



*"What works for your child is what makes the choice right."*<sup>TM</sup>

Hello Kentucky Hands & Voices Families!

We are so thankful for all the connections we have been able to foster during this time of uncertainty and social distancing. COVID-19 has sent us all on a journey we did not anticipate or foresee, and we are learning how to navigate the unexpected together. A favorite quote in relation to our children who are deaf or hard of hearing is, "Hearing loss is a journey I never planned for, but I sure do love my tour guide." It is quite fitting for this journey we are now on.

As parents, we all have to make some big and difficult decisions about the upcoming academic year. The Hands & Voices motto is "What works for your child is what makes the choice right." Let that motto guide you as you research and contemplate decisions for your child. In an effort to assist you, we – fellow parents – have compiled a variety of information and resources regarding face coverings and advocacy related to children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Remember, each child is different - and whatever works for your child is, and always will be, the right choice!

Some of our families have children who use technology only. Some children use American Sign Language to communicate. Some may rely heavily on visual cues, while others may receive more benefit from acoustic input. In a time where we are unsure what works best, we encourage you to gather information and try out the different face covering options to see what works best for your child. Once you find out what works best for your child, we want you to be equipped to advocate for your child's individual communication needs.

Again, all children are different. All children who are deaf or hard of hearing are different. All families are different. All schools are different. We are all trying to get through this together - and we will continue to be here to support you the best way we can.

This document has been prepared and reviewed by our Board of Directors, made up of both parents and professionals (audiologists, educators and early interventionists), with input from a variety of medical and educational professionals. If you have any questions, please contact us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Anita Dowd'.

Anita Dowd  
President, Board of Directors  
Kentucky Hands & Voices



# LEARNING OPTIONS FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

IN-PERSON	VIRTUAL	HOMESCHOOL
<p>In-Person learning is when your school district or private school holds classes in person with live teachers and other students present.</p>	<p>Virtual School includes online learning, NTI (non-traditional instruction), or remote learning utilizing virtual meeting spaces such as Zoom, Google Meets or Google Classrooms. This may be provided by your local school system. This may happen synchronously (students all log on at a prescribed time to listen to a teacher live) or asynchronously (videos and other assignments are posted online and students complete them individually).</p>	<p>Homeschooling comes in many different forms. Some families choose a complete packaged curriculum and replicate school at home by sticking to regular hours, subjects, and assignments. Others take a more “whole life learning” approach and emphasize everyday experiences and child-directed learning.</p>
<p><b>PROS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to services such as speech, interpreting, etc.</li> <li>• Opportunities for social-emotional development by being physically present with peers and adults.</li> <li>• Less likelihood for technological access issues such as captioning, virtual interpreting, and loss of connectivity.</li> </ul> <p><b>CONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many regulations, including masks and social distancing, will make it harder for children who are deaf or hard of hearing to have full communication access, creating frustration, fatigue and possibly social detachment.</li> <li>• Chance of in-person shutdown(s), creating an inconsistent learning environment.</li> <li>• Potential for exposure to virus.</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarity with local school system and curriculum.</li> <li>• Less potential for exposure to virus.</li> <li>• Control over child’s listening environment. (i.e. no masks, background noise, etc.)</li> </ul> <p><b>CONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty of auditory accessibility of online videos and other content such as lack of captioning.</li> <li>• Services such as speech and interpreting services will also be done virtually, which could present additional challenges.</li> <li>• Fewer opportunities for social-emotional development by not being physically present with peers and adults.</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control over approach and curriculum tailored to your child’s needs and strengths.</li> <li>• Control over child’s listening environment. (i.e. no masks, background noise, etc.)</li> <li>• Freedom over you and your child’s schedule.</li> <li>• Less potential for exposure to virus.</li> </ul> <p><b>CONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total control equals total responsibility of your child’s education, in addition to responsibility of finding needed services such as speech.</li> <li>• Out-of-pocket expenses. being physically present with peers and adults.</li> </ul>

# IN-PERSON LEARNING: ACCESSIBILITY & ACCOMMODATIONS

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) considerations released for schools recommend the use of face masks along with social distancing and frequent handwashing to help protect students/staff and slow the spread of COVID-19. In-person learning environments require additional emphasis on personal hearing/visual technology due to challenges with face coverings and social distancing.

