

February 23, 2021

Memorandum to: Directors of Education
School Authorities

From: Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Subject: Student Masking and Personal Protective Equipment
(PPE)

Thank you for your continued support for students, families and staff. The purpose of this memo is to address specific issues related to student masking and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Student Masking

As you are aware, masks are also now mandatory for all students in grades 1 – 12 and encouraged for students in kindergarten, subject to reasonable exceptions.

The ministry recognizes that some students will be unable to wear masks for medical reasons and it is expected that these will be relatively rare cases. Boards are asked to carefully review their masking exceptions policies and ensure that students are supported to wear masks to the greatest extent possible. If the standard ear-loop-type masks cannot be worn, principals may discuss with parents/guardians, in consultation with the student's health care provider, whether other types of face coverings might work for the student.

In addition, resources are available that can be shared with parents on supporting children in wearing masks and on health and safety practices for children who cannot wear masks. See for example this [tip sheet](#) from Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. Your public health unit may have additional resources and advice.

PPE Requirements

Boards are asked to ensure that all staff working directly with students are outfitted with and using appropriate PPE, including surgical masks and eye protection (e.g., face shields), and other PPE based on their specific role/job functions (e.g., gloves, gowns).

There has been growing interest in the role of N95 and KN95 masks.

In keeping with expert guidance, the use of N95 respirators (fit tested) in schools is restricted to individuals who are performing an aerosol generating medical procedure (AGMP) (or required to be within 2 meters/6 feet when an AGMP is being performed).

SickKids Hospital has developed a guideline on the care of children with medical complexity which includes a list of AGMPs and helpful guidance on their safe delivery. This guidance document is attached to this memo.

In most cases, these procedures are performed by community-based health care providers, e.g., nurses, that bring their own N95 respirators to the school setting to perform these procedures.

To understand school board staff N95 requirements, please complete the attached survey and send to EDUProcurementReporting@ontario.ca by **Tuesday, March 2nd, 2021**. Responses should have the approval of both the Senior Business Official and the Superintendent of Special Education, as applicable. In order to ensure the appropriate N95 respirator is ordered, school boards will need to complete mask fit testing for identified staff.

For all other school operations, EDU guidance, per public health and occupational health and safety requirements, is that American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM)-rated masks are the masks required for workers in schools.

While there has been a marked increase in the number of KN95 masks being ordered by school boards, boards should be aware that “KN95” are not ASTM-rated. Being unrated, KN95 masks are not consistent with the COVID-19 PPE guidance for staff interacting with students/staff.

Thank you again for your ongoing partnership as we continue to ensure the safety of students and staff in this unprecedented school year.

Sincerely,

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Attachments:

- SickKids Guidelines -Care of Children with Medical Complexity in the School Setting During the COVID-19 Pandemic (EN/FR)
- School Board Survey for AGMPs (EN/FR)

c: Board COVID-19 Leads

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