

8450.01 - PROTECTIVE FACIAL COVERINGS DURING PANDEMIC/EPIDEMIC EVENTS

During times of elevated communicable disease community spread (pandemic or epidemic), the Superintendent will issue periodic guidance through Board of Education plans/resolution(s) in alignment with public health officials and/or in accordance with government edicts and including any Pandemic Plan developed by the District's Pandemic Response Team under Policy 8420.

School settings can be a source of community spread. Wearing face masks/coverings is especially important during these times and can help mitigate the risk of exposure from person to person.

As such, during times of elevated communicable disease community spread, the Superintendent may activate this policy by notifying the school community, requiring all school staff, volunteers and visitors (including vendors) to wear appropriate face masks/coverings on school grounds unless it is unsafe to do so or where doing so would significantly interfere with the Districts educational or operational processes.

Face masks/shields will be provided by the District to employees. Alternatively, employees may elect to wear their own face coverings if they meet the requirements of this policy as well as any requirements issued by State or local health departments.

In addition, the Board may require that students shall wear a face mask unless they are unable to do so for a health or developmental reason. Efforts will be made to reduce any social stigma for a student who, for medical or developmental reasons, cannot and should not wear a mask.

If face masks/coverings are required, and no exception is applicable, students may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct/Student Discipline Code, and in accordance with policies of the Board and/or may be reassigned by the Superintendent to an online/virtual learning environment if the Superintendent determines that reassignment is necessary to protect the health and safety of the student or others.

During times of elevated communicable disease community spread as determined by the Board in consultation with health professionals, all students are required to wear masks while being transported on District school buses or other modes of school transportation.

Use of Mask/Face Covering

Cloth face coverings/masks should:

- A. fully cover the mouth, nose, and chin;
- B. fit snugly against the side of the face so there are no gaps;
- C. not create difficulty breathing while worn; and
- D. be held securely through either a tie, elastic, etc. to prevent slipping.

Facial masks/coverings generally should not include surgical masks or respirators unless medically indicated (as those should be reserved for healthcare workers) or masks designed to be worn for costume purposes.

All employee facial masks/coverings shall meet the requirements of the appropriate dress/staff grooming policies (Policy 3216/4216). All student facial masks/coverings shall meet the requirements of the appropriate Student Code of Conduct/Student Discipline Code and Policy 5511 Dress and Grooming.

Any person may be required to temporarily remove a face mask or covering when instructed to do so for identification or security purposes. Failure to comply with such a request violates this policy and may lead to disciplinary or other action.

The requirement that students, faculty, and staff wear a mask does not apply when any of the following are applicable, as determined by the educator supervising the educational setting, building principal or Superintendent:

1. The individual has a medical condition, including respiratory conditions that restricts breathing, mental health conditions, or a disability that contraindicates the wearing of a mask;
2. 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;
3. 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 under a separate Department of Health Order;
4. The individual is seated and actively consuming food or beverage;
5. Where student and staff can maintain distancing of at least six feet and removal of the mask is necessary for instructional purposes, including instruction in foreign language, English language for non-native speakers, and other subjects where wearing a mask would prohibit participation in normal classroom activities, such as playing an instrument;
6. 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;
7. The individual is alone in an enclosed space, such as an office; or
8. When an established, sincerely-held religious requirement exists that does not permit a mask.

The Board may be required to provide written justification to the local health officials upon request explaining why a staff member is not required to wear a facial covering in the school. Therefore, if any exceptions are made to the requirement for facial coverings, the request for such exception must be submitted in writing to the individual's supervisor with appropriate documentation provided. A decision on the request will be provided in writing.

Use of Face Shields

Face shields that wrap around the face and extend below the chin may be permitted as an alternative to cloth face masks/coverings with permission of the Superintendent as the Board recognizes that face shields may be useful in some situations, including:

1. when interacting with students, such as those with disabilities, where communication could be impacted;
2. when interacting with English-language learners or when teaching a foreign language;
3. settings where cloth masks might present a safety hazard (i.e. science labs); or
4. for individuals who have difficulty wearing a cloth face covering.

If employees receive approval from the District administration after discussing their request not to wear a face mask/covering/shield due to a physical, mental or developmental health condition, and/or if wearing a mask/covering/shield would lead to a medical emergency or would introduce significant safety concerns, the District administration may also discuss other possible accommodations for the staff member. Such discussion shall follow Board policies and guidelines under the ADA

School nurses or staff who care for individuals with symptoms consistent with those of a communicable disease must use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), provided by the school, in accordance with OSHA standards.

When facial masks/coverings are required by the Board, and no exception has been applied, staff members who violate this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with policies of the Board.

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