



# State of New York County of Broome Government Offices

## Broome County Health Department

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### MASK USAGE IN SCHOOLS

*Valid as of August 14, 2020. As updates and changes occur, we will continue to update this document.*

The Broome County Health Department sees the greatest transmission with person to person contact via droplets of COVID-19. The Health Department strongly urges that every student and staff wear a mask or face covering at all times. Masks and face coverings help prevent transmission of droplets between individuals, and the main objective is to prevent the spread, but also give your students and staff members the best chance to minimize disease transmission.

The Health Department does understand that students and staff members may have a tough time wearing these coverings for an extended period of time. If a student or staff member needs a break from their mask the school district should make sure that there is at least six feet of space between individuals and these do not occur in largely populated areas, or congregate areas as cited in the NYSED school reopening guidance. Whenever possible we recommend that these breaks are taken in large square footage areas, and outdoor areas.

1. Personal Protective Equipment - Acceptable face coverings for COVID-19 include, but not limited to, cloth-based face coverings (e.g. homemade sewn, quick cut, bandana), and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and the nose.<sup>1</sup>
2. Cloth Face Covering - Mask is made from fabric, preferably tightly woven cotton. Cloth masks should include multiple layers of fabric.<sup>4</sup>
3. Faces shields worn without other face coverings are not considered adequate protection for source control against COVID-19 and should not be used.<sup>1</sup>
4. Both students and drivers will wear masks while on a school bus.<sup>2</sup>
5. All individuals in school facilities and on school grounds must be prepared to put on a face covering if another person unexpectedly cannot socially distance.<sup>3</sup>
6. All students and staff must wear cloth face coverings:<sup>3</sup>
  - a. Whenever they are within 6 feet of someone;
  - b. In hallways;
  - c. In restrooms; and
  - d. In other congregate settings.
7. Schools must provide acceptable face coverings to employees and students if they forget their own and have an adequate supply in case of need for replacement.<sup>3</sup>

8. Face coverings may be challenging for students (especially younger students) to wear in an all-day setting, so scheduling mask breaks is important. Face coverings should **not** be placed on:<sup>3</sup>
- a. Children younger than 2 years old;
  - b. Students, where such covering would impair their health or mental health, or where such covering would present a challenge, distraction, or obstruction to education services and instruction;
  - c. Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious;
  - d. Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.

#### References

<sup>1</sup> – New York State Department of Health Interim Guidance for in-person instruction at the Pre-K to Grade 12 schools during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. Page 14 (II)(A)(1)

<sup>2</sup> – Recovering, Rebuilding, and Renewing: The Spirit of New York’s Schools. Page 7(Transportation)

<sup>3</sup> - Recovering, Rebuilding, and Renewing: The Spirit of New York’s Schools. Page 36(Cloth Face Coverings)

<sup>4</sup> - Recovering, Rebuilding, and Renewing: The Spirit of New York’s Schools. Page 139(Health and Safety)