

Dear GWCS families,

The Deputy Secretary of the Department of Education, released a memo to public and nonpublic school leaders alerting us to a revised mandate from the Department of Health regarding face coverings in school buildings. Students and staff will now be required to wear face coverings at all times while inside of the school building with the following three exceptions during which time students will be allowed to remove face coverings:

- When eating or drinking if spaced at least 6 feet apart; or
- When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe environment in which to operate equipment or execute a task; or
- During “face-covering breaks” to last no longer than 10 minutes if students are at least six feet apart

This set of exceptions is a clear departure from the three exceptions from their mandate in July that allowed most of our school day to be without face coverings.

Our faculty has been discussing the impact of this new mandate on our school. We are committed to providing your children with a safe, effective, in-person educational experience that provides maximum socialization.

I have purchased face shields for ALL students and teachers. Elementary face shields have Velcro adjustments with animal print designs. The middle school students will have clear, plain face shields. These are arriving between August 31st and September 4th. When using the face shields, it is easier to breathe in because there is plenty of air circulation. We are also able to see each other’s faces; we learn so much from a facial expression. Since the face shield is not in direct contact with the students face, it is less likely they will feel the need to touch or adjust it.

Until these face shields arrive, students will need to wear a mask. Students will be able to remove masks when eating or drinking and when given face-covering breaks. It does not specify how many of these breaks are allowable. Our plan will be to maximize the number of these breaks throughout each day and allow individuals to take them as often as needed.

As always, please be assured that the safety of your children is our top priority. We will monitor the situation closely and remain flexible to make changes based on the needs of our students.

If in consultation with your child’s physician it is determined that your child should be exempt for any reason from wearing a facemask for significant lengths of time in the classroom, you must let us know. The mandates do not require you to submit documentation, just to let the administration know.

Blessings,

Pastor Bill