

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE (ABRSC)  
MEETING AGENDA

Virtual Public Meeting

August 19, 2021

To attend: <https://www.youtube.com/actontv1>

7:00 p.m.

To preregister for Public Comment (required):

(pre-registration must be submitted 24 hours prior to the start of the meeting)

[https://abschools.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_saxt8y80Tgg-nUMs2yQgUQ](https://abschools.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_saxt8y80Tgg-nUMs2yQgUQ)

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1. **Call to Order (7:00)**
2. **Chairperson's Welcome - Adam Klein**
3. **Overview of Revisions to Masks/Face Coverings policy/procedures EBCFA/EBCCA-R (7:05) - Peter Light**
4. **Public Comment (7:10)** - *Public Comment for this meeting is limited to the Masks/Face Coverings policy and procedures only. Please see note above regarding the preregistration requirement for anyone who would like to comment on the Masks policy. Because we would like to hear from as many people as possible, comments will be limited to one minute per person. Alternatively, the public is welcome to email their comments to the Committee at [abrsc@abschools.org](mailto:abrsc@abschools.org) prior to the meeting. Please note that emails will not be responded to prior to the meeting but will be reviewed by members of the committee.*
5. **Discussion of Masks/Face Coverings Policy EBCFA & Procedures EBCFA-R (7:55)**
  - a. Recommendation on First Read Revision from the Policy Subcommittee - *Nora Shine*
  - b. Possible **VOTE** of Revision to the Policy - *Adam Klein*
6. **FY22 ABRSC Subcommittee Assignments - Adam Klein**
  - a. Subcommittee Descriptions
  - b. FY21 Assignments
7. **Adjourn (8:30)**

Posted on 8/13/21 at 2:00 p.m.

**NEXT MEETINGS:**

August 26 and September 9 ABRSC at 7:00 p.m.



## Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

15 Charter Road Acton, MA 01720

978-264-4700

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

Peter J. Light

Superintendent of Schools

To: Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee  
From: Peter Light, Superintendent of Schools  
Date: August 13, 2021  
RE: Recommendations regarding Mask Policy/Procedure Fall 2021

At your meeting on Thursday, August 19, 2021, you will be asked to consider revisions to the Mask Policy and Procedure (EBCFA/EBCFA-R). I have included both "mark-up" and "clean" copies of these documents for your review and discussion. The recommended policy and procedure included in the packet reflect work by the administration and policy subcommittee.

**I recommend that we begin the year with universal masks required for all students and staff while indoors.**

Some reasons for my recommendation include:

- Recommendations from the CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics and the ABRSD School Physician that we begin the year with a universal masking requirement.
- Recent increases in transmission of COVID-19 in our state and region.
- New understanding that fully vaccinated individuals, while less likely, can contract and transmit the COVID-19 Delta Variant.
- High rate of travel at the end of summer among students and staff.
- Vaccines are not yet available to children under 12.

I also recommend that you charge the administration with monitoring the transmission of COVID-19 within our schools, communities and region and consider opportunities to relax mask requirements after the start of the school year *for those individuals for whom we have proof of full vaccination* and as long as the rate of transmission remains "low." Similarly, we want to provide flexibility to require masks again in the event there is school-based transmission of the virus or we see community or regional spread increase.

We want to create as normal a school year as possible for our students. While I urge a cautious approach to begin the year, I also want to recognize that wearing masks during learning is less than optimal for many. I believe that several factors can support a longer-term, flexible approach to masking that is based upon public health metrics. Some of these factors include:

- A high vaccination rate in our Junior High School (>80%) and High School (>85%) among students.
- A very high self-reported vaccination rate among staff (>90%)
- Additional mitigation strategies that remain in place to limit the transmission of COVID-19 in our schools.
- No or extremely low incidence of transmission of COVID-19 in our schools.

The attached policy and procedures detail our proposed plan for masking. I look forward to sharing more detailed information with you and hearing feedback at our meeting on August 19.

*To develop engaged, well-balanced learners through collaborative, caring relationships.*

**Mask Procedures: School Opening Fall 2021**

Given the recent increase in the spread of COVID-19 throughout the state and region, and based upon the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics, **the District will begin the 2021-22 school year by requiring all students and staff PK-12, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a mask when indoors.** Notable exceptions to the indoor mask procedure are as follows:

- *Masks are not required during lunch*
- *Masks are not required when outside for any activity*

This requirement will be reviewed monthly by the Superintendent of Schools in consultation with the district's medical advisory team beginning the last week of September. If the incidence rate for our communities and region are in the "low" range (defined as an incidence rate of fewer than 8.5 cases per 100K residents over a 14-day period) for the preceding two weeks or more, the Superintendent may, *after consultation with and upon the recommendation of the district's medical advisory team*, institute the "Mask Procedures during periods of "low" Covid transmission in the community and region described below."

