

Rule Regarding Face Coverings The School Board of Pinellas County, Florida

Whereas, the state of Florida has been under a declared State of Emergency as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic since March 9, 2020; and

Whereas, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as local health experts and officials, recommend that everyone wash their hands often, avoid close contact and cover their mouth and nose with a face covering; and

Whereas, one of the School Board's highest priorities is to provide a safe learning environment for the benefit of its students, staff, families and others who interact with the school environment; and

Whereas, the wearing of face coverings is required for all persons while in any indoor public places in Pinellas County pursuant to Pinellas County Board of Commissioners' Ordinance 20-14, with certain exceptions; and

Whereas, the School Board has the power to impose reasonable restrictions on students, staff and others related to their health, safety and welfare.

Now, Therefore, pursuant to the authority of the School Board under Article IX, section 4 of the Florida Constitution, as well as sections 1001.32, 1001.41, 1001.42, 1001.43 and 120.54(4), Florida Statutes, and other legal authorities, the School Board of Pinellas County finds that an immediate danger to the public health, safety and welfare requires adoption of the following emergency policy:

Section 1. Required Face Coverings

Subject to the exceptions set forth below, each student, employee, visitor, vendor or other person must wear a face covering at all times when on or inside any property owned, leased, or operated by the School Board, including schools, administrative buildings and buses, as well as during any school or district-sponsored activity to another location. The district will provide students and staff with a supply of acceptable face coverings and will maintain emergency supplies of disposable or other new face coverings so that no student, staff member or other person will be in a position where they will not have access to one.

Consistent with the District's ReOpening Plan, and in alignment with medical recommendations, students in prekindergarten, kindergarten and students in ESE self-contained classrooms and ESE Center schools may not be able to utilize face coverings to the same extent as other classrooms. Nevertheless, employees should encourage such students to use face coverings to the extent appropriate and provide relevant instruction and direction to the students.

Section 2. Face Covering Defined

Face coverings must cover both the mouth and nose completely and fit snugly against the sides of the person's face with little or no gaps. Face coverings must be made of solid material, and not lace, mesh, crocheted, made of other largely porous material or have exhalation valves or vents that allow air to be exhaled through a hole in the material. Although medical-grade masks, such as surgical face masks and N95 respirators, are sufficient face coverings, they are not required and members of the public who do

not work in health care or an occupation that requires them are discouraged from wearing them during times that such equipment are in short supply so that medical professionals may more easily access them. The school principal or department head, or their designee in their absence, shall have the final authority to determine the acceptability of a particular face covering. This rule is intended to conform to CDC guidance regarding the definition of a face covering or mask, and will be interpreted consistent with CDC guidance as it evolves.

Examples of acceptable face coverings include paper or disposable face masks, cloth face masks, neck gaiters/buffs or other cloth apparel completely covering the mouth and nose.

Examples of unacceptable face coverings include lace, mesh, crocheted or other masks or face coverings that are not solid material, those that have exhalation valves or vents that allow air to be exhaled through a hole in the material, face coverings that are worn so that large gaps exist between the face covering and the person's skin, and face shields (face shields, however, may constitute an exception and are discussed in Section 3.c. below).

Text, symbols, slogans and other speech contained on face coverings shall be addressed just as if the same speech was worn on another article of apparel by the student, employee, visitor, vendor or other person on district property.

Section 3. Exceptions

- a. Very Young Children. Face coverings are not required for children who are less than four (4) years of age.
- b. Face Shields in Certain Circumstances. Face shields are generally defined as a piece of equipment fitting on top of the head that contains a solid, but clear, piece of plastic or other lightweight material covering the person's face from at least the forehead to the bottom of the chin, and from ear to ear. Face shields are less effective than face coverings defined above, but may be used (i) as a possible accommodation under the ADA or Section 504 where an appropriate medical professional has certified in writing that the person has a qualifying contraindication that prevents that person from being able to safely wear a face covering defined above; (ii) where staff and/or students have an instructional or communicative reason for showing or viewing another's mouth, such as during phonetic instruction or for students who are hearing impaired and need to see facial movements, but only when video instruction is not available or appropriate; and (iii) other situations on a case-by-case basis as determined by the principal or department head, or their designee in their absence, where in the best interests of the person seeking to wear the face shield, which must relate to medical or instructional reasons.
- c. Face Covering Breaks. To promote the social and emotional wellbeing of students, who may struggle wearing a face covering for long periods of time, schools will provide students with opportunities for breaks where they can remove their face covering while maintaining appropriate distancing and while under general supervision. Under these circumstances, employees may also periodically and for short periods of time take a face covering break.
- d. Eating and Drinking. Face covering are not required while actively eating or drinking.
- e. Strenuous Physical Activity. Face coverings are not required during the times that any person is engaged in strenuous physical activity, whether inside or outside a district building. However,

social distancing of at least 6 feet is strongly recommended in these situations. The district will also consider guidance issued by outside governing authorities regarding face coverings and physical activities.

- f. Wind Instruments. When students, employees or guests are permitted by the school to play wind instruments during a school-sponsored course or activity, they must use a face covering with a slit, in addition to other safety measures, to allow for the performance, but must wear a face covering without any slit when not playing the instrument.
- g. During Receipt of Health Care. Face coverings are not required when its removal is necessary for the person to receive health care or to undergo a health care examination from authorized health care professionals, including school nurses.
- h. Emergency Circumstances. Face coverings are not required and may be removed if a person is experiencing a medical emergency, is unconscious or incapacitated, or is personally unable to remove the face covering without assistance.
- i. Indoors or Driving When Alone. Face coverings are not required when persons, including employees, are alone in a classroom, other district building room or district vehicle when they are alone in such space.

Section 4. Noncompliance.

The wearing of a face covering is a public health issue. Students who do not wear a mask when it is required (or refuse to do so), should first be reeducated on the importance of wearing a mask. If after the reeducation occurs, they still do not comply, the student's administrator should be contacted. Not wearing a mask when it is required is not a disciplinary matter, but rather a health and safety concern. Administrators will contact the parent/guardian for support. If the refusal continues, the principal must contact the area superintendent/chief to discuss options which will include administrative placement into one of the other learning options (MyPCS Online or Pinellas Virtual School). This placement is a non-disciplinary placement and is based on the health and safety needs of all students and staff.

Employee noncompliance will be addressed as an employee discipline issue.

Section 5. Effective Date.

This emergency policy takes effect on August 12, 2020, and will remain in effect until 11:00 p.m. on November 9, 2020, unless extended pursuant to law.

Signed this 11th day of August 2020


School Board Chair


Superintendent