Executive Summary

On October 9, 2020, there were fifteen school districts in South Carolina providing full face-to-face instruction, five days a week. Governor McMaster asked each of the superintendents in these fifteen districts to complete a survey to learn what practices and policies were working to ensure that face-face-instruction occurred safely and what, if any, additional support the districts needed to continue to provide full face-to-face instruction during the pandemic.

The fifteen school districts surveyed were:

Abbeville	Anderson 5	Kershaw
Anderson 1	Berkeley	Laurens 56
Anderson 2	Florence 2	Oconee
Anderson 3	Florence 5	Pickens
Anderson 4	Greenwood 50	Saluda

All fifteen school districts responded to the survey by November 4, 2020.

Each of the fifteen school districts provided parents the option of enrolling their child in full face-to-face instruction or in virtual instruction. Three of these fifteen districts also provided a third option, a hybrid model. All district reopening plans were approved by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) pursuant to Act 135 of 2020.

In summarizing the responses from the school districts, full face-to-face instruction was able to be provided because these districts:

- Developed a detailed plan in collaboration with the local community that included parental choice or options. The plan clearly defined the goals or objectives and articulated for teachers, district staff, and parents the "why" and "how" schools would reopen. Some districts even collaborated regionally to design reopening plans.

- Implemented safety protocols aligned with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). Districts used the DHEC Recent Disease Activity by County information as one of many data points in determining how schools reopened but not as the sole data point. Districts also emphasized that cohorting of students, especially in elementary schools, and expanded roles for school nurses facilitated the reopening of schools. Cohorting is defined as keeping students in a specific grade level or class together to limit the risk of contracting the virus. In essence, students in a specific grade or class are isolated to the extent possible from other staff or students. Cohorting also facilitates in effective contact tracing.

- Communicated continuously with teachers, staff and parents using multiple methods and modalities to communicate the district's reopening plan, any changes in protocols and information about positive COVID-19 cases to build trust and confidence.

This report highlights many innovative policies implemented in these districts that can be adopted or modeled in other school districts.

Also, in these fifteen districts:

- Parents were administered a survey in the summer to determine interest in each instructional option for school year 2020-21.

- Parents or guardians were given the option of choosing the learning option that met the educational needs of their child, typically through an online registration process.

- Parents overwhelmingly opted for full face-to-face instruction, even parents of children with Individual Education Program (IEPs).

- Parents were allowed to change the instructional delivery option at specific intervals in the school year such as at the end of the first six weeks, at the end of each nine-week quarter or at the end of the semester. Districts that had space also handled requests on a case-by-case basis with many establishing a system whereby the most vulnerable students were given priority.

Districts consistently identified the following challenges that continue to impact the ability of districts to provide full face-to-face instruction and offered some solutions:

1. *Transportation* – The current restriction that school buses can only operate at 66 percent capacity restricted the ability of districts to transport students in a timely manner. For districts that did not lengthen the school day, the restriction has reduced the number of hours students are in school. One district calculated the impact of the restriction on the number of hours lost in instruction for students in their district; for elementary school students, the restriction will equal 28 days of lost instruction and for middle and high school students, 26 days of lost instruction. Some districts asked that the restriction be reviewed while other districts supported the capacity limits.

2. *Quarantining Guidelines* – Several districts asked that DHEC reconsider the quarantining guidelines, especially those for students. One district pointed out that some states are allowing students to come back after 7 days with a negative test or no symptoms.

Other districts pointed out the impact of the quarantining guidelines on support staff. If multiple support staff employees have to be quarantined, districts worry that in-person instruction may be suspended. Districts mentioned the need for emergency funding to support the hiring of substitute personnel as well as funding for additional nurses, custodians and school bus drivers.

3. *Technology* – Districts that did not have one device (computer, iPad, Chromebook, etc.,) for each student faced significant challenges in providing virtual learning. These districts had to purchase devices and train teachers. Going forward, these same districts, many in rural areas of our state, believe that access to high-speed Internet for students and teachers will continue to be a challenge. They asked that the state allocate funds to purchase mobile hotspots and devices and to expand high-speed Internet.

4. *Space and Funding* – Districts noted that following CDC and DHEC guidelines requires additional purchases of personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies and in some districts, even additional personnel. As more students return to full face-to-face instruction, space to social distance will become a problem with financial implications. Many districts noted that social distancing requires common areas like libraries, chorus rooms and gyms to be converted into classrooms. In some districts, these classrooms will require additional teachers and staff. Other districts believe that guidance issued by the SCDE should be reviewed and revised guidance issued. The guidance relates to the 6-foot social distancing policy and the plexiglass policy. One district noted that the plexiglass policy requiring twelve inches above the student's head and extending twelve inches on each side of the student is actually a safety hazard in the classroom.

5. *Documentation and Record Keeping* – Especially in districts that offer multiple instructional models, documenting completion of courses is a challenge with the SC Pupil Accounting System, whereby block schedule membership criteria must be commensurate with services provided. Other districts noted that reporting requirements imposed by the SCDE should be reviewed to determine which reports can be temporarily suspended.

6. Teaching and Learning - Several districts noted that teacher morale is a challenge. Several districts requested that the step increase be reinstated as well as bonuses or hazard pay considered for teachers.

Districts identified three state-level issues that impact their ability to provide full face-to-face instruction.

1. *Assessments* – Six districts asked to limit the number of assessments administered as a result of state law or regulations.

2. *Support from the South Carolina Department of Education* – Three districts cited a lack of support from the SCDE as an impediment. The districts noted that not being able to get clear, concise, or timely answers to questions created challenges.

3. *Seat Time Requirement* – Two districts noted that the General Assembly must consider amending Section 59-1-425 of the South Carolina Code of Laws to give local school districts the flexibility to implement virtual learning for inclement weather days as well as for other situations. The pandemic has revealed that the law needs to be amended to give districts with a proven track record of providing virtual instruction the means to utilize virtual days in lieu of the mandatory 6.5 hours of face-to-face instruction for 180 days per week.

Only five of the fifteen districts implemented local school board policies during the pandemic. These policies focused on: suspension of board policies that would delay action in responding to the pandemic; enactment of social media policies given the expansion of virtual learning options; procurement; and provision of unlimited sick leave for teachers impacted by the pandemic.

Finally, regarding lessons learned, overwhelmingly the school districts stressed the need to plan, collaborate, communicate, and implement the reopening plans at all levels - in the community, in the district, and at the school level. While the plan may be amended during the pandemic and those changes must be communicated to teachers, staff and parents, the goal must remain the same: return to face-to-face instruction as quickly and safely as possible.