**Mask Procedures during periods of "low" Covid transmission in the community and region:****For Students:**

- All students in **Preschool through Grade 6** are required to wear masks in indoor settings.
  - Masks are not required during lunch
  - Masks are not required when outside for any activity
  - Mask guidelines for students in PK-6 may be amended to reflect guidelines for students in grades 7-12 after vaccines and made available to this group and there has been sufficient time afforded for students to become fully vaccinated.
- Students in **Grades 7-12** who have proof of full vaccination<sup>s</sup> on file with the school are not required to wear masks indoors. When your child receives a vaccine, their healthcare provider enters them into the [Massachusetts Immunization Information System](#), to which our school nurses have access. Families will be notified of their child's vaccination status in our system prior to the school year and as we receive updates from the state.
  - During periods when the incidence rate in our communities and/or region increase above the "low" range, or upon the recommendation of town health departments or the district's medical advisory team, students in grades 7-12 will be required to wear face masks when indoors regardless of vaccination status. This requirement does not apply to lunch time or to any activity conducted outdoors.
- Students who do not have proof of full vaccination<sup>s</sup> on file with the school are required to wear masks indoors.
  - Masks are not required during lunch
  - Masks are not required when outside
- By federal public health order, all students are required to wear masks on school buses at all times.
- Anyone visiting a school health office is required to wear a mask.

**For Staff:**

- Staff who have proof of full vaccination on file with the district are not required to wear masks indoors.
  - Staff will need to complete the Google form to submit photo proof of vaccination to Human Resources.
  - During periods when community transmission increases to moderate or high levels\* or transmission, or upon the recommendation of town health departments or the district's medical advisory team, staff will

be required to wear face masks when indoors regardless of vaccination status. This requirement does not apply to lunch time or to any activity conducted outdoors.

- Staff who do not have proof of vaccination on file with the district will be required to wear a mask at all times when indoors. Masks are not required during lunch or when outdoors.
- By federal public health order, all staff are required to wear masks on school buses at all times
- Anyone visiting a school health office is required to wear a mask.

### Visitors

- All visitors, where permitted, to schools for meetings and events are required to wear a mask when indoors.

<sup>5</sup> Full vaccination is defined as either two weeks after a second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna Vaccines or two weeks after a first dose of the Johnson and Johnson Vaccine

### Background on Covid and Masks Usage

Because the primary route of transmission for COVID-19 is respiratory,<sup>1 2 3</sup> masks or face coverings are among the most critical components of risk reduction.<sup>4 5 6</sup> Masks/face coverings protect the general public against COVID-19 infection,<sup>7</sup> with a recent retrospective study estimating near 80% effectiveness in reducing COVID-19 transmission, especially when worn prior to symptom onset.<sup>8</sup> In the United States, states advising face masks/face coverings be worn in public saw a decline in their COVID-19 growth rates,<sup>9</sup> and community-wide mask/face covering usage contributed to control of COVID-19 in Hong Kong.<sup>10</sup>

In July 2020, the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)<sup>11</sup> reviewed the evidence and confirmed that “cloth face coverings are a critical tool in the fight against COVID-19 that could reduce the spread of the disease, particularly when used universally within communities.” Mask mandate exemptions may include students who have chronic medical or other health conditions, disabilities, or significant developmental or behavioral needs that make it difficult to tolerate wearing a face covering.

<sup>1</sup> Zhang, Renyi, et al. "Identifying airborne transmission as the dominant route for the spread of COVID-19." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (2020).

<sup>2</sup> CDC., et al. "Coronavirus Disease 2019 in Children—United States, February 12–April 2, 2020." Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 69.14 (2020): 422.

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization. Modes of transmission of virus causing COVID-19: implications for IPC precaution recommendations: scientific brief, 27 March 2020. No. WHO/2019-nCoV/Sci\_Brief/Transmission\_modes/2020.1. World Health Organization, 2020. Available at:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/modes-of-transmission-of-virus-causing-covid-19-implications-for-ipc-precaution-recommendations>

<sup>4</sup> Wang, Y., Tian, H., Zhang, L., Zhang, M., Guo, D., Wu, W., ... & Liu, B. (2020). Reduction of secondary transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in households by face mask use, disinfection and social distancing: a cohort study in Beijing, China. *BMJ Global Health*, 5(5), e002794. Available at

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<sup>5</sup> Lyu, W. and Wehby, G. L. (2020). Community Use Of Face Masks And COVID-19: Evidence From A Natural Experiment Of State Mandates In The US. *Health Affairs*. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00818>

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[https://www.journalofinfection.com/article/S0163-4453\(20\)30235-8/pdf](https://www.journalofinfection.com/article/S0163-4453(20)30235-8/pdf)

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<sup>8</sup> Wang, Y., Tian, H., Zhang, L., Zhang, M., Guo, D., Wu, W., ... & Liu, B. (2020). Reduction of secondary transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in households by face mask use, disinfection and social distancing: a cohort study in Beijing, China. *BMJ Global Health*, 5(5), e002794. Available at

