

STUDENTS

4118.237 / 4218.237 / 5141.8 (a)

Personnel -- Certified/Non-Certified

Students

Face Masks/Coverings

This policy pertains to students, faculty, staff, and visitors. It has been developed to safeguard the health and safety of students and staff and to allow all students the opportunity to return into classrooms full-time in the event of a public health crisis that would require respiratory safeguards.

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 a pandemic/epidemic outbreak. 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 opening/reopening of schools.

Region One Administrators, staff, students, families and Board of Education members will follow all guidelines provided by The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Connecticut Department of Health (DPH) according to the guidance provided by the Connecticut State Department of Education, when required to wear face coverings including but not limited to times when they are inside school buildings and while riding school transportation vehicles, with certain exceptions.

Definitions

Face covering/mask - a cloth, paper, or disposable face covering that covers the nose and mouth. It may or may not be medical grade. (Evidence shows that the proper wearing of facial masks or coverings helps stop the spread of the virus, which is currently by droplets when an individual coughs, sneezes or talks.)

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 or cloth face covering 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 or cloth face covering is also applicable to the drivers of the vehicle.

The Board may consider the option of assigning a temporary monitor on student transportation at the beginning of the school year to facilitate compliance with this new face mask protocol.

School Buildings and Grounds

All students, staff, and approved visitors are required to use face coverings that completely cover the nose and mouth, when they are inside the school building or on school grounds, even when social distancing is maintained. An individual shall be excused from this requirement for the following listed reasons, per CDC guidance.

The individual:

1. has trouble breathing;
2. is unconscious;
3. is incapacitated; or
4. cannot remove the mask or face covering without assistance.

In addition, masks or face coverings shall not be required for anyone who has a medical reason making it unsafe to wear a face mask or face covering. A written notification from a physician is required in order for the Board to permit a medical exemption. The note should state the medical reason for the requested exemption, such as, but not limited to, difficulty breathing.

Parents/guardians may not excuse their child from this face mask requirement by signing a waiver when 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 safely during a pandemic/epidemic.

In addition to the wearing of face masks, the District will maximize social distancing between student's workstations and desks, achieving six feet when feasible. Space between the teacher and students is to be maximized to reduce the risk of infection transmission from teachers during instruction.

Transparent (clear) masks should be considered as an option for teachers and students in classes for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Pre-K and special education teachers should consider wearing clear masks.

Face shields may be an option for those students with medical, behavioral or other challenges who are unable to wear face masks or coverings. 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 social distancing.

The Board shall provide to any student, staff member or approved 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.

Limited Exceptions to Use of Face Coverings

When other and appropriate mitigating practices are in place, such as social distancing, students will not be required to wear face masks or coverings while eating, drinking, during physical education classes, or when students are outside and effectively practicing social distancing and any other possible mitigation methods. Exceptions may also be necessary for certain special education students or other special populations.

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, etc.) and social distancing is maintained. However, face shields alone are not a sufficient alternate to the wearing of face mask for source control.

Mask Breaks

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

During time of eating, face masks or coverings may be removed. Masks are required in all dining areas while entering and leaving or getting food and drinks. They may be removed at appropriately socially 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 social distancing requirements are maintained to the greatest degree feasible.

Violations of this Policy

Violations of this policy, whether by students or staff, shall be handled in the following manner:

1. If a staff member refuses to wear a mask, the Principal will meet with the staff member to reinforce the need to wear a mask at all times while in the building, in accordance with the school's health and safety guidelines (that include noted exceptions). Should the staff member continue to refuse to wear face covering, that staff member will be sent home and a notice of the refusal to comply will be included in the staff member's file. The staff member may return to work if/when s/he complies with the face covering expectation. Staff members will not be compensated for time away from work due to non-compliance with this policy.
2. If a student refuses to wear a face mask or covering and does not fulfill any of the exemptions allowed by this policy, such student shall be sent to a location in the building that separates the student from others in the building (The health isolation room may not be used for this purpose). The parent/guardian shall be contacted to rectify the situation, school personnel to explain the options available regarding schooling and for the possible removal of the child from the school setting.
3. If an approved visitor refuses to wear a face covering, for non-medical reasons, entry to the school/district facility will be denied.

Teachers or schools may provide incentives for compliance with the face mask requirement.

Community Relations and Information

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, DPH, CSDE and OSHA guidance. Community members will be reminded that mask use does not replace the need for social 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 approved 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 wear a mask when anyone enters a private office space and are required to wear a mask if their office space is physically shared with others and does not allow for 6 feet of physical distancing or if the work area is frequented by others (such as a reception area).

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.

Legal References:

- 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.
- 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 Connecticut LEA School Reopening Template

CDC Considerations for Schools

CDC Symptoms of Coronavirus

CDC Quarantine & Isolation

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

Adopted: October 13, 2020

NORTH CANAAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

North Canaan, Connecticut