



The [S.C. Department of Education](#) announced face mask requirement for all students attending public schools for the 2020-2021 school year. We know this latest information has created many questions for parents, teachers, and students. Our mask policy at HPA will remain the same as previously announced in our [Return to School Plan](#). The state's guidance advises schools to follow directions from the [Centers for Disease Control](#) regarding masks in schools.

We have put together six tips and ideas to help students adjust to wearing masks. Click [here](#) to view.

### **HPA Mask Policy**

***Our mask policy at HPA will remain the same as previously announced. Students will be expected to wear masks upon entering and exiting the school, during transition times, and in classrooms, as needed when social distancing is not possible. Masks or face coverings must cover the nose, mouth, and chin simultaneously. They may be homemade, and they may be reusable or disposable. Medical exemptions from masks will be respected with proper documentation.***

This recommendation is based on what we know about the role respiratory droplets play in the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, paired with emerging evidence from clinical and laboratory studies that shows coverings reduce the spray of droplets when worn over the nose and mouth. COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact with one another (within 6 feet, longer than 15 minutes). The use of coverings is particularly important in settings where people are close to each other or where social distancing is difficult to maintain.

A face covering is a piece of fabric, cloth, or other material that covers the wearer's nose, mouth, and chin simultaneously and is secured to the wearer's face by elastic, ties, or other means. Acceptable face coverings may be homemade, and they may be reusable or disposable.

### **Students who should NOT be required to wear face coverings:**

- Those who have trouble breathing
- Those with special healthcare or educational needs as determined by an Individualized Education Program (IEP), 504 Accommodations Plan, or an individual student healthcare plan, or by a medical doctor

Staff members who have trouble breathing or those with special healthcare needs as noted by a medical doctor should NOT be required to wear a face covering.

### **Additional Considerations:**

The SCDE recognizes that face coverings may be challenging for some students, teachers, and staff, including:

- Younger students, such as those in early elementary school (Kindergarten-2)
- Students, teachers, and staff with severe asthma or other breathing difficulties.
- Students, teachers, and staff with special educational or healthcare needs, including intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, and sensory concerns, or tactile sensitivity.

In these instances, parents, guardians, caregivers, teachers, and school administrators should consider adaptations and alternatives whenever possible.



Consider the use of clear face coverings that cover the nose and wrap securely around the face by some teachers and staff. Clear face coverings should be determined not to cause any breathing difficulties or overheating for the wearer. Teachers and staff who may consider using clear face coverings include:

- Those who interact with students or staff who are deaf or hard of hearing, per the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- Teachers of young students learning to read
- Teachers of English learners
- Teachers of students with disabilities, as applicable

Clear face coverings are not face shields. The CDC does NOT recommend the use of face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings because of a lack of evidence of their effectiveness for source control.