

Utilizing HCS Case Dashboard as an Additional Local Datapoint for Determining the Instructional Model

Policy Reference: OE-12: The superintendent shall establish and maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful and conducive to effective learning.

Background Information: At its August 4, 2020, the Horry County Board of Education unanimously approved the “2020-21 HCS Re-Opening Plan” as presented by Dr. Maxey and staff. Upon Board approval, the “2020-21 HCS Re-Opening Plan” was submitted to the South Carolina Department of Education. In a letter dated August 10, 2020, South Carolina Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman notified Dr. Maxey that the South Carolina Department of Education approved the “2020-21 HCS Re-Opening Plan.”

To determine the type of instructional model that would be used in Horry County Schools, the “2020 HCS Re-Opening Plan” specified that the District would rely upon the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) weekly Disease Activity by County report. More specifically, if the disease activity level is reported as low, the instructional model will be face-to-face, five days per week; medium, the instructional model will be hybrid; or high, the instructional model will be distance education.

As noted on page 2 of the “2020-21 HCS Re-Opening Plan,” the fluid nature of the pandemic means that adjustments to the District’s Re-Opening Plan may need to occur should more information become available: *“Our knowledge and understanding of the COVID-19 virus continue to evolve, and our protocols and plans will be updated as appropriate and as more information becomes available.”*

DHEC on its “Schools & Childcare Centers (COVID-19)” web page states the following: *“CDC recommends that all decisions about implementing school-based strategies should be made locally, in collaboration with local health officials who can help determine the level of transmission in the community. DHEC is providing this county-level data about disease transmission to support decision-making at the local level. It is not meant to be a stand-alone document.”*

Horry County Schools has developed a COVID-19 case dashboard, which was introduced by Dr. Maxey during the October 5, 2020, Board meeting. This dashboard, which provides additional local data for the District to use in making school operational decisions, reports COVID-19 positive test results for staff and students which HCS nurses have confirmed with DHEC.

Numbers reported in the Horry County Schools COVID-19 Case Dashboard indicate totals for both current and cumulative positive staff and student COVID-19 cases, as reported by HCS nurses and as confirmed by DHEC for each school site. During the school week, Horry County Schools compiles and updates the disease activity data on the dashboard twice daily for each school, at 10:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M.

While the data provided by the dashboard are extremely valuable, multiple factors may impact a decision to return a school to full-time distance education, factors such as the impact of quarantines on staffing, the availability of substitute employees, and/or a significant number of positive test results within a given school. However, the value of the dashboard as a local datapoint is that decisions to move instruction to full-time distance education can then be limited to the school(s)/classroom(s) that are significantly impacted by the aforementioned factors and thus prevent a system-wide transition of the entire District to distance education.

Purpose: To update the “2020-21 HCS Re-Opening Plan” to incorporate a new local datapoint into the decision-making process for determining the type of instructional model to be used by individual District schools.

For additional information: Contact Dr. Rick Maxey at rmaxey@horrycountyschools.net.

Recommended Action: Approve the following:

- 1) the utilization of the HCS Case Dashboard as an additional local datapoint for determining the instructional model to be used by individual District brick-and-mortar schools,
- 2) the use of any local datapoints which may be developed or become available in the future,
- 3) the implementation of the hybrid instructional model for all District brick-and-mortar schools, effective October 19, 2020, until the District is able to return all brick-and-mortar schools safely to five-day, face-to-face instruction,
- 4) the provision of a minimum of five calendar days’ notice to parents before a change in instructional model unless an emergency at an individual brick-and-mortar school warrants an immediate change of that individual brick-and-mortar school’s schedule, and
- 5) re-affirm the premise, as previously stated in the “2020-21 HCS Re-Opening Plan,” that our knowledge and understanding of the COVID-19 virus continue to evolve, and our protocols and plans will be updated as appropriate and as more information becomes available.

Estimated Project Cost:

Recurring ☐ Non-recurring ☒

Funding Sources: