



THOMPSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

785 Riverside Drive
North Grosvenordale, CT 06255

Tel: (860) 923-9581
Fax: (860) 923-9638

September 1, 2020

Dear Thompson Families, Faculty, and Staff,

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), has just released Addendum #11 to *Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together*. This guidance focuses primarily on the wearing of face coverings (masks) at all times when students, faculty, and staff are in school. The face covering requirement does include all preschool students to the extent possible.

A copy of the full addendum was emailed to all Thompson employees yesterday and has been placed on the district's website under the COVID-19 section for parents to access.

This guidance developed in collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Health (DPH) emphasizes the need for everyone to wear appropriate face coverings. Guidance for the use of face coverings in schools is attached. Based on this new information, neck gaiters, bandanas, and exhalation valve masks should not be worn. Multiple layer cloth face masks are recommended to wear in schools.

In rare circumstances, a student or employee may be granted a mask waiver if sufficient medical documentation has been submitted by the individual's physician or we have written evidence of a diagnosed disability. All inquiries regarding mask waivers must be directed to the school nurse or principal. We will work with a family or employee to develop an accommodation plan that may include the use of a face and/or desk shield to ensure a healthy school environment for all.

This new guidance from CSDE and DPH provides the district with more information to keep our school community informed of best health practices to keep our schools safe.

Yesterday, we had a great first day of school! I want to thank everyone for working together to keep our schools safe and for following the face mask requirement.

Sincerely,

Melinda A. Smith, M. Ed., Superintendent

Mask Types	Advantages	Disadvantages	Recommendation
N95 Respirators	Excellent filtration of droplets and most aerosols-sized particles	Difficult to wear for extended periods, need specific fit-testing and medical clearance, supply chain issues, cannot be easily cleaned	X Not recommended for school use <i>(except for nurses and aerosol-generating procedures)</i>
KN95 Facemasks	Very good capture of respiratory droplets, widely available for ordering	Wide variation in sizing and quality control, tend to run large and may not fit children well, may be difficult to wear for very long periods, cannot be easily cleaned	✓ Recommended for use in schools for older children
Surgical/ Procedure Style	Good to very good capture of respiratory droplets, widely available for ordering, relatively light weight	May not hold up to repeated use, cannot be easily cleaned, may have some quality control issues	✓ Recommended for use in schools, especially as a stockpile for schools to hand out when students do not have a face mask
Cloth Masks	Good to very good capture of respiratory droplets, widely available for purchase, can be constructed and personalized at home, fabric very breathable, can be easily cleaned	Generally require multiple layers of fabric, ear loops may irritate after extended use, may need to try multiple styles to find appropriate fit, fit may change with laundering	✓ Recommended for use in schools for all ages
Neck Gaiters	Very breathable and light weight, some moisture-wicking, very personalizable, widely available, many sizes and styles, eliminates ear loop irritation, stays on neck when not in use	May or may not provide adequate droplet control depending on fit and material used, may need to be layered to provide adequate source control	? May be adequate if layered (folded over nose and mouth multiple times) and sized appropriately so fabric is not stretched extensively, better for smaller children where bunching of fabric may be more protective
Bandanas	Widely available, inexpensive, allows mask to be tied instead of using ear loops, light weight and breathable	May or may not provide adequate droplet control depending on the weight of material used, may need to be layered to provide adequate source control	? May be adequate if layered and positioned tightly at the chin, material should be washed/ dried to tighten the fabric weave
Exhalation Valve Masks	Can be found in many styles of masks, may add some comfort, allows relief of air pressure upon exhalation	May allow some droplets to escape through the mask, may not close tightly when breathing in, cannot be easily cleaned	X Unknown whether or not exhalation valves in masks increase the risk of spread of COVID-19, better than no mask at all but masks with valves currently not recommended for school settings