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<sup>9</sup> Lyu, W. and Wehby, G. L. (2020). Community Use Of Face Masks And COVID-19: Evidence From A Natural Experiment Of State Mandates In The US. *Health Affairs*. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00818>

<sup>10</sup> Cheng, V. C., Wong, S. C., Chuang, V. W., So, S. Y., Chen, J. H., Sridhar, S., ... & Yuen, K. Y. (2020). The role of community-wide wearing of face mask for control of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic due to SARS-CoV-2. *Journal of Infection*. Available at [https://www.journalofinfection.com/article/S0163-4453\(20\)30235-8/pdf](https://www.journalofinfection.com/article/S0163-4453(20)30235-8/pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2768532>

## Mask Requirements

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- In accordance with MA Department of Public Health and CDC guidelines face coverings must:
  - Cover the nose and mouth;
  - Fit securely and comfortably against the side of the face;
  - Be secured with ties or ear loops;
  - Allow for breathing without restriction;
  - Be able to be laundered without damage or change of shape;
  - Be made of at least two layers of material;
  - Not have an exhalation valve or vent
- The following types of masks/face coverings are **acceptable** to wear at school:
  - Blue disposable surgical masks (must be replaced daily; cannot be reused or washed)
  - Fabric masks ( at least two layers)<sup>12</sup>
  - Face shields along with a surgical or fabric mask
- The following types of masks/face coverings are **not acceptable** to wear at school:
  - Masks with vents<sup>13</sup>
  - Neck gaiters<sup>14</sup>
  - Plastic face shields alone without a fabric or surgical mask
- Staff and students will sanitize hands before removing mask/face covering and after replacing mask/face covering.
- Visitors, where permitted, in violation of this policy will be denied entry to the school/district facility.

## Face Shields

- Students with medical or other behavioral, developmental, or health-related conditions who are exempted from wearing regular face coverings may have the option of wearing a face shield. This will be determined in collaboration with the school nurse.
- Face shields may be worn (in addition to masks/face coverings) by staff who will be working closely with students who are unable to wear masks/face covering and/or if a 6-foot distance cannot be maintained (ie providing 1:1 care), or if supporting students through self-care tasks where universal precautions are utilized (ie toileting).
- Staff may wear a mask/face covering AND shield until a distance of greater than 6 feet has been reached; at that time, the face shield may be removed and solely the mask will remain for the lesson.
- Staff must disinfect the shield at the close of every school day or if it is dirty by disinfecting with alcohol wipe or disinfecting spray and a paper towel (do not use glass cleaner). Staff should not share face shields.

## Mask Breaks / Removing Masks / Face Coverings

Mask breaks will occur throughout the day at school. Students and staff may remove face masks/coverings inside when eating and drinking , when staff are alone in their classroom/office; and/or when outside .

## Approach to Support Students' Mask Wearing

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-face-masks-what-you-need-to-know>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>

<sup>14</sup> <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/early/2020/08/07/sciadv.abd3083>

During this pandemic, evidence shows that wearing masks is a non-invasive health measure that promotes all of our safety. For a number of reasons, mask wearing may increase some people's anxiety and it is important to be sensitive and aware of possible trauma history. When we wear masks we lose some of the elements that can increase trust and connection: our facial expressions are hidden and must be guessed or assumed.

- Many who have experienced traumatic events may anticipate initial interactions as negative with their heightened vulnerability and vigilance.
- Many may misinterpret tone of voice and body language.
- Many may perceive mask-wearing as a statement against them rather than as a protective measure for them.
- Many of our BIPOC students, faculty and staff have either experienced or witnessed incidents where by wearing masks they have been questioned or charged.
- A few cannot wear masks due to medical issues.

We are a community. Each of us brings our own narrative to what wearing a mask means. The medical research and science are clear: wearing a mask keeps those around us safer and is a critical piece that allows us to be together.

### **An Instructional Approach**

In an effort to encourage all students to wear masks, we will incorporate teaching opportunities within the classroom. At the earlier grades and in some special education settings, a direct instruction approach is most effective. Direct instruction could involve following a desensitization procedure, providing and regularly reviewing social stories related to wearing a mask, developing individualized reinforcement plans, or modeling the use of masks and how to take an appropriate mask break. Some resources to support additional educational opportunities for students:

- [Helping Someone with a Disability Wear a Face Mask](#)
- [We Wear Masks Social Story](#)
- [Wearing a Mask - A Social Narrative for Children by Autism Little Learners](#)

### **Students Experiencing Difficulties with Mask Wearing**

Should all instructional and therapeutic approaches be exhausted, we will incorporate failures to comply with the mask policy within the structure of each building's progressive discipline model. Masks are to be worn at all times unless otherwise directed by faculty or staff. In the event that a student removes their mask or fails to wear their mask without permission, we will follow a philosophy of restorative practice, social emotional, and behavioral support. Operating from within a culture of caring, a restorative approach focuses on creating opportunities for students to become aware of the impact of their behavior, understand why they need to take responsibility for their actions, and take steps to repair the situation and re-integrate back to the learning environment.

