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In response to updated guidance for K-12 schools issued on Tuesday, July 27, 2021, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and with the safety of its nearly 30,000 students and 4,000 employees as a priority, the Richmond County School System (RCSS) has updated its back-to-school plans to require masks. This decision is based on the School System's collaboration with the Department of Public Health (DPH), current CDC recommendations and COVID-19 conditions in Richmond County – including positive case data, vaccine eligibility and vaccination rates.

Beginning August 2, 2021, masks will be required for all (K-12) students, staff, and visitors to all Richmond County School System facilities and on school buses, regardless of vaccination status.

RCSS will reopen schools for in-person instruction for all students. Elementary students will start school on Thursday, August 5th. Students in K-8, Middle and High Schools will start on Monday, August 9th.

The School System will continue its partnership with the DPH to implement best practices in COVID-19 response and reporting. According to CDC and DPH guidance, students or staff identified as close contacts to a positive case for COVID-19 will not have to quarantine if both are properly wearing masks in the school setting.

Students will be permitted to remove masks during lunch and while outside (on the playground, mask breaks, etc.). Accommodations will be made for students and employees unable to wear a mask for documented medical reasons.

As COVID-19 conditions in our community change and guidance from the CDC and DPH is updated, the Richmond County School System will update COVID-19 mitigation plans throughout the 2021–22 school year.