

PROTOCOL ON THE USE OF FACE MASKS INSIDE KPRDSB SCHOOLS TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS)

MARCH 8, 2021

(PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS PROTOCOL IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.)

1. Purpose

The purpose of this protocol is to provide direction on the use of face masks in schools to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 (Coronavirus).

The KPRDSB is committed to providing learning environments, services and workplaces that are welcoming, respectful, safe, inclusive, equitable, accessible and free from harassment and discrimination. This protocol must be carried out in a manner that is consistent with this commitment.

2. Definitions

2.1 **Face Mask:** includes any approved mask (medical-grade or non-medical) that is large enough to cover a person's nose and mouth without gaping and that can be secured to a person's head with ties or ear loops. See section 3.4 for further details.

2.2 **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** According to the Ontario Ministry of Labour, this is equipment and clothing worn by a worker to minimize exposure to hazards and prevent illnesses and infection. PPE is used to protect the wearer and can include such things as medical grade masks and eye protection.

2.3 **Qualified Health Professionals:** persons who are members of a [Regulated Health Profession in Ontario](#) and who are deemed by the KPRDSB to be essential for the safe delivery of programs and services for students. These would include: audiologists, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, psychotherapists, nurses, physicians, and any other regulated healthcare professionals as deemed appropriate by the principal in collaboration with their Family of Schools Superintendent.

3. Direction

3.1 Based on directives from Public Health Ontario, as well as Ontario's Ministry of Education, all students in Grades 1 – 12 are **required** to wear **non-medical face masks** to reduce the spread of COVID-19 indoors in school, including hallways, during classes, as well as while being

transported to and from school in a school vehicle. Students are also expected to wear masks outdoors where physical distancing of 2 metres cannot be maintained; this includes when students are on school property and/or during school hours.

- 3.2 All students in Kindergarten are **strongly encouraged** to wear **non-medical face masks** to reduce the spread of COVID-19 indoors in school, including hallways, during classes, as well as while being transported to and from school in a school vehicle. Kindergarten students are also strongly encouraged to wear masks outdoors where physical distancing of 2 metres cannot be maintained; this includes when students are on school property and/or during school hours.
- 3.3 School staff and board staff in schools are **required** to wear **face shields and medical-grade face masks** while indoors at school, subject to the following conditions. Cloth face coverings are not considered medical-grade.
 - 3.3.1 Staff do not have to wear a mask and face shield if they are working **alone** in their classrooms or office spaces. Once students enter the space, they must wear a mask and face shield, as per 3.3.4.
 - 3.3.2 Staff must wear a mask if they are working in a communal, **staff-only** meeting/workspace, even if they can physically distance by 2 metres. If staff cannot physically distance by 2 metres in a staff-only meeting/workspace, then they must wear both a mask and a face shield.
 - 3.3.3 Face shields are not a substitute for masks, and must be worn in conjunction with masks.
 - 3.3.4 Masks must be worn indoors at all times while in the presence of students; the two metre distance will be too fluid in an indoor school setting while students are present, not to wear them. However, while staff are strongly encouraged to wear them at all times, face shields may be removed if staff can physically distance by 2 metres.
 - 3.3.5 If staff are eating, they can remove their masks while maintaining a 2-metre distance.
 - 3.3.6 Staff who teach courses which require protective eye **goggles**, such as some Science and Technology courses, do not need to wear a shield in addition to these goggles, as the goggles seal around the eyes and stop the spread of infection. Protective eye **glasses** do not seal around the eyes, and they are not a substitute for a shield, so it is important that staff either physically distance themselves while wearing them alone, or wear a shield as well.
 - 3.3.7 Masks and shields do not have to be worn by staff if they are

outdoors with students **and can safely physically distance**, but they should have these items with them should they not be able to physically distance (e.g. a student requiring first aid).

- 3.3.8 Staff will wear the personal protective equipment (PPE) provided to them by the board, rather than their own PPE.
- 3.3.9 Should staff require accommodations around wearing the prescribed PPE, they are to contact Employee Health Services in the Human Resources Department.
- 3.4 The type of non-medical mask worn by students must be a reusable cloth mask or a disposable surgical mask.
 - 3.4.1 Masks should be large enough to completely and comfortably cover the nose and mouth without gaping;
 - 3.4.2 Masks should fit securely to the head with ties or ear loops;
 - 3.4.3 Masks should be made of at least two layers of tightly woven material (such as cotton or linen);
 - 3.4.4 While being worn, masks should not be touched, moved around or adjusted often;
 - 3.4.5 Masks should be changed if damaged, wet or soiled;
 - 3.4.6 Masks should be cleaned with soap and water;
 - 3.4.7 Hands should be sanitized before putting on a mask and after taking it off;
 - 3.4.8 At the end of the school day, masks should be stored appropriately in the classroom and/or safely on a student's person and/or in their school bag;
 - 3.4.9 For outdoor recess/breaks, students must wear their masks right up to and through the exit doors of the school, then safely store it on their person (e.g. in a pocket, looped around their upper arm);
 - 3.4.10 If students cannot maintain physical distancing, they must wear their masks during outdoor recess/breaks;
 - 3.4.10 Clear masks provided by the school for staff and classmates of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, should not leave the inside of the school. Students using clear masks should change masks to their regular masks before leaving the classroom for recess or for dismissal.
- 3.5 It is the responsibility of the students and parents to ensure that reusable masks are kept clean for use each day. Single use masks should be disposed of once the student returns home for the day.
- 3.6 Should a student forget to bring a mask to school, or is unable to provide one, then an appropriate mask will be provided for them by the school.
- 3.7 All visitors to the school must wear a medical grade mask while inside the school. If they do not have a medical-grade mask, one will be provided for them upon signing in with the secretary.

