

Building a Mask Culture



Definition:

Mask-wearing is an evidence-based practice for reducing the risks of many infections. Building a mask cultural norm supports, reinforces, and celebrates mask-wearing as a healthy habit.

Guiding Question

What steps can I take to help develop a mask culture of acceptance?

Lessons and Activity Ideas to Incorporate Mask Wearing

PreK to Grade 2

- Watch videos
- Incorporate books
- Draw self-portraits

Grades 6-8

- Explore fact vs. fiction
- Watch PSAs
- Discuss facts

Grades 3-5

- Conduct mask experiments to explain how masks are worn
- Draw self-portraits

Grades 9-12

- Watch a news hour presentation
- Discuss feelings
- Empower teens to discuss mask wearing in the community

Best Practices to Help Build a Mask Culture

Partner with Caregivers/Parents

- Proactively reach out to parents caregivers and send home clear guidelines on expectations.
- Develop a shared understanding of needs and expectations.
- Engage families in information sessions and establish ongoing communication.

Normalize Mask Wearing

- Display posters and visual reminders of how to properly wear a mask.
- Put masks on stuffed animals or show your mascot wearing a mask.
- Reinforce messaging by showing students images of familiar people and objects.

Make It Fun

- Let students decorate masks using creativity and channel individuality.
- Consider using a “cohort/team” style to build school spirit.
- Encourage local partners to contribute.

Share the “Why” Behind Wearing a Mask

- Be positive when explaining mask wearing.
- Use easy-to-understand language.
- Remind students how it protects them as well as others and is a healthy habit.

Build in Opportunities for Breaks

- Wearing a mask for a long period of time can put a strain on students.
- Start by reviewing your schedule.
- Designate an area of the school as mask-free.

Express Emotions

- Incorporate games where students can use body language to share verbal information.
- Develop a system of signals and gestures that convey specific emotions while wearing a mask. Example: “Look, I am happy. You can’t see my mouth smile, but my cheeks are raised up, my eyes crinkle, and my shoulders and arms look like this.”
- Increase the use of gestures throughout the day when talking about emotions (e.g., shoulders shrugged for sad, arms out to indicate a happy mood).

Additional Resources

- [The Learning Accelerator: Mask Culture Tool](#)
- [How to Help Elementary Students Get Used to Masks](#)
- [Face Masks and COVID-19: Supporting Teenagers](#)
- [Helping Students Read Emotions Behind Masks](#)