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On Friday, November 13, 2020, Governor Northam issued an amendment to Executive Order 63 (EO-63), which updates face covering requirements in Virginia. This morning we received additional guidance from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) about the specific application of EO-63 in public schools.

Based on EO-63 and this new guidance from VDOE, Bedford County Public Schools will now require that face coverings be worn at all times in indoor school settings for all individuals age 5 or older, with the following exceptions:

- While eating or drinking
- While exercising or using exercise equipment
- While playing a musical instrument, when wearing a mask or face covering would inhibit the playing of the instrument (e.g. wind instrument), if at least 10 feet of physical distancing can be maintained from other persons, whether the rehearsal or performance is indoors or outdoors.
- Any person who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance
- Any person seeking to communicate with the hearing impaired and for which the mouth needs to be visible
- When temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to secure government, or medical services
- Persons with health conditions or disabilities that prohibit wearing a face covering

Please also note:

- Nothing in EO-63 shall require the use of a face covering by any person for whom doing so would be contrary to his or her health or safety because of a medical condition. Adaptations and alternatives for individuals with health conditions or disabilities should be considered whenever possible to increase the feasibility of wearing a mask or to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading if it is not possible to wear one.
- Any person who declines to wear a face covering because of a medical condition shall not be required to produce or carry medical documentation verifying the stated condition nor shall the person be required to identify the precise underlying medical condition.

We realize that EO-63 represents a change from our current practices, and we will be spending time during the days and weeks ahead helping our learners understand these new expectations, as well as the rationale for the decision. Thank you in advance for helping us implement this new requirement and for all that you are doing to keep our schools safe.