Given public health guidance, Marietta City Schools is requiring all staff, students, and visitors to wear a face covering while in MCS school and district buildings and on MCS school buses.

I acknowledge the decision to wear a face covering is very personal. I also acknowledge, as we prioritize the safety of students and staff, that we are committed to being on the safe side of medical research and on the progressive side of student and staff health.

Please practice mask wearing so children may become accustomed to their fit and feel.

We have received donations of masks; if you are in need of one for your child, please reach out to your School Social Worker.

Grant Rivera, Ed.D.
Superintendent

WHY DO I NEED TO WEAR A FACE COVERING?

Over the past few months, we have learned a lot about COVID-19 transmission. We know now that people who are infected, and may not have any symptoms, can infect others by spreading respiratory droplets through activities like speaking, coughing, laughing, and singing. Scientific evidence suggests that public use of face coverings, such as masks, can help reduce disease transmission by helping to keep respiratory droplets contained and from reaching other people.

Face coverings are not a substitute for other important prevention practices and should be used in addition to staying 6 feet apart, washing hands, and staying home when ill.

DOES EVERYONE NEED TO WEAR A FACE COVERING?

Some people, such as those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, or other sensory sensitivities, may have challenges wearing a face covering. They should consult with their healthcare provider about alternatives.

People do not need to wear a face covering when eating and drinking, when engaged in outdoor activities (if physically distant from others), or while doing independent work in personal office spaces where physical distancing can be maintained.

We understand the importance of providing opportunities to remove face coverings during the school day. When socially distanced (at least six feet apart) from others and outside the school building, students and staff will have the opportunity to take a break from wearing their face covering. Our teachers will create as many opportunities as possible for students to be outside and socially-distanced during the school day.

Also, in the spirit of acknowledging that our youngest learners may not have the self-discipline to consistently wear their face coverings, we are exploring various options to provide clear table partitions in our Pre-K and elementary classrooms.

WILL MCS PROVIDE A FACE COVERING FOR MY CHILD?

We encourage families to obtain reusable/washable face coverings for their student; however, a mask will be provided for any student who boards the school bus or arrives to school without an appropriate face covering. Please read below for guidance on the different type of face coverings and the advantages of each.
WHAT ARE THE APPROVED TYPES OF FACE COVERINGS?

When choosing a mask, experts say focus on the fabric, fit, and breathability. How well a mask protects is a function of both what it's made of and how well it seals to your face. But if you can't breathe well through it, then you're less likely to keep it on.

Avoid masks with exhalation valves. The valve makes it easier to breathe out, but it also releases unfiltered air, so it doesn't protect others if you're contagious. And protecting others is the primary reason to wear a mask.

SURGICAL MASKS

Surgical masks are disposable coverings worn around the face. Try to find surgical masks that have been cleared for medical use by the FDA and have better filtration efficiencies. There is still some concern about using up this supply, because they are needed by medical personnel. However, if you use a disposable mask, please safely dispose of it after each use as they cannot be washed.

NECK GAITERS

Neck gaiters are an acceptable choice of face covering, especially as they don't suffer from gaps on the sides of one's mask. They can't fall off, but they can be hot.

FACE SHIELDS

Some people may choose to use a face shield when sustained close contact with other people is expected, especially to protect eyes and serve as an additional layer of protection. A face shield does not serve as a suitable substitute for a face covering as respiratory droplets can still be expelled out the bottom of the shield onto others.

However, certain face shields, such as humanity shields, that are fitted around the neck and forehead and fully surround the face may be an allowed substitute for individuals who have difficulties wearing a cloth face covering or for those who are working with the hard of hearing; these are not suggested for children.

N95/KN95s Respirators

N95 respirators are designed to create a tight seal around the nose and mouth, but must be custom-fitted to each person. When worn correctly, they can block at least 95 percent of small airborne particles. But N95s remain in short supply and should still be reserved for health care workers and first responders for whom they can be custom fitted. Many of N95/KN95 masks on the market are fakes.

CLOTH MASKS

Material: Look for a tight weave. To check your fabric, hold it up to a light: If you can easily see the outline of the individual fibers, it's not going to make a great filter. 100 percent cotton is best, as the natural fibers in cotton are better than synthetics at stopping incoming particles. For children, allowing them to pick out masks in their favorite colors, or with a favorite character, can go a long way in promoting mask wearing.

There are also cloth masks on the market with clear inserts that might be good options for teachers, and speech therapists, especially of young children or our special needs learners.

- **Construction**: Multiple layers are better than single layers. Two layers of cotton with a polypropylene filter or a folded tissue inside works well. Coffee filters are not suggested.
- **Shape**: The better a mask seals to your face, the better it is at filtering out particles. Cloth masks that fit tightly to you face are best, but pleated masks work well, too.
- **Nose Wire**: Some masks have a wire that runs across the bridge of the nose. This allows for a tighter fit, and is a good option for people with glasses to help reduce the problem of fogging.
A GUIDE TO MASK USE

HOW DO I APPLY A MASK?

- Wash your hands and get a clean mask.
- Put on mask by holding it by straps/ear loops.
- Mask should fit snugly around face.
- If there is a wired side, press it to your nose for a closer fit.
- Make sure your mouth, nose, and chin are all covered.
- Don't touch your mask until you take it off.

Cover mouth and nose with mask and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.

HOW DO I REMOVE A MASK?

- Remove by ear loops/straps and avoid touching the front.
- Put in bag to wash later or throw away, if disposable.
- If you are taking off your mask for a break or to eat, fold the mask in half with the outside facing in, so any contact will be with the side that touches your face. Put in pocket or a small bag.
- Wash your hands after removing the mask.

HOW SHOULD I CARE FOR A FACE COVERING?

Wash your cloth face covering frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily. Have a bag or bin to keep cloth face coverings in until they can be laundered with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. Make sure the mask is completely dry before you reuse it, as a wet mask can make it harder to breathe and can promote the growth of microorganisms.

Discard cloth face coverings that:
- No longer cover the nose and mouth
- Have stretched out or damaged ties or straps
- Cannot stay on the face
- Have holes or tears in the fabric
- Disposable face shields should only be worn for a single use. Reusable face shields should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

Sources:
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Cobb & Douglas Public Health
- Georgia Department of Public Health
- National Public Radio
- North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services