The progressive approach to supporting students to wear their masks with no improvement may evolve as follows:

- Step 1 : Teacher gives multiple verbal and/or non-verbal redirections/reminders in class.
- Step 2 : Teacher engages student in a restorative chat and re-teaches using visuals as appropriate.
- Step 3 : Behavior support, nursing, or therapeutic staff talks with the student using a restorative approach and makes an individualized decision based on student presentation.
- Step 4 : Principal or designee talks with the student, teacher, and personnel involved in Step 3.
- Step 5 : Parents are given the option to support the child to wear a mask or to have them learn remotely.\*

*\* For students who struggle to wear a mask where the behavior is a manifestation of their disability, they will not be excluded from school. Instructional and therapeutic interventions will continue.*

### **Procedure for Families to Request a Mask Exemption**

**Acton-Boxborough Regional School District - Procedures REV 3/25/2021 5/18/2021 8-2021**

It is important to note that there are very few medical conditions that prevent mask wearing, and inappropriate medical exemptions may actually increase the spread of the virus. In a recent interview Dr. Albert Rizzo<sup>15</sup>, chief medical officer for the American Lung Association, noted that "masks have no detrimental effects, even in patients with chronic lung disease." He further stated that "cases of exemption are very few and far between." Further, in a recent article published by the Medical Scientific Council for the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA),<sup>16</sup> Dr. David Stukus wrote, "For people with very mild asthma or well-controlled asthma, it's probably not going to be an issue. Most people with asthma, even if it's severe, can manage to wear a face mask or covering for a short period of time," and this is also supported by the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>17</sup> and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)<sup>18</sup>. In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics<sup>19</sup> recommends that children who are considered high-risk or have severely compromised immune systems wear an N95 mask for protection, and in a recent JAMA article,<sup>20</sup> Dr. Mical Raz and attorney Doron Dorfman argue that individuals with these conditions may have even *greater* reason to wear a mask.

Parents who want to request a medical exemption for their student to not wear a mask while at school must follow the steps below for consideration. Parents may not excuse their child from the face mask requirement by signing a waiver.

1. Provide/complete the following documentation:
  - a. A letter from the child's primary care physician that clearly specifies the chronic, significant medical reason for the exemption request
  - b. [Exchange of Information form](#) so staff may contact the child's pediatrician for additional information.
2. Send documentation to your child's school nurse. (Click [here](#) for a list of nurse contacts by building.)
3. A nurse will review documentation in the order received and contact the family to discuss the request.
4. Our school physician will review documentation to determine whether the exemption is warranted.
5. The superintendent or designee will review all mask exemptions and make the final determination.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/medical-reasons-wearing-face-mask/story?id=72020929>

<sup>16</sup> <https://community.aafa.org/blog/what-people-with-asthma-need-to-know-about-face-masks-and-coverings-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/myth-busters/mythbuster-masks>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/p0714-americans-to-wear-masks.html>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Cloth-Face-Coverings-for-Children-During-COVID-19.aspx>

<sup>20</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/channels/health-forum/fullarticle/2768376?resultClick=1>



**Mask Procedures: School Opening Fall 2021**

Given the recent increase in the spread of COVID-19 throughout the state and region, and based upon the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics, **the District will begin the 2021-22 school year by requiring all students and staff PK-12, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a mask when indoors.** Notable exceptions to the indoor mask procedure are as follows:

- *Masks are not required during lunch*
- *Masks are not required when outside for any activity*

This requirement will be reviewed monthly by the Superintendent of Schools in consultation with the district's medical advisory team beginning the last week of September. If the incidence rate for our communities and region are in the "low" range (defined as an incidence rate of fewer than 8.5 cases per 100K residents over a 14-day period) for the preceding two weeks or more, the Superintendent may, *after consultation with and upon the recommendation of the district's medical advisory team*, institute the "Mask Procedures during periods of "low" Covid transmission in the community and region described below."

**Mask Procedures during periods of "low" Covid transmission in the community and region:****For Students:**

- All students in **Preschool through Grade 6** are required to wear masks in indoor settings.
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- Students in **Grades 7-12** who have proof of full vaccination<sup>s</sup> on file with the school are not required to wear masks indoors. When your child receives a vaccine, their healthcare provider enters them into the Massachusetts Immunization Information System, to which our school nurses have access. Families will be notified of their child's vaccination status in our system prior to the school year and as we receive updates from the state.
  - During periods when the incidence rate in our communities and/or region increase above the "low" range, or upon the recommendation of town health departments or the district's medical advisory team, students in grades 7-12 will be required to wear face masks when indoors regardless of vaccination status. This requirement does not apply to lunch time or to any activity conducted outdoors.
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- Anyone visiting a school health office is required to wear a mask.

