

## **Community Relations Personnel -- Certified/Non-Certified Students**

### **Face Masks/Coverings**

This policy pertains to students, faculty, staff, and visitors. It has been developed to fulfill the guiding principles contained in the *Framework for Connecticut Schools*, specifically to safeguard the health and safety of students and staff and to allow all students the opportunity to return into classrooms full time.

The Board of Education (Board) is implementing this masking requirement to promote the safest possible learning, teaching and work environment for students, faculty, staff and visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first priority of the Board is the health and well-being of students and staff as the District prepares for and implements the safe reopening of schools.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Connecticut Department of Health (DPH) and the Connecticut State Department of Education, as outlined in *Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together* requires the wearing of face coverings for all students and staff when they are inside school buildings and while riding school transportation vehicles, with certain exceptions.

### **Definitions**

**Face mask** – A cloth or disposable procedure-style face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth for the purpose of source control (i.e., capturing and/ or slowing down respiratory droplet emissions from the wearer). It may or may not be medical grade. The administration may promulgate specific design requirements.

**Face shield** – a clear, plastic shield that covers the forehead, extends below the chin and wraps around the sides of the face, protecting the eyes, nose and mouth from contamination from respiratory droplets, along with masks or respirators.

**Clear plastic barrier** – a clear plastic or solid surface that can be cleaned and sanitized often.

### **Transportation**

Student passengers are required to wear a face mask that completely covers the nose and mouth during transit. The student's face covering must be in place prior to boarding the bus, van or other vehicles and must be kept in place until they are completely off the bus or van. The Board shall provide back-up masks if students do not have face coverings when boarding a school bus or van. The face mask requirement is also applicable to the drivers of the vehicle.

The Board may consider the option of assigning a monitor on student transportation to facilitate compliance with this face mask protocol.

## **School Buildings**

All students, staff, and visitors are required to use face coverings that completely cover the nose and mouth when they are inside any school building, even when appropriate physical distancing is maintained.

The Board shall provide to any student, staff member or visitor a face mask if such individual does not have one. Training shall be provided as necessary regarding the proper use of face coverings. Information shall be provided to staff, students and students' families regarding the proper use, removal and washing of cloth face coverings.

## **Exemptions from Mask Requirement**

An individual shall be excused from this requirement for the following listed reasons, per CDC guidance. The individual:

1. is experiencing a medical emergency with impaired breathing;
2. is unconscious;
3. is incapacitated; or
4. cannot remove the mask or face covering without assistance.

Preschool students are not required to wear masks, nor are visitors under the age of 2 years old.

Parents/guardians may not excuse their child from this face mask requirement, by signing a waiver, because such wearing is a mandated requirement that the Office of the Governor, the Connecticut State Department of Education, and/or the Connecticut State Department of Public Health have defined as necessary for school districts to comply with in order to open schools from the COVID-19 caused closure.

## ***Medical Exemptions***

Masks shall not be required for anyone who has severe medical conditions that interfere with the wearing of face coverings, such as severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) such as might be seen with cystic fibrosis, severe emphysema, heart failure, or significant facial burns that would cause extreme pain or interfere with the healing of a skin graft. Mild or intermittent respiratory or other common conditions such as asthma, cardiovascular diseases, kidney disease, or other similar conditions are generally not considered contraindications to the wearing of loose-fitting face coverings. A written notification from a licensed medical provider, the Department of Developmental Services or other state agency that provides or supports services for people with emotional, intellectual or physical disabilities, or a person authorized by any such agency is required in order for the Board to permit a medical exemption.

Aside from medical contraindications, there may be individuals or situations where exemptions to mask wearing may be appropriate. For example, some students with developmental disabilities may not tolerate or be able to comply well with mask wearing. In cases where an exception is requested based upon a disability, a planning and placement team (PPT) or Section 504 meeting as appropriate should be held to consider possible programming revisions or appropriate accommodations.

In those cases where face masks will not be in use, the effective use of other key mitigation strategies such as maximizing distancing, moving activities outdoors or to a well-ventilated space, and/or the use of face shields or other physical barriers will be extremely important to the protection of the students and staff involved.

