

## **WEARING OF FACE COVERINGS DURING THE PANDEMIC**

*Policy Code:*

**1501**

Pursuant to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (“NCDHHS”), there is growing evidence that wearing face coverings can help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Recent studies on types of face coverings suggest that multi-layered cotton face coverings provide good coverage to keep droplets from spreading when individuals speak, sneeze or cough. The Thomasville City Schools Board of Education will adhere to the requirements and recommendations of the North Carolina Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit (“Toolkit”), which can be viewed at <https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/guidance/Strong-Schools-NC-Public-Health-Toolkit.pdf>.

In accordance with the recommendations issued by the NCDHHS as well as the Office of the Governor, the Thomasville City Schools Board of Education hereby adopts and delegates the procedures below for enforcement of the policy regarding the wearing of face coverings to the Superintendent or designee. This policy may be amended, from time to time, in accordance with changes to the Toolkit.

### **A. FACE COVERINGS**

1. A Face Covering is a covering of the nose and mouth that is secured to the head with ties, straps, or loops over the ears and fits snugly against the side of a person’s face. A Face Covering can be made of a variety of synthetic and natural fabrics, including cotton, silk, or linen. A Face Covering may be factory-made, sewn by hand, or may be improvised from household items.
2. A Face Covering does not have to be a surgical mask, respirator (“N-95s”), or other medical personal protective equipment. However, an N-95 respirator or surgical mask will qualify as a Face Covering if it meets the definition in A.1 above.
3. Each school shall maintain a limited number of disposable and/or reusable Face Coverings for students or employees who do not have their own Face Covering. Based on guidance from the CDC, face shields do not meet the requirement for Face Coverings.
4. Bandanas shall not be allowed to be worn as a Face Covering.

### **B. EXEMPTIONS**

Face Coverings shall not be required to be worn by an individual who:

1. Should not wear a Face Covering due to any medical or behavioral condition or disability (including, but not limited to, any person who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious or incapacitated, or is otherwise unable to put on or remove the face covering without assistance) documented by a medical professional;

2. Is under two (2) years of age;
3. Is actively eating or drinking;
4. Is seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired in a way that requires the mouth to be visible;
5. Is giving a speech for a broadcast or to an audience;
6. Is working at home or is in a personal vehicle;
7. Is temporarily removing his or her Face Covering to secure government or medical services or for identification purposes;
8. Would be at risk from wearing a Face Covering at work, as determined by local, state or federal regulations or workplace safety guidelines;
9. Has found that his or her Face Covering is impeding visibility to operate equipment or a vehicle; or
10. Is a child whose parent, guardian or responsible person has been unable to place the Face Covering safely on the child's face.

All requests for an exemption to the face covering requirement shall be submitted to the Superintendent or designee. The Superintendent or designee is hereby authorized to grant or deny any request for an exemption on a case by case basis, to be determined by, but not limited to, the known medical or behavioral condition of the student/employee and information submitted in support of the request for an exemption from a licensed health care provider. Submission of a request for an exemption does not guarantee that an exemption will be granted.

#### C. STUDENTS

All students age of two (2) or older shall be required to wear a Face Covering in the following scenarios unless one of the exemptions identified in Section B above applies.

1. **Requirements to Wear Face Coverings.** All children age two (2) or older must wear a Face Covering when indoors, at all times, and while on a bus or other transportation vehicle.

Documentation necessary to establish an exemption under Section B.1 above must specifically state that the student is not able to wear a Face Covering due to a disability and how the disability prevents the child from wearing a Face Covering and what, if any, alternatives can be provided.

2. Pursuant to the Toolkit, Face Coverings should not be worn by anyone under the age of two (2) years old.
3. **Consequences for Violations.** Students who fail to wear a Face Covering, in compliance with the requirements of Section C.1 above, shall be subject to discipline in accordance with applicable and existing school board policies, the student code of conduct and applicable school rules. For a first or minor offense, consequences may include student counseling on the importance of wearing a Face Covering, parent-teacher conference and/or student contracts. For more repeat or more serious infractions, consequences may include suspension from school.

#### **D. EMPLOYEES**

All employees must wear a Face Covering in the following scenarios unless one of the exemptions identified in Section B above applies.

1. **Requirements to Wear Face Coverings.** All employees are required to wear a face covering when indoors, at all times (regardless of whether they are six feet apart from others), and when they are on a bus or other transportation vehicle. Employees are not required to wear a Face Covering when he/she is alone in their classroom or office and with the door closed.
2. Documentation from a healthcare provider necessary to establish an exemption under Section B.1 above must specifically state the nature of the disability and how the disability impairs the employee's ability to wear a Face Covering as required by this policy. Employees who wish to request a reasonable accommodation due to a physical or mental disability, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, must contact Human Resources.
3. **Consequences for Violations.** Employees who fail to comply with the requirements of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment.

#### **E. OTHER ADULTS, VISITORS AND CONTRACTORS**

All other adults, contractors and/or visitors must wear a Face Covering in the following scenarios unless one of the exemptions identified in Section B above applies.

1. **Requirements to Wear a Face Covering.** All visitors, volunteers, guests or contractors must wear a face covering when indoors, at all times, and when they are on a bus or other transportation vehicle.
2. Visitors, volunteers, guests and other adults are required to verify their identity upon arrival at a school building or other school owned or operated facility. Therefore, visitors, volunteers, guests and contractors shall be permitted to temporarily remove their Face Covering for identification purposes in order to check-in at each school

owned or operated building. However, after the visitor, volunteer or contractor has completed the check-in process, he/she shall immediately re-cover their nose and mouth with the Face Covering and continue to wear the Face Covering for the duration of their visit.

3. **Consequences for Violations.** Visitors and other adults who refuse to abide by the requirements of this policy shall not be permitted to be or remain on the premises of a school building, facility, school system transportation vehicle or other area of school system owned or operated property. Contractors who refuse to abide by this policy may be subject to restrictions from school property, termination of contracts, and/or other consequences as appropriate.

Adopted: September 7, 2021

Revised: