

MASKS/FACE COVERINGS GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

The health, safety and well-being of students and staff is a top priority as schools are reopened. The following guidance has been prepared based on advice from the Ministry of Education through consultation with health professionals. The wearing of masks/face coverings is a key component to the layered approach to safety in our schools. Masks/face coverings that are worn consistently and correctly, along with other strategies such as frequent hand washing and physical distancing, will be in place in all schools for the safety of students and staff. Please note that the information included below is subject to change.

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 the guidelines below as 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 for students. It is possible that stigmas, discrimination, or bullying may arise due to wearing or not wearing a mask/face covering. Schools will provide ongoing instruction and support around health, safety and respect for all. Communication with appropriate staff about mask/face covering accommodations and exemptions will be in place. Staff will monitor and address any signs of bullying as soon as possible and restorative practice strategies, as well as progressive discipline, will be used.

Will Masks/Face Coverings Be Provided to KPDSB Students?

- Students are expected to bring their own properly fitted non-medical or cloth masks to wear at school and on student transportation where applicable. Non-medical 3-ply masks will be made available by schools for students who are not able to provide their own masks.
- Families are asked to send extra masks to school with their child(ren), however, masks will be provided to students if their mask/face covering requires replacing during the day and they do not have a replacement. A small supply of mask/face coverings will be available in every school and on school buses.

Where and When are Masks/Face Coverings Required?

- Students in Grades 1 to 12 are required to wear non-medical or cloth masks/face coverings indoors in schools, including in hallways and during classes, as well as on the school bus. Outdoor times (e.g. nutrition breaks and outdoor learning) can be used as opportunities to provide students with breaks from wearing masks/face coverings with their cohorts as long as physical distancing can be maintained. Even if physical distancing is maintained in the classroom (e.g. students are sitting at their desks), masks/face coverings must be worn.
- It is strongly recommended that students in Kindergarten wear masks/face coverings in indoor spaces, including on the school bus, but is not required.

- 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 move to a designated space and use the provided PPE (medical mask and hand sanitizer) until they can safely leave the school/building when their parent/guardian arrives to collect them.

Non-Medical Masks/Face Coverings:

- When students are required to wear a mask/face covering, the mask/face covering must cover their nose and mouth and chin without any gaps.
- 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 will be stored in a space designated for each student that is separate from others when not being worn in elementary (e.g., in individually labelled containers or bags, personal lockers, or cubbies).
- Families and students are responsible for the cleanliness of the cloth mask/face covering. Families 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.

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

- Progressive discipline measures will be in place to support 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 practices approach, to determine the reason for the non-compliance.
 - If non-compliance continues, parents/guardians will be contacted to pick the student up immediately. A meeting will occur between school administration and the parent/guardian.

- After three occurrences of non-compliance, in discussion with the appropriate Superintendent of Education to consider the circumstances around the occurrences of non-compliance, the student may be required to engage in 100% remote learning.

Mask/Face Coverings Accommodation/Exemption Process

While cloth masks/face coverings are required in grades 1 to 12 to reduce the spread of COVID-19, we recognize there are specific instances when wearing a mask/cloth face covering may not be feasible. 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 school 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 things like lip-reading, the use of clear masks and face shields may work.
- Masks/face coverings may not be required for students who cannot wear one or who 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 families (Grades 1-12) for students who have health issues or a disability that prevents them from wearing a mask/face covering. The medical documentation, when requested, will confirm that the student requires a mask exemption for medical reasons (not provide a diagnosis).

Parents/guardians 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 to complete the [KPDSB Mask/Face Covering Accommodation/Exemption Form](#) to submit the form to their school principal. A meeting with the principal to discuss the situation and basis for the accommodation/exemption request may be required. 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.

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