. Parents may submit a request to the principal in writing (email or hard copy) **by Monday, May 17**. Further information regarding exams, EOCEP assessments will be forthcoming.

### **FACE COVERINGS ON SCHOOL BUSES**

As noted above, the federal requirement for wearing face coverings on school buses is still in effect. As such, Richland One students and staff will be required to wear masks/face coverings while on our school buses. This includes students whose parents choose for their children not to wear face coverings while at school.