

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Is my child required to wear a mask?

In the absence of a mandate from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Department of Health, and the Chester County Health Department, it is recommended, not required, that district staff, students, and visitors wear a mask when in Octorara's school buildings or other indoor facilities. However, there are certain situations where face coverings may be required based on government orders, to protect student and staff health and safety, or preserve in person learning.

- A. By federal order of the Transportation Security Administration and Center for Disease Control (CDC), masks must be worn when riding on Octorara transportation when traveling to and from school and traveling to and from extracurricular or athletic events.
  - B. If a student is confirmed as symptomatic for COVID-19 and the nursing staff or school district physician determines that the student needs to be isolated and sent home, the student will be required to wear a mask until the student leaves school district property. The nurse will contact parents/guardians to pick up the student immediately.
  - C. If a student is a confirmed positive case and is in school when the determination is made, the student will be required to wear a mask until the student leaves district property. The nurse will contact parents/guardians to pick up the student immediately.
  - D. If the determination is made to modify school district operations to preserve continuity of education in a particular school building or campus wide, all staff, students, and visitors will be required to wear a mask when indoors.
  - E. If an individual visits the nurse's office he/she will be required to wear a mask to prevent any possible exposure to COVID as a result of symptomatic students being assessed by the school nurse.
2. What is the benefit of my child wearing a mask as it relates to current requirements for reporting cases to the Chester County Health Department, isolating COVID positive students, and quarantining close contacts?

Wearing a face covering may help prevent the spread of COVID-19. In addition, under certain circumstances, wearing a mask may help your child avoid the need to quarantine. Octorara will use the following protocols from the Chester County Health Department

to respond to cases of COVID-19 in the schools;

[School Response Actions](#)

to support symptomatic individuals at school; and

[Sent Home Sick Guidance](#)

to support the close contacts of a COVID positive individual.

[Close Contact Guidance](#)

Octorara understands that parents want their children in school. The best way to accomplish this goal is through employing as many recognized mitigation measures to the greatest extent practicable. While Octorara recognizes that many families do not want their children to wear masks out of personal preference, the District also recognizes that wearing masks may help to avoid close contact and quarantining of students.

Octorara further recognizes that if case numbers rise, in-person learning may be in jeopardy. In certain situations, requiring masks as a temporary mitigation strategy may get students back to school and keep them in school for a longer period without disrupting the educational process. Using local community and school specific data, Octorara reserves the right to require staff members, students, and visitors to wear a mask indoors if an outbreak of COVID-19 and/or an excessive number of students in quarantine and isolation interferes with the continuity of education in any school building.

3. How will the school community be notified about changes to the masking protocol?

Every Saturday, the school community will receive an email from the Superintendent summarizing the health and safety data for the previous week and the masking protocol for the upcoming week.

4. I want my child to wear a mask. How will staff support my wishes and make sure my child is wearing his or her mask?

Masks are available in your child's classroom and in the common areas and offices of every campus building. During classroom orientations, building tours, and class meetings, students will be shown where they can get a mask if they wish to wear one. Please contact your child's teacher if you prefer that your child wear a mask and believe he or she will need encouragement to do so while in school.

5. What cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting protocols will the district use to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Octorara will maintain the sanitizing and disinfecting protocols implemented during the 2020-2021 school year. Such protocols include making hand sanitizer available in all

classrooms, common areas, and offices, providing frequent opportunities for students to wash their hands, using foggers to disinfect common areas and classrooms as needed, and frequently cleaning and sanitizing high touch surface areas.

6. To what extent will my child be socially distanced from other students throughout the school day?

As noted in the board approved Health and Safety Plan, school buildings and offices will allow for full occupancy with no alterations, restrictions, or physical distancing measures. When possible, Octorara will implement the following procedures to the greatest extent practicable.

**ELEMENTARY PROGRAM:**

In the K-6 buildings (Octorara Primary Learning Center, Octorara Elementary School, and Octorara Intermediate School) desks and tables have been arranged to provide for physical distancing to the greatest extent practicable. Plexiglass shields may be used to facilitate small group instruction and individual tutoring.

-Students at the Intermediate School will be dismissed to their lockers in small groups to avoid congregate settings in the hallways.

-When possible, cafeteria seating at the OPLC, OES, and OIS will be arranged so that students face one direction and not each other. Breakfast will be 'grab and go' and eaten in the classrooms.

-Hallways may be marked to help students avoid congregate settings.

-Outdoor recess at the K-6 building has been structured so students are assigned to small group "play zones." These zones will be rotated every day so students have multiple opportunities to participate in different outdoor activities during the week.

-Procedures will be implemented to decrease the number of students in hallways during arrival and dismissal.

-Refillable water stations are available in all schools so students do not have to use the traditional water fountains.

**SECONDARY PROGRAM:**

-At Octorara Jr. Sr. High School, when possible, desks and tables have been arranged to provide for physical distancing to the greatest extent practicable.

-Plexiglass dividers have been installed on many of the cafeteria tables. Breakfast will be 'grab and go' and eaten in the classrooms.

-Hallways may be marked to help students avoid congregate settings.

-Student drivers may arrive late or leave early if they are scheduled for a 1st period or 8th period study hall.

7. How will Octorara support the education of students required to quarantine?

Teachers will use a variety of methods to help quarantined students maintain continuity of education, including but not limited to: providing assignments in See Saw, Google classroom and Schoology, sending assignments, resource materials and textbooks to the home, providing recordings of whole group instruction, facilitating virtual help classes, and the consideration of homebound instruction when specific disability criteria exists and is appropriate.

8. What mitigation procedures are being implemented to support the athletic program?

Octorara will follow the Athletic Health and Safety Plan, created under the direction of Octorara school physician, Dr. Keith Heck from LGH/Penn Medicine.

**Fall OASD Athletic Health and Safety Plan - August 20, 2021**

9. Will Octorara make testing available to families?

Octorara will participate in the Pennsylvania Department of Health's K-12 School COVID-19 Testing program. Participation in the district's testing plan is free and voluntary. No student, staff, or visitor will be required to submit for testing without prior consent. More information will be provided as Octorara finalizes details with the Department of Health.

10. How will I be notified if my child is symptomatic or identified as a close contact to a symptomatic individual?

Parents/guardians of symptomatic students and close contacts will be notified immediately by the school nurse.

11. Can my child be excused or exempt from wearing a mask on the school bus?

Students must have a 504 plan or a 504 accommodation in his/her IEP to be exempt from wearing a mask on school district operated transportation. Please contact Mr. Cale Hilbolt, Student Services Director, at [chilbolt@octorara.org](mailto:chilbolt@octorara.org) and your child's building principal for more information about implementing a 504 plan. A copy of the Face Mask Exemption Request

Physician Certification form will be provided to the parent and must be completed by the student's treating physician.