



# Illinois State Board of Education

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www.isbe.net

**Darren Reisberg**  
*Chair of the Board*

**Dr. Carmen I. Ayala**  
*State Superintendent of Education*

June 30, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Following the release of our Transition Joint Guidance for Starting the 2020-21 School Year, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has engaged in fruitful dialogue with educators and stakeholders concerning the use of face shields in lieu of face coverings (e.g. masks). Since that time, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has communicated that face coverings and social distancing are the goal whenever and wherever possible. ***Face shields have not been deemed effective for source control and are only to be used when other methods of protection are not available or appropriate.*** IDPH arrived at this determination after lengthy additional collaboration with the communicable disease team, infection preventionists, and infectious disease specialists and after reviewing available Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance.

In cases where individuals need facial visualization for instruction and communication, IDPH recommends video instruction to promote social distancing. If video instruction is not available or appropriate, face shields may be used with the understanding that they have not been deemed effective for source control. As such, heightened attention and adherence to 6-foot social distancing is critical for individuals using face shields. Examples of limited situations when face shields may be necessary, if video instruction is not possible, include for teachers of English Learners or world languages, whose students may need to see their mouths form words to facilitate language acquisition.

IDPH also appreciates that there may be a small minority of individuals who have a medical contraindication to using face coverings. If face shields can be tolerated, face shields might be utilized in these situations, understanding their limitations and the heightened need for strict adherence to social distancing. ISBE recommends that schools review information, such as a physician's note, documenting the medical contraindication for any individual who is not able to wear a face covering.

ISBE has updated our supplementary FAQ with this clarification that face shields are not effective protection against coronavirus and should only be used in situations when other methods of protection are not available. Please review at [www.isbe.net/Documents/FAQ-Part-3-Transition-Guidance.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/Documents/FAQ-Part-3-Transition-Guidance.pdf).

We understand the difficulty that educators face as our FAQ and the joint guidance are updated to reflect best practice. However, in this rapidly evolving crisis, we are committed to ensuring that Illinois schools operate under the most current information, guided by science and data. We appreciate the strong partnership with IDPH and your continued diligence in following effective health and safety measures. Your leadership is what will keep Illinois communities on the path to recovery.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to ISBE by emailing [covid19@isbe.net](mailto:covid19@isbe.net) with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Trisha Olson  
Legal Officer  
Illinois State Board of Education