Conclusions

The fifteen districts which re-opened for full five-day face-to-face instruction provide a case study in how to successfully offer traditional instruction in a socially-distanced era.

The common theme in each of these successful re-opening efforts is communication and collaboration within local communities, within districts and within individual schools. In each case, plans are unique to the needs of the local community and entail extensive, ongoing communication with parents, teachers and staff. These districts prove unequivocally that we can do what is best for students, while prioritizing the health and safety of parents, teachers and staff.

Further, it is clear from the overwhelming parental preference for in-person instruction in these districts that we should make a greater effort to offer in-person instruction on a broader level. For many South Carolina families, public schools provide the opportunity for parents to work and for students – particularly vulnerable students – to have structure, supervision and regular nutrition. For students in rural areas of the state without dependable Internet access, it is especially important that we make in-person learning opportunities available.

At the same time, districts have identified problem areas that we must continue to address, including high-speed Internet expansion. Continued access to personal protective equipment will also be critical as districts endeavor to comply with CDC and state social distancing guidelines. At the state level, we must also refine our support for these districts by promptly reviewing health and safety protocols and supporting our districts with more timely assistance.

Survey

On October 9, 2020, there were fifteen school districts in South Carolina providing full face-to-face instruction, five days a week. Governor McMaster asked each of the superintendents in these fifteen districts to complete a survey to learn what practices and policies were working to ensure that face-face-instruction occurred safely and what, if any, additional support the districts needed to continue to provide full face-to-face instruction during the pandemic.

The fifteen school districts surveyed were:

Abbeville	Anderson 5	Kershaw
Anderson 1	Berkeley	Laurens 56
Anderson 2	Florence 2	Oconee
Anderson 3	Florence 5	Pickens
Anderson 4	Greenwood 50	Saluda

Each of the fifteen school districts provided parents the option of enrolling their child in full face-to-face instruction or in virtual instruction. Three districts also provided a third option, a hybrid model. All district reopening plans were approved by the South Carolina Department of Education.

These fifteen school districts are located throughout South Carolina and include small, rural school districts as well as suburban and county-wide districts as documented in Table 1:

- There were 126,142 students enrolled in these fifteen school districts in school year 2019-20, which represents 16 percent of all students enrolled in public schools in our state.
- Of the 53,488 teachers employed in school year 2019-20 in public schools, 8,208 or 15 percent were employed in these fifteen school districts.
- The mean or average student enrollment in these districts in 2019-20 was 8,409, but the median was 3,664. Half of the districts had a student enrollment greater than 3,664 and half had fewer than 3,664.

- In 2019-20, two-thirds of these school districts had a poverty index at or above the state poverty index of 61.1 The average poverty index for these fifteen districts was 62.0. The poverty index is the percentage of students in a district who qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, or Supplemental Nutritious Assistance Program (SNAP) or who are homeless or migrant or were in foster care.

Table 1
Student Enrollment, Poverty Index, and Number of Teachers
School Year 2019-20

District	Student Enrollment	Poverty Index	Number Teachers
Abbeville	2,963	69.4	230
Anderson 1	10,243	50.5	608
Anderson 2	3,664	64.5	233
Anderson 3	2,611	72.6	175
Anderson 4	2,860	60.5	197
Anderson 5	13,043	66.1	897
Berkeley	36,812	56.6	2,260
Florence 2	1,086	70.3	78
Florence 5	1,192	70.9	84
Greenwood 50	8,844	73.9	581
Kershaw	10,900	61.4	697
Laurens 56	2,867	80.0	199
Oconee	10,472	65.8	791
Pickens	16,270	59.8	1,021
Saluda	2,315	77.1	157
15 Districts	*126,142*	*62.0*	*8,208*
State	**783,419**	**61.1%**	**53,488**

Source: 2019-20 Report Cards, https://screportcards.ed.sc.gov/

Results

All fifteen school districts responded to the survey by November 4, 2020. Their responses are tabulated or summarized in this report.

Question 1: Statistics

Districts were asked to respond to the following questions.

Approximately what percentage of _students_ in kindergarten through grade 12 in your district are currently receiving instruction accordingly:

      Full face-to face   _____%
      Virtual only   _____%
      Other   _____% (please explain)

Approximately what percentage of _students with IEPs_ are receiving instruction accordingly:

      Full face-to face   _____%
      Virtual only   _____%
      Other   _____% (please explain)

Approximately what percentage of classroom _teachers_ in your district are delivering instruction accordingly:

      Full face-to face   _____%
      Virtual only   _____%
      Other   _____% (please explain)

When comparing the 135-day average daily membership of your district in 2019-20 to the initial enrollment of students in your district in school year 2020-21, enrollment this school year: (Please check one response)

      Is relatively unchanged _____

      Has declined by approximately ___%

      Has increased by approximately ___%

Each of the fifteen school districts provided parents the option of enrolling their child in full face-to-face instruction or in virtual instruction. Three districts also provided a third option, a hybrid model. Table 2 below documents the percentage of students in kindergarten through grade 12 in each district who opted for full face-to-face instruction, virtual only, or the other option. All percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

In these districts, parents overwhelmingly chose full face-to-face instruction.

Table 2
Percentage of All Students in K-12 Receiving Instruction

District	Full Face-to-Face	Virtual Only	Other
Abbeville	70	30	
Anderson 1	85	15	
Anderson 2	76	24	
Anderson 3	88	12	
Anderson 4	81	19	
Anderson 5	69	31	
Berkeley	51	3	46 *
Florence 2	63	37	
Florence 5	67	33	
Greenwood 50	56	29	15% *
Kershaw	48	52	
Laurens 56	70	30	
Oconee	78	22	
Pickens	77	23	*
Saluda	76	24	

* Berkeley created an alternative model called Blended Distance learning that allows students the same delivery and quality of direct instruction via live streaming from the classroom.
* Greenwood 50 provided parents with three instructional options: returning to school *Traditionally (5 days face-to-face)*, *A/B Model,* or *Virtually*. Students attend and receive face-to-face instruction at school on specific days based on the A or B Schedule assignment.
* Pickens used a six-week calendar with scheduled times for digital learning, referred to as intermittent virtual, to provide social distancing breaks and to prepare for extended closure due to COVID-19. Elementary students receive most, if not all, instruction in face-to-face instruction. Secondary schools have 4 weeks of face-to-face instruction for each 6-week window.