School districts must provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction and related services to these students.<sup>1</sup>

School officials have an obligation to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability under Title II and Section 504, while cooperating with public health authorities to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the school's education program.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup><https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/faq/rr/policyguidance/Supple%20Fact%20Sheet%203.21.20%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/ocr-coronavirus-fact-sheet.pdf>

The Kentucky Department of Education issued COVID-19 Considerations for Reopening Schools for Exceptional Learners and Preschool Students. This document has information specific to students with disabilities.

[https://education.ky.gov/comm/Documents/Reopening Considerations for Exceptional Learners and Preschool FINAL.pdf](https://education.ky.gov/comm/Documents/Reopening_Considerations_for_Exceptional_Learners_and_Preschool_FINAL.pdf)



## Accommodations When Face Coverings are Required






<b>Visual supports</b>	Are more critical than ever for students with hearing loss when face coverings are worn. Consider using the following strategies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write directions on the board or provide written directions on a handout.</li> <li>2. Select designated note takers for students with hearing loss.</li> <li>3. Consider use of a social story, picture board, or written daily agenda that students with hearing loss can use to follow along in the classroom.</li> <li>4. Captions should be used for all media-based presentations.</li> </ol>
<b>Ear level remote microphone systems</b>	Are essential for <u>all</u> students who use hearing devices. While a remote microphone will not completely overcome the loss of acoustic and visual cues that face coverings cause, it will improve the signal at the ear of the student with hearing loss.
<b>Regular check-ins</b>	Are needed for all students with hearing loss. Do not ask your student if they heard verbal directions; instead, ask them to repeat the directions to you or tell you what was said to check comprehension.
<b>Improve incidental learning and facilitate classroom interaction</b>	As much as 90% of information is learned by overhearing. Students with hearing loss often miss out on these opportunities, and this risk is increased with face coverings. Teachers should repeat questions and answers from all students, so that the student with hearing loss has an additional opportunity to hear what others in the classroom are saying.
<b>Speak naturally and clearly; do not raise your voice</b>	Raising your voice distorts the signal and will make it difficult for the student with hearing loss to hear clearly. Slower than typical speech (approximately 124 words/minute) is helpful to improve processing and speech understanding.
<b>Reduce background noise</b>	Please do this in the classroom as much as possible to increase ease of listening for your students.
<b>Obtain visual attention</b>	Please do this for the student with hearing loss before speaking. While they may not be able to access visual cues due to mask wearing, it will alert them that they need to pay attention.
<b>Give listening breaks</b>	Even under normal circumstances, student with hearing loss can quickly become fatigued due to the additional effort required for them to listen in a classroom. Offer regular movement breaks and/or rest times.

### References

- <https://www.hearingreview.com/hearing-loss/health-wellness/how-do-medical-masks-degrade-speech-reception>
- <http://oticononline.adobeconnect.com/pokbkj7e6ju0>
- [https://f.hubspotusercontent30.net/hubfs/2117481/Overcoming%20Listening%20Challenges%20Webinar\\_Light-speed\\_062420\\_Fullpresentation.pdf](https://f.hubspotusercontent30.net/hubfs/2117481/Overcoming%20Listening%20Challenges%20Webinar_Light-speed_062420_Fullpresentation.pdf)

# IN-PERSON LEARNING: FACE COVERINGS

Masks should be considered Supplementary Aids and Services (SAS) as defined by KDE Guidance Document for IEP Development. SAS are “what the student needs” in order to learn. SAS includes strategies, aids, services and other supports provided in the general education environment or other education settings to gain access to the general curriculum.

