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| Section | Chapter 01 - Governance and Operations |
| Title | Face Coverings During COVID-19 Pandemic Emergency |
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01-29 FACE COVERINGS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC EMERGENCY

(A) Preamble

WHEREAS, the State of Florida has been under a declared State of Emergency as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic since March 9, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as local health experts and officials, recommend that everyone wash their hands often, avoid close contact and cover their mouth and nose with a face covering in settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain in order to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus and help prevent people who have the virus from transmitting it to others; and

WHEREAS, one of the School Board's highest priorities is to provide a safe learning environment for the benefit of its students, staff, families and others who interact with the school environment; and

WHEREAS, the School Board has the power to impose reasonable restrictions on students, staff, and others related to their health, safety and welfare; and

WHEREAS, this emergency policy is intended to promote and contribute to a healthy and safe school environment and to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in an effort to keep school buildings open and students and employees in attendance.

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority of the School Board under Article IX, section 4 of the Florida Constitution, as well as §§120.54(4), 120.81(1), 1001.32(2), 1001.41, 1001.42 and 1001.43, Florida Statutes, and other legal authorities, The School Board of Okaloosa County, Florida finds that an immediate danger to the public health, safety and welfare requires adoption of the following emergency policy:

(B) Wearing of Face Coverings

Subject to the exceptions set forth below, each student, employee, visitor, vendor, or other person is strongly encouraged to comply with the CDC guidelines regarding the wearing of masks or face coverings (hereinafter collectively "face coverings") at those times when social distancing of at least six (6) feet between individuals is not possible when on or inside any property owned, leased, or operated by the School Board, including, but not limited to schools, administrative buildings and vehicles, as well as during any school or district-sponsored activity at another location. All individuals subject to this policy are encouraged to provide their own face coverings that comply with this policy. The school district will maintain emergency supplies of disposable or other new face coverings so that no student, staff member or other person will be in a position where they will not have access to one. All persons are strongly encouraged to have a face covering with them at all times while on school district property.

School employees will make every effort to encourage student's compliance with this policy and other COVID-19 safety protocols, however, employees will not be disciplined or held responsible for the actions of students or parents who refuse to follow instructions to comply with this policy or practice COVID-19 safety protocols or for

any adverse consequences of wearing face coverings. While school employees may assist students with their face coverings, they are not responsible for students putting on or taking off masks properly or for the appropriate storage of face coverings during a face covering break or at scheduled meal times.

In the event that CDC guidance significantly changes during the effective period of this emergency rule, the School Board delegates authority to the Superintendent to modify compliance requirements in accordance with then-current guidance from public health officials.

(C) Face Covering Defined

Face coverings must cover both the mouth and nose completely and fit snugly against the sides of the person's face and under the chin with little or no gaps. Face coverings must be made of solid material, and not lace, mesh, crocheted, or made of other largely porous material. Although medical-grade face coverings, such as surgical face masks and N95 respirators, are sufficient face coverings, they are not required and members of the public who do not work in health care or an occupation that requires them are discouraged from wearing them during times that such equipment are in short supply so that medical professionals may more easily access them. The school principal or department head, or their designee in their absence, shall have the final authority to determine the acceptability of a particular face covering, as defined by this policy.

Examples of acceptable face coverings include two (2) or three (3) ply non-medical grade disposable face masks (usually made of paper) or cloth face masks. Cloth used in a cloth face mask should be a tightly woven fabric (such as cotton or polypropylene fabric, or cotton/polypropylene blend) that allows for a good seal along the face and under the chin.

Examples of unacceptable face coverings include knitted, gaiter type neck fleece, double layer bandana, any type of mask with a one-way exhalation valve or vent, lace, mesh, crocheted, or other masks or face coverings that are not solid material, face coverings that are worn so that large gaps exist between the face covering and the person's skin, and face shields (face shields, however, may constitute an exception and are discussed in section D(3) below).

Text, symbols, slogans, and other speech contained on face coverings shall be addressed just as if the same speech was worn on another article of apparel by the student, employee, visitor, vendor or other person on school district property. All face coverings must comply with school dress codes.

(D) Exceptions

1) PreK, Kindergarten, and Specialized Student Populations. Students in prekindergarten, kindergarten and students in ESE self-contained classrooms and ESE Center schools may not be able to utilize face coverings to the same extent as other classrooms. But teachers and other employees should encourage such students to use face coverings (e.g. during carpool drop-off or pick-up or when standing in line at school) and provide appropriate instruction and direction to the students. Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions or other sensory sensitivities may have challenges wearing a face covering. It is recommended to consult with their health care provider for advice about wearing a face covering.

