



TRINITY AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Reminder: Mask Mandate

September 6, 2021

Dear Trinity Area Parents and Guardians:

We hope all of our Trinity Area families enjoyed a long Labor Day weekend of sun and fun. This correspondence is to remind all parents, staff members, and students that everyone is required to wear a face mask or shield while inside the school building, beginning Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

The masking rules are similar to last year's rules. If students arrive to the bus or at school without a face mask or shield, they will be offered one. To ensure that our students are as comfortable as possible given the circumstances, we will provide opportunities for them to remove their masks safely throughout the school day:

- While outdoors, students and staff will be permitted to remove their masks. We will maximize the time students might spend outdoors for learning, engaging in activities, playing sports, and enjoying recess, weather permitting.
- While eating lunch, students and staff will be permitted to remove their masks. During lunch, we will maximize social distance to the degree we are able.
- While learning inside the school buildings, students will be offered scheduled mask breaks. The times of these breaks will be documented. If a student desires a mask break at a different time, he/she may ask the classroom teacher, who will arrange for the break in the safest manner possible per the Department of Health's guidelines.

We recognize that wearing a mask can be uncomfortable and inconvenient. We also recognize that some community members find the terms of the Department of Health's Order to be unfavorable, and, therefore, would prefer their children not wear masks while in school. Frankly, we can't think of any adult or child who enjoys wearing a mask! We respect everyone's right to a personal opinion, and we understand that everyone's circumstances and experiences as related to the Order are different.

Nevertheless, Trinity Area School District will adhere to the Law. The health and safety of our students, employees, and community is our first priority. We will continue to work diligently to maintain a safe learning and working environment for all. In the first week of school, 145 students and staff members were required to quarantine. Therefore, we will continue to take the measures and precautions necessary to keep our schools open for in-person learning because students learn best when they are actively engaged alongside their teachers and peers.

Should the terms of this mandate or guiding legislation change, we will notify the community immediately. In the meantime, please consider supporting our students and staff by talking with your child about the importance of wearing a mask, washing hands, and maintaining a positive attitude throughout a most challenging time. Below, see answers to frequently asked questions

about remote learning options, mask accommodations or exemptions for students with special needs and health concerns, and student discipline.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What if I'd prefer that my child does not attend school for in-person instruction?

If, for any reason, you'd prefer that your child does not attend school for in-person instruction, know that remote learning options are available through Trinity Cyber School, where live, interactive instruction is provided by Trinity Area teachers daily. To learn of enrollment options, please contact your child's building principal.

What if my child has special needs documented in a 504 Plan or Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?

Federal and State guidance recognize that some students with disabilities may not be able to wear a mask because of sensory issues or other issues related to their disability. Requiring these students with disabilities to wear a mask may make it hard or impossible for them to engage in learning activities while at school. When evidence of such a disability or sensory issue is documented in a student's 504 Plan or Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the student will not be expected to wear a mask while in school and/or will be given mask breaks accordingly.

What if I'd like for my child to be excused from wearing a mask due to an underlying health condition?

Federal and State laws (Section 504, IDEA, and Chapter 14) mandate that a team decides whether an accommodation should be made given the evidence provided. Therefore, the District must require any parent/guardian asking for their child to be exempted from wearing a mask for medical reasons to provide pertinent medical documentation as evidence of the need for exception. Once submitted, the special education office will contact the parent to begin the evaluation process. While we engage the formal process to determine whether an exemption should be made, your child(ren) will be expected to wear a mask while in school.

What if I'd like my child to be exempted from wearing a mask in school because I do not agree with the terms of the Department of Health's Order?

Per the PA Department of Education and Trinity Area's legal counsel, there are no convenient and voluntary ways to opt out of adhering to the terms of the Department of Health's masking mandate. Children of parents who contact an administrator, teacher, and/or school secretary to request exemption and/or express their displeasure with the terms of the Order will be expected to wear a mask while in school.

What if my child simply refuses to wear a mask while in school?

Students refusing to wear a mask or face covering will be expected to leave campus; their parents will be notified and asked to retrieve them from school. If a parent refuses to pick up his/her child from school, the matter will be addressed with the assistance of our administrators, social workers, and community protective services. Additionally, students refusing to wear a mask will be disciplined according to the terms outlined in our approved Board policies and student handbooks. Once a student refusing to wear a mask is removed from campus or isolated from others, he/she will be disciplined like any other student refusing to comply with a school rule or regulation.