



WPS Mask and Face Covering Policy

Background: The Covid-19 pandemic is a continuously evolving public health crisis. Covid-19 is a highly contagious virus that is primarily spread through respiratory droplets produced when an individual coughs, sneezes, talks, shouts, or sings. Individuals are exposed to these droplets through direct inhalation or indirectly through contact with droplets that are subsequently transferred to the mucous membranes (frequently the nose or mouth). On Tuesday, July 14th, 2020 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified cloth face masks as a critical tool in the fight against Covid-19. CDC continues to recommend masking as one of the key mitigation factors against Covid-19.

Purpose: Mask wearing was identified by the CDC as one of the key components in reducing transmission of Covid-19 in schools. Masks act as a barrier, reducing the total number of droplets released by the wearer. Mask use in conjunction with proper hand hygiene and social distancing can mitigate transmission of Covid-19.

The Weston Public Schools will require masks that cover the nose and mouth for all students, staff, visitors, and vendors *REGARDLESS OF VACCINATION STATUS* per recommendation of the Weston Board of Health. Staff and students are required to wear masks inside of all school buildings unless in a school designated mask break area during a scheduled mask break.

While masks are required of all staff and students, there are specific instances when wearing a mask may not be feasible. Staff and students with documented medical or developmental conditions who may be unable to wear a mask will be addressed on an individual basis and reasonable modifications may be granted, including but not limited to the use of a face shield.

In accordance with guidance from the CDC and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) the following guidelines for masks will be enforced:

1. **Masks must cover the mouth and nose**
2. Masks must fit snugly against the side of the face
3. Fabric masks must have at least two layers of breathable fabric
4. Masks should allow for breathing without restriction
5. Fabric masks should be cleaned after each use and should be machine washable and dryer safe
6. Fabric masks cannot be single layer (e.g. bandanas, gaiters) or have an exhalation valve

Clear, surgical, and N95/KN95 masks that meet the above criteria are acceptable and encouraged under specific circumstances including when an individual is deaf or hard of hearing, or when providing direct care to an ill student. N95 and KN95 masks will primarily be reserved for staff providing direct care of students/staff who are confirmed or suspected to have Covid-19. Due to the tightness of fit and decreased breathability of N95 and KN95 masks, staff are advised to speak

with their physician regarding routine use. Please contact the building administrator and school nurse if there is a need to request one of these masks as an accommodation.

Student Rights and Responsibilities: Face coverings are subject to the stated responsibility of each student to behave in a way as to ensure safety for self and others. Families are expected to send students to school prepared with a minimum of **two laundered face masks daily**. Extra disposable face masks will be available in the event a student forgets their mask or a mask is lost, damaged, or soiled. Reusable masks should be laundered after each use, and before reuse in school. Please contact the building administrator if you need financial assistance regarding purchasing masks.

Guidelines for Mask Use in Schools:

1. Staff and students will bring a minimum of two masks to school daily.
2. Staff and students will bring a container or lanyard to store their mask during masks breaks and while eating
3. Mask storage containers will be labeled with staff/student name
4. Staff and students should label storage containers either front and back or top and bottom (depending on type of container) to indicate which direction the mask should be stored while not in use
5. Cloth face masks and lanyards should be washed prior to reuse
6. Masks are not required while outdoors, but are strongly encouraged in crowded settings for unvaccinated individuals
7. Masks and mask containers will **NEVER** be shared
8. Masks will only be removed indoors when a minimum of 6-foot distancing can be maintained under the following circumstances – designated mask breaks or during consumption of food or drink
9. Mask removal will only occur during above designated times in accordance with the following instructions:
 - a. Wash hands with soap and water or sanitize before removing mask
 - b. Remove mask using the ear loops or ties, **DO NOT TOUCH** the mask itself
 - c. Once removed, hold the outer edge of the mask to fold in half with the inside opposing surfaces touching and place in the assigned receptacle. If using a lanyard, place a clean paper towel over the mask during the break.
 - d. Wash hands with soap and water or sanitize after the mask is properly stored
 - e. Wash hands with soap and water or sanitize prior to returning the mask to the face
 - f. Remove the mask from the container or remove the paper towel covering if using a lanyard by holding the ear loops or ties
 - g. Reapply the mask to the face using the ear loops or ties
 - h. Resecure the mask around the nose and mouth to ensure tight fit, touching the edges of the mask only if required to secure the fit
 - i. Wash hands with soap and water or sanitizer

Guidelines for School Bus: Masks ***MUST*** be always worn by every student and staff member on the school bus. If individual accommodations are needed please consult your building principal.

