



Our **vision** is to provide high-quality educational opportunities that inspire a community of learners

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Our **mission** is to develop engaged, well-balanced learners through collaborative, caring relationships

Masks as a COVID-19 Mitigation Strategy

Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee
August 19, 2021

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Presentation Goals

1. Understand the overall scope of COVID Mitigation Strategies in our schools in order to inform a decision about mask requirements
2. Ensure our thinking about mask requirements is complex and reflects the broad range of available information, including why thoughtful and well-informed people may come to different conclusions.

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Synopsis of Key Guidance:

MA DESE, DPH, CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics

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Brief History of Relevant Guidance

5/27/21 - DESE

1. *“All districts and schools will be required to be in-person, full-time, five days a week, and all DESE health and safety requirements will be lifted. This includes all physical distancing requirements.”*
2. *“Districts will no longer be able to offer remote learning as a standard learning model.”*

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Brief History of Relevant Guidance

7/30/21 - DESE & MA DPH

Regarding Masking:

- **K-6:** “strongly recommend that all students in kindergarten through grade 6 wear masks when indoors... Masks are not necessary outdoors and may be removed while eating indoors.”
- **Unvaccinated staff and students 7-12:** “strongly recommend that unvaccinated staff in all grades, unvaccinated students in grades 7 and above, and unvaccinated visitors wear masks indoors...”
- **Vaccinated staff and students 7-12:** “recommend that schools allow vaccinated students [and staff] to remain unmasked.”

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Brief History of Relevant Guidance

8/5/21 - CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Schools

- Series of recommendations of “*layered prevention strategies*” including:
 - Promoting vaccination
 - Consistent and correct mask use
 - Physical distancing
 - Screening testing to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks
 - Ventilation
 - Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
 - Staying home when sick and getting tested
 - Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine
 - Cleaning and disinfection

“Because of the highly transmissible nature of this variant, along with the extent of mixing of vaccinated and unvaccinated people in schools, the fact that children <12 years of age are not currently eligible for vaccination, and low levels of vaccination among youth ages 12-17, CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all students (age 2 years and older), teachers, staff, and visitors to K-12 schools regardless of vaccination status.”

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Brief History of Relevant Guidance

American Academy of Pediatrics

“...All students older than 2 years and all school staff should wear face masks at school (unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit use)”

Vaccination Rates

Local/National Data as of 8/18/21

Current Vaccination Rates (as of 8/18/21)

Age	Acton (A-B)	National
<12	0%	0%
12-15	77%	31.8%
16-17	>95%	42.5%
18-24	(16-19 year olds as reported at Acton BoH 8/16/21)	45.5%

Vaccination Clinics

ABRSD is preparing to offer vaccination clinics for students in grades PK-12 as soon as vaccines become available to this age group.

- Enrolled RJ Grey: **85% of eligible students** w/ at least 1 dose
- Enrolled ABRHS: **89% of eligible students** w/ at least 1 dose
- All Staff: >90% (voluntary self report as of April 2021)

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Multiple Layers of Mitigation

Masks are only one piece of the puzzle

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Core Mitigation Strategies

Mitigation Strategies **UNCHANGED** from 2020-21:

- Outdoor classes highly encouraged
- Enhanced ventilation in schools (including open windows)
- Air purifiers in all classrooms and spaces
- Personal Hygiene Practices
- Cohorting (elementary schools)

Core Mitigation Strategies

Mitigation Strategies **MODIFIED** from 2020-21:

- Cleaning procedures
- Lunchroom modifications
- Transportation modifications
- Visitor limitations
- COVID testing increased*
- Modified Quarantine Protocols*
- Interscholastic Athletics

Core Mitigation Strategies

Mitigation Strategies **LIFTED** from 2020-21:

- Physical distancing requirements in classrooms
- Restrictions on classroom furniture
- Restrictions on shared materials

Close Contacts, Quarantine & Testing

Changes for the 2021-22 School Year

Close Contacts & Quarantine

Close Contact

Within 6' of a COVID positive individual for 15 minutes or more within 24 hours (unchanged)



Quarantine requirements dependent on vaccination status

Fully Vaccinated Individuals:

- Exempt from quarantine if asymptomatic
- Self-monitor symptoms for 7 days

Unvaccinated Individuals:

- Exempt from quarantine in limited circumstances if contact was:
 - In a classroom > 3'
 - On a bus (masks required)
 - If COVID positive within last 90 days
- If not exempt from quarantine, then:
 - Test & Stay Protocol, OR
 - Quarantine and return on day 8 after negative PCR Test (day 5-7), OR
 - Quarantine and return on day 11 if no COVID test

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Educational Access During Quarantine/Isolation

Students who are quarantined because they:

- Test positive for COVID-19, OR
- Are identified as a close contact and required to quarantine

Students will be provided access to classes via Zoom

- Working with ABEA to finalize details
- Online access will not fully replicate in-class instruction
- Access and times may vary by age

This does not apply to student travel or absences other than those specifically noted above.

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Testing 2021-22

2 Testing Programs:

1. Routine COVID Safety Checks *

(formerly pooled testing)

** Need strong majority of student/staff participation to proceed (vaccinated and unvaccinated)*

2. Test & Stay Protocol

- For *unvaccinated* close contacts to be able to remain in school

Test and Stay Protocol

Pathway for unvaccinated individuals to remain in school after being identified as a close contact *in the school setting*.

- Student must be asymptomatic
- Student takes a rapid test in school nurse's office each morning during the 7 day period after exposure.
- Student quarantines outside of school weekends until 7 day period is complete
- If student tests positive on any day, must be sent home and parent arranges for PCR test or completes 10 day quarantine.

Highlights of the Proposed Policy

Proposed mask policy/procedure (highlights)

- Places responsibility for setting mask requirements with the Superintendent, in consultation with medical advisors
- *Begins* school year with universal mask requirements for staff and students PK-12
 - Exceptions for outdoor and activities and during lunch
 - Masks required on buses and in nurses' offices
- Provides flexibility for Superintendent to relax requirements for staff and students in grades 7-12 based on school, local and regional public health data
 - Requires proof of vaccine
- Provides flexibility for Superintendent to increase requirements should transmission increase

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Questions & Discussion

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