Due to the impact of school closures during the pandemic on the learning and support services for students with special needs, districts were also asked to report the percentage of students with Individual Education Program (IEPs) who received instruction in full face-to-face instruction, virtual only, or other delivery option. The results are shown in Table 3.

Overwhelmingly, parents of children with IEPs also opted for their child to receive face-to-face instruction.

Table 3
Percentage of Students in K-12 with IEPs Receiving Instruction

District	Full Face-to-Face	Virtual Only	Other
Abbeville	71.4	28.6	
Anderson 1	85.0	15.0	
Anderson 2	73.0	27.0	
Anderson 3	85.0	15.0	
Anderson 4	77.5	22.5	
Anderson 5	65.5	34.5	
Berkeley	51.8	2.1	46.2
Florence 2	60.0	30.0	10.0
Florence 5	81.0	19.0	
Greenwood 50	55.0	32.7	12.2
Kershaw	49.0	51.0	
Laurens 56	74.0	26.0	
Oconee	77.0	23.0	
Pickens			*
Saluda	77.0	23.0	

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

* Pickens identified students in Special Programs and students in Early Childhood (3K through grade 2) to be their highest priority for in-person face-to-face instruction. The district will provide face-to-face instruction to these groups at times when other student groups are being taught through Intermittent Virtual or through the district's Virtual Academy.

It should be noted that many districts also provided supplemental services to students with IEPs using other means. For example, students received academic

instruction virtually, but other services like occupational therapy, speech therapy, or physical therapy, were provided weekly in-person at the school. One district allowed a high school student to attend in-person one block of special education resource daily.

Districts then were asked what percentage of classroom teachers delivered instruction full face-to-face, virtually only, or other. The results are tabulated in Table 4.

Many districts reported that middle and high school teachers in many of these districts taught some students in face-to-face instruction and others virtually.

There were at least three districts that reported providing some type of synchronous instruction. Synchronous instruction requires all students to be present at the same time, either in the classroom or online. Asynchronous instruction does not require all participants to be virtually present at the same time. An example of asynchronous instruction are self-paced online courses or classes with pre-recorded videos of instruction with support.

For example, **Berkeley** reported the highest percentage of teachers providing instruction in multiple platforms. According to the district, "district and school administrators worked together to devise caseloads to reflect both traditional and blended distance learning students. Teacher caseloads within this model do not exceed the maximum number of students as defined by the state and allows for a significant reduction of students present at a given time in a classroom. In addition, this model allows for continuity of services if a parent were to transition their child's pathway throughout the year based on their circumstance by reducing the potential for disruption of teachers of record and shifts in instructional pacing."

Table 4

Percentage of Teachers Providing Instruction

District	Full Face-to-Face	Virtual Only	Other	Explanation
Abbeville	68.0	8.0	24.0	Middle and high school teachers have one or two sections of virtual and other sections face-to-face
Anderson 1	95.0	5.0		
Anderson 2	47.0	8.0	45.0	Teachers in middle and high school teach their face-to-face students as well as have their virtual students join the class through live streaming.
Anderson 3	55.2%		44.8%	All teachers are teaching students face-to-face and some are concurrently teaching virtual students. Teachers who have a blended class (both virtual and face-to-face) have a smaller number of face-to-face students in the particular class period or subject area.
Anderson 4	63.5	7.4	29.1	There are 55 middle and high school teachers who are either teaching a section that is virtual or volunteered to teach for a stipend a group of students in addition to their regular school day.
Anderson 5	80.3	14.8	4.9	Other includes teachers who provide dual instruction in special education.
Berkeley	4.0		96.0	
Florence 2	60.0	30.0	10	Teachers at the middle school level teach in a

				departmentalized schedule. They each have three full face-to-face classes and one virtual only section. Each of these teachers also has a planning period. At the high school level, one teacher in each core content area teaches virtual classes, in addition to full face-to-face classes.
Florence 5	94.0	6.0		
Greenwood 50	36.0	11.0	53.0	
Kershaw	65.0	<5.0	30.0	Other includes teachers teaching both face-to-face and virtual students
Laurens 56	74.0	13.0	13.0	Other includes teachers who teach face-to-face and virtual students
Oconee	80.0	10.0	10.0	Middle and high school teachers that teach some classes face-to-face and others virtually.
Pickens	77.0	23.0		
Saluda	88.0	12.0		

Districts were then asked to compare their 135-day average daily membership in school year 2019-20 to the initial student enrollment in school year 2020-21 to determine if student enrollment has increased, decreased, or remained relatively unchanged. For purposes of reporting, "relatively unchanged" refers to districts having less than a 1 percent decline in enrollment. Responses were rounded up to the nearest percentage.

The results in Table 5 document that eight school districts reported that student enrollment was relatively unchanged, and seven districts reported declines of between 2 and 5 percent. No district reported an increase.

Table 5
Initial Change in Student Enrollment in 2020-21 as compared to 2019-20

Relatively Unchanged	Decline
Abbeville	Anderson 2 by 5%
Anderson 1	Anderson 3 by 4%
Anderson 5	Anderson 4 by 4%
Florence 5	Berkeley by 2%
Greenwood 50	Florence 2 by 3%
Kershaw	Oconee by 2 to 3%
Laurens 56	Pickens by 2%
Saluda	

Question 2: *Strategies, Policies, and Protocols*

> In your opinion, what strategies, policies, or initiatives implemented by your district are critical to providing full face-to-face instruction in school year 2020-21?

In analyzing the responses, four common policies were identified as critical in providing full face-to-face instruction.

1. Establishment of clearly defined goals or objectives that articulate to teachers, staff and parents the "why" and "how" schools would reopen.

Below are some examples of how districts articulated the need to provide full face-to-face instruction.

Anderson 1's policy explicitly addressed the spread of COVID-19. "No policy or procedure created can provide a 100% guarantee that the virus will not be transmitted in our schools. . .. Anderson One's goal will be to limit the transmission as much as possible. While children generally experience mild symptoms with COVID-19, and, to date, have not been found to contribute substantially to the spread of the virus, transmission from even those with mild or non-apparent symptoms remain a risk to others."

Anderson 1 then identified the priorities for opening schools as follows:
- Maintaining the health and safety of our students, employees, and families.
- Returning to face-to-face instruction as quickly and safely as possible.
- Remaining flexible and altering procedures if health issues dictate.

