

Face Coverings (File 1.3)

The Hingham Public School District is committed to providing a safe environment as schools reopen during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to public health experts, one of the best ways to stop the spread of coronavirus and to keep members of our school community safe is the use of face masks. Therefore, in accordance with guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), the following requirements are in place until further notice.

A face covering that complies with CDC guidance and covers the nose and mouth must be worn at all times and by all individuals in all public areas of school buildings, on school grounds and on school transportation. Approved face coverings will be made of cloth and have secure ties to keep it firmly in place. For the purpose of this policy, face coverings such as bandanas, gaiters, or other face coverings not secure around one's chin will not be considered appropriate for the school environment.

In rare cases, individuals may be excused from the requirement per CDC guidance, if for example the individual has trouble breathing, is unconscious, is incapacitated, or is not able to remove the mask without assistance.

In addition, masks will not be required for anyone who has a medical, behavioral or other challenge making it unsafe to wear a face mask. A written note from a physician, certifying that it is unsafe to wear a mask, is required for a requested exemption. Parents may not excuse their child from the face mask requirement by signing a waiver.

Students with medical, behavioral or other challenges who are unable to wear masks, must be approved by the building principal in consultation with the school nurse or local Board of Health. Face shields or physical barriers may provide an alternative in some instances.

Additionally, face masks will not be required when appropriate social distancing between individuals of at least 6 feet apart is enforced:

- during mask breaks
- while eating or drinking

Masks and six (6) feet of social distancing between individuals are required for the following activities:

- Non-musical theater indoors and outdoors
- Physical Education indoors and outdoors
- Dance indoors and outdoors

When outdoors, face masks are encouraged if possible, but will not be required when appropriate social distancing between individuals of at least 10 feet apart is enforced for:

- Chorus
- Singing
- Musical Theater
- Playing brass or woodwind instruments
- Physical Education activities
- Dance

A student's mask is to be provided by the student's family. Staff may elect to provide their own CDC approved face covering, but may also choose a face mask supplied by the district. The district will supply disposable face masks for individuals who arrive at a building, or board school transportation, without one.

If students are in violation of this policy, the building principal/designee will consult with the parent/guardians to determine whether an exception is appropriate, or if the student may be removed from the school building for in-person learning until such time as they will comply with the requirement or the requirement is lifted.

Violations of this policy by staff will be handled in the same manner as other violations of School Committee policy.

Visitors in violation of this policy will be denied entry to the school/district facility and grounds.

This policy will remain in place until rescinded by the School Committee.

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>