

Use of Face Masks/Coverings

The health and safety of students, staff, and volunteers is paramount to the School. For this reason, and in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, state and local health orders, and guidance from the Ohio Department of Education, the School will comply with this policy for the 2020-2021 school year.

The School will follow the mandates and requirements set forth by the federal, state, and local governments, the Center for Disease Control (“CDC”), Ohio Governor, Ohio State Department of Health, local county health department, Ohio Department of Education, and other applicable entities (“Directing Entities”) as it relates to the protecting the health of students. If any of these Directing Entities or the School administration requires staff, students, and/or visitors to wear face masks/coverings while attending school, reporting to work at a school, or visiting a school, the School will follow and enforce such directives. If any part of this policy conflicts with applicable mandates or requirements from these Directing Entities, the School will comply with the applicable mandate or requirement.

Except as provided herein, all students, faculty, staff, and volunteers shall wear face masks/coverings at all times when:

- In any indoor location including, but not limited to, classrooms, gymnasiums, offices, locker rooms, hallways, cafeteria, and/or locker bays;
- Outdoors on school property and unable to consistently maintain a distance of six feet or more from individuals who are not members of their household;
- Waiting for a school bus outdoors and unable to maintain a distance of six feet or more from individuals who are not members of their household; or
- Riding a school bus.

To the extent that the School provides transportation services for its students, students shall be required to wear face masks/coverings while being transported on school buses. If a student receives transportation services through a school district transportation provider that requires face masks/coverings, the School will follow and enforce such directives, to the extent permitted by law and state and federal guidance.

Visitors will also be required to wear a face mask/covering while in any indoor location on the school’s property, and while outdoors on school property and unable to consistently maintain a distance of six feet or more from individuals who are not members of their household.

In implementing this policy, consideration should be given for the age and developmental level of the child and the physical situation the child is in at that moment. Face masks/coverings are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult.

At minimum, face masks/coverings must:

- Cover an individual’s mouth, nose, and chin.

In addition, it is strongly recommended that face masks/coverings:

- Fit snugly against the side of the face so there are no gaps;
- Not create difficulty breathing while worn; and
- Be held secure through either a tie, elastic, etc. to prevent slipping.

Face masks/coverings shall not include masks designed to be worn for costume purposes, and all face masks/coverings shall meet the requirements of the appropriate dress code policies and code of conduct. Procedural and surgical masks intended for health care providers and first responders should be reserved for appropriate occupational and health care settings.

Exemptions. The requirement to wear a face mask/covering does not apply when:

- The individual has a medical condition including respiratory conditions that restricts breathing, mental health conditions, or a disability that contraindicates the wearing of a face mask/covering;
- The individual is communicating or seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing impaired or has another disability, where an accommodation is appropriate or necessary;
- The individual is actively participating in outdoor recess and/or physical activity where students are able to maintain a distance of six feet or more or athletic practice, scrimmage, or competition that is permitted per Ohio Department of Health Order;
- The individual is seated and actively consuming food or beverage;
- Where students and staff can maintain distancing of at least six feet and removal of the face mask/covering is necessary for instructional purposes, including instruction in foreign language, English language for non-native speakers, and other subjects where wearing a face mask/covering would prohibit participation in normal classroom activities, such as playing an instrument;
- Students are able to maintain a distance of six feet or more and a mask break is deemed necessary by the educator supervising the educational setting;
- The individual is alone in an enclosed space, such as an office; or
- When an established sincerely held religious requirement exists that does not permit a face mask/covering.

The School Principal or his/her designee shall have the authority to determine if and when masks may be temporarily removed pursuant to an exemption in consultation with local health authorities and state and federal guidance.

Face shields that wrap around the face and extend below the chin can be considered as an alternative, in the sole discretion of the School, where an exemption applies.

The School is required to provide written justification to the local health officials, upon request, explaining why a staff member is not required to wear a face mask/covering in the School.

Exemptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If any of the above exemptions are applicable, a request for such exemption must be submitted in writing to the staff member's supervisor, or in the case of a student, to the School Principal or his/her designee, and a decision on the request will be provided in writing by the School. An individual may, on a case-by-case basis, be required to wear a face shield or other face mask/covering as appropriate for an accommodation of this face mask/covering requirement. The School may also discuss other possible accommodations for the student or staff member. Such discussion shall follow applicable law and School policies and procedures for requests for accommodation, including but not limited to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Any school nurse or staff member who cares for individuals with COVID-19 symptoms must use appropriate personal protective equipment ("PPE"), provided by the School, in accordance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration ("OSHA") or Public Employment Risk Reduction Program ("PERRP") standards***.

If face masks/coverings are required, and no exemption has been applied, students and/or staff who violate this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the applicable Student Code of Conduct/Student Discipline Code, staff handbook, and in accordance with policies of the School.