

FACE COVERINGS

The Andover Public Schools District is committed to providing a safe and operational learning environment as schools continue to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to public health experts, one of the best ways to limit the spread of coronavirus and to keep members of our school community safe is the use of face masks. Therefore, the following requirements are in place **when it is determined masking will be required** by Andover Public Schools throughout the District or in individual buildings and programs.

All individuals inside school buildings and on school transportation, even when social distancing is observed, must wear a face mask that:

- covers the nose and mouth;
- fits securely and comfortably against the side of the face;
- is secured with ties or ear loops;
- allows for breathing without restriction;
- does NOT have an exhalation valve or vent;
- can be laundered and machine dried without damage or change of shape if a multi-use mask;
- is a fresh mask as recommended by the CDC or Massachusetts Department of Public Health if single use.

Students and staff are not required to wear face masks outdoors even if defined social distance is not observed. This applies to:

- recess;
- physical education classes;
- athletics as defined by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (MA EEA) and adopted by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA);
- learning environments; and
- eating and drinking.

Individuals may be excused from the mask requirement if they:

- have trouble breathing;
- are unconscious or incapacitated;
- cannot remove a face mask without assistance.

Accommodations will be made for individuals for whom face masks are not possible due to medical conditions, disability impact, a significant impediment to communication, or other health or safety factors, which for students may include behavioral challenges. Medical documentation acceptable to APS is required for a requested accommodation. Any accommodations 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. Parents may not excuse their child from the face mask requirement by signing a waiver.

Face masks will be required **indoors** except:

- during approved mask breaks of less than 15 minutes;
- while eating or drinking during designated snack and lunch; and
- while alone in an office or classroom.

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

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

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

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

The School Committee delegates the authority to the Superintendent **to invoke or rescind the mask requirements under this policy** throughout the District or in individual buildings or programs as deemed operationally necessary to protect the health and safety of the school community as circumstances change or arise, based on data and professional judgment. Such decision shall be made in consultation with the Director of Nursing and Andover Director of Public Health and shall consider guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The School Committee must be notified of any decision by the Superintendent to invoke or rescind the mask requirements under this policy and the basis for such decision, including the input of the Director of Nursing and the Director of Public Health.

The Superintendent may exercise this authority with respect to the District, an individual school building, an individual school-sponsored event or program, or individual events or programs being conducted by non-APS groups using APS facilities.

The following requirements apply whether or not masking is required for all students and staff within an Andover Public School building or program.

- **Students and staff who test positive for Covid-19 must follow State of Massachusetts Isolation and Quarantine Guidelines in effect at the time.**
- **Masks are required in all school nursing offices.**
- **Masks must be worn wherever required by a state or federal public health order.**

Students and staff shall retain the option to wear a mask whenever and wherever desired at times when or locations where masking is not mandated by the school district. Students and staff who are not fully vaccinated or are immunocompromised are strongly advised to wear a mask when inside an APS building or while attending a school sponsored event or program.

The School Committee recognizes that because of their individual circumstances (e.g., they are immunocompromised or live with vulnerable individuals or individuals who cannot be vaccinated), a teacher may prefer students wear masks in their classroom. The School Committee fully supports such requests and encourages the school community to voluntarily honor such requests.

The School Committee believes that all students deserve every opportunity to achieve academic success in a safe, secure learning environment. Good citizenship in schools is based on respect and consideration for the rights and choices of others. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a way that respects those rights and choices.

Further, NO student shall be subjected to harassment, intimidation, bullying, or cyber-bullying for their personal choice to wear or to not wear a mask during times when, or at locations where, masks are not required by the District.

Any student engaging in conduct demonstrating disrespect for another student's choice with respect to masking, including harassment, intimidation, bullying, or cyber-bullying, will be subject to discipline as defined in School Committee policies [JIC: Student Conduct](#) and [JICFB: Bullying Prevention](#).

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

CROSS REF: [EEAEC](#): Student Conduct On School Busses

[GBEB](#): Staff Conduct

[JIC](#): Student Discipline

[JICFB](#): Bullying Prevention

[KE](#): Public Complaints

LEGAL REF:

REFS:

Massachusetts Department of Public Health – [Mask Advisory Updated December 21, 2021](#)

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/updated-advisory-regarding-masks-and-face-coverings-july-30-2021-0/download>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – [Guidance for Covid-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools Updated January 22, 2022](#) -

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – [Guidance for Covid-19 Prevention on Public Transportation](#)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/face-masks-public-transportation.html>

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education – [Press Release: Statewide School Mask Requirement Will Be Lifted February 28](#)

<https://mailchi.mp/doe.mass.edu/press-releasestatewide-school-mask-requirement-will-be-lifted-february-28>

American Academy of Pediatrics - [Recommendations for Opening Schools in Fall 2021](#)

<https://services.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2021/american-academy-of-pediatrics-updates-recommendations-for-opening-schools-in-fall-2021/>

American Academy of Pediatrics - [Guidance for Safe Schools and Promotion of In-Person Learning Updated January 14, 2022](#)

<https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

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