

REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES FOR USE OF FACE COVERINGS –

The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility relative to student, employee, and visitor health and safety. The following procedures and requirements regarding the use of face coverings while on school property have been developed with a goal of having students physically present in school while balancing health and safety considerations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Current medical evidence indicates that the spread of certain communicable diseases, specifically those that are transmitted via respiratory droplets, may be limited by use the face coverings, including face masks and other face shields (i.e. cloth/fabric face masks, plastic face shields) when social distancing cannot be maintained. For purposes procedure and requirements, social distancing shall be a space of at least 6 feet between individuals.

In order to maintain a safe and healthy school environment, and reduce the potential spread of communicable disease, face coverings are required for all adults on District property, including employees, vendors and visitors unless an exception has been made per the procedures below.

All face coverings shall meet any applicable dress code requirements, such as those established in Board policies or any applicable code of conduct provisions. All face coverings shall be free from offensive and disruptive language, symbols, designs, etc. that would distract the learning environment and/or violate other established policies and procedures.

Face Masks:

- Must fully cover the mouth, nose, and chin
- Must fit snugly against the face so there are no gaps
- Must be secured in place through a tie, clip, elastic, etc.
- Cloth masks should be cleaned on a regular basis
- Disposable face mask should only be used for a single use
- Shall not include surgical masks or respirators

Face Shields:

- Can be worn by staff/students in instances where wearing a mask would interfere with the learning process
- Must wrap around the face and extend below the chin
- Disposable face shields should only be used for a single use
- Reusable face shields should be cleaned and disinfected after each use

Cloth face coverings should **not** be worn by:

- Children younger than 2 years old
- Anyone who has trouble breathing
- Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance

All individuals who are required to wear a face covering while on school property are responsible for providing their own face covering. Each school building will maintain a supply of face coverings that can be provided to individuals who must enter school property due to an emergency situation (e.g., student illness or injury) and who do not have their own face covering.

EMPLOYEES AND SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS

All District employees and volunteers shall wear a face covering while on school property unless it is unsafe to do so or where doing so would significantly interfere with the learning process. Face shields will be used when a face mask would hinder the learning process, present a health or safety issue, or for those individuals who have difficulty wearing cloth masks.

For purposes of these procedures, “interference with the learning process” includes but is not limited to, interaction and communication with students that would be negatively impacted by limited face visibility, such as students who require certain specially designed instruction and/or specific related services, students with disabilities, language instruction with English language learners, during foreign language instruction, or during certain extracurricular activities.

A face covering is not required when an employee or volunteer is working alone in an assigned work area. Periodic breaks from face covering may be taken at any time the employee or volunteer is more than 6 feet from all other individuals; however, the expectation is that face coverings will be regularly and properly worn aside from brief face covering breaks. If the individual taking a face covering break comes within 6 feet of another individual, the employee or volunteer immediately will reaffix his/her face covering so that it covers the nose, mouth and chin. When possible, face covering breaks shall be taken when an employee or volunteer is alone or outside the school building.

Exceptions

Exceptions to the required use of face coverings by employees and volunteers expressly include:

- When facial coverings in the school setting are prohibited by law or regulation;
- When facial coverings are in violation of documented industry standards;
- When facial coverings are not advisable for health reasons;
- When facial coverings are in violation of the school’s documented safety policies; or
- When there is a functional (practical) reason for a staff member or volunteer to not to wear a facial covering in the workplace.

The District is required to provide local health officials with written justification for exceptions, upon request. If an allowable exception is applicable to an employee or volunteer, he/she will be excused from face covering requirements after approval from a District administrator. All exception requests for an employee or volunteer must be made in writing to the applicable building administrator or individual’s supervisor, including a statement of the applicable exception utilizing the “Face Covering Exemption Request Form.” Verification may be required for health conditions that are raised as the basis for the request for an exception. Within two (2) business days of the request, a District administrator will discuss the request with the requesting individual. If the exception is being sought due to the requesting individual having a disability that impacts his/her ability to wear a face covering, reasonable accommodations such as the use of a face shield, different mask material, or other available barriers, will be considered with the individual in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of

1973, and associated District policies and procedures. Each decision will be made on an individual basis taking into account all known circumstances. A written approval or denial will be issued within one business day of the related exception discussion meeting. An employee or volunteer who is in disagreement with the building administrator's decision regarding that individual's request can appeal the decision to the superintendent. The determination made by the superintendent is final. In the event that the requesting individual's condition changes, he/she may submit a new exemption request with updated information.