SURGICAL MASKS	CLOTH MASKS (SOLID FABRIC)	CLOTH MASKS (CLEAR PANEL)	FACE SHIELD (ALONE WITHOUT A MASK)	THE CLEAR MASK
				
<p><b>PROS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal impact on speech clarity and loudness.</li> <li>Cost effective and readily available for purchase.</li> <li>Use of remote mic provides some additional auditory benefit</li> </ul> <p><b>CONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No access to speechreading and facial cues.</li> <li>Limited or one-time use.</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easily accessible to purchase/make.</li> <li>Washable/reusable.</li> <li>Use of remote mic provides some additional auditory benefit.</li> </ul> <p><b>CONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Causes some speech distortion and/or sound reduction.</li> <li>No access to speechreading and facial cues.</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows access to speechreading cues and limited facial expressions.</li> <li>Washable and/or reusable.</li> <li>Use of remote mic provides some additional auditory benefit.</li> </ul> <p><b>CONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Causes some speech distortion and/or sound reduction.</li> <li>May fog up. *</li> </ul> <p><i>*Anti-fog sprays can be bought to help minimize fogging use.</i></p>	<p><b>PROS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full visual of speaker’s facial expressions and visual cues.</li> <li>Easier use of remote microphone provides some additional auditory benefit.</li> <li>Washable and reusable.</li> </ul> <p><b>CONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health/safety concerns due to opening below the chin.</li> <li>Causes some speech distortion and/or sound reduction.</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little to no fogging.</li> <li>Allows access to speechreading cues and facial expressions.</li> <li>Available with tie on or adjustable straps.</li> </ul> <p><b>CONS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More difficult to clean/sanitize, leading to limited life of mask.</li> <li>Causes some speech distortion and/or sound reduction.</li> <li>Inability to effectively use remote mic.</li> </ul>

## SUPPORTIVE DOCUMENTS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Open Arms Children’s Health, PPE &amp; Hearing Loss: Face Covering Considerations</a></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">ASHA, Communicating Effectively While Wearing Masks &amp; Physical Distancing</a></li> <li><a href="#">ASHA, Letter to CDC About Face Masks, June 8, 2020</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">American Cochlear Implant Alliance, Consideration of Face Shields as a Return to School Option</a></li> <li><a href="#">Hands &amp; Voices, Consideration of Face Shields as a Return to School Option</a></li> <li><a href="#">KDE, COVID-19 Considerations for Reopening Schools, p. 16</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">The ClearMask</a></li> </ul>
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## WHERE TO GET THEM

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online</li> <li>Medical Supply Stores</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online</li> <li>Retail Stores</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://kyhandsand-voices.org/product/the-access-mask/">https://kyhandsand-voices.org/product/the-access-mask/</a></li> <li><a href="https://people.com/style/clear-face-masks/">https://people.com/style/clear-face-masks/</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online</li> <li>Retail Stores</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="http://theclearmask.com">theclearmask.com</a></li> <li><a href="#">Kentucky Hands &amp; Voices through partnership with KCDHH</a></li> </ul>
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## IN-PERSON LEARNING: HOW DO I DECIDE WHAT'S BEST FOR MY CHILD?

✓ Know what tools your child uses when communicating.

1. Does your child need visual cues?
2. Is your child able to get appropriate access with auditory input only?
3. Does your child use both visual and auditory cues?

✓ Try different face coverings at home and ask your child their preference and/or use a simple speech recognition test to evaluate their comprehension.

\* Remember, any tests done at home are rudimentary and not to be used diagnostically. This is simply a tool to help you gauge their preference.

✓ Have your audiologist test different options using booth testing or speech recognition tests.

✓ Request a Functional Listening Evaluation (FLE) using different facial coverings.

1. What is a FLE?

- A FLE is a specific evaluation designed to simulate listening ability in situations that are more representative of actual listening conditions such as noises expected in a classroom setting.
- [https://www.handsandvoices.org/pdf/func\\_eval.pdf](https://www.handsandvoices.org/pdf/func_eval.pdf)

2. How do I request a FLE?

- Contact your Teacher of the Deaf or Hard of Hearing, KSD Outreach Consultant (see Resources Section), district special education representative, or your child's audiologist.

