



SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Fall 2021 COVID-19 BACK TO SCHOOL PROTOCOLS

Office of the Superintendent

Robert Wargo, Superintendent | Melanie Curtin, Assistant Superintendent | Brian Smith, Assistant Superintendent

August 19, 2021

111 Middle Street, Weymouth, MA 02189



Strong Schools

Strong Community

Fall 2021 Opening

Back to School Protocols



Thank you to our school administrators, our local Board of Health, the School Committee, and especially our school families who have patiently awaited our Fall COVID-19 opening protocols as we awaited and reviewed guidance recently released from federal and state agencies related to opening this Fall.

Some of the reviewed recommendations include guidance from the:

- Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
- Department of Public Health (DPH)
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
- Local Board of Health
- Weymouth Public Schools Health Services



Reviewing the Guidance

Centers for Disease Prevention (CDC)



The **Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC)** last updated their guidance for school districts on **August 4, 2021**, that guidance includes:

- **Prioritizing in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction**
- **Promoting vaccination as the leading public health prevention strategy**
- Due to the circulating and highly contagious Delta variant, the CDC recommends **universal indoor masking by all students (age 2 and older), staff, teachers, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.**
- **Maintaining at least 3 feet of physical distance when possible** between students within classrooms to reduce transmission risk.
- Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, cleaning and disinfection
- Staying home when displaying signs of any infectious illness
- Implementing **layered prevention strategies**



Reviewing the Guidance

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)



On May 27, 2021 DESE announced **all districts and schools will be required to be in-person full time five days a week this Fall**. On July 30, 2021 the Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released guidance for school districts developed jointly with the Department of Public Health (DPH). That guidance includes:

- DESE and DPH **strongly recommend that all students in kindergarten through grade 6 wear masks when indoors**, except students who cannot do so due to medical conditions or behavioral needs.
- DESE and DPH also **strongly recommend that unvaccinated staff in all grades, unvaccinated students in grades 7 and above, and unvaccinated visitors wear masks indoors, in alignment with the statewide advisory on masking**. Masks are not necessary outdoors and may be removed while eating indoors.
- **DESE and DPH recommend that schools allow vaccinated students to remain unmasked.**

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Massachusetts Department of
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Reviewing the Guidance

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)



DESE/DPH guidance continued:

- Any child or family who prefers to mask at school should be supported in this choice.
- **By federal public health order, all students and staff are required to wear masks on school buses at this time.**
- All staff and students must wear masks while in school health offices.
- Districts and schools are highly encouraged to maintain or establish a robust plan for COVID-19 testing in schools, including both diagnostic testing and screening (pooled) testing for students and staff. DESE and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services will continue to offer these services at no cost to districts. These no cost services will include optional support for districts who would like additional staff to conduct testing on-site and/or help with testing logistics and communication.
- Districts in the statewide testing program or using other approved diagnostic tests will be able to implement a **new “test and stay” protocol** in lieu of requiring asymptomatic close contacts to quarantine.



Massachusetts Department of
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EDUCATION



Reviewing the Guidance

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)



On July 18, 2021 the AAP released guidance to support communities, local leadership in education and public health, and pediatricians collaborating with schools in creating policies for safe schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, that guidance includes:

- **All eligible individuals should receive the COVID-19 vaccine.**
- **All students older than 2 years and all school staff should wear face masks at school (unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit use).**
- Schools must continue to take a multi-pronged, layered approach to protect students, teachers, and staff (ie, vaccination, universal mask use, ventilation, testing, quarantining, and cleaning and disinfecting).
- School COVID-19 policies should be practical, feasible, and appropriate for child and adolescent's developmental stage and address teacher and staff safety.
- School policies should be guided by supporting the overall health and well-being of all children, adolescents, their families, and their communities and should also look to create safe working environments for educators and school staff. This focus on overall health and well-being includes addressing the behavioral/mental health needs of students and staff.



