

RICHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
COVID-19 FACE COVERING POLICY

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish requirements for employees, students, and other persons (including visitors, guests, contractors, etc.) present on school property to wear face coverings in classrooms, preschool, child care settings and other indoor areas, as well as outdoor areas where a physical distance of 6 feet cannot be maintained between persons, in order to minimize exposure to COVID-19.

II. GENERAL OF STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. The policy of the school district is to comply with Executive Order 20-81, Executive Order 20-82, and applicable face covering requirements from the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Department of Education. The policy will remain in effect as long as these Executive Orders remain active.

B. Face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer does not know they are infected.

C. Unless an exception described in Part IV below applies, all students, staff, and other people present indoors in school buildings and district offices or riding on school transportation vehicles are required to wear a face covering at all times.

D. A violation of this policy occurs when any student, staff, or other person present in a school building, in the school district office, or on a school transportation vehicle fails to wear a face covering, unless an enumerated exception applies.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. A face covering must be worn to cover the nose and mouth completely, should not be overly tight or restrictive, and should feel comfortable to wear. Face coverings should never be shared and should only be utilized

by one individual. The following are included in the definition of face covering:

1. Paper or disposable mask;
2. Cloth face mask;
3. Scarf;
4. Neck gaiter;
5. Bandana;
6. Religious face covering;
7. Medical-grade mask or respirator; and
8. Transparent face mask

This policy recommends the use of a multi-layered cloth mask as the preferred option as this has been recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) as the best method for preventing the spread of COVID-19. Bandanas and neck gaiters are generally not recommended by the CDC, but are not expressly prohibited, thus all face coverings listed above are acceptable. Any face coverings that are made of only one layer of cloth material are recommended to be worn folded over to provide two layers of cloth.

B. A face shield is a clear plastic barrier that covers the face and allows visibility of facial expressions and lip movements for speech perception. A face shield should extend below the chin anteriorly, to the ears laterally, and there should be no exposed gap between the forehead and the shield's headpiece. A face shield does not meet the definition of a face covering and is not recommended to be used in place of a face covering. The best use of a face shield is in addition to a face covering as a secondary layer of protection.

C. Masks that incorporate a valve designed to facilitate easy exhaling, mesh masks, or masks with openings, holes, visible gaps in the design or material, or vents are not sufficient face coverings because they allow exhaled droplets to be released into the air.

IV. EXCEPTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES; TEMPORARY REMOVAL OF FACE COVERING

A. Face coverings should never be placed on anyone under age 2, anyone who is having trouble breathing or is unconscious, or anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.

B. A face shield may be used as an alternative to a face covering in the following situations:

1. Individuals who cannot tolerate a face covering due to a documented medical condition or documented disability related condition may be permitted to utilize alternative options such as a face shield or other reasonable accommodation.

2. If a transparent face mask is not available, a teacher of any grade level may wear a face shield when wearing a face covering may impede the educational process. This may only occur when the teacher is able to remain at least 6 feet away from all other individuals. For example, a teacher teaching phonics in early grades might need students to observe lip motions to appropriately learn the content. In this example, the teacher would need to teach from a 6 foot distance and wear a face covering if moving closer than 6 feet to the students.

3. If a transparent face mask is not available, staff providing direct support student services may wear a face shield instead of a face covering when a face covering would impede the service being provided. This may only occur when the staff member is able to remain at least 6 feet away from all other individuals. For example, in a special education session where a student is learning to identify emotions, they may need to see facial expressions to appropriately learn the content. In this example, the staff member would need to teach from a 6 foot distance and wear a face covering if moving closer than 6 feet to the students.

C. Staff, students, and other people present in school buildings or in district offices may temporarily remove their face covering in the following situations:

1. When engaging in classes or activities conducted outdoors, though people participating in these activities must maintain six feet of distance to the extent possible. Staff are encouraged to consider outdoor breaks to support successful mask usage during indoor learning time.

