

GCSD FACE COVERING GUIDELINES

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) is now requiring face coverings to be worn on school buses and in public school facilities. GCSD will follow these requirements.

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 and staff who ride the state's pupil transportation system to and from school are required to wear face coverings while boarding, riding, and exiting school buses. Staff members, including bus drivers, are required to wear face coverings while boarding, riding, driving, and exiting school buses. Bus drivers and support staff should ask any student who boards a bus without a covering to put one on and offer them a disposable or cloth face covering provided by the SCDE.

Students and staff in South Carolina public schools **must** wear a face covering upon entering a school building, moving through hallways, during carpool/bus drop off or pickup, and when social distancing is not possible or optimal. Student face coverings may be removed upon teacher or administrator direction while in the classroom or during special activities outside the classroom.

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

- Those younger than two years old;
- Those who have trouble breathing;
- Those unable to remove the covering without assistance; and/or
- 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, including bus drivers, who have trouble breathing and/or those with special healthcare needs as noted by a medical doctor should **NOT** be required to wear face coverings.

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 (Pre-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.

Clear face coverings that cover the nose and wrap securely around the face may be used by some teachers and staff. Clear face coverings should be determined not to cause any breathing difficulties or over heating for the wearer. Clear face coverings are not face shields. The CDC does **NOT** recommend use of face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings.

For the full SCDE Guidance go to: <https://ed.sc.gov/newsroom/covid-19-coronavirus-and-south-carolina-schools/south-carolina-department-of-education-face-covering-guidelines-for-k-12-public-schools/>