

Gadsden City Schools

2021-2022 Masking Guidelines

Recognizing his role in developing public health precautions and infectious disease mitigation procedures for all schools, the Superintendent of Gadsden City Schools has established face covering guidelines for all schools and other Board properties and all school sponsored activities. The Superintendent recognizes there will be some opposition to these guidelines but feels it is in the best interest of the entire system to support procedures that are best noted to serve as methods for minimizing risks of COVID-19 infection. It is the Superintendents hope that these guidelines will be temporary, however, these guidelines will remain in place until it is determined that the risks of infection have been reduced to a level for such reconsideration.

Guidelines for Students and staff

1. **Face Coverings.** Face coverings (masks, shields, gaiters) that cover the nose and mouth are to be worn as follows:
 - a. **Inside GCS Facilities.** Face coverings are to be worn by everyone, including faculty, staff, and administrators inside any GCS facility regardless of vaccination status. This requirement also applies to any indoor GCS activity or event, including Gadsden City Board of Education meetings.
 - b. **Traveling on School Bus.** Face coverings are to be worn by everyone while traveling on any GCS school bus regardless of vaccination status. This provision is intended to comply with CDC Order, authorized by 42 U.S.C. 264(a) and 42 C.F.R. 70.2, 71.31(b), and 71.32(b).
2. **Exceptions.** Face coverings are not required as follows:
 - a. **Infants.** Face coverings shall not be required for individuals younger than two (2) years of age who may enter a GCS facility.
 - b. **Strenuous Physical Activity.** Face coverings shall not be required for any student while engaged in strenuous physical activity, singing, or playing a wind-aided instrument. When a student is not participating in such an event, he or she should wear a face covering.
 - c. **Critical Circumstances.** A face covering will not be required if a parent, guardian, or visitor is: experiencing acute difficulty breathing; unconscious or incapacitated; receiving health care where it is necessary to remove the face covering; or is personally unable to remove the face covering without assistance.
 - d. **Medical Exemptions.**
 - a. If a parent or guardian believes his or her child requires an exemption to this procedure based on a medical, physical, or psychological contraindication, that parent or guardian should reach out to the child's principal.
 - b. GCS may require documentation from a licensed health care provider before granting an exemption, and it is ultimately GCS' determination after

consultation as to whether a student's medical condition justifies an exemption.

- c. Given the potentially large quantity of requests that principals could receive, it is important to note it may take several days before they or their designees can review a particular request for an exemption and to determine whether any such exemption is warranted.

Disposition for Failure to Comply

Note. If a family or student is unwilling to comply with these guidelines, the school principal will attempt to discuss possible alternatives to in-person instruction.

Enforcement.

- a. *Misplaced or Forgotten Mask.* GCS will not punish students for failing to bring a mask to school or for misplacing their masks. Each school will have spare masks for students.
- b. *Disruption.* If a student disrupts class or school as a part of failing to wear a mask, the student will be subject to the applicable consequences and interventions. If a student refuses to comply with these procedures, then he or she may forfeit the privilege of participating in any on campus instruction or attendance at any school sponsored event. If parents/guardians believe that their student will not be able to comply with the guidelines, they should contact their students' school principals to discuss options.
- c. *Concessions:* Principals may opt to allow teachers to offer outdoor "breathers" where masks can be temporarily removed if deemed necessary. There should, however, be sufficient enough transitional opportunities to accommodate temporary mask removal (outdoor play, transfers to alternate buildings...etc.)

3 Updates.

The Superintendent and his designees will develop, and amend as necessary, these guidelines based on current guidance from local and state government and health officials, ensuring these guidelines are updated to reflect the latest version of the COVID-19 mitigation procedures.

- The Superintendent, or his designee, will update the Board of Education when making major changes to these procedures.
- The Superintendent, or his designee, will send updates to GCS families using typical methods of communication (e.g., schoolcast, website notifications, facebook, and email) when making major changes to these procedures.
- These guidelines will be reviewed by the Board of Education at its monthly Board meetings in case revisions become necessary.

Effective Date: August 9, 2021