

Mask in Schools

Frequently Asked Questions and Considerations for Use

1. Are face masks required in school buildings at this time?

Starting on Tuesday, January 11, 2022, the use of face masks will become optional for students, staff, and spectators within the Big Spring School District. Despite that, there may be situations where the level of school or district transmission rates require the use of face masks for a defined period of time. A decision-making tool has been developed to provide a clear evidence-based approach in the event a change is needed to our face covering procedure and to effectively communicate with our school community. It is important to note that these criteria will be utilized only in the absence of a masking order or requirement from any governing agency of the Big Spring School District. If a building's positivity rate is greater than or equal to 2.5% of that building's population, that building will move to universal masking for a defined period of time. The table below outlines those 2.5 % thresholds converted to actual case counts that would necessitate universal masking, by building.

Building	Threshold for Universal Masking / 14-Day Window
<i>Mount Rock Elementary</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Newville Elementary</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Oak Flat Elementary</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Big Spring Middle School</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Big Spring High School</i>	<i>23</i>

2. Are face masks required on district transportation?

Yes, as per the CDC transportation ([linked here](#)), masks are required on all district transportation.

3. Should universal masking be implemented due to active cases in a building, under what circumstances are students permitted to remove their face coverings?

Students will not be required to wear face coverings when they are outside of the buildings (recess, physical education, outdoor instruction, etc.), dining in the cafeteria, or when actively engaged in physical activity within the building. Similar to last year, mask breaks will be provided as appropriate.

4. Are there any exceptions for masking?

Yes. Exceptions to masking will continue to be granted for any student who cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition, including those with respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition, or disability. Accommodations for such students should be made in partnership with the student’s health care provider, school nurse, and IEP / 504 team.

5. Should universal masking be implemented due to active cases in a building, where in schools are masks to be worn?

Masks should be worn in all indoor spaces and buses except when eating their lunch, exercising, or participating in athletic activities.

6. Do I have to wear one if I’m at an outside event?

No. Current data suggest the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in outdoor settings is minimal. In general, fully vaccinated people do not need to wear a mask outdoors. Fully vaccinated people might choose to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised. The chart below shows CDC recommendations for mask usage in various outside settings.

Choosing Safer Activities

	Unvaccinated People	Your Activity	Fully Vaccinated People
Safest		Outdoor	
		Walk, run, or bike outdoors with members of your household	
		Attend a small, outdoor gathering with fully vaccinated family and friends	
Less Safe		Attend a small, outdoor gathering with fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people	
		Dine at an outdoor restaurant with friends from multiple households	
Least Safe		Attend a crowded, outdoor event, like a live performance, parade, or sports event	




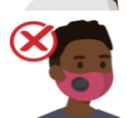



— The CDC released updated guidance on outdoor mask usage. CDC

7. Should universal masking be implemented due to active cases in a building, do I have to wear a mask when I’m exercising, at recess, or actively participating in athletic activity?

No, masks are not required during these activities while the student is actively participating. When not, or when on the bench during competition, students should be masked.

8. What type of mask should be worn? (<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-face-masks-what-you-need-to-know>, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>)

Look for a mask made with at least two layers of fabric. It should cover your nose and mouth without large gaps. The mask should have ear loops or ties so you can adjust it. For people who wear glasses, look for a mask with a bendable border at the top so you can mold the mask to fit the bridge of your nose and prevent your glasses from fogging. Gaiters with two layers, or folded to make two layers are acceptable.

DO choose masks that	DO NOT choose masks that
 <p>Have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric</p>	 <p>Are made of fabric that makes it hard to breathe, for example, vinyl</p>
 <p>Completely cover your nose and mouth</p>	 <p>Have exhalation valves or vents which allow virus particles to escape</p>
 <p>Fit snugly against the sides of your face and don't have gaps</p>	 <p>Are prioritized for healthcare workers, including N95 respirators</p>
 <p>Have a nose wire to prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask</p>	

9. What do I do if I don't have a mask?

A mask can be provided for students and visitors as needed for those who forget or misplace them. Those in need of additional support to obtain masks will be connected with community resources.

10. Can I wear a face shield instead of a mask?

Alternatives to face masks may be considered if recommended by a medical professional.

11. Will mask breaks be given this year, like they were last year?

Yes. Mask breaks will be granted in the same manner they were last year.

12. How is wearing a mask most effective?

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>)

1. *Wash your hands before and after touching the mask.*
2. *Touch only the bands or ties when putting on and taking off your mask.*
3. *Make sure the mask fits to cover your nose, mouth and chin. ...*
4. *Make sure you can breathe and talk comfortably through your mask.*
5. *Wash reusable masks after each use.*

13. Should universal masking be implemented due to active cases in a building, when can students and staff take off their masks during the school day?

Students may remove their masks when outdoors, at lunch, while exercising, or participating in athletic activities.

14. Are parents and spectators at school functions and extracurricular events required to wear masks at this time?

No.