- Providing options (when possible) for parents, students, and employees when returning to school is not possible because of health concerns.

Anderson 5, likewise, explained the factors and research that led to the district's decision to return to full face-to-face instruction, which included:
- Loss of direct instruction for nine weeks in the spring of 2020 was detrimental to students.
- Our parent survey reported that 65% of parents felt it was "very important" for students to return to in-person learning vs eLearning in the fall of 2020.
- Scientific reports that the spread of COVID-19 among elementary and secondary age students was low.
- Research regarding all instructional options: Full virtual, hybrid, full face-to-face. Only full virtual instruction guaranteed no COVID-19 transmission among students and staff through school attendance. However, the detrimental effects of instructional loss and student isolation negated this option. While the hybrid model reduced the number of students in school and on buses, it still did not prevent the spread of COVID-19. The hybrid model is also a burden on families, especially since many returned to work in the fall. Our Parent Survey results showed low regard for a hybrid model.
- Research on the detrimental effect of student isolation during COVID-19 lockdowns.
- Well-established and highly effective District procedures for facility cleaning, food service, transportation, and nursing services.
- Nurses in every District Five school.
- Use of a cohort model for elementary schools which limits interaction between students in other classes.
- One-to-one technology for kindergarten through 12th grade. This factor allowed the K-12 Virtual Academy to become operational.
- Delaying the start of school for three weeks from August 18 to September 8, 2020. This provided additional time for COVID-19 spread to begin to trend downward from its peak in late July.

Berkeley shared a common goal with stakeholders to facilitate a safe re-entry into school five days a week while adhering to social distancing guidelines, as is practical.

Pickens adopted a different approach by explaining the purpose of a six-week calendar rather than a 180-day calendar. The district also communicated that the

virus spread was more contagious in secondary schools so elementary students could attend more face-to-face instruction.

2. Creation of community health and safety taskforces to ensure that the goals or objectives were achieved with local support.

All school districts identified key community members including pediatricians, county DHEC officials, representatives from local hospitals, school board members, school nurses, district and school personnel, students, and parents who worked with the district to develop safety protocols. These protocols were aligned with DHEC and CDC guidelines and included such examples as the creation of the following teams or taskforces that were expressly named:

> Health and Safety Taskforce (**Anderson 1**)
> Reopening Task Force (**Anderson 4** and **Saluda**)
> Pandemic Safety Team (**Greenwood 50**)
> School Transition Opening Committee (**Laurens 56**)

Districts used the DHEC Recent Disease Activity by County information as one of many data points in determining how schools reopened but not as the sole data point. One district noted that the taskforce was critical in reopening because had the district relied only on the DHEC community spread information, the district still would not have been open.

3. Choice, flexibility for parents to choose, among various instructional models, was critical in ensuring districts could practice social distancing and in building confidence and trust among parents.

Providing virtual instruction or hybrid options reduced the number of students in face-to-face instruction, allowing districts to follow distancing protocols in classrooms and other common areas in school buildings. Giving parents the initial choice created trust and confidence in the public schools. Here are some examples:

> By providing a virtual option, it reduced the number of students in face-to-face instruction. This allowed us to follow social distancing protocols in classrooms and other common areas of our buildings.
> (*Abbeville*)

(Our) ability to develop multiple learning pathways to give choice for parents was critical to a successful reopening five days a week.
(*Berkeley*)

CHOICE, Flexibility to choose for our parents. While there was initial hesitancy to full face-to-face instruction, parents slowly changed their learning operations from virtual to face-to-face as their comfort level increased. However, parents had to understand that face-to-face looks and feels different than it has in the past.
(*Kershaw*)

Berkeley was one district that provided three options to parents: face-to-face instruction five days a week; virtual and an alternative model called Blended Distance Learning that allowed students the same delivery and quality of direct instruction via live streaming from the classroom.

Greenwood 50 was another district that provided three options to parents: face-to-face instruction five days a week; A/B hybrid schedule; or virtual instruction. "Providing parents with three back-to-school instructional options gave us the ability to reduce class sizes and reopen schools safely." The district has decided to offer two options in the spring semester, face-to-face or virtual.

4. Open and continuous communication between the district and the staff and parents using multiple methods and modalities was critical to providing in-person instruction.

All fifteen districts emphasized the importance of communication. Communication included providing factual and timely information using multiple methods and modalities so that teachers, staff and parents understood the safety protocols being implemented. Below are some quotes from these districts about the importance of communication.

Every week the district sends communication through email to all parents and staff with changes to schedules, protocols, and practices. The district praises the staff, parents and students in areas that are working well and encourages them where improvements are needed.
(*Anderson 1*)

Communication is key in any situation but especially as we began to bring students back face-to-face.

(*Anderson 3*)

One of the key factors that have allowed us to stay in school has been communication with parents and staff. We have worked very hard to help staff and parents to understand that you must not come to school if you are sick. Parents are calling the school when their child is sick to get advice as to how to proceed and not bringing them to school. This has prevented us from having to quarantine students on more than one occasion.
(*Florence 5*)

We met weekly with the community via Facebook Live and Google Meets. We met weekly with the board in open session updating on our progress."
(*Laurens 56*)

Weekly videos spotlighting the hard work that was being done in areas such as health and wellness, air filtration systems, sanitation practices, instructional planning, technology upgrades and other related topics were pushed out every Wednesday. Saluda County Schools continues to push out a #OneSaludaWednesday video every week to spotlight, educate, and reassure parents of the safety protocols we are using. We strongly believe that our early and constant transparent communication has played a tremendous role in our success.
(*Saluda*)

Pickens emphasized the importance of constant communication with parents and staff. "We started early in the process that decisions regarding six-week windows will be announced two weeks prior to each new window so parents will know how to plan in advance." There is also constant communication and requests for feedback on the protocols with principals, districts teachers of the year, past and current, support employee of the year, and the senior leadership team.

Saluda also emphasized constant communication between the superintendent and the Board of Trustees. Similarly, **Laurens 56** affirmed that having a school board committed to doing what was best for students improved communications and enforced the district's reopening plan.

Some districts also identified other protocols and policies that supported the reopening of schools including the need to provide professional development and training to teachers.

- **Berkeley** noted that resources and support to teachers was instrumental in providing multiple learning pathways.
- **Laurens 56** trained teachers and nurses on the protocols for social distancing, mask wearing, and hand washing. The district read and developed a knowledge of and understanding for the CDC and DHEC protocols. The district did a full slate of professional development modules on instructional technology for classroom and virtual environments teacher support system to ensure teachers were prepared to deliver instruction.

