

Rice Lake Area School District Families and Staff:

I wanted to provide some follow up and clarification at this time regarding the use of cloth face coverings in district buildings by students, staff, and those who may be visiting.

Based on Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, cloth face coverings are an important mitigation strategy to help slow the spread of COVID-19, especially when social/physical distancing is not possible. As I have previously communicated, we cannot promise to eliminate the possibility that someone will contract COVID-19 while at school, but we need to do what we can to mitigate risk. Mitigating risk is incredibly important to maintaining our in-person learning option.

As a reminder, CDC guidelines state that cloth face coverings should **not** be placed on:

- Children younger than 2 years old.
- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious.
- Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.

In the Rice Lake Area School District, all staff, and students in 4K through the 12th grade are required to wear a cloth face covering while attending school or a school function in any District building, facility, or other District-controlled area, and when riding in District-provided transportation. All face coverings must cover the nose and mouth. Face coverings must be worn regardless of the ability to maintain six feet of distancing. Face coverings shall be worn at all times except for the following limited exceptions:

- When eating or drinking;
- Students or staff may be exempted from wearing masks and face coverings due to a documented medical condition;
- Students may be exempted from wearing masks and face coverings due to special behavioral or individualized needs as determined through the IEP process

All other rules of the District related to student dress (e.g., prohibitions against clothing or jewelry containing messages related to sexual references, profanity, drugs, etc.) apply equally to face coverings. Students and staff members who refuse to wear face coverings without proper documentation shall be subject to discipline consistent with other school attire rules violations.

Below are a few questions and answers related to cloth face coverings.

Q: How do you wear a cloth face covering?

A: A cloth face covering should cover the nose and mouth, fit snugly on the face, and be secured in place via ear loops or strings that tie behind the head.

Q: When should you change a cloth face covering?

A: The same cloth face covering should not be worn more than a single day to allow for adequate cleaning. If the cloth face covering becomes soiled, excessively moist or damaged, more frequent changing is advised.

Q: How do you wash a cloth face covering?

A: Wash the face covering in the warmest water possible and dry with high heat in a dryer. If you are unable to machine wash a cloth face covering, wash it by hand with laundry detergent and hot water before air drying. Re-wearing a cloth face covering without washing it is not advised.

Q: How do you care for your skin when wearing a cloth face covering regularly?

A: Wash face often, preferably directly before and after each use of the face covering, and apply moisturizer to decrease friction and reduce irritation if needed. Wear a clean mask.

Q: Will students and staff members need to wear one while riding a bus?

A: Yes.

Q: What if someone arrives at school without a cloth face covering?

A: One will be provided in the event that someone inadvertently forgot to bring one.

Q: Can a student or staff member wear a face shield instead of a face covering?

A: No. A face shield does not provide the same protections as a face covering. People are free to wear a face shield in addition to a face covering if they wish.

Q: What type of cloth face covering is recommended?

A: A piece of cloth or other material that is worn to cover the nose and mouth completely. A 'face covering' includes but is not limited to a bandana, a cloth face mask, a disposable or paper mask, or a religious face covering. A 'face covering' does not include face shields, mesh masks, masks with holes or openings, or masks with vents.

Q: Will people need to wear one while eating?

A: No. We will socially/physically distance as much as possible, and it is not realistic to wear one while eating.

Q: What if my child, or an employee, has an underlying health condition or disability that prevents the wearing of a cloth face covering?

A: Documentation from a medical professional stating such needs to be submitted. We do not require the specifics of the health condition or disability unless that information is

voluntarily shared. If you have questions about this, please contact the building where your child attends.

Q: Will students need to wear a cloth face covering while in class and in hallways?

A: Yes. We will work to provide opportunities to have breaks during the day.

Q: Will students and staff need to wear one if they are exercising indoors?

A: Yes, people do need to wear a face covering if they are exercising indoors or in an enclosed space and other people are present, such as a gym.

Q: Will students need to wear one when they are outside at recess?

A: They would not be needed when students are physically active and/or are socially/physically distancing. We will develop school specific protocols for students placing one back on when they re-enter the building.

Q: Will the school district provide cloth face coverings?

A: Parents are encouraged to provide face coverings for their students when possible. This will allow for student choice and allow parents to determine which cloth face covering is best tolerated by their child(ren). Through a donation from the Department of Public Instruction, the school district is able to provide a minimum of two (2) cloth face coverings to every student. These face coverings are "one-size-fits-most" and may not be the most comfortable option for some students. We are investigating the possibility of other products and will inform you of other options as they are available.

Q: Will visitors need to wear a face covering?

A: Visitors will be allowed in the buildings on a limited basis. For those that need to enter the building, yes, they will need to wear a face covering.

As a district, we will approach the wearing of cloth face coverings with common sense, dignity and respect, and with the understanding that the use of cloth face coverings are a mitigation measure that will help us maintain the in-person learning option. We will work with staff and students to provide opportunities for students to have breaks from their face coverings.

If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, or to the school where your child attends.

Sincerely,  
Randy Drost  
District Administrator