Face shields may be an option for those students with medical, behavioral or other challenges who are unable to wear face masks. The Board recognizes that face shields are not as effective for source control and should be used only when other methods are not available or appropriate. Therefore, the use of face shields for those with

medical conditions is done with the understanding of their limitations and a heightened need for strict adherence to appropriate physical distancing.

### ***Exemptions Based on Instructional Needs***

Teachers and staff may be excused from wearing a face mask or covering while teaching, provided they are properly physically distancing or remaining static behind a physical barrier.

Face shields may be useful in situations where it is important for students to see how a teacher pronounces words (e.g. English Learners, early childhood, foreign language, special education, etc.) and for students and staff involved with certain special education activities like speech therapy or where lip reading is required. However, face shields alone are not a sufficient alternate to the wearing of face mask for source control, and appropriate physical distancing must be maintained.

### ***Mask Breaks***

When other and appropriate mitigating practices are in place, such as appropriate physical distancing, students will not be required to wear face masks or coverings while eating, drinking, participating in physical education classes, or outside.

Breaks from wearing masks shall be scheduled throughout the school day, by the teacher, provided that strict physical distancing requirements are maintained and limitations are enforced regarding student and staff mobility.

Masks are required in all dining areas while entering and leaving or getting food and drinks. They may be removed at appropriately physically distanced tables in order to eat but must be replaced after eating.

A recess period may be used as a break from wearing masks when students are outside and appropriate physical distancing requirements are maintained to the greatest degree feasible.

### **Policy Violations**

Violations of this policy, whether by students or staff, shall be handled in the same manner as other violations of applicable Board policy.

If a student refuses to wear a face mask and does not fulfill any of the exemptions allowed by this policy, the student shall be sent to the school's isolation room. Their parent/guardian shall be contacted to rectify the situation. School personnel shall explain the mask requirement for in-person learning and the procedures for moving the child to remote learning.

If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering, for non-medical reasons, entry to the school/district facility may be denied.

### **Community Outreach**

The District shall engage in community education programs including signage, mass and targeted communication, and positive reinforcement that will actively promote mask use consistent with CDC, DDH, CSDE and OSHA guidance. Community members will be reminded that mask use does not replace the need for appropriate physical distancing, washing of hands and other preventative practices recommended by all appropriate authorities.

## Other Considerations

- The District shall maintain in each school a supply of disposable face coverings in the event that a staff member, student or visitor does not have one for use.
- Special attention must be given to putting on and removing face coverings for purposes such as eating. After use, the front of the face covering is considered contaminated and should not be touched during removal or replacement. Hand hygiene should be performed immediately after removing and after replacing the face covering.
- When medically appropriate, nurses shall substitute use of metered dose inhalers and spacers for students with respiratory issues.
- Face shields with face masks may be used by staff who support students with special healthcare needs such as those who are unable to wear masks and who may need assistance with activities of daily living, such as toileting and eating.
- Mask use will not be required by employees when they are alone in private offices. However, they are required to mask when anyone enters a private office space and required to wear a mask if their office space is physically shared with others and does not allow for appropriate physical distancing or if the work area is frequented by others (such as a reception area).

Until further notice the Board will require the wearing of masks as prescribed in this policy. The Board reserves the right to interpret the provisions of this policy and to modify any or all matters contained in this policy at any time, subject to applicable law.

(cf. 5141.22 – Communicable/Infectious Diseases)  
(cf. 6114 – Emergencies and Disaster Preparedness)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes.

10-154a Professional communications between teacher or nurse and student.

10-207 Duties of medical advisors.

10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rules.

19a-221 Quarantine of certain persons.

52-557b Immunity from liability for emergency medical assistance, first aid or medication by injection. School personnel not required to administer or render.

CT. Executive Order 7NNN, August 14, 2020

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. 1232g, 45 C.F.R. 99.

[Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together](#), with addenda 1-11, inclusive.

[Connecticut LEA School Reopening Template](#)

[CDC Considerations for Schools](#)

[CDC Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#)

[CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs](#)

[CDC Schools Decision Tree for Schools Reopening](#)

**Tentative Approval:**

**Final Approval:**