## IN-PERSON LEARNING: WHO WEARS THE MASK?

✦ Anyone interacting with your child should wear the facial covering that best suits your child's communication needs, including teachers, aides, principal, teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, speech-language pathologists, special area teachers including music, PE, STEM, art, etc., in addition to bus drivers and cafeteria staff.

LITMUS TEST: If your child is expected to listen and take directions from someone, that person should be required to wear the facial covering that best suits your child's communication needs.

✦ Consider requesting your child's preferred facial coverings be provided for your child's direct classmates to encourage social interaction.

✦ What if there is another deaf or hard of hearing student in the same class that prefers a different facial covering?

- ❖ Having other peers with hearing loss is beneficial to your child's social-emotional health as well as their incidental learning environment.
- ❖ When possible, such as one-on-one time with your child, the teacher should always use your child's preferred face covering.
- ❖ Group setting situations will require some flexibility with the goal being fair and equal access to what is being taught.

## IN-PERSON LEARNING: CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

- An increase in distance between peers and teachers will present difficulties for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Assistive technology and accommodations may be necessary for access to the curriculum and full comprehension, even if the accommodations might not have been necessary in typical classroom environments
  - Additional accommodations for learning include sign language support, visual supports, personal amplification, DM or soundfield devices to adjust for listening conditions and to reduce vocal fatigue for teachers, speech-to-text, written instructions, adequate lighting, reduced glare, and/or prompts for turn-taking or repeating peer comments.
- When utilizing outdoor spaces for learning, several factors will affect students who are deaf or hard of hearing, including wind noise for certain devices. Many of their accommodations would not be available in that setting and should be addressed by the student's IEP or 504 Plan.

## IN-PERSON LEARNING: ADVOCACY

### Who do I contact in my school district?

- School Principal
- School Counselor
- Teacher of the Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- Director of Special Education
- KSD Outreach Consultant

If you need additional support, refer to the Resources Section.

### Things to consider for my child's IEP or 504 Plan

- Listening Checks
- Pre-Teaching
- Functional Listening Evaluation (FLE)
- Note-takers
- Social-Emotional Development Plan
- Type of Facial Coverings
- Adjustments to personal hearing/visual technology plans based on use of masks and social distancing.
- Sound buffering and reduction of background noise techniques.
- Consider grouping students who are deaf or hard of hearing together for peer support and access to language.
- Accommodations for a variety of settings, including, but not limited to, outdoor classrooms, cafeteria, playground and bus.
- **Even when in-person learning is the expected mode of education, IEPs should address all virtual needs as well in case of shutdown.**

## IN-PERSON LEARNING: IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW



**Temperature Screens** – Earmolds may cause false-positive temperature spikes when taking temps by ear. Consider using an alternative thermometer or rescreen after 10 minutes with earmolds removed.

**Classroom Noise** - Background noise is greatly reduced by carpet and other textiles in the classroom. Many schools are removing these textiles to minimize cleaning challenges. Acoustic wall panels can be used for the same purpose without the need for additional cleaning.

Increased ventilation noise impedes comprehension. Remote microphones and shutting doors will help.

## VIRTUAL LEARNING: ACCESSIBILITY AND LEARNING

Electronic Accessibility	Tech Support for Virtual Learning	Technology Needs
<p>All virtual lessons must have accurate closed captioning and/or ASL interpreting, based on each DHH student's needs for effective communication.</p>	<p>DHH students need readily available access to troubleshooting when technological supports such as captioning, interpreting, and assisted listening devices are not displaying or functioning properly. Back-up plans for when supports cannot be quickly fixed must also be in place.</p>	<p>With remote learning, additional technology may be required for meaningful access to sound, captioning, and/or interpreting. These may include secondary laptops or other technology for displaying captions or interpreters and devices for sending sounds directly to hearing equipment.</p>