**For Staff:**

- Staff who have proof of full vaccination on file with the district are not required to wear masks indoors.
  - Staff will need to complete the Google form to submit photo proof of vaccination to Human Resources.
  - During periods when community transmission increases to moderate or high levels\* or transmission, or upon the recommendation of town health departments or the district's medical advisory team, staff will



be required to wear face masks when indoors regardless of vaccination status. This requirement does not apply to lunch time or to any activity conducted outdoors.

- Staff who do not have proof of vaccination on file with the district will be required to wear a mask at all times when indoors. Masks are not required during lunch or when outdoors.
- By federal public health order, all staff are required to wear masks on school buses at all times
- Anyone visiting a school health office is required to wear a mask.

### Visitors

- All visitors, where permitted, to schools for meetings and events are required to wear a mask when indoors.

<sup>5</sup> Full vaccination is defined as either two weeks after a second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna Vaccines or two weeks after a first dose of the Johnson and Johnson Vaccine

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~~On May 17, 2021 DESE issued new guidance on mask use in the school setting. ¶~~

~~**Outdoors:** Students are no longer required to wear masks outdoors, even if distance cannot be maintained. This applies to recess, physical education, outdoor learning, and sports practices and competitions. Adults must continue to wear masks outdoors if distancing cannot be maintained. ¶~~

~~**Indoors:** Adults and students must continue to wear masks indoors. ¶~~

~~As Covid restrictions and protocols are lifted over time, it will be imperative that we support students and staff who are not yet comfortable with revised, less stringent guidelines and who choose to continue to wear masks, maintain distance, and sanitize hands/surfaces frequently.~~

### Background on Covid and Masks Usage

Because the primary route of transmission for COVID-19 is respiratory,<sup>1 2 3</sup> masks or face coverings are among the most critical components of risk reduction.<sup>4 5 6</sup> Masks/face coverings protect the general public against COVID-19 infection,<sup>7</sup> with a recent retrospective study estimating near 80% effectiveness in reducing COVID-19 transmission, especially when worn prior to symptom onset.<sup>8</sup> In the United States, states advising face masks/face coverings be worn in public saw a

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<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization. Modes of transmission of virus causing COVID-19: implications for IPC precaution recommendations: scientific brief, 27 March 2020. No. WHO/2019-nCoV/Sci\_Brief/Transmission\_modes/2020.1. World Health Organization, 2020. Available at:

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<sup>4</sup> Wang, Y., Tian, H., Zhang, L., Zhang, M., Guo, D., Wu, W., ... & Liu, B. (2020). Reduction of secondary transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in households by face mask use, disinfection and social distancing: a cohort study in Beijing, China. *BMJ Global Health*, 5(5), e002794. Available at <https://gh.bmj.com/content/bmjgh/5/5/e002794.full.pdf>

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decline in their COVID-19 growth rates,<sup>9</sup> and community-wide mask/face covering usage contributed to control of COVID-19 in Hong Kong.<sup>10</sup>

In July 2020, the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)<sup>11</sup> reviewed the evidence and confirmed that “cloth face coverings are a critical tool in the fight against COVID-19 that could reduce the spread of the disease, particularly when used universally within communities.” ~~As a key component of our ABRSD Transition to School Plan, all staff and students are required to wear masks on the bus, in school buildings, and when they cannot maintain a distance of at least six feet. We recognize that in extremely rare circumstances, it may not be possible for a student to wear a mask. Mask mandate exemptions may include students who have chronic medical or other health conditions, disabilities, or significant developmental or behavioral needs that make it difficult to tolerate wearing a face covering.~~

~~DESE’s 3/21/2021 guidance<sup>12</sup> pertaining to who needs to wear a mask at school reads, “Masks are among the most important single measures to contain the spread of COVID-19. We require all students and all staff to wear masks, unless students receive a medical or behavior exemption. Masks must completely cover your nose and mouth and fit snugly against the sides of your face without gaps. Even if an individual is fully vaccinated, they must still wear a mask.”~~

