



## **MESC Mask Information and Exemptions**

MESC's mask wearing protocol is an important way to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19, particularly when people are indoors and physical distancing (2m) is a challenge. These procedures are to inform Principals and school staff of masking requirements.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

#### **Non-medical Masks**

To reduce the risk of COVID, it is required that all staff and teachers, as well as students in grades 4 to 12 wear non-medical face masks while:

- In shared areas of the school, outside of the classroom (e.g., in common areas such as the hallway and on the bus), where physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Within classrooms at times where required distancing between staff and students is not possible.

#### **Face Shields**

Face shields are not considered to be equivalent to non-medical face masks. Plastic face shields can help reduce, but does not eliminate, exposure by protecting eyes, nose and mouth of the wearer from splashes and sprays of bodily fluids from other people. Face shields may be used in addition to wearing a mask, but not on their own.

#### **Instances where students may remove their masks:**

Although masks are mandatory for students in Grades 4 to 12, masks are not required for any students in the following instances. During these times social distancing should be practiced.

- Students consuming food or drink in designated areas.
- Spaces where protective barriers have been installed between persons.
- Students engaged in physical exercise (e.g., recess, DPA, physical education).
- While seated in the classroom during instruction where the recommended distance can be maintained between staff and students, and the maximum distance between students' desks (as a principle, two metres should be maintained wherever possible).

## **Unconditional mask exemptions (for students):**

There are circumstances where individual students in grades 4 to 12 may be exempt from wearing a mask at any time:

- **Students who are unable to place, use, or remove a non-medical face mask without assistance:** This may include students with complex needs who are unable to put on and remove their own mask independently, as they could put themselves at a higher health risk for cross-contamination. School staff must model and make every effort to teach the procedure for wearing a mask safely before recommending an exemption to the principal.
- **Students unable to wear a non-medical face mask due to a mental or physical diagnosis:** School staff must model and make every effort to teach the procedure for wearing a mask safely before recommending an exemption to the principal.

## **Procedure for the approval of an unconditional mask exemption (for students):**

1. School staff must make recommendations to the Principal.
2. Principals must contact the Executive Director of Student Services to review the circumstances. Decisions regarding mask exemptions will be made on a case-by-case basis. During this meeting, the following will be discussed before approval is made:
  - a. Rationale for mask exemption
  - b. Potential need for documentation or letter of support, as determined by the Executive Director of Student Services based on previously documented information.
  - c. Communication plan with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s)
  - d. Promotion of a shared understanding within the school community regarding mask exemptions, as to protect the privacy of individual students.
3. Upon approval of student mask exemption:
  - a. The Principal will record the unconditional mask exemption approval within log entries in PowerSchool.
  - b. The Principal will inform relevant staff of the mask exemption approval
  - c. The Executive Director of Student Services will maintain a detailed student mask exemption list.

## **In the event a student, that a student in grade 4 to 12 refuses to wear a mask and has not been approved for a mask exemption:**

1. Principals must ensure they have an approved procedure in their school re-entry plan to address instances of student mask refusal. Procedures in the plan must be trauma-informed and should not be disciplinary in nature.
2. School staff must inform the Principal of student mask refusal.
3. Principal must contact the Executive Director of Student Services to discuss the concern and to ensure a trauma-informed response.

## **Mask Wearing Protocol for Employees, Contractors, and Visitors**

All MESC employees, contractors and visitors will be required to wear face masks:

- When physical distancing cannot be maintained; or
- When meeting in smaller office spaces, even while maintaining proper physical distancing; or
- When in common areas such as hallways, reception areas, etc.; or
- When carpooling.

In addition to the above, school based employees will be required to wear face masks:

- When outside of their classroom cohorts; or
- When in common areas, any indoor instructional space outside of their classroom or when moving around the school.

All staff will be provided with four(4) reusable masks for the 2020/2021 school year.

### **Mask Accommodation for Employees**

Accommodation will be made for employees who have difficulty with wearing a mask due to medical or physical restrictions.

Procedure for employee mask accommodations:

1. The employee will inform their supervisor of the need for a workplace accommodation.
2. The supervisor, in conjunction with the employee, will develop an accommodation plan and fill out the [COVID-19 Workplace Accommodation Request Form](#), which must then be forwarded to the Director of Health and Wellness. Supervisors are encouraged to discuss individual situations with the Director of Health and Wellness and accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis.
3. The Director of Health and Wellness will maintain documentation regarding mask accommodation.

[Guidance for Wearing of Non-Medical Face Masks for the General Public](#)