

Dear Parents,

In an effort to provide you with the latest information regarding the health and safety of your child while in school, we wanted to share the most recent guidance received from the State Department of Education and public health officials regarding face coverings.

The guidance, issued by the state yesterday states:

The wearing of face coverings (masks) that completely cover the nose and mouth at all times by everyone when in public or at any time a person is within 6 feet of someone not living in their household, has been the most important mitigation strategy implemented during the pandemic.

The wearing of face coverings by all students and staff at all times while inside the school will be perhaps the most important strategy employed by schools to reopen schools for in person learning, while limiting the spread of COVID in the school community. The use of face coverings along with physical distancing, good ventilation, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting and frequent handwashing are all necessary elements of a plan to safeguard the health and safety of students, teachers and school staff.

The State Dept. of Education has directed all schools to adopt policies requiring the use of face coverings (cloth masks or disposable procedure-style masks that completely cover the nose and mouth) for all students and staff when they are inside the building. They have further directed that all schools be prepared to provide a face covering for any student or staff member who does not bring one with them to school on any given day or be prepared to deny that person entry into the school.

So that brings us to what the State is recommending for face coverings. The most important features of any face covering to be used during the school day will be that it completely covers the nose and mouth of the wearer and that it is comfortable enough to wear for long periods of time during the school day.

I will summarize what the state said about each of the 5 most common forms of face coverings. I have also included a chart as an attachment to this email.

KN95 masks: Most have an ear loop design that does not allow for a tight seal to be formed around the face of the wearer, however, they have been found to be a very effective mask in most cases.

Surgical/Procedure style masks: Disposable paper-style masks in most studies appear to be useful for the purpose of controlling respiratory droplet emissions from the wearer.

Cloth masks: Multi-layer cotton and other cloth masks have proven to be very effective. Advantages of cloth masks over other styles include the fact that they tend to be more

comfortable and less irritating to wear for long periods of time and can be laundered and dried repeatedly for reuse while maintaining their effectiveness.

Neck Gaiters and Bandanas: Bandanas have issues due to the light weight of the fabric and the potential loose weave of the cotton fibers. It is recommended that a bandana be washed in warm/hot water and dried prior to use to tighten the weave of the fabric and that the bandana be worn so as to allow for three layers of material to cover the nose and mouth.

Neck gaiters are typically made from a blend of polyester and spandex. The stretchable nature of the material results from the size of the weave so that the fabric can expand or contract as worn. This makes it plausible that a single layer of material stretched over the nose and mouth may open the weave to the point of ineffectiveness. Thus it is recommended to use a gaiter that can be folded into multiple layers over the nose and mouth.

Masks with exhalation valves: CDC does not recommend masks with an exhalation valve for use as a face covering in the school setting.

We are recommending the use of cloth masks or procedure masks (as long as they are snug on the sides) to best protect the school community.

We do keep a supply of cloth masks here at school for anyone who needs one during the school day.

As always, the health and safety of your child and the whole Woodhouse community is of the utmost importance. If you have any questions regarding this email, please feel free to reach out to me.

Thank you for helping to keep us all safe and learning.