> In your opinion, what are the key health and safety protocols that your school district is implementing to ensure that full face-to-face instruction can occur safely? Please differentiate if the protocols vary at the elementary, middle or high school levels.

Overwhelmingly, all districts adhered to guidance published by the CDC and DHEC to control the spread of the virus. These practices include social distancing; wearing of face coverings; frequent hand-washing; staying home if sick; and criteria for returning to school after quarantining or isolation. All districts also identified expanded cleaning and disinfecting strategies for buildings, buses and classrooms. The following chart lists the most commonly mentioned health and safety protocols used in these districts.

Enforced social distancing in school buildings and on school buses by changing bus routes, having staggered lunch schedules, having students eat in their classrooms, and adjusting arrival and afternoon dismissal procedures
Implemented cohorting of students
Enforced social distancing in classrooms by installing desk or plexiglass shields, especially in early grades to allow students to remove masks
Promoted personal hygiene to include frequent hand-washing, encouraging parents to keep children at home, monitoring symptoms for students in middle and high schools, and adding to the daily schedule 10 minutes between classes for hand-washing
Encouraged or required wearing of face coverings, especially in middle and high schools
Increased sanitation of buildings and buses (i.e. electrostatic fogging, daily spraying, etc.) and of high touch surfaces during the day
Limited visitors to campuses
Created isolation rooms to evaluate students
Took daily temperature checks
Installed hand-sanitizing pump stations at each entry point/classroom
Eliminated school assemblies
Staggered classroom release times to minimize contact in hallways
Provided social and emotional support to students and staff
Retrofitted water foundations to accommodate filling of water bottles for students
Removed non-essential classroom furniture
Assigned one district person to handle all COVID related cases
Refined procedures for identifying close contacts by communicating through a single source to the district office and then to DHEC to track cases and quarantine staff and students in a consistent, efficient manner

Districts also emphasized two key policies that facilitated the reopening of schools to face-to-face instruction: (1) the use of cohorting in the early grades; and (2) the use of school nurses.

Cohorting, especially in elementary schools, was critical. Cohorting in public education is defined as keeping students in a specific grade level or class together to limit the risk of contracting the virus. In essence, students in a specific grade or class are isolated to the extent possible from other staff or students. Cohorting also

facilitates in effective contact tracing. Below are examples from districts regarding how cohorting was implemented.

- **Florence 2** stated that "cohort group for all activities and self-contained grouping through 6th grade have been instrumental in ensuring the ability to contact trace, as necessary."

- **Florence 5** also asked elective/departmentalized teachers to change classes rather than students, aided in the ability to maintain cohort grouping.

- **Oconee** emphasized the importance of cohort grouping in elementary schools. "We are not requiring mask use in classrooms for kindergarten through grade 2. Instead, we are being very vigilant with cohort grouping and keeping those students in one room as much as possible. This has been largely successful during our first seven weeks. Cohort grouping is not possible at the middle and high level. At the middle and high, desks are spaced as far apart as possible. All students and staff wear masks unless they are spaced 6 feet apart. Principals were asked to approve socially distance classrooms before students were allowed to remove masks. Seating charts are strictly enforced to make contact tracing possible."

- At the elementary level, **Kershaw** started the school year by providing a family-style environment where students stayed in their classrooms and support activities such as related arts traveled to the classes versus the students traveling to the related arts classrooms.

- Regarding contact tracing, **Pickens** described how students were assigned seats and areas within the classroom to allow for contact tracing. Each teacher and principal had to be able to contact trace every student and employee who had been within 6 feet or less for more than 15 consecutive minutes. The seating charts – every child, every chair, every day – is critical to contact tracing.

Several districts emphasized the importance of having a ***nurse*** at each school. The districts utilized the services of nurses in a variety of ways as noted below.

- **Anderson 5** used its school nurses to provide education on coronavirus to the school community and parents and worked closely with athletic directors to help decrease risk of COVID-19 transmission among athletes.

- **Florence 2** has school nurses take medications to the child in his or her classroom to reduce the number of children coming in and out of the office/health room. In addition, nurses now respond to medical calls in the classroom as well.
- **Greenwood 50** assigned district nurses and administrators to work with on a daily basis to make critical decisions about COVID-19 cases and quarantining of staff and students.
- **Kershaw** and **Laurens 56** designated an isolation room staffed by a Health Room Assistant with the nurse remaining in the nurse's office unless needed to complete an assessment.
- **Picken**s had daily updates on the number of COVID-19 cases from data collected by school nurses.

There were also other unique protocols implemented, which are noted below, to mitigate the spread of COVID-19:

- Requiring employees to complete a daily health screening survey – **Anderson 4** used a mobile-response web application that employees could access on any device. **Kershaw** used PreChek kits, a smartphone app and digital thermometer system. Results with the test kit came back in 48 hours. **Greenwood 50** and **Saluda** required staff to complete a daily health survey that included such questions as "in the past 24 hours have you had a temperature?"

- Engaging an outside company to assess the ventilation capacity of buildings and to recommend appropriate air filters. (**Laurens 56**)

- Using an infrared artificial intelligence (AI) temperature check system at all entry points to screen students, staff, and visitors before entry into the buildings. The system has a separate screen that is monitored by the front office. If an individual presented an elevated temperature, they were taken to the isolation room for further evaluation by the school nurse. (**Kershaw**)

Question 3: *Challenges and Barriers*

> Please describe the greatest challenge or challenges that your school district continues to encounter in providing full face-to-face instruction, and what, if any, action the state could take to assist you in overcoming these challenges.

Districts consistently identified the following challenges along with suggestions for overcoming the challenges.

1. *Transportation* – The current restriction that school buses can only operate at 66 percent capacity restricted the ability of districts to transport students in a timely manner. For districts that did not lengthen the school day, the restriction reduced the number of hours students were in school. One district even calculated the impact of the restriction on the number of hours lost in instruction for students in their district. For elementary school students, the restriction equaled 28 days of lost instruction and for middle and high school students, 26 days of lost instruction. Some districts asked that the restriction be reviewed while other districts supported the capacity limits.

2. *Quarantining Guidelines* – Districts asked that DHEC reconsider the quarantining guidelines, especially those for students. One district noted that they had very few students who were quarantined and who became symptomatic or tested positive for COVID-19. Another district pointed out that some states are allowing students to come back after 7 days with a negative test or no symptoms.

