

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



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August 4, 2021

Dr. Cade Brumley
Superintendent
Department of Education
State of Louisiana
1201 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Dr. Brumley:

It has come to my attention that school districts throughout the State are receiving questions from parents about exceptions to the face covering order effective today for all people in Louisiana ages five and over (including those enrolled in a kindergarten program). In particular, the questions seem to be in response to a letter apparently drafted by the Attorney General regarding possible exceptions to the order. In order to clarify any confusion caused by this letter, I will emphasize that the **only** exceptions to the order are enumerated in Section 3(C) of the proclamation, as follows:

- 1) Any individual who will not come in contact with any other individual (outside of their immediate household members) or who will be able to maintain strict social distancing of six feet apart from any other individual (outside of their immediate household members);
- 2) any child under the age of five not enrolled in a kindergarten program, however all children between the ages of two and five years old are strongly encouraged to wear a face covering in accordance with Subsection (A) of this Section;
- 3) any individual with a medical condition that prevents the wearing of a face covering;
- 4) any individual who is consuming food or drinks;
- 5) any individual seeking to communicate with someone who has or is suspected of having a communication disorder;
- 6) any individual giving a speech for broadcast or to an audience;
- 7) any individual temporarily removing his or her face covering for identification purposes; or
- 8) any athlete participating in organized athletic activities.

These are essentially the same exceptions that were contained in all of the face covering orders for the entirety of the 2020-2021 school year. As you know, unlike many other states, Louisiana had

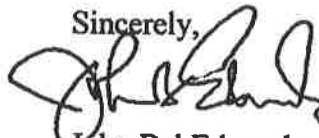
a relatively safe and successful in-person year last year in large part because of masking by students.

The need for this school year to start with our students wearing face coverings has only been made clearer since I announced this order on Monday. We are in, as Dr. Catherine O'Neal at Our Lady of the Lake stated in the Monday press conference, "the darkest days of the pandemic." Our hospitals throughout the State are at capacity and are having to turn away COVID and non-COVID patients alike. We simply must reverse the trajectory we are on – and right now. We can and will see our way through this darkness, but it will only be through more vaccinations and masking in public places in this critical time.

I very much appreciate your efforts, and the heroic work of educators in this challenging time. By adopting these measures – and ignoring those that are unwilling to acknowledge the current crisis – we can keep our kids in school this year and keep them safe. Please feel free to forward this letter on to any school districts that may be addressing this issue.

As always, if I can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to call on me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Bel Edwards". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "B".

John Bel Edwards
Governor