

Hopewell Area School District

2354 Brodhead Road
Aliquippa, PA, 15001

August 18, 2020

Dear Hopewell Families,

Yesterday afternoon, the Pennsylvania Department of Education released new requirements regarding facial coverings. Unfortunately, school districts were unaware of this change until we received an email with the new guidance from Pennsylvania's Department of Health and Department of Education.

The changes in the Department of Health requirements are as follows:

Schools may allow students to remove face coverings when students are:

- *Eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart; or*
- *When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task; or*
- *At least 6 feet apart during "face-covering breaks" to last no longer than 10 minutes.*

Last week, I provided parents a letter outlining Facial Covering requirements in our District. In light of the new requirements, please see the changes below in Hopewell's plan for implementation. **Please know that the District must adhere to the new requirements.** We also understand, especially in warmer weather, that facial covering breaks will be needed multiple times throughout the day for staff and students. We will work to provide these breaks, while still adhering to the new requirements and making decisions that keep the safety of all students and staff our priority.

Facial Coverings

Facial coverings or masks are also now required while in schools, per the Governor's Order. We would ask that you help your child become accustomed to wearing a facial covering before the start of school. Please review the following with your child(ren) so these expectations are not surprising when they arrive at school the first day.

- Facial coverings can be a mask, facial shield or any other approved facial covering from the Department of Health. It should cover the nose and mouth.
- Facial coverings will need to be provided by families, as well as laundered or cleaned. We require that masks adhere to the dress code policy (i.e. graphics or language that would not be permitted on clothing).
- Facial coverings must be worn at all times on busses and in all common areas of the building (halls, office, restrooms, lunch lines, etc...).
- Facial coverings can be removed in classrooms during "mask breaks", under the teacher's supervision.
 - *NEW: Facial covering breaks in a classroom may not exceed 10 minutes at a time.*
- If students are socially distanced and six feet away from others, they are permitted to remove their facial covering in the classroom, under the teacher's supervision.
 - *NEW: Facial covering breaks are ONLY permitted when students are 6 feet away from others.*
- A student may be asked to wear a facial covering in a classroom, even if socially distanced, if another individual's health is compromised. Breaks will be afforded in these settings, when needed.

- Facial coverings will be able to be removed while seated for lunch.
 - *NEW: Facial coverings will be able to be removed while seated for lunch, breakfast or snack provided that students are 6 feet apart.*
- A student may continue wearing his or her facial covering at any time, even if breaks are provided.

Additional Back to School reminders:

- Please contact the school to update your contact information.
- Start planning for remote learning spaces in your home.
- New Dismissal times:
 - High School: 2:00 PM
 - Junior High: 2:35 PM
 - Elementary: 3:05 PM
- Remote Days: Time to Connect with Teachers
 - High School: Remote learners will be able to connect with teachers from approx. 2:05-2:55 PM
 - Junior High: Remote learners will be able to connect with teachers from approx. 2:40-3:10 PM
 - Elementary: Remote learners will be able to connect with teachers from approx. 3:10-3:55 PM
- Viking CONNECT: Device Distribution
 - See the website under District News for more information
 - Devices for the Junior High and Kindergarten students at Margaret Ross are not yet scheduled for pick up. We will notify you when these devices are ready.
 - Pick-up times are for all other students:

■ Tuesday 8/18	9-2 pm	High School Students Only (last names A-Z)
■ Tuesday 8/18	4-6 pm	Open to <u>any families</u> with multiple children/multi-devices
■ Wednesday 8/19	9-2 pm	Cyber families only (K-12)
■ Wednesday 8/19	4-6 pm	Open to <u>any families</u> with multiple children/multi-devices
■ Thursday 8/20	9-2 pm	Elementary Students Only (last names A-K)
■ Thursday 8/20	4-6 pm	Open to <u>any families</u> not able to make their scheduled time
■ Friday 8/21	9-2pm	Elementary only students (last names L-Z)
- Virtual Orientations for all students and parents are on the website: Check them out under District News!
- HASD Cyber Orientation: Sign up for a time on the District website. It is the last link in the blue box at the top of the web page.
- Student schedules & classroom assignments: These will be released on CSIU at 8:00AM on Monday, August 24.
- Bus stop times and assignments: Mailed next week

I will be sharing some short videos this week that highlight some topics of interest for parents and students. Check out the website under District News later this week to watch a few of them. Some of these videos will include new procedures, a sneak peek into the classrooms, and some ways to prepare for the school year. In these ever changing times, I know that together, we can have a great school year for all of our Vikings!

