



## **RE: Face Covering Guidelines**

At this time during the COVID-19 Pandemic, it is strongly recommended that face coverings be worn during the school day by staff and students for those who are able. There is increasing evidence that face coverings help prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus to others. The guidelines model the CDC Recommendations, but have been modified to fit the needs specifically for our school setting.



Wearing cloth masks does not replace the need to continue frequent hand washing, avoiding touching the face, staying home when you are ill, and practicing physical distancing, which in combination are all our best strategies to help prevent the spread of illness.

The following outlines the basic guidelines for wearing face coverings at school. Please reference the Face Coverings Question/Answer for further details. COVID-19 recommendations change frequently based on the most recent evidence to protect against the virus. Montezuma Community Schools guidelines for wearing face coverings will change as we learn more and learn what feasibly works for our environment. Parents will be notified if the guidance changes.

### **Types of Face Covering**

- All types of face coverings are allowed with the exception of masks with valves
- The face covering must cover the nose and mouth
- It is recommended that masks have the ability to hang around the neck as an option when not in use

### **Face Coverings Provided from Home**

- Students can supply their own from home as long as it complies with the guidelines.
- It is recommended that students bring their own from home to allow for proper fitting and personal preference for the type of face covering chosen to wear.
- The school will provide a face covering to use at school if the student does not have one but please keep in mind this is a limited supply.
- At minimum, for masks and neck gaiters, it's recommended that two be at school on a given day. One to wear, and one as a replacement if one is soiled. More are encouraged. The extra can be stored in a separate, labeled bag, with the student's name and kept in their backpack.

### **General Recommendations**

- Face coverings worn properly should allow for breathing without restriction.
- A face covering should not be worn if the person has trouble breathing or the person cannot remove the face covering without assistance.
- Some people are not able to wear a face covering for medical or developmental reasons. In these situations, simply contact your principal or school nurse to discuss.

### **Other Specifics**

- Face coverings cannot have offensive print or language according to student dress code
- Should be labeled with the student's name somewhere on the item
- Sharing, trying on, or touching others' masks is not allowed
- Students are not allowed to bring masks to school to share with peers/friends

### **When to Wear a Face Covering**

- Face coverings should be worn, at minimum, when physical distancing cannot be maintained. It is best to minimize taking face coverings on and off frequently.
- Teachers will work with students and explain appropriate times during the day when face coverings can be removed safely. There will be many "mask breaks" throughout the student's day.

## MCS D Face Coverings Questions and Answers:

**1. Q: When you say “any type” of face covering can be worn, what do you mean?**

**A:** At this time, any mask (disposable or cloth), face shield, neck gaiter, scarf, etc, is acceptable as long as it covers the nose and mouth completely. It’s recommended that it stays in place over the nose and mouth without needing to touch it frequently.

Masks or gaiters with valves, mesh masks, masks with openings or holes are *not* sufficient.

**2. Q: Why are masks with valves not allowed?**

**A:** Masks which have a one way valve allows exhaled air to pass through the mask. This type of mask defeats the purpose of universal masking guidelines which is to prevent transmission from infected individuals.

**3. Q: If my child is wearing a face covering and is exposed to someone with COVID-19 (is considered a “close contact” - within 6 feet for over 15 minutes), will my child still need to quarantine since they were wearing a face covering?**

**A:** Poweshiek County Public Health will be conducting contact tracing with any identified positive cases of COVID-19 at MCS D. Close contact and the need for home-quarantine will be determined on a case-by-case basis. PCPH will help determine the best course of action. Wearing face coverings is one of many strategies combined together to decrease the risk of spreading the virus. It decreases the risk, but does not eliminate the risk. In any regard, wearing a face covering is strongly encouraged as opposed to not wearing face coverings, especially when maintaining social distancing of 6 feet isn't possible.

Individuals previously diagnosed positive for COVID-19 within the past 12 weeks, and who were exposed to a COVID-19 case, do not need to quarantine per IDPH guidelines. However, if symptoms arise, the individual will need to self-isolate according to PCPH guidelines.

Per IDPH, staff determined as critical personnel may be allowed to work in certain circumstances after being exposed to someone with COVID-19 as long as they remain asymptomatic and wear a mask. This is determined in collaboration with public health, administration and health services.

**4. Q: When can my child take their face covering off during school? Will they have to wear them ALL DAY?**

**A:** Face coverings can be removed at appropriate times when physical distancing is implemented. Teachers will communicate to the students the appropriate times when face coverings can be removed and where to safely store the face covering when not in use. Each class may have a different system based on the age of the student and situation. For example, students will be able to take face coverings off when physical distancing is being maintained, during recess if appropriate, obviously for eating, etc. Students will always be allowed to take a “mask break” if necessary, by simply going to an area where they can physically distance from others and take their mask off.

- It is best practice to minimize taking the mask on and off as much as possible.
- Avoid touching the outside of the face covering.
- At school, face coverings not in use, it’s recommended that the face covering be connected to the person, placed in the designated individual’s labeled bag, or on a designated table on a clean paper towel folding ‘dirty’ sides together as appropriate for the type of face covering used. If able, please send labeled paper or plastic bags in the student’s backpack ideally labeled “clean” and “dirty”.
- Wash/ sanitize hands before and after touching a face covering
- Avoiding touching the front of the mask or face shield

**5. Q: Why does Montezuma Community Schools recommend that a mask have the ability to hang around the neck when CDC does not recommend this?**

**A:** It is not best practice to hang a mask around the neck when not in use; however, in a school

setting with children of different ages wearing a mask all day, it may be a better option at times for the mask to hang on the person rather than it be placed down risking the mask be misplaced, another person touching it, it falling on the floor, etc.