2. During activities, such as swimming or showering, where the face covering will get wet;
3. While receiving a service, including nursing, medical, or personal care services, that cannot be performed or is difficult to perform when the individual receiving the service is wearing a face covering;
4. When the wearer needs to remove their face covering to eat or drink, though care should be taken to maintain as much space as possible between people while doing so;
5. During indoor practices or performances involving playing musical instruments where a face covering cannot be used while playing the instrument, though people participating in these activities must maintain at least six feet of distance and must consider additional barriers such as Plexiglas dividers;
6. When required by school staff for the purposes of identification;
7. Staff working alone in their offices, classrooms, vehicles, or job locations that have no person-to-person interaction;
8. Staff working in communal spaces that have barriers such as Plexiglas or cubicle walls between employees that are above face level, provided that six feet of distance is maintained; or
9. When communicating with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing or has a disability, medical condition, or mental health condition that makes communication with a face covering difficult, provided that six feet of distance is maintained to the extent possible.
10. Students participating in athletics competitions may temporarily remove their face coverings during competitive game play. Athletes must keep their face coverings on when they are not actively playing (on the bench) and at all other times, including practice and warm-ups.

V. IMPLEMENTATION

A. This policy will be conspicuously posted in each school building and administrative office and communicated to students, staff, families, and potential visitors to the school building.

B. The school district will provide face coverings to all students. Employees will be provided face coverings and face shields (to the extent practicable). Employees and students may choose to wear their own face covering as long as it covers the nose and mouth. To the extent practicable, the school district will maintain an extra supply of face coverings for people who forget to bring their face covering.

C. The school district will teach and reinforce the use of face coverings for students and staff throughout the school day, including on transportation vehicles, inside school buildings, and generally when on school grounds.

D. Individuals who cannot tolerate a face covering due to a medical condition or disability related condition may be permitted to utilize alternative options such as a face shield or other reasonable accommodation. The Superintendent or designee shall have discretion to determine whether an employee, parent, or community member qualifies for a reasonable accommodation and the accommodation to be provided. For a student with a medical condition or disability, the student's education team (i.e. IEP team, Section 504 team, health plan team) will determine whether the student qualifies for a reasonable accommodation and the accommodation to be provided. As a condition to granting a reasonable accommodation, the school district may require an individual to provide a note from a health care provider or medical authority and/or other relevant information or with respect to the condition or circumstance. Requests for reasonable accommodations from the face covering requirement shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with applicable federal and state law.

E. All face coverings shall meet the requirements of applicable dress code policies and/or codes of conduct.

1. Face coverings promoting products or activities that are illegal for use by minors are not acceptable.
2. Face coverings with any of the following will not be tolerated: Objectionable emblems, badges, symbols, signs, words, objects or pictures on clothing or jewelry communicating a message that

is racist, sexist, or otherwise derogatory to a protected group, evidences gang membership or affiliation, or approves, advances or provokes any form of religious, racial or sexual harassment and/or violence against other individuals as defined in School Board Policy 103 pertaining to “Racial, Religious and Sexual Harassment and Violence.”

3. It is not the intention of this policy to infringe on the rights of students to express political, religious, philosophical, or similar opinions by wearing apparel on which such messages are stated. Such messages are acceptable as long as they are not lewd, vulgar, obscene, defamatory, profane, do not advocate violence or harassment against others or do not create a substantial disruption of the learning environment.

F. The school district will make distance learning available to all enrolled students as an option.

G. Students and staff should not engage in any indoor physical activity where the level of exertion makes wearing a face covering difficult, except as outlined above in section IV.C.10

VI. ENFORCEMENT; CONSEQUENCES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE

A. In order to promote the health and safety of employees, students and members of the community, and make available a safe environment that is conducive to learning, compliance with this policy is necessary.

B. Employees who fail or refuse to comply with this policy may be subject to discipline, as appropriate, up to and including the termination of employment.

C. Students who fail or refuse to comply with this policy may be subject to discipline in accordance with Policy 541, Student Behavior. Students unwilling to participate in in-person or hybrid learning in compliance with this policy will be offered distance learning. Accommodation will appropriately and legally be made for students with specific health or special education concerns that prevent them from wearing face coverings. When appropriate, additional options will be provided such as face shields or Plexiglas dividers.

D. The school district may, in its discretion, report violators of this policy to law enforcement. Any adult individual who willfully violates Emergency Executive Order 20-81 or 20-82 is guilty of a petty misdemeanor and upon conviction must be punished by a fine not to exceed \$100.

Legal References:

Emergency Executive Order 20-81

Emergency Executive Order 20-82

Minn. Stat. § 12.45 (Governor's Orders and Rules, Effect)

Minn. Stat. § 12.45 (Violations; Penalties)

Cross References:

Policy 103 Racial, Religious and Sexual Harassment and Violence

Policy 541 Student Behavior

Policy 547 Student Dress and Appearance

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