Mask Breaks: Mask breaks will be taken throughout the day. Information will be provided at the school level regarding location, duration, and frequency of mask breaks. Families should provide a labeled bag, container, or mask lanyard for students to store their masks during these breaks (refer to building principal for allowable options). Students will maintain a minimum of 6-foot distancing during indoor mask breaks. Mask breaks will always be supervised by an adult.

Guidelines for Face Shield Use in Schools:

1. Students and staff with medical or developmental conditions who are exempted from wearing masks will be encouraged to wear a face shield. This decision will be in collaboration with the building principal and the school nurse.
2. Face shields may be worn (in conjunction with masks) by staff who will be working closely with students who are unable to wear a mask, if 6-foot distancing is unable to be maintained, while toileting students, and while providing direct care to students or staff who are confirmed or suspected to have Covid-19.
3. Face shields will be removed and cleaned when visibly soiled
4. Students and staff will wash hands with soap and water or sanitize before and after manipulation of a face shield
5. Face shields will be stored in a designated storage container that is labeled with the student/staff name and the side that will touch the outer surface of the face shield.
6. Face shields will be disinfected at the end of each school day or when visibly dirty
7. Follow these instructions for disinfection:
 - a. Wash hands or sanitize
 - b. Wear gloves
 - c. Clean with soap and water
 - d. Dry
 - e. Disinfect with alcohol wipe or disinfecting spray and a clean paper towel
 - f. Do not use glass cleaner
 - g. Place on clean paper towel on desk or hard surface
 - h. **DO NOT SHARE SHIELDS**

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, May 7). Science Brief: Community Use of Cloth Masks to Control the Spread of SARS-CoV-2. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/masking-science-sars-cov2.html>
2. Zimmerman, K., et al. (2021). Incidence and Secondary Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 Infections in Schools. *Pediatrics*, 147(4). doi:10.1542/peds.2020-048090

Instructional videos for cleaning of face shields:

Doffing and cleaning face shields for reuse – <https://youtu.be/3RvPKkp5EJs>

How to properly clean your face shield – https://youtu.be/nBC65j_AiwU

Mask Exceptions: Exceptions include situations that may inhibit an individual from wearing a face mask safely. These may include, but are not limited to:

1. Individuals who cannot breathe safely with a face covering, including those who require supplemental oxygen to breathe
2. Individuals who, due to a medical or a developmental impairment, are unable to wear a face covering safely
3. Individuals who need to communicate with people who rely upon lip-reading. In such cases, staff may be provided with alternative facial coverings (i.e. clear masks)

If a student or staff member cannot wear a mask due to a disability, the building administrator should be promptly contacted by the family or staff member to discuss potential accommodations. Face shields or physical barriers may serve as a suitable alternative in these instances.

How to Properly Put on a Face Mask

1. Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer before touching the mask.
2. Inspect the mask to ensure there are no holes or tears
3. Inspect the mask to ensure it is not visibly soiled
4. If there are holes, tears, or soiling, place mask in dirty mask container or dispose of single use mask and select alternate mask for use (begin process at step 1)
5. Identify the top and bottom of the mask. The side of the mask with the stiff bendable edge is the top of the mask.
6. Identify the front and back of the mask. The front of the disposable mask is typically darker colored or printed. The front faces away from you and the back always touches the face.
7. If not clearly defined, label the front of the mask with individual initials
8. Follow these instructions for application of mask to the face:
 - a. Face Mask with Ear Loops – Hold the mask by the ear loops. Place a loop around each ear.
 - b. Face Mask with Ties – Hold the mask by the ties. Place the mask level with the nose and wrap ties around the crown of the head. Secure ties with a bow technique around the crown of the head and nape of the neck.
 - c. Face Mask with Bands – Hold the mask in hands with the nosepiece at the fingertips with bands hanging freely below hands. Bring the mask to nose level and pull one strap over your head so it rests on the crown of your head. Pull the other strap over your head so it rests at the nape of the neck.
9. Mold the top edge of the mask by pinching the stiff edge to the shape of the nose. Be sure to manipulate the edges of the mask only.
10. Pull the bottom of the mask to fit snugly over your mouth and chin. Be sure to manipulate the edges of the mask only.