STUDENTS

Face coverings will be required for all students at Berkshire Local Schools at all times except when students are specifically authorized by a staff member to remove their face coverings (e.g., in classroom situations where social distancing can be maintained, when the face covering would interfere with the learning process, etc.).

All Students

For all students, brief breaks from wearing a face covering may be taken when the student is working at an individual workstation at least 3-6 feet from others, is using their desk shield, when authorized by a teacher or other staff member, or outside the school building (at least 6 feet from other individuals).

In the event that a student has a disability or a health condition that could impair his/her ability to wear a mask or other face covering an exemption to the face covering policy can be sought. Requests for exemption from the District's face covering policy must be addressed to the student's building principal utilizing the "Face Covering Exemption Request Form." Verification may be required for health conditions that are raised as the basis for the request for an exception. Within two (2) business days of the request, the building principal will discuss the request with the requesting individual. If the exception is being sought due to the requesting individual having a disability that impacts his/her ability to wear a face covering, reasonable accommodations such as the use of a face shield, different mask material, or other available barriers, will be considered with the individual in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and associated District policies and procedures. Each decision will be made on an individual basis taking into account all known circumstances. A written approval or denial will be issued within one (1) business day of the related exception discussion meeting. Any student/parent who is in disagreement with the building principal's decision can appeal the decision to the superintendent. The determination made by the superintendent is final unless Section 504 procedural safeguards apply. In the event that a student's condition changes, parents may submit a new exemption request with updated information.

No student will be excluded from school unless required in order to adhere to local public health mandates or because of unique medical needs as determined by the student's IEP or Section 504 team.

Transportation

Face coverings are required for all students while on school transportation due to the inability to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between students.

VISITORS

All visitors over the age of two (2) years old are required to wear a facial covering in District buildings at all times, unless permitted to remove the covering by building administration due to adequate social distancing being maintained. Facial coverings are expressly required when entering and exiting school buildings and classrooms and moving through a school building's hallways. Should a visitor refuse to wear an appropriate facial covering when social distancing is not possible, the individual will not be permitted in the District building.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES/ATHLETICS/SPECIAL EVENTS

The face covering requirements set forth above also are applicable to extracurricular activities, athletics, and other school related special events. For athletics, these requirements are supplemented by any Orders from the Ohio Department of Health and guidance from the Ohio High School Athletics Association that specifically relate to athletics. The District will follow any Orders from the Ohio Department of Health pertaining to athletics which could impose additional face covering requirements or provide exemptions from face covering requirements for student athletes who are engaged in athletic events (e.g., athletes who are actively participating vs. athletes who are on the sidelines). All coaches, athletic trainers and other individuals working with student athletes will be required to wear a mask unless an applicable exemption exists.

TRAININGS

Employees will be trained on how to properly use face coverings and strategies to reinforce these concepts with students and parents. Students also will be trained on how to properly use face coverings. Trainings will follow guidelines and utilize resources provided by the Ohio Department of Education, in partnership with Ohio Department of Health and other health professionals.

Employee trainings will be conducted prior to the start of the school year to ensure staff understand protocols and changed policies and procedures.

Families are encouraged to introduce facial coverings to their children prior to the start of school to aid in this unprecedented transition.

ENFORCEMENT

If face coverings are required, and no exception has been applied in accordance with the provisions above, students and/or staff who violate this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the applicable Code of Conduct and in accordance with the policies of the Board of Education. The District will implement strategies to avoid discrimination, harassment, bullying, and retaliation against individuals who are unable to wear masks.

For face coverings required for students, each school will determine how they will address face coverings that become soiled or unwearable while at school, students who do not bring a face covering to school, and students refusing to wear a face covering in accordance with school requirements and the Code of Conduct.