



SCHOOL REOPENING GUIDELINES 2021-2022

Version 1.0 August 30, 2021

Table of Contents

<i>Superintendent's Message</i>	3
<i>Opening Statement</i>	4
<i>DESE Mandate</i>	4
<i>Swiss Cheese Analogy</i>	4
<i>COVID Mitigation Measures</i>	4
<i>Masks</i>	5
<i>Masks and Athletics</i>	7
<i>Masks and Lunch, Snacks</i>	7
<i>Masks and Physical Education</i>	7



Superintendent's Message

Dear Parents and Guardians of the Hingham Public Schools,

At the close of the 2020-2021 School year, we all had great optimism that we would be starting our school year under normal operating conditions. I grew increasingly concerned when we began to see a resurgence of COVID cases developing across the country. As we start this school year, I realize that there is great consternation among the school district stakeholders for various reasons. I write this introduction to our guidance document to express that our most significant concern is the health and safety of your children. I understand that we all have differences of opinion and direction on how schools should open this year. The one thing we can all agree upon is that we want our kids back in school.

We start this school year with a great deal of positivity and optimism that we will work with your children face to face for 180 days. The information contained in this document will highlight some of the mitigation measures to meet this goal. Please keep in mind that this is Version 1.0 of the document. As we learn more about our challenges and remediation strategies to address challenges, we will make periodic updates to this document.

We are all tired of COVID, and I feel the tension in schools around the country. I believe that Hingham can rise above and become the example of cooperation and optimism that we all would like to see during this time. I am the eternal optimist, and through my 33 years in education, I have learned that no matter how optimistic I have been, there are always deterrents to challenge my optimism. As we go forward into the school year with so many unknowns, I ask that you join me in facing these challenges with optimism and collaboration. I am confident that together we can have a fantastic school year. I only have ten months at the helm of this incredible school district, but I am determined to make it the best school year ever!

I hope to meet as many of your children as possible.

Sincerely,
Dr. Gary E. Maestas
Interim Superintendent of Schools



Opening Statement

The district looks forward to welcoming our students, faculty, and staff back to begin the 2021-2022 academic year. The Hingham Public Schools administrative team is planning for a smooth operational opening of the school year. This document has been developed to explain the district's COVID mitigation measures that will be in place. We ask for your patience as the year begins and revisions or adjustments to these protocols are expected throughout the school year. This document will be updated as changes or modifications occur.

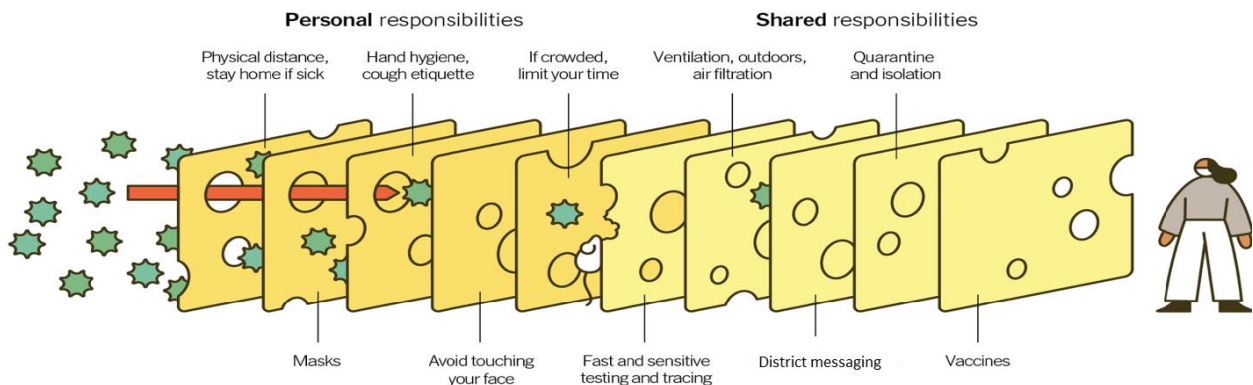
DESE Mandate

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health issued a joint memo on July 30, 2021 outlining the expectations that schools across the Commonwealth are required to be in-person, full-time, five days a week for the 2021-2022 academic year and that all previous health and safety requirements were lifted.

Swiss Cheese Analogy

Multiple Layers Improve Success

The Swiss Cheese Respiratory Pandemic Defense recognizes that no single intervention is perfect at preventing the spread of the coronavirus. Each intervention (layer) has holes.



