

**OCTOBER
2020**

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

**AN EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY NEWSLETTER FROM YOUR
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST AND SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER**

Elizabeth Roberts eroberts@rochester.k12.mi.us

Amy Phaneuf aphaneuf@rochester.k12.mi.us



BACK TO SCHOOL

On behalf of your child's teacher and RCS PreK staff, we are excited to welcome you back to school! This year brings some changes, and we want to focus here on masks and how to encourage safe, healthy behavior in your child's mask-wearing.

BE A HEALTH HERO!

Just as children learn to wear bike helmets and buckle into cars using car seats and seat belts for safety, children can learn how to use masks to protect themselves and others from germs. Maybe this is a challenge for your child, or maybe you're worried about your child wearing one?

Read on for tips and strategies!

TIPS TO HELP KIDS WEAR MASKS



EXPLAIN WHY MASKS ARE IMPORTANT

Use simple, concrete explanations to tell your child why masks are important. You can say "Wearing a mask helps keep us safe and others safe" or "Wearing a mask can protect us against germs and keeps us from sharing germs with others." For some children, knowing the "Why" can be an essential part of following directions.

PRACTICE WEARING A MASK

First, be a mask role model yourself. Start at home with your child wearing a mask for short periods of time and do fun activities together to make mask-wearing normal. Gradually increase the time for mask-wearing, using a timer if that helps your child to understand better. Give them positive attention to encourage mask-wearing and reinforce the behavior with specific praise such as "You're keeping your mask on!"



MAKE MASK-WEARING FUN

If you can, provide fun, colorful masks. Let your child choose a mask between two options to reduce refusal behaviors, if possible. Use masks in play to encourage exploration of different play characters who might wear masks: super heroes, nurses, vets, doctors. With your child, use materials around your house to make masks for stuffed animals or dolls.



ENSURE A GOOD FIT

Make sure your child's mask fits well; masks should:

- cover both the nose and mouth
- fit snugly across the face
- be secured with ear loops or ties
- have multiple layers of fabric
- allow for unrestricted breathing
- be washed and dried carefully after use



ENCOURAGE THE "RIGHT" WAY TO WEAR A MASK

Place the mask over the nose and mouth and show your child in a mirror what this should look like. Teach your child how to hold the ear loops and stretch it over their face and loop over their ears. Encourage your child to wash their hands before and after touching their mask. Remind them not to touch their mask or their face whenever possible.

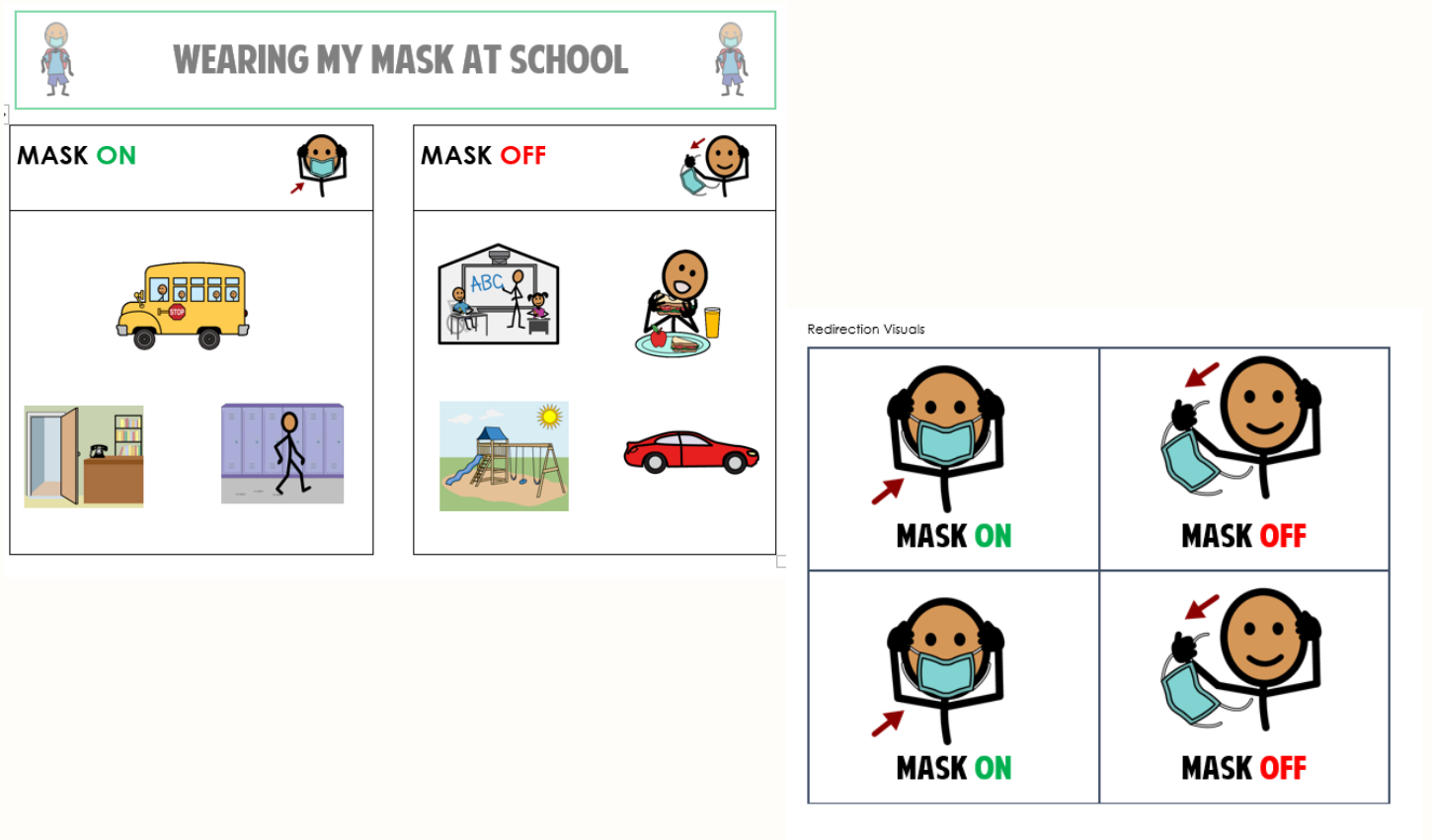


VISUALS TO HELP KIDS WEAR MASKS

FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Sometimes explanations, modeling, and practice are not enough for students to be successful. Some students may need repeated practice to feel comfortable, especially across home, school, and in the community. In addition to showing pictures of other people in masks, pictures and videos may also be helpful in offering visual representations of expectations.

Reach out to your teacher, School Social Worker, or School Psychologist (listed above) for partnering together on strategies and instruction, if you would like additional help.



RESOURCES AND FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For tips and myth-busting about cloth face coverings from the American Academy of Pediatrics
<https://www.healthychildren.org>

For additional COVID-19 resources such as coloring books: <https://zerotothrive.org/covid-19-kids/>

For ways to talk with children about COVID-19 from the University of Michigan School of Public Health:
<https://sph.umich.edu/news/2020posts/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-coronavirus.html>

For talking with children about coping with changes related to COVID-19, from the National Association of School Psychologists: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/helping-children-cope-with-changes-resulting-from-covid-19>