Other districts pointed out the impact of the quarantining guidelines on support staff. If multiple support staff employees have to be quarantined, districts worry that in-person instruction will have to be closed. Districts mentioned the need for emergency funding to support the hiring of substitute personnel as well as funding to hire additional nurses, custodians and school bus drivers.

3. *Technology* – Districts that did not have a device for each student faced significant challenges in providing virtual learning. These districts had to purchase devices and train teachers. Going forward, these same districts, many in rural areas of our state, believe that access to the Internet for students and teachers at home will continue to be a challenge. They asked that the state allocate funds to purchase mobile hotspots and devices and to expand high-speed Internet.

4. *Space and Funding* – Districts noted that following CDC and DHEC guidelines requires additional purchases of personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies and in some districts, even additional personnel.

Other districts believe that guidance issued by the SCDE should be reviewed and revised guidance issued. The guidance relates to the 6-foot social distancing policy and the plexiglass policy. Districts noted that the plexiglass policy requiring twelve inches above the student's head and extending twelve inches on each side of the student is actually a safety hazard in the classroom.

As more students return to full face-to-face instruction, space to social distance becomes an issue with financial implications. Many districts noted that to practice social distancing, common areas like libraries, chorus rooms, gyms, etc., will have to be turned into classrooms. In some districts, these classrooms will require additional teachers and staff.

One district created extra classes in middle and high schools by using classroom teachers willing to teach above a "full load" or willing to give up their planning period. These teachers are being compensated with a stipend. At the elementary level, the same district moved interventionists into regular teacher roles to create extra classes.

5. *Documentation and Reporting* - One district noted that, when offering multiple instructional models, documenting completion of courses is a challenge with the SC Pupil Accounting System, whereby block schedule membership criteria must be commensurate with services provided. Another district requested more flexibility regarding reporting mandates related to state laws, namely Act 142 of 2020 and Read to Succeed.

6. *Teaching and Learning* - Several districts noted that teacher morale is a challenge. Several districts requested that the step increase be reinstated as well as bonuses or hazard pay considered for teachers.

Other districts noted challenges to teaching and learning. One district hired additional certified teachers and staff to provide academic support for students. Another district noted that its prekindergarten and primary teachers are struggling with the lack of developmentally appropriate measures that have to be taken which, in turn, are negatively impacting learning for young children.

Other challenges and concerns that were identified include:

- School meal participation is down because students in virtual instruction are not participating.

- Extra-curricular activities including athletics at the middle and high school level are causing risks that might not be in the best interest of children.

- Administrative time and cost between getting COVID-19 test results and then doing contact tracing, notifying parents/guardians, and completing paperwork, quarantine or isolation is a challenge with financial implications.

- Liability and risk management in regard to COVID-19 is a concern.

In your opinion, are there any statutes, regulations, or state policies that have or continue to impede your district's ability to provide full face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic? Please be as specific as possible with references to the South Carolina Code of Laws, State Board of Education regulations, etc.

Generally, school districts did not cite specific statutes or regulations that impeded their ability to provide full face-to-face instruction. However, below are three areas that were mentioned and that address state-level issues:

1. *Assessments* – Six districts asked the state to limit the number of assessments administered as a result of state law or regulations. Some districts asked for the suspension of all summative assessments. Others asked for suspension of other assessments like the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, formative assessments administered during the first semester pursuant to Act 142, and assessments to identify students for the gifted and talented program. However, no district articulated how suspending the assessments would ensure face-to-face instruction continued. Instead, districts contend that assessments require additional safety procedures and time away from instruction.

2. *Support from the South Carolina Department of Education* – Three districts cited a lack of support from the Department of Education as an impediment. The districts noted that not being able to get clear, concise, or timely answers to questions created challenges. One district noted the lack of support from the Office

of School Facilities at the Department when asked about how to remove and store non-essential furniture. Another district stated that verbal guidance from the Department on social distancing questions has not been translated into written guidance. And, another district questioned the Department's public support of its school reopening plans despite the Department having approved it.

3. *Seat Time Requirement*– Two districts noted that the General Assembly should consider amending Section 59-1-425 of the South Carolina Code of Laws to give local school districts the flexibility to implement virtual learning for inclement weather days as well as for other situations. The pandemic has revealed that the law needs to be amended to give districts with a proven track record of providing virtual instruction the means to utilize virtual days in lieu of the mandatory 6.5 hours of face-to-face instruction for 180 days per week.

Question 4: *Communication*

Please explain the process by which parents/families were able to choose between full face-to-face instruction and virtual learning of instruction.

All school districts conducted one or more surveys of parents during the summer to determine interest in each instructional option. Then the districts required parents or guardians to choose the learning option for their child. Typically, these registrations were conducted online and by paper. Most districts administered the survey in English and in other languages as needed.

Other districts also implemented the following innovative strategies to meet the needs of parents, students and teachers.

- **Greenwood 50** provided parents of students with disabilities a detailed explanation of services defined in each instructional delivery model and IEP teams met to decide instructional service delivery models and related services for students. They also used translator services to communicate with non-English speaking parents.

- **Laurens 56** held multiple parent meetings to explain virtual learning and how this would differ from what parents experienced in the spring of 2020 so that parents could make an informed decision.

- **Oconee** included in its parent survey multiple statements that parents had to acknowledge. These statements were intended to clarify the parental and student responsibilities for face-to-face and virtual instruction. They also collected information about transportation needs so the district could determine if buses would have to do double routes. Any parent who did not respond received a personal call from school staff.

- **Saluda** first deployed a parent/family survey to assess student and parent/guardian thoughts on returning to in-person instruction. A second survey asked parents to select their preferred instructional delivery option.

> Please explain if and when parents can choose to change the instructional delivery during the school year.

Generally, districts allowed parents or guardians to change the instructional delivery option at the following intervals in the school year:

- After six weeks into the school year;
- At end of each quarter; or
- At end of the semester.

A few districts required parents to make a yearlong commitment; however, students were allowed to move from virtual to in-person based on extenuating circumstances and if space was available.

Many districts, especially districts with smaller student enrollments, handled requests on a case-by-case basis to address the needs of students, especially young students in elementary school and students for whom virtual instruction did not meet their educational needs.

