

*Lexington Four is requesting stakeholder and community input on its 2021-22 Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan as part of the school district's fulfillment of requirements related to the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act.*

*On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act was signed into law.*

*The U.S. Department of Education is providing an additional \$121.9 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER III Fund). This legislation is awarding grants to state educational agencies, including the S.C. Department of Education, to provide local educational agencies, including Lexington Four, with emergency relief funds to address the impact of COVID-19 on elementary and secondary schools across the nation.*



## **RETURN TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION AND CONTINUITY OF SERVICES PLAN**

**OVERVIEW:** *A district's plan must include how it will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and LEA staff, and the extent to which it has adopted policies or practices and a description of any such policies or practices, on each of the CDC's safety recommendations including: universal and correct wearing of masks; modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding); hand washing and respiratory etiquette; cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation; contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the state, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments; diagnostic and screening testing; efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible; appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies or practices; and coordination with state and local health officials.*

## **Description of Maintaining Health and Safety**

Lexington Four families were provided communication and updates from the start of the pandemic in March 2020 via email, text alerts, and the district COVID-19 webpage at [www.lex4.org](http://www.lex4.org). In July 2020, the district administration, in consultation with the local school board and meeting CDC/DHEC guidance for the health and wellness of students and staff, provided a detailed reentry plan to the Lexington Four community. This plan provided parents a choice of a virtual or hybrid model consisting of both on campus and virtual instruction, with the goal of reopening schools to return to a five-day weekly schedule and on-campus instruction as safely and as soon as possible.

As conditions with the pandemic changed, and CDC/DHEC guidance changed, updates and transition occurred to provide a four-day instructional schedule for hybrid students by January 2, 2021 and a five-day instructional schedule for hybrid students on March 22, 2021. As social distancing guidance changed in November 2020, virtual students were allowed to return to in person learning as space was available. These practices were in place through June 2021.

For the 2021-2022 school year, Lexington Four will follow DHEC recommendations to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Key points from the DHEC guidelines:

Reopening schools for in-person, full-time education is vitally important to ensuring students do not fall behind academically or socially.

Vaccination is currently the leading health prevention strategy for COVID-19.

DHEC recognizes mask use cannot be mandated per the SC General Assembly.

DHEC strongly recommends mask use for all people when indoors in school settings, especially when physical distancing is not possible.

## **Universal and Correct Wearing of Masks**

Lexington Four follows DHEC policies for mask use in schools.

While DHEC recognizes mask use cannot be mandated per the SC General Assembly, DHEC strongly recommends mask use for all people when indoors in school settings, especially when physical distancing is not possible.

Students and staff who use bus transportation must wear masks on school bus transportation in compliance with federal law.

## **Modifying Facilities to Allow for Physical Distancing (e.g., use of cohort/podding)**

Site-based safety protocols to allow for physical distancing may include the following:

- Class and bus organization (rows, assigned seats)
- Student transition procedures (staggered; one way, etc.)
- Limiting access beyond office to essential personnel
- Limiting large student gatherings such as assemblies.

## **Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette**

COVID updates are sent out periodically to families via text alert, email and district website with DHEC recommendations.

As of December 2021,

DHEC recommends the following practices to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Get tested if you have COVID-related symptoms.
- Maintain social distancing.
- Practice good hygiene, washing hands frequently and covering coughs and sneezes.
- Wear a mask inside school buildings.

## **Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities, Including Improving Ventilation**

Through ESSER I federal grant funding, face shields, gloves, masks were available for any staff member at the start of school. In addition, custodians were also issued electrostatic sprayers and chemical sprayers for sanitizing all student and staff areas. Food service programs worked with SCDE staff to ensure protocols are followed for food storage and sanitization.

Nurses were provided additional days and supplies to prepare stations and protocols. An additional nurse was hired through grant funding to ensure that all school buildings had a registered or licensed nurse on staff to care for students and maintain healthy facilities.

Training was provided to all custodial staff. A member of the administrative staff at each school was also trained in these practices and a checklist of sanitization was provided to each custodial team. Classroom doors and windows remained open for improving ventilation as safety practices warranted.

ESSER II federal grant approval in May 2021 will ensure that Lexington Four may begin upgrading all HVAC units and controls to improve ventilation in schools. In addition, federal grant funded flooring and roofing repairs in district buildings will also enhance air quality for students and staff.

## **Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine**

All policies and procedures for contact tracing follow SC DHEC guidelines and are updated as DHEC guidance is updated. To be considered exposed to COVID-19, students or staff need to be in close contact with a person who has the virus (tested positive or showing symptoms).

Definition of Close Contact:

1. Being within 6 feet of a sick person with the virus for at least 15 continuous minutes (with or without the use of a face covering).
2. Living in the same household and/or caring for a sick person with the virus.
3. Being in direct contact with secretions from a sick person with the virus.

Isolation is recommended for those who are sick with symptoms of COVID-19 and have tested positive or are waiting on the results of a test. As with quarantine, they must remain at home or the place they were told to isolate and avoid contact with other people until their isolation period is over. This includes avoiding contact with those in their household as much as possible.