Ear loop masks can easily be modified by tying loose string or elastic between the ear loops to hang behind the back of the head or neck. This provides the ability for the mask to hang around the neck when not in use.

Students should be taught to only touch the string holding the mask and not the outside of the mask itself and the importance of handwashing/ sanitizing when the mask is touched. The outside of the mask is considered the most contaminated part of the mask.

**6. Q: Why should students bring a back-up face mask/covering and not a back-up face shield?**

**A:** It's not that an extra face shield shouldn't be brought to school, it's simply that if a face shield is stored in a backpack, there is high risk that the face shield will get broken in the backpack. Also, face shields can more easily be cleaned or sanitized at school if soiled than a mask can be. Parents can make individual arrangements with the student's teacher to have a back up faceshield at school if necessary, but please keep in mind that storage is limited.

**7. Q: Can I wear a face shield that attaches to a hat?**

**A:** Yes. Hats will be acceptable in school if it has a face shield attached to it for that purpose. Hats will need to follow the school's dress code.

**8. Q: Should I reuse a mask, or wash the mask?**

**A:** Due to short supply masks are commonly reused or washed after use due to the short supply and high demand in this pandemic situation.

Ideally, cloth masks should be washed each night before wearing it again.

Any mask, disposable or reusable, can be reused if the mask is not visibly soiled and has sat unused for at least 24, preferably 72 hours before wearing again.

It is recommended that disposable masks be disposed of if they become visibility soiled or wet. Cloth masks can be washed if visibility soiled or wet.

A suggested system is to have 5 masks at home and rotate the use.

- a. Label 5 paper bags (1 through 5) at home.
- b. After wearing "day one" mask, place back in bag #1.
- c. Wear an individual mask each day, in order, and replace back in the coordinating bag.
- d. When you return to bag labeled #1, it will be well over 72 hours
- e. Discard the masks and replace them when they are not in good condition.

**9. Q: What if my child forgets their face covering, or it gets dirty at school.**

**A:** It is recommended that you have, at minimum, a clean "back up" face covering safely packed in the child's backpack each day. This will help eliminate the situation of not having one available. Parents are encouraged to have several available in their child's backpack, making sure a system is in place to know which coverings are clean vs dirty.

If the child does not have a face covering or it gets soiled at school, the school will make arrangements for the student appropriately to have one available.

**10. Q: What if I don't have the means or resources to get a face covering for my child?**

**A:** Simply contact your child's teacher or principal and arrangements will be made for your child. The school will have a limited supply of masks for students to wear.

**11. Q: How do I decide if my child should wear a face shield vs mask vs neck gaiter?**

**A:** There are pros and cons about each type. Montezuma Community Schools is allowing parents and students to individually decide what works best for their situation. It is an individual preference.

There are different levels of protection and source control for each choice, depending on the product. Face shield should extend below the chin and to the ears, and there should be no exposed gap between the forehead and the shield's headpiece.

Neck gaiters are sometimes difficult to stay in place without having to touch them frequently. They should be able to fit over the nose and mouth without having to touch it frequently to adjust it.

Masks should fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face covering the nose and mouth.

It is recommended to trial options at home to see what works well for your child and to research level of effectiveness. The preferred type chosen should allow for easy breathing without restriction, with the student demonstrating appropriate use.

**12. Q: What if my child's mask becomes dirty, soiled, or wet during the school day?**

**A:** If brought from home, teachers will guide the student to place their face covering in a labeled bag in their backpack to be transported home to be cleaned / sanitized appropriately. A clean face covering will be put on. A clean one will be provided if necessary. It is encouraged to have several "back up" coverings on hand in their backpack in case of this situation.

**13. Q: Where do I buy a face shield or mask for my child?**

**A:** Face coverings are more readily available now than they were at the beginning of the pandemic. Many local stores are selling face masks and other types of face coverings. There are multiple variations of masks, face shields and neck gaiters available online as well. MCSD does not require a certain brand, type etc, (with the exceptions mentioned in Q/A #1). The face covering must simply cover the nose and mouth and must not have offensive print or language according to student dress code.

**14. Q: How can I help my child get used to wearing a face covering?**

**A:** The Health Staff at Montezuma Community Schools recommend parents try a variety at home before school starts and encourage their child to practice wearing it at home before school starts in the fall. Here are some additional tips on helping your child get used to wearing a face covering: [How to Help Your Child Adapt to Wearing a Face Covering](#).

Montezuma Community teaching staff will be working with the students and helping them adapt.

**15. Q: My child is not able to wear a face covering, what do I do?**

**A:** We realize that some students may not be able to wear a face covering for a variety of medical or developmental reasons. Simply contact your school nurse and school principal to discuss.

## REFERENCES:

1. [CDC Press Release](#) Tuesday, July 14. 2020
2. [CDC - How to Wear Cloth Facecoverings](#)
3. [CDC - Considerations for Wearing Cloth Face Coverings](#)
4. [CDC - How to Wash Cloth Face Coverings](#)
5. [CDC - Considerations for Wearing Masks](#)