



Resource Package:

Guidelines for Student Accommodation, up to and Including Exemption, from Non- Medical or Cloth Masks

September 2021

Background

The Grand Erie District School Board promotes and supports the well-being and safety of all students. As per the Ministry of Education's document "Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools" released in the fall of 2020, and the Addendum to the reopening guidance document, "Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools" released in January 2021, mandatory masking will be in place for students in Grades 1 to 12 indoors in school, including in hallways and during classes, as well as on school vehicles. The Grand Erie District School Board has also mandated masking for students in the Kindergarten Program, following the same guidelines as outlined above.

On August 13, 2021, the Ministry released "Covid-19: Health, safety and operation guidance for schools (2021-22)". This document clarifies that students are not required to wear masks outdoors, but distancing should be encouraged between cohorts as much as possible.

Both masks and face shields are types of personal protective equipment (PPE). Measures that are used for *source control* attempt to prevent the spread of infection from the wearer to those around them. Source control can include covering your sneezes and coughs, hand hygiene, and wearing a mask in public. **Masks** are both used for source control and to protect oneself from others (as PPE). Cloth masks are for source control and higher-grade disposable masks are for both for source control and PPE. **Face shields** are considered PPE but are not meant to function as a primary device for respiratory protection. To date, there is no evidence that face shields alone are effective either as source control or as PPE but are effective to augment other more effective PPE.

Public Health Ontario does not recommend the use of face shields as a substitute for cloth face coverings. Although face shields would not replace masks, in some cases, face shields, in combination with other protective measures, may be considered an appropriate accommodation.

The Grand Erie District School Board recognizes that there are some students with medical restrictions that may require the student to attend school without the use of a mask. Reasonable accommodations, up to and including exemptions, will be permitted for some students. Parents/guardians are encouraged to consult their physician for guidance about a mask accommodation/exemption for their child, if necessary, however a physician note is not required for a student mask accommodation/exemption under the following situations that are previously known to the school:

- child with a medical or cognitive condition that prevents wearing a mask (severe sensory processing disorder, cognitive impairment, longstanding agoraphobia, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder triggered by a face covering),
- child unable to apply or remove a face covering without help
- children less than 5 years of age (cognitively or developmentally) who refuse to wear a face covering and cannot be persuaded to
- accommodations under the Ontario Human Rights Code based on the protected grounds of:
 - Age
 - Ancestry, colour, race
 - Citizenship
 - Ethnic origin
 - Place of origin
 - Creed
 - Disability
 - Family status
 - Marital status (including single status)
 - Gender identity, gender expression
 - Sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding)
 - Sexual orientation.

We note that discomfort or acne would generally not constitute a basis for NOT wearing a mask.

School Procedure

- (a) The parent/guardian contacts the principal/designate to request an accommodation/exemption for their child.
- (b) The parent/guardian completes the Parent Application Form (Appendix A) and returns it to principal/designate.
- (c) The principal/designate reviews the mask accommodation/exemption request with the parent/guardian. (The principal/designate will review if there are any solutions other than a complete exemption such as frequent breaks, only wearing during certain activities, avoiding during exertion, gradual build up to full day masking, if allergy, provide a different one. Such options should be considered before a complete exemption will be considered.) While the request is being considered, the student will be expected to follow the policy laid out by the Ministry of Education or the Board of Trustees.
- (d) The school provides the Principal Response Form (Appendix B) to parent/guardians.
- (e) The principal/designate communicates the mask accommodation/exemption outcome to school staff and transportation services.
- (f) The principal/board reserves the right to ask further questions or request more information and to modify its decision as may be needed for the health and safety of others.
- (g) The school will provide masks to students at school who require them.



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Parent Application Form

This form is to be used when a parent/guardian applies for a mask exemption or accommodation for their child.

Steps for Mask Accommodation/Exemption:

1. A physician note is not required if the medical concern is apparent and known to the school; however, parents/guardians are encouraged to consult their physician for guidance if requesting an accommodation/exemption to wearing a mask for their child.
2. Provide student information, reason(s) for accommodation/exemption and sign the acknowledgement.
3. Return the completed form to the school principal/ designate.

Child's First and Last Name: _____ Grade: _____

Reason for requesting mask accommodation/exemption:

- child with a medical or cognitive condition that prevents wearing a mask (severe sensory processing disorder, cognitive impairment, longstanding agoraphobia, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder triggered by a face covering)
- unable to apply or remove a face covering without help
- children less than 5 years of age (cognitively or developmentally) who refuse to wear a face covering and cannot be persuaded to
- accommodations under the Ontario Human Rights Code based on the protected grounds of:
 - Age
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Please include a description of OHRC related protected ground that requires an accommodation:

Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement:

- I understand the potential health risks for my child and to others when a non-medical or cloth mask is not worn during a pandemic.
- I understand, and approve, that my child does not wear a non-medical or cloth mask at school, knowing the inherent health risks to my child if they are not wearing one.
- I give permission for my child to attend school without wearing a non-medical or cloth mask.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

For the safety of all, each school principal will alert the school staff of any students with an approved accommodation/exemption.

At this time, you can opt for remote learning for your child if you feel it would be in the best interest of their safety and wellbeing. If you choose to opt for remote learning, please contact your school principal for more information

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Retention: CY (CY = current year)



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Principal Response Form

Child's First and Last Name: _____ Grade: _____

Outcome:

- Your child is not required to wear a mask. Where a full exemption is granted, other safety measures will be put in place.
- Your child is not exempt from wearing a mask, but the school will make the following other accommodations:

If you wish to have the exemption outcome reviewed, please contact the Superintendent responsible for your child's school.

Principal/Designate
Signature _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____