Here are some specific examples of how districts prioritized parents' requests for changes and how districts have amended their policies over time:

In **Anderson 5** requests for an instructional delivery change are handled on a case-by-case basis with preference given to the following students:
   a. Students with disabilities (IEP and 504)
   b. English learners
   c. Students who are homeless

d. Students in foster care
e. Students in group homes
f. Students who are academically delayed
g. Students with poor or intermittent Internet connectivity at home
h. Students in kindergarten through fifth grades

Berkeley initially opened the pathway change process for two weeks with consideration for exceptions. Based on the volume of exceptions granted, the district then closed the choice option to stabilize teacher caseloads and instruction.

Florence 2 parents were allowed to change the instructional delivery model based on the availability of space with consideration given to current class sizes after a conference with the school principal.

Florence 5 requested parents wait until the end of the first nine weeks to switch their instructional delivery model. It became clear very early in this process that this was not going to work. Many students with IEPs had difficulty with virtual instruction and requested to be moved back to face-to-face instruction within a week of school opening. Students were moved upon request. Students who could not complete work virtually were also given the option to move back to face-to-face.

Kershaw at each 4.5 week mark allowed families to change their learning option. Families are only allowed to change their learning option one time. The only exceptions to this policy are a change in the medical status and/or family circumstances.

Laurens 56 allowed parents to change their requests but asked them to maintain their commitment for at least one semester.

Oconee allowed changes at the semester break with appeals to switch at every nine weeks. Many principals have accepted students back into the school prior to the nine weeks because they knew it was in the best interest of the student.

Pickens established throughout the first semester, a list of "high needs" students considered "high needs" (ESOL, IEP, special situations) who were approved to return to face-to-face instruction from the virtual option or vice versa on a case by case method with principal and district approval. As the year has progressed, more students are requesting to shift from virtual to face-to-face, and the district developed a process to manage the requests.

> Please describe the strategies that your district uses to communicate with parents/families and students during the pandemic. Please identify the strategies that in your opinion were the most successful and why.

Districts concurred that weekly COVID-19 updates were critical in communicating factual information to staff and families. All districts used multiple media outlets including:

- Printed and pdf brochures to parents
- Emails
- Website announcements including COVID-19 dashboards of information
- Social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)
- Automated calling
- Personal calls
- Text messages
- Newspaper articles
- Letters
- Radio
- Digital signage
- Small group face-to-face meetings
- Designated person at each school and district office to provide assistance
- Home visits
- Mandatory teacher phone conference or Google meet with each parent
- Videos
- School Messenger to send mass phone calls and emails and to track teacher call data between teachers and parents/students.
- Learning management system like Canvas/Google Classroom
- Blackboard Connect/Parent Link
- Home visits
- Virtual conferences

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- YouTube videos
- Translator services for non-English speaking parents/guardians
- Distribution of instructional materials, handouts, etc., at food pick-up sites
- Virtual open houses, meet the teacher, etc. to engage families safely

There were some unique communication strategies used in districts to assist families in making their choice of instructional delivery:

In **Anderson 3** when someone indicated that they were interested in virtual, an administrator from the school reached out by phone and personally spoke with them about the differences and the responsibility that comes with virtual learning. Finally, once a person stated that they wanted to move forward, they signed a "Virtual Contract" with all the requirements that were discussed. The district had a common script format and contract that was used at all locations.

At least three districts reporting using district apps. For example, **Anderson 3** has an app that works on a Thrillshare platform. This platform allows the district to email, text, send push notifications, voice calls, and social media blasts in one click. This has been the most efficient way to update our families within minutes of operational changes. Most of our families have a cell phone, and the district found the app to be the best way to get information to them quickly. Surveys show that the best response comes from texts and through the Facebook pages.

Laurens 56 hired a marketing consultant to assist with communications plans.

Pickens communicated the importance of being prepared to notify parents when a student, teacher or staff member tests positive for COVID-19. The district provided tools to parents to familiarize them with the notification process so that parents would know if their child came in close contact with the infected person and posted weekly updates about the number of positive cases and quarantines by school.

Saluda focused on the social and emotional health of its students and staff. Correspondence included the most current factual information available along with the consistent messaging. The district included a teaching and learning resource section and links to articles about self-care.

Question 5: *Local Policies*

> Did your local school board of trustees adopt or amend any local school district policy to provide full face-to-face instruction during the pandemic? If so, please describe the new policy or policy change and its rationale and impact on providing full face-to-face instruction.

Ten school districts responded that no local school board policies had been implemented to provide full face-to-face instruction. The remaining five districts enacted the following local board policies:

Anderson 3 - At the April 13, 2020, Board Meeting, the board unanimously adopted an Emergency Resolution Re: 2019 Novel Coronavirus Response. This action authorizes the Board Chair in consultation with the Superintendent to waive or suspend provisions of existing policies, administrative procedures, and other rules that would delay the Board or district in coping with the emergency and making necessary and appropriate decisions to account for the needs of the school district. This resolution allowed the district to make grading and attendance policy adjustments without modifying existing policies. It also allowed the district to enforce stricter rules regarding visitors to schools to mitigate the transmission of the virus.

With the expansion of instructional technology use in both face-to-face and virtual instruction, the district has a new social media policy that is in first reading and is expected to pass on second reading. This policy addresses guidelines for staff and students when utilizing social media platforms for educational purposes. Another policy in draft form is an opt-out for onsite instruction. The district expects the virtual learning option to be an ongoing choice even after the pandemic and are working on a defined policy do address this option.

Anderson 5 - At the March meeting of the Anderson Five Board of Trustees, the Board moved $1 million from the General Fund to a specially designated fund created for the purpose of funding expenses incurred by the district response to COVID-19. This motion included a request to suspend all local board policies regarding procurement as it relates to expenses incurred in this specialty designated

fund. It passed unanimously. The creation of a special fund also allowed better tracking of COVID-19 related expenses.

Florence 2 adopted the following polices related to mandatory school closures and virtual instruction:

Emergencies: To establish the basic structure for preparation for, and reaction to, emergencies by the administration.

Remote Work: The superintendent is given the flexibility to temporarily permit district staff to work remotely to provide instruction and to conduct other district business.

Remote Instruction: Creates an opportunity for students and teachers to interact in creative ways and allows students to continue learning during situations that necessitate the closure of schools or district buildings.

Florence 5 board approved a policy giving teachers unlimited sick leave if they were quarantined or diagnosed with COVID-19. This was a major concern for teachers.

Greenwood 50 Board of Trustees voted and approved Pandemic Safety Expectations to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. The board also voted and approved a continuing resolution to operate on the same budget for the school year due to the uncertainty of the pandemic.