### Mask Requirements

- ~~● All students in all grades PK-6 are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth on the bus and in school buildings. Families should provide two masks/face coverings per day for each child. Disposable face masks are available at school and on the bus for students who need them. Reusable masks/face coverings should be washed at home daily.~~
- ~~● Staff members may use their own masks or face shields or use the ones the District provides. The district will have a supply of disposable face coverings for individuals who arrive at school without one.~~
- ~~● Adults who have not provided proof of full vaccination, including educators and staff, are required to wear masks/face coverings while at school. If staff are in violation of this policy, their supervisor may take appropriate action, including but not limited to disciplinary consequences or other appropriate action.~~
- In accordance with MA Department of Public Health and CDC guidelines face coverings must:
  - Cover the nose and mouth;
  - Fit securely and comfortably against the side of the face;
  - Be secured with ties or ear loops;
  - Allow for breathing without restriction;
  - Be able to be laundered without damage or change of shape;
  - Be made of at least two layers of material;
  - Not have an exhalation valve or vent
- The following types of masks/face coverings are **acceptable** to wear at school:
  - Blue disposable surgical masks (must be replaced daily; cannot be reused or washed)
  - Fabric masks (at least two layers)<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Lyu, W. and Wehby, G. L. (2020). Community Use Of Face Masks And COVID-19: Evidence From A Natural Experiment Of State Mandates In The US. *Health Affairs*. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00818>

<sup>10</sup> Cheng, V. C., Wong, S. C., Chuang, V. W., So, S. Y., Chen, J. H., Sridhar, S., ... & Yuen, K. Y. (2020). The role of community-wide wearing of face mask for control of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic due to SARS-CoV-2. *Journal of Infection*. Available at [https://www.journalofinfection.com/article/S0163-4453\(20\)30235-8/pdf](https://www.journalofinfection.com/article/S0163-4453(20)30235-8/pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2768532>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/facg/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-face-masks-what-you-need-to-know>

- Face shields along with a surgical or fabric mask
- The following types of masks/face coverings are **not acceptable** to wear at school:
  - Masks with vents<sup>14</sup>
  - Neck gaiters<sup>15</sup>
  - Plastic face shields alone without a fabric or surgical mask
- Staff and students will sanitize hands before removing mask/face covering and after replacing mask/face covering.
- Visitors, where permitted, in violation of this policy will be denied entry to the school/district facility.

**Face Shields**

- Students with medical or other behavioral, developmental, or health-related conditions who are exempted from wearing regular face coverings may have the option of wearing a face shield. This will be determined in collaboration with the school nurse.
- Face shields may be worn (in addition to masks/face coverings) by staff who will be working closely with students who are unable to wear masks/face covering and/or if a 6-foot distance cannot be maintained (ie providing 1:1 care), or if supporting students through self-care tasks where universal precautions are utilized (ie toileting).
- Staff may wear a mask/face covering AND shield until a distance of greater than 6 feet has been reached; at that time, the face shield may be removed and solely the mask will remain for the lesson.
- Staff must disinfect the shield at the close of every school day or if it is dirty by disinfecting with alcohol wipe or disinfecting spray and a paper towel (do not use glass cleaner). Staff should not share face shields.

**Mask Breaks / Removing Masks / Face Coverings**

Mask breaks will occur throughout the day at school. Students and staff may remove face masks/coverings inside when eating and drinking (~~provided individuals are at least 6 feet apart~~), when staff are alone in their classroom/office; and/or when outside (~~provided staff are at least 6' apart~~).

**Approach to Support Students' Mask Wearing**

During this pandemic, evidence shows that wearing masks is a non-invasive health measure that promotes all of our safety. For a number of reasons, mask wearing may increase some people's anxiety and it is important to be sensitive and aware of possible trauma history. When we wear masks we lose some of the elements that can increase trust and connection: our facial expressions are hidden and must be guessed or assumed.

- Many who have experienced traumatic events may anticipate initial interactions as negative with their heightened vulnerability and vigilance.
- Many may misinterpret tone of voice and body language.
- Many may perceive mask-wearing as a statement against them rather than as a protective measure for them.
- Many of our BIPOC students, faculty and staff have either experienced or witnessed incidents where by wearing masks they have been questioned or charged.
- A few cannot wear masks due to medical issues.

We are a community. Each of us brings our own narrative to what wearing a mask means. The medical research and science are clear: wearing a mask keeps those around us safer and is a critical piece that allows us to be together.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/early/2020/08/07/sciadv.abd3083>

### An Instructional Approach

In an effort to encourage all students to wear masks, we will incorporate teaching opportunities within the classroom. At the earlier grades and in some special education settings, a direct instruction approach is most effective. Direct instruction could involve following a desensitization procedure, providing and regularly reviewing social stories related to wearing a mask, developing individualized reinforcement plans, or modeling the use of masks and how to take an appropriate mask break. Some resources to support additional educational opportunities for students:

- [Helping Someone with a Disability Wear a Face Mask](#)
- [We Wear Masks Social Story](#)
- [Wearing a Mask - A Social Narrative for Children by Autism Little Learners](#)

### Students Experiencing Difficulties with Mask Wearing

Should all instructional and therapeutic approaches be exhausted, we will incorporate failures to comply with the mask policy within the structure of each building's progressive discipline model. Masks are to be worn at all times unless otherwise directed by faculty or staff. In the event that a student removes their mask or fails to wear their mask without permission, we will follow a philosophy of restorative practice, social emotional, and behavioral support. Operating from within a culture of caring, a restorative approach focuses on creating opportunities for students to become aware of the impact of their behavior, understand why they need to take responsibility for their actions, and take steps to repair the situation and re-integrate back to the learning environment.

