

FACE COVERINGS POLICY

The Board adopts this policy regarding face coverings to comply with state requirements and recommendations to prevent and slow the spread of COVID-19. The current consensus among public health experts is that face coverings are a preventative measure that can reduce the spread of COVID-19, when used along with other preventative measures, including social distancing, frequent handwashing, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.

Staff and Volunteers

All school employees and volunteers (including contractors) shall wear a face covering while riding or operating school transportation: we strongly recommend that masks are worn while in facilities or other areas of a school campus. While this is a recommendation it is the individual's choice as to whether masks are worn in our facilities. This choice may change to mandatory wearing of masks in our facilities, if required or mandated by the Erie County Health Department, the Ohio Department of Health, or the Governor.

Exceptions include when:

- (1) Face coverings in the school setting are prohibited by law or regulation.
- (2) Face coverings are in violation of documented industry standards.
- (3) Face coverings are not advisable for health reasons (such as a documented medical breathing issue).
- (4) Face coverings are in violation of the school's documented safety policies.
- (5) Face coverings are not required when the staff works alone in an assigned work area.
- (6) There is a functional (practical) reason for a staff member or volunteer to not wear a face covering in the workplace.

Schools must provide written justification to local health officials, upon request, explaining why a staff member is not required to wear a face covering. Requests for accommodations must be directed to a building administrator and exemptions must be

in writing. School nurses or staff who care for individuals with symptoms must use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), provided by the school.

Students

All students in Preschool(through 12th grade must wear a face covering while riding in school-provided transportation, unless an exception applies. We recommend that masks are worn within our facilities, but will leave it up to the individual as to whether masks are worn at this time. Requirements or mandates from the Erie County Health Department, Ohio Department of Health, or the Governor may make masks required in our facilities.

Exceptions to required mask wearing are:

(1) Students may be exempted from this policy due to documented medical, developmental, behavioral or individualized needs. Requests for exemptions should be in writing and directed to a building administrator who may convene the student's IEP team, 504 team or review the student's health plan. Face shields may be considered as an alternative.

(2) Students may remove face coverings when appropriate social distancing measures are in place as determined by a teacher, coach or school administrator.

(3) Students participating in athletics shall be subject to the current Ohio Department of Health orders regarding use of face coverings.

*** (If masks are required)** Students in grades K-2 are required to wear a face covering while attending school or a school function in any school building, facility or other area of a school campus unless they are unable to do so for a health or developmental reason. Students in grades K-12 are required to wear a face covering when riding in school-provided transportation, unless an exception applies. Students required to wear a face covering who refuse to follow this policy may be required to leave the school campus and are subject to appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the student code of conduct. Students who refuse to wear a face covering on a school bus shall be subject to policies and guidelines concerning student conduct on district managed transportation.

School Visitors

School visitors are recommended to wear a face covering in any school building or facility, including waiting outside school buildings before and after school. Face coverings are not required for:

- (1) Children younger than 2 years old.
- (2) Anyone with a documented medical condition that prevents them from wearing a face covering (such as a documented medical breathing issue).
- (3) Anyone who otherwise has trouble breathing.
- (4) Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.

General Rules for Face Coverings

- (1) Staff and students are required to have a face covering with them at all times. Students should wear their own face covering or one will be provided for them. Staff will be provided with a face shield and cloth face covering upon request.
- (2) Individuals may remove their face covering when eating or drinking.
- (3) Face coverings should be cloth/fabric and cannot be made of mesh or cloth/fabric that is transparent (with the exception of plastic components of a cloth/fabric face covering that allow for viewing a person's mouth and face shields). Face coverings must cover an individual's nose, mouth, and chin.
- (4) Face coverings are not required outside when individuals are able to maintain a social distance of six feet or more from individuals who are not members of their household.

(5) Individuals should wash their hands before putting on a face covering. The face covering should fit snugly against the side of an individual's face. Face coverings should not create any difficulty breathing while worn and should be secured by a tie or elastic to prevent movement.

(6) All face coverings must be appropriate for the school setting and comply with applicable dress codes. Face coverings that contain offensive words or images or that may substantially disrupt the educational process are prohibited. Face coverings that are part of costumes or cover the entire face are not appropriate, with the exception of face shields. Face coverings for staff shall comply with policies and guidelines on staff dress and grooming. Face coverings for students shall comply with policies and handbook provisions concerning the student dress code.

(7) Currently, surgical masks and N95 respirators are critical supplies that should be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders. Employees who have an operational need to use respirators will be provided that equipment and training on how to use it.

(8) Face shields that wrap around the face and extend below the chin may be considered as an alternative where cloth face coverings would hinder the learning process. Some situations where face shields may be used include:

- When interacting with students, such as those with disabilities, where communication could be impacted.
- When interacting with English-language learners or when teaching a foreign language.
- Settings where cloth face coverings might present a safety hazard (i.e. science labs).
- For individuals who have difficulty wearing a cloth face covering.

Training

The District will provide training to staff and students on this policy and the use and care of face coverings along with other preventative measures, including social distancing, frequent handwashing, and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.

Duration of Policy

This policy is adopted on an interim and temporary basis consistent with current legal requirements and recommendations. In the event legal requirements and/or recommendations change, the Superintendent is authorized to align the requirements in this policy to current legal requirements for a period of 30 days, pending further Board action.

Legal References: Ohio Department of Health *COVID-19 Health and Prevention Guidance for Ohio K-12 Schools* (July 7, 2020)

Centers for Disease Control *Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19* (June 28, 2020)