

Mask Mandate in Lexington-Richland School District 5

Joshua Gray Wednesday, September 29, 2021 at 4:52:13 PM Eastern Daylight Time
To: chuddle@lexrich5.org Cathy Huddle, aross@lexrich5.org Akil Ross, [REDACTED], [REDACTED],
jhammond@lexrich5.org Janis Hammond, mhogan@lexrich5.org, rhines@lexrich5.org Rebecca Hines, kloveless@lexrich5.org
Kenneth Loveless, ngardner@lexrich5.org Nikki Gardner

Dear Mrs. Hammond, Dr. Ross and Board of Trustees for Lexington-Richland 5,

I am writing to request that LRD5 re-instate a mask mandate, consistent with CDC Guidance for Safe Operation of Schools.

According to SC DHEC's County-level data, both Richland and Lexington Counties remain in High Levels of Transmission (Lexington County: 838 news cases / 100k, Richland County: 658 new cases / 100k). CDC guidance for Safe Return to Schools our district should be operating in Virtual or Hybrid models with mandatory masking, social distancing and enhanced hygiene practices. Recent CDC studies have shown that schools without mask mandates are 3.5 times more likely to suffer outbreaks than those with mask mandates.

With the recent ruling overturning the interpretation of the proviso prohibiting mask mandates in schools and the language in the ruling, it seems clear that the position of the courts is that failure to enact basic public health practices such as universal masking in a fatal transmissible pandemic is a discriminatory practice. If I understand correctly, the judge compared mask requirements to wheelchair accessible ramps for public schools, which are not discretionary.

" 'It is noncontroversial that children need to go to school,' Lewis wrote. 'And, they are entitled to any reasonable accommodation that allows them to do so. No one can reasonably argue that it is an undue burden to wear a mask to accommodate a child with disabilities.' In part of her ruling, Lewis likened a mask mandate in schools to ramps that allow children with mobility-related disabilities to access school buildings."

I understand that there are loud politically motivated factions in our district and state who have hung their emotional identities around this issue. I think it is incredibly sad that public health provisions have become so emotionally and politically charged - we don't have this argument over requirements that children wear shoes as part of the school dress code, for example. Previous communication stated that should the proviso be overturned or the interpretation found to be incorrect, the board would consider changing it's policy position on this matter. I urge you to do so at this juncture - last year COVID transmission dramatically increased as we headed into holiday season. With SC still significantly lagging national metrics in vaccination and unfortunately leading the nation in disease metrics - including those in adolescent populations, this is a critical measure to adopt for the health and safety of our children and the communities that support them.

Regards,

Josh

<https://scdhec.gov/covid19/covid-19-data/south-carolina-county-level-data-covid-19>

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7039e1.htm>

<https://www.thestate.com/news/coronavirus/article254609257.html>

Joshua Gray Friday, August 19, 2022 at 4:26:51 PM Eastern Daylight Time
To: chuddle@lexrich5.org Cathy Huddle, aross@lexrich5.org Akil Ross, [REDACTED], [REDACTED],
jhammond@lexrich5.org Janis Hammond, mhogan@lexrich5.org, rhines@lexrich5.org Rebecca Hines, kloveless@lexrich5.org
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Dr. Ross,

It has been widely reported that a new policy is being introduced in the district, starting with Spring Hill High School, regarding the use of pronouns of choice for children in the LGBTQ+ community. I would like to inquire as to this policy change or interpretation and to receive a written copy of this policy or policy implementation directive, along with any communication which resulted in several students being targeted by this today.

Take care,

Josh

Joshua R. Gray, Ph.D.

email: [REDACTED]

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and nothing contained herein is intended to waive any applicable privilege. If you are not the intended recipient, please advise by return e-mail and delete immediately without reading or forwarding to others.

aross@lexrich5.org Akil Ross

Friday, August 19, 2022 at 4:30:07 PM Eastern Daylight Time

To: [redacted] Joshua Gray
Cc: chuddle@lexrich5.org Cathy Huddle, [redacted], jhammond@lexrich5.org Janis Hammond, mhogan@lexrich5.org, rhines@lexrich5.org Rebecca Hines, kloveless@lexrich5.org Kenneth Loveless, ngardner@lexrich5.org Nikki Gardner

Josh,

I am not aware of a pronoun policy in our district.

Allow me to investigate this further and respond.

On Fri, Aug 19, 2022 at 4:27 PM Joshua Gray [redacted] > wrote:

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Joshua R. Gray, Ph.D.

email: [redacted]

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--



Dr. Akil E. Ross, Sr.

Superintendent

School District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties

o: 803.476.8169 e: aross@lexrich5.org

www.lexrich5.org



"We love and grow our students!"

aross@lexrich5.org Akil Ross

Friday, August 19, 2022 at 4:31:02 PM Eastern Daylight Time

To: melofton@lexrich5.org Michael Lofton

Are you aware of what Mr. Gray is referring to?

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Joshua Gray** [redacted] >

Date: Fri, Aug 19, 2022 at 4:27 PM

Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in Lexington-Richland School District 5

To: Cathy Huddle <chuddle@lexrich5.org>, Akil Ross <aross@lexrich5.org>, [redacted], Janis Hammond <jhammond@lexrich5.org>, <mhogan@lexrich5.org>, Rebecca Hines <rhines@lexrich5.org>, Kenneth Loveless <kloveless@lexrich5.org>, Nikki Gardner <ngardner@lexrich5.org>

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email: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] **Joshua Gray**
To: aross@lexrich5.org Akil Ross

Friday, August 19, 2022 at 4:36:23 PM Eastern Daylight Time

Akil,

Thank you. I know several upset parents whose kids are impacted, and I have people in the LGBTQ community in my family who are D5 graduates as well. It's an important issue for students who are already in a frequently precarious mental health space.

Quick searches indicate to me that this could be a challenge for the district in times that are already challenging.

Take care,

Josh

<https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-confirms-title-ix-protects-students-discrimination-based-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity>

On Fri, Aug 19, 2022 at 4:30 PM Akil Ross <aross@lexrich5.org> wrote:
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Joshua R. Gray, Ph.D.

email: [REDACTED]

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--

Joshua R. Gray, Ph.D.

email: [REDACTED]

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Attachments:

ED-DCL-Fact-Sheet.pdf 873k

aross@lexrich5.org Akil Ross

To: mrharris@lexrich5.org Michael Harris

Friday, August 19, 2022 at 4:40:45 PM Eastern Daylight Time

Be informed.

Can you send me the gender non-comforming powerpoint from Nuts and Bolts?

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Joshua Gray** [REDACTED]

Date: Fri, Aug 19, 2022 at 4:36 PM

Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in Lexington-Richland School District 5

To: Akil Ross <aross@lexrich5.org>

Akil,

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Joshua R. Gray, Ph.D.

email: [REDACTED]

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Attachments:

ED-DCL-Fact-Sheet.pdf 873k

aross@lexrich5.org Akil Ross

Monday, August 22, 2022 at 12:36:48 PM Eastern Daylight Time

To: [Redacted] Kathryn Long Mahoney

FYI

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Joshua Gray** [Redacted] >

Date: Fri, Aug 19, 2022 at 4:27 PM

Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in Lexington-Richland School District 5

To: Cathy Huddle <chuddle@lexrich5.org>, Akil Ross <aross@lexrich5.org>, [Redacted], [Redacted] Janis Hammond <jhammond@lexrich5.org>, <mhogan@lexrich5.org>, Rebecca Hines <rhines@lexrich5.org>, Kenneth Loveless <kloveless@lexrich5.org>, Nikki Gardner <ngardner@lexrich5.org>

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