The progressive approach to supporting students to wear their masks with no improvement may evolve as follows:

- Step 1 : Teacher gives multiple verbal and/or non-verbal redirections/reminders in class.
- Step 2 : Teacher engages student in a restorative chat and re-teaches using visuals as appropriate.
- Step 3 : Behavior support, nursing, or therapeutic staff talks with the student using a restorative approach and makes an individualized decision based on student presentation.
- Step 4 : Principal or designee talks with the student, teacher, and personnel involved in Step 3.
- Step 5 : Parents are given the option to support the child to wear a mask or to have them learn remotely.\*

*\* For students who struggle to wear a mask where the behavior is a manifestation of their disability, they will not be excluded from school. Instructional and therapeutic interventions will continue.*

### Procedure for Families to Request a Mask Exemption

It is important to note that there are very few medical conditions that prevent mask wearing, and inappropriate medical exemptions may actually increase the spread of the virus. In a recent interview Dr. Albert Rizzo<sup>16</sup>, chief medical officer for the American Lung Association, noted that "masks have no detrimental effects, even in patients with chronic lung disease." He further stated that "cases of exemption are very few and far between." Further, in a recent article published by the Medical Scientific Council for the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA),<sup>17</sup> Dr. David Stukus wrote, "For people with very mild asthma or well-controlled asthma, it's probably not going to be an issue. Most people with asthma, even if it's severe, can manage to wear a face mask or covering for a short period of time," and this is also supported by the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>18</sup> and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)<sup>19</sup>. In addition, the American Academy of Pediatrics<sup>20</sup> recommends that children who are considered high-risk or have severely compromised immune systems wear an N95 mask for protection, and in a recent JAMA article,<sup>21</sup> Dr. Mical Raz and attorney Doron Dorfman argue that individuals with these conditions may have even *greater* reason to wear a mask.

<sup>16</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/medical-reasons-wearing-face-mask/story?id=72020929>

<sup>17</sup> <https://community.aafa.org/blog/what-people-with-asthma-need-to-know-about-face-masks-and-coverings-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/myth-busters/mythbuster-masks>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/p0714-americans-to-wear-masks.html>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Cloth-Face-Coverings-for-Children-During-COVID-19.aspx>

<sup>21</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/channels/health-forum/fullarticle/2768376?resultClick=1>

Parents who want to request a medical exemption for their student to not wear a mask while at school must follow the steps below for consideration. Parents may not excuse their child from the face mask requirement by signing a waiver.

1. Provide/complete the following documentation:
  - a. A letter from the child's primary care physician that clearly specifies the chronic, significant medical reason for the exemption request
  - b. [Exchange of Information form](#) so staff may contact the child's pediatrician for additional information.
2. Send documentation to your child's school nurse. (Click [here](#) for a list of nurse contacts by building.)
3. A nurse will review documentation in the order received and contact the family to discuss the request.
4. Our school physician will review documentation to determine whether the exemption is warranted.
5. The superintendent or designee will review all mask exemptions and make the final determination.

~~¶ Students who do not qualify for a mask exemption, but whose families believe their child is unable to wear a mask may want to consider whether enrollment in our remote learning program may be a more appropriate option during the pandemic.~~

## **MASKS/FACE COVERINGS**

According to public health experts and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), face coverings/mask-wearing is an important component in the prevention and control of COVID-19 in concert with physical distancing and other measures and offers one of the best ways to mitigate their spread for the safety of our school community.

The Acton Boxborough Regional School Committee recognizes:

- The pandemic will continue to evolve, sometimes in unpredictable ways, and our schools must be able to respond rapidly to prioritize the health and safety of members of the school community.
- Vaccines and ensuring access to vaccines for members of our school community are the primary strategy to control the spread of COVID-19.
- Masks play an important role in mitigating the spread of the virus
- Requirements to use masks should be based on available local public health information and consider impacts on the learning environment in our schools
- Mask requirements should strike a balance between enhancing student learning experiences and maintaining a safe environment in our schools.
- The health and safety of our school community should consider the emotional well-being of our students and staff and the relationships among them.

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District (ABRSD) may at times mandate the use of face coverings/masks that cover the nose and mouth (as defined in EBCFA-R) by all individuals (including visitors) in school buildings, on school grounds and on school transportation, even when physical distancing is observed. Such mandates will be developed and enacted by the District administration and may be amended periodically in response to public health conditions with regard to the spread of COVID-19.

Student masks or face coverings are to be provided by each student's family or caregiver. Staff members may use their own masks or face-shields, or they may use face coverings/masks provided by the District. The district will have a supply of disposable face coverings for individuals who arrive at a school building or board school transportation without one.

