

## **Virtus Academy of South Carolina**

### **The Proper Use of Face Masks During the School Day**

For the current 2020-2021 school year, the SC Department of Education stated that the use of face masks will be required for everyone in the school building. Facemasks, alongside other mitigation strategies, help ensure that schools provide a safe learning environment even when optimal social distancing is not feasible. VASC supports the science that states that masks, when properly worn, are effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19. VASC also recognizes that COVID-19 is highly contagious and can pose life-threatening illness in certain segments of society. Given this background, VASC reiterates that masks must be worn properly by all students, staff, teachers, and guests when they are on the premises of Virtus Academy.

Masks should be made of cloth, preferably of multiple layers, that fit properly, comfortably, and snugly against the face. Masks that leave gaps on the side of the face or that consistently need to be adjusted are not considered a proper fit. When worn properly, masks must cover both the nose and mouth and should extend under the chin [1]. It is highly recommended that students be sent to school with an extra mask in case the one being worn becomes wet from moisture. It is also recommended that non-disposable masks be hand washed daily at the end of the day.

VASC asks that parents emphasize to their student the importance of wearing their mask when at school. If a student is found to not be properly wearing their mask in class, they will be instructed by a teacher or staff to adjust their mask. If a student intentionally does not comply, the student will be removed from class, their parent/guardian will be called to the school, and the student will be sent home for the remainder of the day. If the student receives a second offense for intentionally defying the mask requirement, they will again be sent home for the remainder of the day. After a student receives two offenses for defying the mask requirement, the student will be unable to return to school until the student's parent/guardian has scheduled a meeting with the administration to discuss how the child will comply with the mask requirement. During this meeting, the parent/guardian will also be offered the opportunity to enroll his or her student in the virtual program. Upon a third offense, the student will again be sent home, and the parent/guardian will be informed that the student will be enrolled into the virtual school for the remainder of the year.

For students who are unable to wear a mask for health reasons, the parent/guardian will be required to supply a note from a doctor verifying the student's health limitations and any accommodations that are required. If it is determined that a student has a disability, a 504 evaluation will be conducted, and depending upon the results of the evaluation, Virtus will offer reasonable accommodations to the student, which may include, but is not limited to, enrollment in the virtual program; in-person but self-contained study; or the use of a face shield.

For guests, teachers, and staff who are found not wearing a mask, they will be asked to put a properly fitting mask on immediately. If individuals refuse or cannot comply (e.g., they are not in possession of a mask), they will be asked to leave the premises and not return until they are wearing a properly fitting mask.

VASC recognizes that face-to-face instruction is best for the emotional well-being of our children, which can only occur with a healthy student and teacher population. VASC appreciates parents/guardians speaking with their children and encouraging them to wear their masks to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 within the halls of Virtus Academy.

#### References

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Considerations for Wearing Masks: Help Slow the Spread of Covid-19. URL:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>.

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