



Masking and Masking Opt Out - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q. How will school personnel know if a student doesn't have to wear a mask?

A. Completed and returned opt out forms will be used to update the student's record. The hard copy will be added to the student's file. Teachers and staff with access to the electronic student information system (SIS) will easily see which students have opt out forms on file as they take attendance.

Q. Isn't the governor's executive order in litigation?

A. It is. There are questions over local vs. state authority as well as executive vs. legislative powers to be resolved. It is possible that a ruling by the state supreme court could change our procedures.

Q. What happens if there is a positive case in a classroom and my student is not masked?

A. VDH and VDOE's revised masking guidelines ([Interim COVID-19 Guidance](#)) were published on January 21. If there is a positive case in a classroom and a masked and unmasked student are also in that class, the unmasked student would be quarantined for ten days while the masked student five days.

Q. During class changes, will all students have to wear a properly fitting face covering?

A. The school board action allowed parents to opt their students out of masking when inside MCPS facilities. Students with an opt out form will not be required to wear face coverings during class changes.

Q. I don't want my student to wear a mask on MCPS transportation, either. Why is that different?

A. There is still a [federal public health order](#) in place that requires all to be properly masked when using public transportation, including school buses or school vehicles.

Q. Why do teachers, staff, and MCPS employees still have to wear masks, especially those vaccinated and boosted?

A. MCPS continues to follow the recommendations of the CDC in our effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 as per Virginia code. The action of the school board addressed only parents opting their student(s) out of face coverings, not employees. Evidence supports wearing properly fitting masks can reduce the transmission of the virus. We also know vaccinated and boosted persons may also transmit the disease unknowingly, so masks can reduce such spread.

Q. What is the teacher/staff right if their own health concerns are raised?

A. MCPS urges all employees (and students) to be fully vaccinated and boosted against COVID-19. MCPS also requires all employees to wear properly fitting face coverings at all times and follow our mitigation protocols. We do not have options for working remotely for our teachers/staff, but we have these measures in place for their safety.

Q. Why does my child have to wear a mask at off-campus locations (SVHEC, SVCC, etc)?

A. The MCPS school board exercises policy control only over MCPS schools. Those schools or organizations have their own governing bodies and their own operational protocols in place.

Q. I want my child to wear their mask while they are moving in the hallway but do not want them to wear it while sitting at their desk. Will the teacher be responsible for enforcing this with my child?

A. When a secondary student moves out of a classroom and into the hall, they would not have a teacher responsible for monitoring them. Elementary students generally move with their class from place to place during the day, and such a desire could be shared with the teacher. In both cases, however, parents should convey that expectation to their student and follow up with them daily to see they are doing that. Teachers will know if there is an opt out on file, but will not necessarily know any caveats.

Q. My child is wearing a mask. I don't want my child next to a child without a mask.

A. Much will depend on how many students return opt out forms. We will make efforts to accommodate such requests but cannot guarantee such a change. Students wearing well fitted, preferably even KN95, masks should be somewhat protected even if the person near them is unmasked.

Q. My partner and I are separated but have shared/joint custody of our student. I want to opt out our student from mask wearing and they want them to remain masked. What does the school do?

A. The school will require a consensus from the parents. If no consensus may be reached on opting out or wearing the mask, the student will need to wear a properly fitting face covering. The default is students wear face coverings.

Q. If I opt my child out of a mask and do not have one for him to wear on the bus, will the driver still pick him up and provide him with a mask for the bus ride?

A. Drivers are provided with a supply of face coverings for students. Students who are unwilling to wear a face covering properly will not be allowed to ride in MCPS vehicles. Students who are willing to wear the mask will be provided one if needed – but should provide their own. Please consider those driver supplied masks to be used only occasionally.

Q. Are there any times when my student may have to wear a mask if they are opted out?

A. Yes, there are some specific times when they may be required to wear a mask if even opted out.

Proper masking is still required, regardless of opt out status, for all students when:

- accessing MCPS school buses or school vehicles.
- exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms while waiting to see the school nurse or administrator
- waiting for parents to pick them up after they have been seen by the nurse or school administrator who determines a mask is necessary for health reasons
- they are required by athletic/academic practice or completion rules; and
- they are visitors to school events that require masks (such as indoor sporting events)