Source: Adapted from Ian M. Mackay (virologydownunder.com) and James T. Reason. Illustration by Rose Wong

COVID Mitigation Measures

Hingham Public Schools will be implementing a series of mitigation measures to prevent the spread of COVID in our schools. These measures are most effective when used in combination with each other. Measures include: masks, air quality, hand washing, frequent sanitation of high-touch surfaces and materials, vaccinations, and appropriate distancing. These mitigation measures, often referred to as the "swiss cheese" model, acknowledge that no single measure is 100% effective. When used in conjunction with all other measures provides our best defense against the spread of COVID in our educational community.



Masks

Hingham School Committee policy (EBCFA: Face Coverings) states that “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 or face coverings. Therefore, using the guidance and recommendations from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Hingham Department of Public Health, the district has established the following requirements which will remain in place until further notice.

All individuals must wear a face covering that covers the nose and mouth and complies with CDC guidance in public areas within school buildings, and school transportation. Face coverings will not be required outside.

Individuals may be excused from the requirement for the following list of reasons, per CDC guidance:

The individual:

- has trouble breathing.
- is unconscious.
- is incapacitated.
- cannot remove the mask or face covering without assistance.

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

Students with disabilities who receive special education and/or related services will be required to wear a mask in public areas within school buildings and on school transportation. Some students may need to remove their masks for specific interventions (e.g. articulation therapy). These determinations will be made on an individualized basis as determined necessary by the clinician working with the student. Clinicians will seek parental permission to have the student remove the mask during such sessions and will incorporate additional protective measures to maintain safety (distancing, plexiglass, clear masks).

Additionally, face masks or face coverings will not be required when appropriate distancing is available:

- during mask breaks.
- while eating or drinking.
- during physical education classes.



Exceptions to this policy under certain circumstances, such as for 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.

A student's mask or face covering is to be provided by the student's family. Staff members are responsible for providing their own face coverings. However, the district will supply a disposable face covering for individuals who arrive at a building or board school transportation without one.

If a student violates this policy, the building principal or designee will consult with the parent/guardians to determine whether an exception is appropriate. The student may be removed from the school building for in-person learning until they can 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.

This policy will remain in place until rescinded by the School Committee and will be reviewed following an announcement by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education mandating masks in school buildings and then every four weeks or as necessary.

Mask Breaks

Mask breaks may occur throughout the day. If feasible, breaks should occur when the windows are open, or students are outdoors. As a reminder, meals and outdoor recess provide built-in mask breaks for students and staff. **Buildings will be communicating with their parent populations prior to the start of the school year regarding mask break protocols.**

Masks and Instrumental Performance Ensembles

The music department's performing ensembles (band, orchestra, chorus) are eager to make their return this year to their traditional rehearsal spaces in the music classrooms at Hingham Middle School and Hingham High School. To ensure a safe and productive rehearsal environment and limit the spread of aerosols, the department will be implementing various mitigation strategies as recommended by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the National Association for Music Education. These strategies will include using "musician's masks" (traditional cloth face masks with a small slit for an instrument mouthpiece) for most woodwind and brass players, instrument bell covers where appropriate, and increased physical distance when neither of these is a feasible option. We will limit shared



materials and occasionally utilize outdoor spaces when it is conducive to the rehearsal experience.

Except for flutists, woodwind and brass players in our band program should expect to bring their own “musician’s masks” to each rehearsal, and they will be required to participate. (Teachers will provide instructional resources on how to make them.) Instrument bell covers were provided last year by the district and can be used in conjunction with these masks but will not be required. Due to the unique mechanics of the flute, masks cannot be worn while playing. As a result, all flutists will be provided with face shields by the district. All precautions will be reevaluated in accordance with developing state and local guidelines, and any additional questions should be directed to your child’s ensemble director.

Masks and Athletics

Masks are required for any sports-related activity for student-athletes and coaches when indoors, in alignment with guidance provided by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA).

Masks and Lunch, Snacks

Students are not required to wear masks while eating or drinking. This includes during lunch and indoor snack breaks. Students will be expected to maintain appropriate distancing during these breaks and should be masked when not actively eating or drinking.

Masks and Physical Education

The Hingham Public School’s Policy states that masks will not be required during physical education classes when appropriate social distancing is available.

