



Face Mask/Covering Q&A

Updated November 13, 2020

At its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, November 10, 2020, the School Board reviewed Policy 8450, which deals with the wearing of face masks/coverings.

At a previous Public Hearing on August 14, 2020, the School Board mandated that all employees, students and visitors wear a face mask while on school property, facilities, school buses and/or engaged in school activities. The mandate was based on CDC guidance and recommendations to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

During the November 10th Public Hearing, the School Board unanimously voted to maintain a face mask/covering mandate, but with additional allowances for flexibility in the wearing of face masks/coverings in certain specific situations.

Prior to the Public Hearing, an Opinion Poll was taken of employees and parents, and 74 percent of employees and 59 percent of parents supported continuing the mandate approved by the School Board on August 14.

The following Q&A is provided to clarify and communicate the School Boards' most recent decision regarding face masks/coverings moving forward:

Is the face mask/covering mandate still in place?

Yes. Face masks/coverings are still mandated on school property, facilities, school buses and during school activities. However, the School Board did approve certain limited allowances for removal of masks in certain specific situations. See Operating Protocol for Policy 8450.

Does my child have to wear a face mask while outside at recess or in physical education (gym) class?

Face masks/coverings are not required during physical education classes, recess, or other outdoor activities. Students must wear face masks/coverings to and from physical education class and to and from the recess location or activity.

Can my child ask their teacher for a face mask "break" while indoors?

Yes. Students who need a break from their face mask, may do so with teacher permission provided social distancing can be maintained to the best of their ability.

Does my child have to wear a face mask while eating breakfast or lunch?

No. Face masks/coverings are not required while eating or drinking in designated areas as long as social distancing practices are in place.

Can my child wear a face shield while in the classroom instead of a face mask?

Yes. Face shields that completely cover the face, wrap around the face and extend below the chin, will be allowed to be worn by students in Grades PreK-5 and students with disabilities only in the classroom during specific instructional periods as long as either social distancing practices are in place and/or physical barriers of separation are in place between students.

Are district employees also allowed a “break” from wearing face masks?

Employees who need a break from wearing their face mask while on school property, may do so if alone in their own office or classroom or outdoors maintaining social distancing. An employee may not utilize common space, for example a conference room, break room, stairwell or any unoccupied location for a mask break. A cloth face mask must be worn during all other times and locations.

Will face masks have to be worn for the school year or will the School Board reevaluate the face mask policy again before the school year ends?

The School Board of Manatee County has committed to review this policy every 90 days so they will re-evaluate this policy on or before their regularly scheduled School Board meeting on February 9, 2021.

For additional questions with regards to Face Mask/Covering policies, contact Kevin Chapman at chapman3k@manateeschools.net