Generally, the isolation period for COVID-19 continues until each of these conditions is met:

Your symptoms are better - AND –

At least 10 days have passed since your illness onset – AND –

No fever for at least 24 hours and have not used fever-reducing medication during that time.

If students or staff had no symptoms but received a positive COVID-19 test, they must isolate until 10 days have passed since the swab was done.

Quarantine is used to separate people who are close contacts of someone with a contagious disease, like COVID-19, from others for a period of time to see if they become sick. This is to prevent the spread of disease. When someone is quarantining, they should stay home and avoid contact with other people until the quarantine period is over. This includes avoiding contact with people in their household as much as it is possible.

For COVID-19, the quarantine period is ten (10) days from the time of last exposure to the person with the disease. For those who live in the same house as someone who has COVID-19, they should continue to quarantine until fourteen (14) after the date the person with COVID-19 is told they no longer need to practice isolation. CDC provides guidance on how to determine the time needed to quarantine. Please refer to updated quarantine guidance for Options to Shorten Quarantine for COVID-19.

If students or staff are in close contact to someone who had COVID-19 and were told to quarantine, DHEC recommends they get tested even if you have no symptoms. If negative, they could be tested again 5-7 days after last exposure or immediately if

symptoms develop. Even if they test negative between day 5-7, they must complete the 7-day quarantine period. If they test positive for COVID-19, they must isolate for 10 days from the positive test or the onset of symptoms.

Vaccinated persons with an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are not required to quarantine if they meet all of the following criteria:

1. Are fully vaccinated (i.e.,  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series, or  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine)
2. Have remained asymptomatic since the current COVID-19 exposure

Persons who do not meet the above criteria should continue to follow current quarantine guidance after exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

### **Diagnostic and Screening Testing**

Lexington Four currently does not participate in diagnostic or screening testing.

### **Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to Educators, Other Staff, and Students, if Eligible:**

All part time and full time Lexington Four staff were surveyed in January 2021 to determine vaccination needs. Lexington Four partnered with Lexington Medical Center to automatically load staff information into the VAMS registration system. This occurred in early March 2021. Multiple sites in Lexington County including hospitals, businesses, and clinics with neighboring districts were available for staff to receive the vaccine. By the end of March 2021, all staff had the opportunity to register into VAMS and receive their first COVID-19 vaccine.

### **Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities with Respect to Health and Safety Policies and Practices**

Students with disabilities will follow the same policies and practices as set for students without disabilities. However, additional health and safety accommodations and/or services may be implemented as determined by the student's Individualized Education Plan, 504 plan, and/or Individual Health Plan.

## **Coordination with State and Local Health Officials**

All Lexington Four policies and practices follow CDC, DHEC, and SCDE guidance. In addition, Lexington Four partnered with Lexington Medical Center to ensure all staff were provided ease of use with the VAMS website and a local venue for receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

**OVERVIEW:** *A district's plan must describe how it will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health and other needs, which may include student health and food services.*

### **District response on continuity of services:**

Moving forward, the district will work to mitigate the loss of learning for students at risk of not meeting grade level standard. Federal grant funding will pay for summer and after school programs to provide students additional learning time. Funding will also provide for additional academic interventionists and ESOL teachers. Funding will pay for additional instructional materials and supplies for students and classrooms as well as the vast array of computer hardware and software used to address students' academic needs.

Grant funding will also continue to pay for additional nursing services in the district. Nurses will also be paid for additional time in the summer for professional learning, updating policy, and preparation for student arrival. Food service programs will continue to offer community feeding programs in the summer for families and free breakfast and lunches throughout the school year.

**OVERVIEW:** *Districts are required to review and, as appropriate, revise their Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at least every six months through September 30, 2023, including seeking public input and taking such input into account in determining whether to revise the plan and, if revisions are determined necessary, on the revisions it makes to its plan. If a district developed a plan prior to enactment of the ARP Act that was made publicly available and was developed with public comment but does not address each of the required aspects of safety established in the ARP Act, the district must, as part of the required periodic review, revise its plan consistent with the ARP Act requirements no later than six months after it last reviewed its plan.*

## **District Response on Ensuring Periodic Updates to its Plan**

The district will ensure periodic updates to the plan as conditions change, as CDC/DHEC guidance changes and as the needs of students and staff change.

**OVERVIEW:** *The ARP Act requires that school districts make their Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan available to the public online and that the plans be in an understandable and uniform format; to the extent practicable, are written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent. Before making its plan publicly available, school districts must seek public comment on the plan and develop the plan after considering public comment.*

### **District response on public input in development of its plan:**

Public input was first collected in June 2021 from district stakeholders. For the 21-22 school year, the public is updated on the district's COVID response at the monthly board meeting. The public is also allowed public comment at these monthly meetings. Meeting minutes and presentations are available for public information and COVID response information is easily accessible on the district's website. District and school administration maintain an open-door policy for public comment and discussion.

District stakeholders have the opportunity to provide further feedback and input on the District's plan by emailing [lex4info@lexington4.net](mailto:lex4info@lexington4.net) or by calling the Federal Programs office at (803)-490-7000.