4. Exemptions

- 4.1 These criteria have been developed in accordance with the guidelines provided by the public health units within the KPRDSB jurisdiction.
- Face masks are expected to be worn by all students and staff in KPRDSB schools, with the exception of:
- 4.1.1 students in Kindergarten (strongly encouraged, not required);
 - 4.1.2 a student who, related to a diagnosed or assessed need outlined in their IEP or Plan of Care, cannot wear, or refuses to wear, a face covering and cannot be persuaded to do so by their teacher or support staff;
 - 4.1.3 students or staff who have been exempted from wearing an approved face mask for medical reasons by a qualified health professional (as defined in Section 2.3), certifying they are unable to wear a face mask for specific medical reason(s);
 - 4.1.4 students or staff who are unconscious;
 - 4.1.5 students or staff who are unable to remove the mask without assistance;
 - 4.1.6 while eating, drinking, or taking oral medications within the school;
 - 4.1.7 while students are outdoors (e.g. recess/break), physically distancing;
 - 4.1.8 when asked to remove the face mask to verify a person's identity.
- 4.2 Principals have the discretion to exempt students from wearing a mask under section 4.1.2. The assessments required for the IEP and Plan of Care are sufficient to make the determination.
- 4.3 Parents requiring that their children be exempt from wearing a mask for medical reasons under section 4.1.3 must request the exemption **in writing** to the school principal. The request must contain:
- a) the reason for the request,
 - b) the phone contact information of the regulated healthcare professional, as defined in section 2.3, who is supporting the request, and
 - c) permission to contact the healthcare professional, who will typically require written consent from the parent, to be arranged by the parent.
- 4.3.1 Every effort will be made to contact the healthcare professional in a timely manner. Until the exemption is verified, students will remain at home, where school work will be provided for them.
- 4.3.2 If the request does not meet the exemption criteria, parents can choose to enrol their children in the virtual school.
- 4.4 If staff members have questions about exemptions, they should discuss their concerns with their principal, understanding that private medical information cannot be shared.

5. Non-compliance

School staff work collaboratively with students and parents to support the wearing of masks in school. It is to be expected that sometimes, some students will need prompts and reminders to wear their masks as directed.

Should a student who is **not** exempt from wearing a face mask under the criteria outlined in section 4 refuse to wear a mask in spite of repeated requests and discussion with the student, the principal may invoke Public Health and Ministry of Education directives to ensure the safety of that student and the other students and the staff in the school. Accordingly, the Board cannot permit students and staff to attend in-person at school if they refuse to wear a mask.

The [Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools](#) constitutes a return to school direction issued by the Ministry of Education for the purposes of section 5 to Schedule 1 of O. Reg. 364/20 (Rules for Stage 3 Areas) originally made under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* and continued under the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020*. This direction has been approved by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

The principal should:

- 5.1 contact the parents to assist in resolving the situation, such as speaking with their child by phone or on-line;
- 5.2 escort the student to the isolation room dedicated for students with suspected symptoms of COVID 19 (if empty), where they should remain only until the parents can assist in resolving the situation, or only until it is time to depart for the day;
- 5.3 if this is not a feasible option, call the parents and request that they pick their child up from school as soon as possible.

The student may return to school when they agree to wear a face mask as outlined in section 3. If the student continues to refuse, the principal is to discuss each situation with their Family of Schools Superintendent.

6. Guidelines

6.1 Communication Department's Responsibilities:

- 6.1.1 sharing this protocol with the broader community on the KPRDSB website, for linking to school websites.

6.2 Family of Schools Superintendents' Responsibilities:

- 6.2.1 contact healthcare practitioners on behalf of school principals when exemptions are being sought for medical reasons;

6.3 Principal's Responsibilities:

- 6.3.1 share this protocol with staff;
- 6.3.2 share this protocol with school community via KPR web link;
- 6.3.3 ensure all persons inside the school (with the exception of those provided with an approved exemption) be provided with, are in possession of, and properly wearing an approved face mask;
- 6.3.4 grant exemptions related to the requirement to wear a face mask inside the school, when exemption request is supported by appropriate assessments;
- 6.3.5 collect and retain applications and approvals related to exemptions related to the wearing of face masks; and, communicate, as appropriate, information related to individuals who have been approved for an exemption on the use of a face mask indoors at school;
- 6.3.6 share information on mask exemptions with STSCO and bus drivers;
- 6.3.7 share mask refusal situations with their Family of Schools Superintendent for consultation and possible intervention;
- 6.3.8 ensure that staff have clear direction on promoting the use of masks, in helping students practice wearing masks, and in using resources provided to learn how to teach these skills appropriately.

6.4 Educators' (Teachers, Education Workers) Responsibilities:

- 6.4.1 share this protocol with students in an age-appropriate, developmentally-appropriate, and stage-of-language-appropriate way;
- 6.4.2 ensure that all students entering the school and while indoors are in possession of, and properly wearing, an approved face mask;
- 6.4.3 ensure they themselves are in possession of, and properly wearing, an approved medical-grade face mask and face shield as per section 3 of this protocol;
- 6.4.4 promote students' wearing masks, help students practice wearing masks, remind students to change masks if necessary, and use resources provided to learn how to teach these skills appropriately.

6.5 Student's Responsibilities:

- 6.5.1 ensure they are in possession of, and properly wearing, an approved, clean face mask while indoors at school, and while outdoors if they cannot physically distance by 2 metres.