FACE MASK FAQ

Why are face masks beneficial?

- COVID-19 is spread between people who are in close contact when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.
- Some people without symptoms may be able to spread the virus.
- Face masks prevent germs from the nose and mouth from entering the air and infecting other people.
- Face masks also reduce wearers’ exposure to infectious droplets and protect them from infection.

Who should wear a face mask?

- All students, school staff and visitors must wear a face mask inside a school and on school buses, regardless of their vaccination status. Persons do not need to wear a face mask if they have a documented disability that makes wearing a face mask unsafe, if they are eating or drinking, if they under the age of two and/or if they are alone in a private space.
- All staff and visitors to BCPS offices must wear a face mask when community transmission rates are within the CDC categories of substantial or high, except when they are alone in a private space, eating or drinking, or under the age of two.
- Persons who are not fully vaccinated are encouraged to wear a face mask in crowded outdoor spaces.

What types of face masks may be used?

- A face mask should cover the nose and mouth.
- The face mask should fit snugly to the face and stay in place without requiring the user to hold it or adjust it frequently.
- If a face mask should be made of two or more layers of breathable cloth fabric.
- Face shields do not fit snugly at the sides of the face and/or chin and are not to be used instead of face masks.

What type of face coverings are not considered acceptable to be used as face masks?

- A face mask with a valve or vent is not acceptable because they permit virus particles to escape through the vent or valve.
- A face mask made of a fabric with holes, like mesh fabric, is not acceptable because they allow virus particles to escape through the holes.
• A scarf or ski mask is not acceptable to be worn instead of a face mask because they are not well fitting and often not made of appropriate fabric.

**Does wearing a face mask cause a person to breathe in CO2 or have their oxygen level drop?**

• No. Numerous professionals, including healthcare providers have worn masks for years with no adverse effects.
• Carbon dioxide is a very small particle and will pass through the mask. It does not build up to harmful levels.
• During strenuous exercise, masks may become uncomfortable and may be removed.