With Viking PRIDE-

Dr. Michelle Miller
Superintendent

Answers to FAQs: Universal Face Coverings Order

From PDE's website:

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/Waivers/MaskWearing/Pages/default.aspx>

On July 1, 2020, the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health announced an Order Requiring Universal Face Coverings. The order, signed under Secretary Levine's authority under the Disease Prevention and Control Act, outlines the situations when a mask must be worn and includes limited exceptions to the face-covering requirement. Answers to questions school leaders may have regarding the application of this order in school settings is included below. Please reference this guidance as you plan to keep your students, staff, and school communities safe.

This page was updated on August 17, 2020. The section that was updated is marked with an asterisk ().*

Does the Order of the Secretary of the PA Department of Health Requiring Universal Face Coverings apply to children and adults while in schools?

Yes, this order applies to all students, staff and visitors age two and older while in school entities, including public K-12 schools, brick and mortar and cyber charter schools, private and parochial schools, career and technical centers (CTCs), intermediate units (IUs); educational programming for students in non-educational placements such as residential settings (boarding schools), residential facilities, detention centers, and hospital settings; PA Pre-K Counts, Head Start Programs and Preschool Early Intervention programs; and Private Academic Nursery Schools and locally funded prekindergarten activities.

The Order was effective July 1, 2020 and will remain in effect until the Secretary of Health determines the public health risk is sufficiently reduced so that face coverings are no longer necessary as a widely utilized public health tool. For the safety of students, staff and families and to avoid community spread of COVID-19, students and staff are considered to be members of the public who are congregating in indoor locations. As such, they are required to adhere to this Order.

The order is effective immediately and applies to all children aged two and older.

Why did the Secretary of the PA Department of Health issue this Order?

The Secretary issued this Order to continue to protect all in the Commonwealth from the spread of COVID-19, mindful of the need to slow the increase in the number of cases as the Commonwealth reopens and in order to avoid the resurgence that is overwhelming the health care systems and public health systems in other states who have been less successful in reopening than the Commonwealth.

Is this Order temporary?

This Order remains in effect until further notice.

What type of mask complies with this Order?

The Order requires individuals to wear a "face covering." "Face covering" means a covering of the nose and mouth that is secured to the head with ties, straps, or loops over the ears or is wrapped around the lower face. A "face covering" can be made of a variety of synthetic or natural fabrics, including cotton, silk, or linen, and, for the purposes of the order, can include a plastic face shield that covers the nose and mouth. "Face coverings" may be factory-made, sewn by hand, or improvised from household items, including but not limited to, scarves, bandanas, t-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels. While procedural and surgical masks intended for health care providers and first responders, such as N95 respirators, would meet these requirements, these specialized masks should be reserved for appropriate occupational and health care settings.

***Under what circumstances are students permitted to remove their face coverings (e.g. masks and face shields)?**

Schools may allow students to remove face coverings when students are:

- Eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart; or
- When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task;
or
- At least 6 feet apart during "face-covering breaks" to last no longer than 10 minutes.

Do students with disabilities need to wear face coverings?

Children two years and older are required to wear a face covering unless they have a medical or mental health condition or disability, documented in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or IDEA, that precludes the wearing of a face covering in school. Accommodations for such students should be made in partnership with the student's health care provider, school nurse, and IEP/504 team.

Do schools need to update/amend their Health and Safety Plans if they have already been submitted to PDE?

Health and Safety Plans must reflect this Order. Understanding the volatility and uncertainty of the COVID-19 virus, plans should be flexible enough to contemplate any future change in conditions.

Do updated/revised Health and Safety Plans need to be re-approved by local school boards?

Yes. While the Order must be implemented immediately, plan approval, if necessary, should occur at the next board meeting.

Do updated/revised Health and Safety Plans need to be resubmitted to PDE?

Yes. PDE should always have the most recently approved Health and Safety Plans on file for each Local Education Agency (LEA).

Does the Order apply to athletes and sports activities?

Yes. Everyone must wear a face covering, such as a mask, unless they fall under an exception listed in Section 3 of the Order. Coaches, athletes and spectators must wear face coverings unless they are outdoors and can consistently maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet. Athletes are not required to wear face coverings while actively engaged in workouts and competition that prevent the wearing of face coverings, but must wear face coverings when on the sidelines, in the dugout, etc. and anytime 6 feet of social distancing is not possible.

Must an individual provide evidence that they qualify for an exception to the Order?

Schools must require all students over 2 years of age to wear face coverings, except for any student who has a medical or mental health condition or disability that precludes the wearing of a face covering in school. Notwithstanding Section 3, Paragraph B of [Secretary Levine's July 1, 2020 Order regarding face coverings](#), schools may require such students to provide medical documentation. PDE recommends that any documentation that is provided be in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or IDEA of such medical or mental health condition or disability.

More information can be found in the [Public Health Guidance for School Communities](#) issued on July 15, 2020, which also contains provisions applicable to staff and visitors.