2) Very Young Children. Face coverings are not expected to be worn by children who are less than three (3) years of age.

3) Face Shields in Certain Circumstances. A face shield is primarily used for eye protection for the person wearing it. It is not meant to provide protection from respiratory droplets. There is currently not enough evidence for the CDC to recommend face shields as a substitute for face covering. However, wearing a face covering may not be feasible in every situation especially for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing or those who care for or interact with a person who is hearing impaired. Although there is little evidence on face shields, the available data suggest that face shields that wrap around the sides of the wearer's face and extend below the chin or hooded face shields may provide better source control than other style face shields. While face shields are less effective than face coverings, as defined above, usage may be indicated in some circumstances. For this purpose face shields are defined as a piece of equipment fitting on top of the head that contains a solid, but clear, piece of plastic or other lightweight material covering the person's face from at least the forehead to below the chin and from ear to ear. Face shields, as defined, may be used (i) as a possible accommodation under the ADA or Section 504 where an appropriate medical professional has certified in writing that the person has a qualifying contraindication that prevents that person from being able to safely wear a face covering defined above; (ii) where staff and/or students have an instructional or communicative reason for showing or viewing another's mouth, such as during phonetic instruction or for students who are hearing impaired and need to see facial movements; and (iii) other situations on a case-by-case basis as determined by the principal or department head, or their designee in their absence, where it is in the best interests of the person seeking to wear the face shield.

4) Face Covering Breaks. To promote the social and emotional wellbeing of students, who may struggle wearing a face covering for long periods of time, schools will provide students with opportunities for breaks where they can remove their face covering while maintaining appropriate social distancing and while under general supervision. Under these circumstances, employees may also periodically take a face covering break.

5) Eating and Drinking. Face covering are not expected while actively eating or drinking during a planned mealtime. Social distancing is encouraged when feasible during eating and drinking to reduce the spread of the virus.

6) Strenuous Physical Activity. Face coverings are not expected during the times that any person is engaged in strenuous physical activity, whether inside or outside a school district building. However, social distancing of at least six (6) feet is strongly recommended in these situations. The school district will also consider guidance issued by outside governing authorities regarding face coverings and physical activities, when available.

7) Musical Performances. A face covering with a small slit for mouth piece access shall be required for any student, employee or visitor while playing certain musical instruments indoors as specified by the band director. The instrument is to be protected by a covering approved by the principal, or his/her designee, and all other health and safety procedures for the activity shall be followed.

8) During Receipt of Health Care. Face coverings are not expected when its removal is necessary for the person to receive health care or to undergo a health care examination from authorized health care professionals, including school nurses.

9) Emergency Circumstances. Face coverings are not expected and may be removed if a person is experiencing acute problems breathing, a medical emergency, is unconscious or incapacitated, or is personally unable to remove the face covering without assistance.

10) Indoors or Driving When Alone. Face coverings are not expected when persons, including employees, are alone in a classroom, office space, other school district building room or school district vehicle.

11) Outdoors with Social Distancing. Face coverings are not expected by persons outside of any school district building or vehicle provided that such person(s) maintains social distancing of at least six (6) feet minimum distance from other persons except for immediate family members living in the same household.

12) Impediment to Instruction. Teachers, staff members and students at the direction of the teacher, may remove their face coverings when wearing them would impede instruction.

13) Transportation. Face coverings are required while operating or riding school buses subject to necessary accommodations as authorized by the Superintendent or his/her designee.

(E) Eglin Elementary School

This emergency rule shall apply and be enforced at Eglin Elementary School to the extent it is not in conflict with Public Health Emergency Management Orders of the 96th Test Wing Commander at Eglin AFB, whose orders shall be followed in regard to these matters.

(F) Effective Date

This emergency policy takes effect on August 27, 2020, and will remain in effect until 11:00 p.m. on November 25, 2020, unless extended pursuant to law.

Legal Statutory Authority: §§120.54(4), 120.81(1), 1001.32(2), 1001.41, 1001.42 and 1001.43, Florida Statutes
Laws Implemented: §§1001.32, 1001.33, 1001.31, 1001.41, 1001.42(4) & (8), 1001.43, 1003.31 and 1012.23, Florida Statutes.