



Fact Sheet

Mask/ Face Coverings: Guidelines for Students

Revised January 28, 2021



The health, safety and well-being of students and staff is a top priority for our schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The following guidance has been prepared based on advice from the Ministry that was developed in consultation with health professionals. The wearing of masks/face coverings is a key component to the layered approach to safety where multiple measures apply. When mask/face coverings are worn consistently and correctly, along with other protection strategies such as frequent hand washing and physical distancing, they comprise an important part of the safety procedures required in schools.

Cloth face masks/coverings are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. Cloth face masks/coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected. Students and families are asked to become familiar with and adhere to the guidelines below. ***They will be strictly adhered to as the safety of all individuals in the school is paramount.***

Students will be instructed in the importance of wearing a mask/face covering for the safety of self, students, staff and ultimately, community members. Proper mask wearing will be taught and reinforced through signage and verbal reminders will be provided to students. This will occur in an ongoing manner by both school staff and parents. Stigma, discrimination, or bullying may arise due to wearing or not wearing a mask/face covering. Schools will provide ongoing instruction and support about health, safety and respect for all. Communications with appropriate staff about mask/face covering accommodations and exemptions will be a priority. Staff will monitor and address any signs of bullying as soon as possible and restorative practice strategies will be engaged as appropriate. Progressive discipline measures will apply (as per SGDSB Policy 535: Progressive Discipline and School Safety).

Will Masks/Face Coverings Be Provided to Students?

- ✓ Masks/face coverings will not be provided for students unless the student is unable to obtain a mask/face covering or has not brought one to school. Students are encouraged to practice wearing a mask/face covering and to learn what type of mask/face covering is most comfortable for them.
- ✓ Masks will be provided to students if their mask/face covering is soiled or requires replacing. A small supply of mask/face covering will be available in every classroom and on school buses.

Where and When are Masks/Face Coverings Required?

NEW!

- ✓ Students in Grades 1 to 12 will be required to wear non-medical or cloth mask/face covering indoors in school, including in hallways and during classes, and during all outdoor times (e.g.



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recess). Even if physical distancing is maintained in the classroom (e.g. students are sitting at their desks), mask/face coverings must be worn.

- ✓ Students in Kindergarten will be strongly encouraged, but not required, to wear mask/face coverings in indoor spaces.
- ✓ Students in split grades (e.g. Grade 3 students in a Grade 3 and Grade 4 split class, or Kindergarten students in an SK/1 class) will be required to wear a mask/face covering.
- ✓ School-aged children and youth who are not able to remove their mask/face covering without assistance should not wear a mask/face covering due to safety concerns.
- ✓ Where a student becomes symptomatic at school, they will be required to quarantine in a designated space and use the provided PPE (medical mask, gown and hand sanitizer) until they can safely leave the school/building when their parent/guardian arrives to collect them.

NEW!

Non-Medical Masks/Face Coverings:

- ✓ When students are required to wear a mask/face covering, the mask/face covering must always cover their nose and mouth.
- ✓ Face shields cannot be worn in the place of a mask/face covering. If a face shield is needed, a mask/face covering must be worn with a face shield.
- ✓ Students will be given frequent reminders to not share or swap their masks/face coverings.
- ✓ Masks/face coverings should have identifiable features (e.g. student initials) to avoid confusion/swapping.
- ✓ Students will be reminded to refrain from touching their mask/face covering.
- ✓ Masks/face coverings should be stored in a space designated for each student that is separate from others when not being worn (e.g., in individually labeled containers or bags, personal lockers, or cubbies).
- ✓ Parents and students are responsible for the cleanliness of the cloth mask/face covering. Parents are strongly encouraged to teach their children how to properly care for and wear their mask/face covering and to reinforce these behaviours at home.
- ✓ Students will be asked by school staff to change their mask/face covering if visibly soiled, damp or damaged. If worn or disposed of incorrectly, could lead to increased risk of infection.
- ✓ Students are encouraged to have two masks per day: one for indoors and one for outdoors.

NEW!

Student Who Refuse to Wear or to Properly Wear a Mask/Face Covering When Required

It is the expectation that all students, where and when required, will wear their mask/face covering to protect themselves and others. Mask/face covering non-compliance includes not wearing a mask/face covering when required and not wearing a mask/face covering correctly (always covering



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nose and mouth). Students not wearing mask/face coverings where and when required will not be permitted in classrooms or in areas with other students. The following will apply in all SGDSB schools:

- ✓ Progressive discipline measures will be adhered to when supporting students in mask/face covering wearing. Staff will:
 - Immediately move the student to a safe and isolated location.
 - Speak with the student, using a restorative justice approach, to determine the reason for the non-compliance.
 - If non-compliance continues, parents will be contacted to pick the student up immediately. A meeting will occur between school administration and the parent.
- ✓ After three occurrences of non-compliance, in discussion with the appropriate Superintendent to consider the circumstances around the occurrences of non-compliance, the student may be required to engage in 100% At-Home Remote Learning.

Mask/Face Coverings Accommodation/Exemption Request Process

While cloth masks/face coverings are strongly encouraged (Kindergarten) and required (Grades 1 to 12) to reduce the spread of COVID-19, SGDSB recognizes there are specific instances when wearing a mask/cloth face covering may not be feasible. **There are likely to be students in every class who will not be wearing masks/face coverings.** Students may be granted an accommodation/ exemption from wearing a non-medical mask/face covering for reasons related to a medical condition, mental health, sensory, breathing difficulties or other reasons deemed reasonable by the Principal. Principals will follow Board guidance on exemptions as outlined below.

- ✓ Masks/face coverings may not be tolerated by everyone based on underlying health issues. Consideration should be given to mitigating physical or psychological challenges that may inadvertently be caused by wearing a mask/face covering (e.g. interfering with the ability to see or speak clearly). In the latter case, to improve visibility for example, for lip-reading the use of clear masks and face shields may work.
- ✓ Masks/face coverings may not be required for students who cannot wear or are unable to apply or remove a mask/face covering without assistance, including those who are accommodated under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) or who have protections under the Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c.H.19, as amended.
- ✓ As part of the Mask/Face Covering Accommodation/Exemption Request process, appropriate medical documentation/relevant information pertaining to the health issue may be requested from students (Grades 1-12) who have health issues/disability that prevent them from wearing a mask/face covering. The medical documentation, when requested, will confirm there is a disability related need (not provide a diagnosis).

Parents are asked to contact the school principal if they are requesting a mask/face covering accommodation/exemption for their child, based on the reasons outlined above. Parents will be asked



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to complete the SGDSB Mask/Face Covering Accommodation/Exemption Form, submit the form to the principal, and then meet with the principal to discuss the situation and basis for the accommodation/exemption request. The intention of the Mask/Face Covering Accommodation/Exemption Form is to assist in understanding the disability related or accommodation related needs of the student.

In the instances of a Mask/Face Covering Accommodation/Exemption Request, parents, guardians, caregivers, teachers, and school administrators will consider a variety of possible **adaptations and alternatives** to meet the needs of students so that they can learn. They may need to consult with healthcare providers for advice.

This Fact Sheet contains information that is current as of the time of writing. Updates will be provided as information from Public Health and the Ministry of Education becomes available.

This Fact Sheet has been designed to provide information for school communities considering the changes required by COVID-19. For any questions, concerns, or accommodations, please contact your child's school principal.

***Adapted from the Ministry of Education "Approach to Reopening Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year"*