How to Properly Remove a Face Mask

1. Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer before touching mask.
2. Avoid touching the front of the mask. The front of the mask is now considered contaminated. Only touch the ear loops/ties/bands.
3. Inspect the mask to ensure it is not visibly soiled
4. If there are holes, tears or soiling place mask in dirty mask container or dispose of single use mask.
5. Follow these instructions for removal of mask from the face:
 - a. Face Mask with Ear Loops – Hold the mask by the ear loops. Gently lift and remove the mask.
 - b. Face Mask with Ties – Untie the bottom bow (nape of neck) first. Remove the top bow (crown of head) and pull mask away from face.
 - c. Face Mask with Bands – Lift the bottom strap over your head and let hang. Pull the top strap and lift over the top of the head in an upward and outward motion to pull mask away from face.
6. Once removed, place the mask front side down on a clean piece of paper towel, or in a container with the front side facing the labelled side of the container. If folding the mask for storage, hold the outer edges of the mask and fold it in half with the inside of the mask touching.
7. Wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, August 5). Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). How to Wear and Take Off Your Mask. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/cloth-face-covering.pdf>

Instructional videos for mask use and storage:

1. Mask wearing 101: How to properly use and reuse a mask – <https://youtu.be/JwPWdkbyizw>
2. Storing your mask in a paper bag – <https://youtu.be/ZHQ3YrmDqo>
3. Storing your face mask – <https://youtu.be/160pZ1oGSug>

Behavioral Support of Students Wearing Masks: At this point in time, we know that mask wearing keeps those around us safer. It is very important that we all abide by these protective guidelines as this is a community-based health issue. The expectation is that those who can safely wear a mask will do so while indoors. Still, mask wearing may increase some people’s anxiety and it is important to be cognizant of potential trauma history for individual students and staff. As masks shield a portion of the face, wearing masks inevitably limits our ability to create opportunities to establish trust and connection with others by hiding facial expressions and gestures. Students with developmental challenges to mask wearing will be provided instructional opportunities to improve their comfort and compliance with consistent masking indoors.

Instructional Approaches to Mask Wearing – Teaching opportunities will be offered within the classrooms to encourage mask wearing. Direct instruction, including desensitization procedures, social stories, individualized behavioral reinforcement plans and modeling will be incorporated.

Supports for Students Experiencing Difficulties in School – Should all instructional approaches to promote mask wearing fail, building based corrective procedures will be followed. Please refer to building based approaches for corrective action around failure to wear a mask without an approved accommodation.

Masks will be worn by all students while indoors unless directed by staff during specified times (mask breaks or food and water consumption). If a student removes their mask or fails to wear a mask without permission, we will follow a philosophy of restorative practice, with social emotional and behavioral supports. A restorative practice focuses on creating opportunities for students to become aware of the impact of their behavior, understand why they need to take responsibility for their actions, and take steps to repair the situation and re-integrate back to the learning environment.

The progressive corrective approach with no improvement may evolve as follows:

1. Teacher gives up to three verbal and/or non-verbal redirections in class
2. Teacher engages student in a restorative chat and reteaches using visuals whenever appropriate
3. Behavioral support, therapeutic, or nursing staff speak with student using a restorative approach and assess for other potential factors
4. Principal or designee speaks with student, teacher, and personnel involved as noted above
5. Parent called and given the option to encourage child to wear mask or have their child learn remotely

*Students for whom failure to wear a mask is a function of their disability will not be excluded from school. Instructional and therapeutic interventions will continue.