

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The Ministry of Education has mandated that all students from Grades 4 to 12 must wear a mask unless they are exempted due to medical conditions or cognitive difficulties.

We **strongly encourage** students from JK to Grade 3 to wear them as well. Wearing masks at these ages builds skills in their safe use and will increase their comfort level as community use of masks continues. Masks are effective measures to use when physical distancing is more difficult. Students will be given opportunities to be mask-free such as during recess, lunch, outside classroom time and 'mask-break times'.



Wearing a mask helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and helps protect people who are around you. Since some people may have the COVID-19 virus and not know it, everyone should wear a mask when they go into an area where they might come into contact with other people. When you wear a mask, you are helping to protect other people. When other people wear a mask, they are helping to protect you. It is now mandatory to wear a mask in many indoor public spaces, in common areas of multi-unit residential buildings and some outdoor public spaces, as designated.

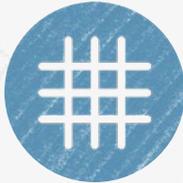


Wearing a mask does not replace other protective measures including **physical distancing**, hand washing, covering your cough or sneeze, not touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands, self-monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms, and **staying home when you are sick**. But wearing a mask adds another layer of protection for everyone in the school and community.

There are many types of masks children can wear. A mask can be cloth (non-medical) or disposable (non-medical). The mask should securely cover the nose, mouth and chin, and be in contact with the surrounding face without gapping, to filter respiratory droplets.



When buying or making a mask you should look for a mask that has:



Two or three layers of tightly woven, but breathable, cloth such as cotton, flannel or quilting cotton.



A secure fitting to cover the nose, mouth, and chin. Should be in contact with the face without gapping.



Horizontal pleats to help fit a variety of faces (pleats face downward when wearing).



Re-usable fabric that can be washed after use or when damp and dirty.

**Disposable (non-medical) masks** are single use masks and should be disposed properly in a lined garbage bag after use. These masks may be more comfortable for younger children especially in warmer weather.

## How masks will be used in our schools:

Students are required to wear masks when getting on the bus each day and they will continue to wear the masks as they enter the school. They will wear them in their classrooms as well.

Students will be provided with bags in which to store their mask on their desks as they leave the classroom for outside activities. When they return from outside, students will sanitize their hands first, then remove their mask from the bag and replace it on their faces correctly. They will be given lots of time to practice these routines.

## Helping your children wear a mask before school starts:

- Promote a positive attitude about taking part in helping our communities stay safe and show the youngest children that they can contribute as you and their older siblings do.
- Purchase/make fun masks if this will encourage them to wear them proudly.
- Have younger children print their names on the front so that they know which way to wear the mask.
- Have extra masks available in case one becomes soiled or damaged through the day - there will be some extras in the classroom available if necessary.
- Model safe mask use as you wear your own mask in the community at large.
- Let your child know that his/her teachers will be wearing them too and that they will help your child get accustomed to wearing one.
- Be sure they know not to not share masks with others.
- Before putting on the mask, they need to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer. They should practice this at home prior to start of school.
- Be sure that the mask covers their mouth and nose and make sure there are no gaps between their face and the mask.
- Let them practice wearing them without touching the outside of the mask.

This video is a great resource for the safe use of cloth masks:



<https://youtu.be/7tfQGRuBE4>