If and when face coverings/masks may be required for some or all members of the community, they may only be removed under specific circumstances such as while eating or drinking, during scheduled mask breaks, when staff members are alone in their classroom or office or as further described in file EBCFA-R. Students or staff who otherwise remove their face coverings/masks may be subject to remedial and/or disciplinary action.

Procedures including details regarding the provision of masks, student and staff violations and mask exemptions are detailed in EBCFA-R.

This policy will remain in effect according to state and local health department guidance.

LEGAL REF.: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, COVID-19 Order No. 31 -  
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/may-1-2020-masks-and-face-coverings/download>

REFS.: Center for Disease Control and Prevention – Considerations for Wearing Masks -  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>  
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – Reopening Guidelines - <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/>  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts – Mask Up MA! <https://www.mass.gov/news/mask-up-ma>

Approved: 8/3/2020

Revised: TBD

***Acton-Boxborough Regional School District***



## MASKS/FACE COVERINGS

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts – Mask Up MA! <https://www.mass.gov/news/mask-up-ma>

Approved: 8/3/2020

Revised: TBD

***Acton-Boxborough Regional School District***

## Information about SC Assignments and Subcommittees

The [Acton Health Insurance Trust](#) allows Acton to self-insure and offer health insurance to its current and retired employees including employees of the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District.

The district pays into an **Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust**, the funding source for future retiree benefits.

The **Superintendent's Safety Task Force** gathers data, facilitates communication, and identifies goals pertaining to school safety and security. The committee is composed of administration, local law enforcement, parent representatives, and school committee members.

The **School Wellness Advisory Committee** works to develop an action plan of priorities around helping create and maintain a school environment that enhances the learning and development of lifelong wellness practices.

The Acton-Boxborough [Special Education Parent Advisory Council](#) (SpEdPAC) advocates and advises the district on matters as they pertain to special education students.

As a member of the [EDCO Collaborative](#), our district is able to take advantage of a variety of programs and services. Our superintendent sits on the EDCO Board of Directors.

The [Concord Area Special Education Collaborative](#) (CASE) allows the Acton-Boxborough district to augment local services and provide a continuum of special education programs through collaboration with other school districts. Our superintendent serves as a member on the CASE Board.

Acton has a working group devoted to **Minuteman Technical Institute**, the current vocational school choice for students in Acton.

[Danny's Place Youth Services](#) is a community organization working to empower youth through life and leadership skills. A School Committee member serves on the organization's Advisory Board.

### Warrant Signature Subcommittee

MGL 71:16A allows regional school committees to establish a subcommittee of not less than three members to sign payroll and accounts payable warrants.

**Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee 2020-2021  
Subcommittees & Assignments**

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**ASSIGNMENTS:**

CASE Board Member	Superintendent Peter Light
EDCO School Committee Leadership Liaison/Round Table	Nora Shine, Angie Tso
EDCO Board Member (voting member)	Superintendent Peter Light
EDCO Advisory Member (non-voting member)	Tessa McKinley
Health Insurance Trust (HIT) Representative	John Petersen ( <i>chair</i> ), Evelyn Abayaah-Issah
PTSO Liaison Coordinator	Tessa McKinley, Kyra Cook
Special Education Parent Advisory Committee Liaison	Diane Baum, Nora Shine
Acton Leadership Group (ALG) Representatives	John Petersen, Amy Krishnamurthy
Acton Board of Selectmen Liaison	Diane Baum and Kyra Cook
Acton Finance Committee Liaison	Amy Krishnamurthy & Angie Tso, Yebin Wang ( <i>back up</i> )
OPEB Trust Fund Board of Advisors	ABRSC Chairperson, Tessa McKinley
Boxborough Leadership Forum (BLF) Representatives	All Boxborough Members
Boxborough Select Board Liaison	Evelyn Abayaah-Issah
Boxborough Finance Committee Liaison	Nora Shine
Minuteman Tech Liaison/ SC Rep to Acton MMT Working Group	Diane Baum
Danny's Place Youth Services Advisory Board	Amy Krishnamurthy
Legislative Liaison	Ginny Kremer
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Liaison	Kyra Cook
New Member Mentor	Amy Krishnamurthy

**SUBCOMMITTEES:**

Budget Subcommittee	Adam Klein ( <i>chair</i> ), Tessa McKinley, John Petersen, Angie Tso, Amy Krishnamurthy
Capital Improvement Subcommittee	John Petersen ( <i>chair</i> ), Yebin Wang
Negotiations Subcommittee	Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, John Petersen
Policy Subcommittee	Diane Baum ( <i>chair</i> ), Evelyn Abayaah-Issah, Ginny Kremer, Yebin Wang, Nora Shine
School Building Committee	Adam Klein, Amy Krishnamurthy
Warrant Signature Subcommittee	Diane Baum, Amy Krishnamurthy, Tessa McKinley, Angie Tso, John Petersen