

Southmoreland School District



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"High Quality Learning for All"

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

As you may be aware, the state has now mandated masks in all K-12 schools and daycare facilities. The announcement was made August 31, 2021 and goes into effect Tuesday, September 7, 2021. The new Masking Order will be reviewed on an ongoing basis with a comprehensive community update due by October 1, 2021 from the PA Secretary of Health. Until the mask order is lifted, the Southmoreland School District is bound to comply with it. More information about your rights as a parent and the District's obligations are included below.

All teachers, students, staff, and visitors are required to wear a mask unless they have a medical or mental health condition or disability, documented by a licensed healthcare provider, that prevents mask wearing in school. When masking is not feasible for a student, schools will explore whether a face shield can be used as an alternative. Please know that your child's school will ensure mask breaks to the extent needed for students to remain safe and healthy in the school environment, and outdoor (unmasked) activities will be used where appropriate. **The wearing of masks by students will lead to fewer quarantined students due to close contacts.**

School administrators are required to implement the District's Health and Safety Plan and the Masking Order. The Masking Order is a legal Order issued under the PA Disease Prevention and Control Law. School entities are expected to enforce the Order in the same way they enforce other laws. Unless the student is exempted from masking pursuant to Section 3 of the Masking Order, failure to wear a mask may result in student discipline measures as outlined in the district-level Code of Conduct.

Exceptions to masking are provided:

- if wearing a face covering while working would create an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task;
- if wearing a face covering would either cause a medical condition, or exacerbate an existing one, including respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition or a disability;
- when necessary to confirm the individual's identity;
- when working alone and isolated from interaction with other people with little or no expectation of in-person interaction;
- if an individual is communicating or seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired or has another disability, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication;
- when the individual is under two (2) years of age;

- when an individual is either engaged in an activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask or is participating in high intensity aerobic or anerobic activities; and
- when the student is participating in a sports practice activity or event.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation with the mask requirement. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your child's principal.

I understand that some parents are extremely upset about the mandate. Please know that your child's teachers, principals, bus drivers, other school staff, and the school board did not make this decision. These individuals are required to support the mandate, regardless of their personal feelings. Your understanding as you prepare your child for the change next week is greatly appreciated as we all work together to provide the best possible education for our students despite the challenging circumstances.

Respectfully,

Vincent Mascia

Vincent Mascia,
Superintendent of Schools