## VIRTUAL LEARNING: ADVOCACY

Who do I contact in my school district?	Things to consider for my child's IEP or 504 Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Principal</li> <li>• School Counselor</li> <li>• Teacher of the Deaf or Hard of Hearing</li> <li>• Director of Special Education</li> <li>• KSD Outreach Consultant</li> </ul> <p>If you need additional support, refer to the Resources Section.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening checks during participation in virtual platforms</li> <li>• Pre-Teaching</li> <li>• Social-Emotional Development Plan</li> <li>• Adjustments to personal hearing/visual technology plans (i.e. use of FM systems, captioning, etc.)</li> <li>• Virtual opportunities for meetups with other students in the district who are deaf or hard of hearing</li> <li>• <b>Even when virtual learning is the expected mode of education, IEPs should address all in-person needs as well in case of a change.</b></li> </ul>

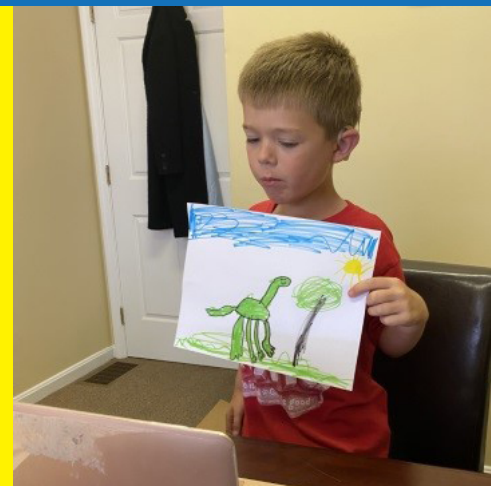
## IN-PERSON LEARNING: IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

**Real-time captioning services** are available for virtual platforms, such as Streamer, Otter, Google Live Transcribe, Live Caption, etc.

**Real-time interpreting** can be provided through virtual platforms.

Some hearing devices can be **linked directly to your computer audio**. Ask your audiologist for more information.

**Reducing background noise** at home such as television, dishwasher, washing machine can help provide an optimal auditory environment.



# RESOURCES

## Who do I contact for support?

- **Kentucky Hands & Voices**  
(888) 398-5030  
[info@kyhandsandvoices.org](mailto:info@kyhandsandvoices.org)  
[www.kyhandsandvoices.org](http://www.kyhandsandvoices.org)
- **KSD Outreach**  
Tony Peavler, (270) 681-0605  
[ksd.kyschools.us/outreach](http://ksd.kyschools.us/outreach)
- **Your Child's Audiologist**
- **Your Child's Teacher of the Deaf or Hard of Hearing** (if applicable)

## Additional Resources

- <http://www.handsandvoices.org/covid-19.html>
- <https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/covid19faqs>
- <https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/news/communicating-face-mask-what-colleges-need-know-deaf-students-and-everyone>
- <https://education.uky.edu/kydbp/>

### References:

*Auditoryverbaltherapy.net*

*Colorado Hands & Voices*

*Little Ears Hearing Center, graphic*

*California Hands & Voices, graphic*

*CDC Considerations June 28, 2020*

## WHO IS KENTUCKY HANDS & VOICES?

Hands & Voices is a non-profit, parent-driven organization dedicated to supporting families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. We are non-biased about communication methodologies and believe that families can make the best choices for their child if they have access to good information and support.

Hands & Voices is a safe place to explore options, get support, learn from one another and share what we have in common. We honor the role of parents and family as the single greatest factor in raising a well-adjusted, successful child.

Our activities focus on parent support, outreach and advocacy. We collaborate with professionals in an effort to impact and improve both the medical and educational systems that serve our children.

Kentucky Hands & Voices is an independent, state chapter affiliated with Hands & Voices Headquarters, an international organization based in Boulder, CO.

[www.handsandvoices.org](http://www.handsandvoices.org)

## SPECIAL THANKS to the following for providing input & feedback:

**Board Members**, Kentucky Hands & Voices

**Donna Carpenter**, State Coordinator, Kentucky Deaf-Blind Project

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**Virginia Moore**, Executive Director, Kentucky Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

**Cathy White**, Educator Preparation, Kentucky Department of Education

**Members of Kentucky Educators of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KYEDHH)**