Question 6: *Lessons Learned*

> Based on your experiences to date with full face-to-face instruction during the pandemic, what are the biggest lessons learned that could assist other districts in transitioning to full face-to-face instruction?

The following are excerpts from each district's answer to this important question. The lessons learned are intended to help other districts provide full face-to-face instruction.

Have a well thought-out plan with options, have safety protocols in place and announced, monitor student learning often, and communicate with parents.
(Abbeville)

Building staff, parents, student, and community trust is important. Being transparent is very important. Most will understand if you do not have all the right answers but make a convincing case for your process.
(*Anderson 1*)

Teaching virtually has been very difficult on its own. If given the opportunity, we would not have teachers teach face-to-face and stream their class to the virtual students at the same time.
(*Anderson 2*)

In drafting our plan, cross-district collaboration was a key. Several face-to-face and Zoom meetings with the superintendents and administration in the other Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens County districts provided valuable insight. We shared research and strategies that we were incorporating into our district plans. On the district level, we began with a general framework and then narrowed the focus by asking and answering the "what if" questions. We worked to develop general procedures and guidelines while understanding that information is fluid, and the plan is not intended to address every possible question. With a plan in place, we communicated with our faculty and staff first to get their feedback and buy-in. Then, we shared the plan with our students, parents, and community.

In summary, the overall biggest lessons learned are to plan extensively but be ready to make adjustments on short notice. Expect anxiety and apprehension but move through each scenario with caution and utmost attention. Collaborate continually with other districts. Over communicate and be proactive. Transparency builds trust and maintains calm. Consistency is key. Our students and parents

really want face-to-face instruction. They've adopted to our new policies and procedures easily, and school does feel normal for them.

Remain calm and manage outcomes one day at a time.

(Anderson 3)

Parents have been supportive of all the safety protocols we have put in place. Ongoing communication with them continues to be critical to obtaining their trust and confidence in the plan to reopen. . . Putting in place a strong cleaning and disinfecting daily protocol remains critical to our ability to provide daily instruction.

By following the CDC guidelines, a district could greatly reduce close contacts. We are proof it can be done as we have had no level of spread in any classroom or school since August 31.

(*Anderson 4*)

Trust the data that the spread of COVID remains low among elementary and secondary age students;

Act quickly to quarantine students and/or staff as directed by DHEC;

Develop strategies to instruct students that are quarantined and strategies to continue instruction when teachers are quarantined. Quarantines can last up to 24 days. (This situation is one of our biggest challenges.)

(*Anderson 5*)

Although our plan was approved, we received little support from the state department when our teachers started calling with concerns. We asked on multiple occasions for an email or written correspondence for support that still have not been received. This is just one example of inconsistencies that were communicated from the state department. It is logistically impossible to bring students back for 5 days a week instruction. with choices for

parents, and not have teachers simultaneously teach different pathways. Districts need support from the state department and clear communication to the public what this looks like.

(*Berkeley*)

The greatest lesson learned is that face-to-face instruction requires constant monitoring and adjusting. In many instances, the plan sounds good and looks good, but it is not until you put it into practice that you discover the little

issues. You must be patient and willing to do what is in the best interest of all stakeholders.

We have experienced several students being placed in quarantine recently, due to a COVID-19 spread outside of school due to youth and church events. Moving students from in-person to virtual is time consuming for faculty and staff and may take several days. Last month, we started practicing what remote learning would involve with teachers and students all in-person classes to make the transition easier. Teachers are required to have remote lessons ready to use as needed for quarantined students.

(*Florence 2*)

Communicate with parents as to the protocols the schools are using for safety. It is very important that parents understand what schools are doing to keep their children safe. Parents also need to understand that if a child is sick they need to keep the child home and call the school to get information where they should go for testing.

(*Florence 5*)

Our district has built a level of trust with our stakeholders and community due to our communication being timely and factual. In spite of the uncertain times, we have tried to be as transparent as possible with our stakeholders in print, digital, and visual communications. . . As we developed our reopening plans for face-to-face instruction, our district understood that we would be asking even more from our teachers and staff. We also understand teachers may experience stress with additional responsibilities created by COVID-19 protocols. . . Our district's top priority is the safety and well-being of our students, teachers and staff. . . Our district truly appreciates everyone's continued patience, support and willingness to make necessary adjustments to provide face-to-face instruction. The challenges and obstacles we have faced during this time have only made us stronger as a school district.

(*Greenwood 50*)

Have an abundance of patience.
Be prepared for extra personnel expenses.
Logging and utilizing a real-time COVID-19 dashboard to provide transparency to your families.
Limit a family's change in learning options because this becomes problematic for teachers and principals from a staffing and management standpoint. We considered staggering class start and end times at the high school. This proved to be problematic as students were clustering outside of classrooms. We then decided to create 'one-way' directional movement in our hallways, regardless of location of a student's next class.
There is no blueprint for this so be prepared to modify your plan based upon your personal experiences and community needs."
(*Kershaw*)

Communication is key. Preparation is vital. Honesty is essential.
You must have a plan for when teachers and/or student have to be home due to COVID-19. When students/staff are quarantined, you have to be able to provide the 14 days of instruction for students so that they can transition back to the regular classroom once the time frame is over.
All districts have to be 1:1 with technology, as this is necessary for ALL students to have access to instruction.
(*Laurens 56*)

PLAN, PLAN, PLAN. And, then follow through with those plans. We expected issues with mask compliance and have been pleasantly surprised. Our staff and students have been great about wearing them. . .Trust your people. . .
(*Oconee*)

Eliminate large gatherings
Treat elementary and secondary differently
Cohorting at all levels must be implemented when outbreaks occur.
(*Pickens*)

We attribute our success to our proactive planning, our inclusion of stakeholders, commitment from our faculty, administrators and staff, and our consistent communication. Furthermore, Saluda County Schools has a proud history of being servant leaders. It is through our servant's heart that we put our students first when

making decisions. From the Board of Trustees to our bus drivers, everyone in Saluda County Schools was and is fully committed to returning to face-to-face instruction five days a week. While our district may not have the resources or budgets of other districts, we have heart, drive, perseverance, and we always place our students first.

In closing, the biggest lesson learned was that by returning to full face-to-face instruction from day one, our students, staff, and parents did not have to worry about the uncertainty of when the district was going to change the model of instruction. Our community needed to return to a solid and consistent routine for our students. Our teachers and staff members needed a return to a solid and consistent routine.

(*Saluda*)