Reviewing the Guidance

Key Factors of Consideration



Key Factors of Consideration Include:

- Low vaccination rate in the Weymouth community
- Not all students are eligible for vaccination at the start of the school year
- Low rates of in-school transmission when layered prevention strategies are documented
- In-person education is critical to providing our children with academic instruction, social emotional skills, safety, nutrition, physical/occupational/speech therapy, mental health services, health services, and opportunities for physical activity.
 - Importance on implementing protocols that keep students in school in-person
- **Guidance agrees on vaccination being the primary mitigation measure, and a layered mitigation plan**
- Local health officials have stressed an uptick in recent positive case counts

Town of Weymouth - Age	Fully Vaccinated Per Capita	Partially Vaccinated Per Capita
12-15	42%	10%
16-19	64%	9%
20-29	64%	8%
30-49	75%	7%
50-64	79%	6%
65-74	88%	7%
75+	89%	6%
Total	66%	6%

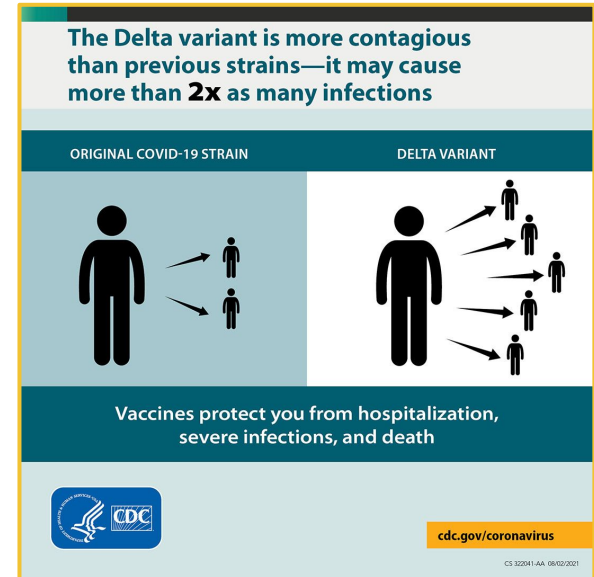
Reviewing the Guidance

Reviewing the Delta Variant



The Delta variant, according to the CDC:

- The Delta variant is highly contagious, more than 2x as contagious as previous variants.
- Some data suggest the Delta variant **might cause more severe illness than previous strains in unvaccinated persons.**
- Fully vaccinated people with Delta variant breakthrough infections can spread the virus to others. However, vaccinated people appear to be infectious for a shorter period.



Reviewing the Guidance

Back to School Protocols



Back to School Protocols Goals:

- Strive to return in-person instruction to school norms pre-COVID whenever safe to do so. Schools and classrooms will look and feel like schools and classrooms
- Use common sense and recommended guidance to establish safe protocols that are attainable within the structure of our school settings (i.e. moving meals and programs outside when possible)
- Prioritize the safety of our students, staff and their families, while providing excellent educational programs and services to benefits our students and staff.
- Continue to work in partnership with the School Committee, our local Board of Health, our Health Services Department, and under the guidance provided by DESE/DPH and the CDC.
- **Revisit protocols frequently, review with updated data, and revise as needed.**



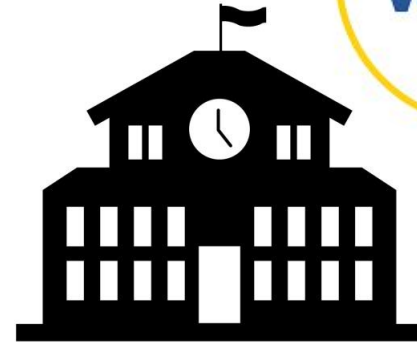
Reviewing the Guidance

Back to School Protocols



Back to School Protocols - Overview:

- Encourage vaccination as the most effective prevention strategy
- Staff and student symptom screening
- Contact tracing
- Classroom structure and layout will resume in pre-COVID fashion
- Extracurricular activities will resume at this time
- Athletics - Awaiting guidance from MIIA
- *Masking - see slide 14*



Reviewing the Guidance

Back to School Protocols


















Back to School Overview - School Protocols:

- Staff and student symptom screening
- Contact tracing
 - Vaccinated individuals exempt as long as they remain asymptomatic
- Resume extracurricular programs, activities and clubs at this time

Back to School Overview - Teaching & Learning:

- All students are required to return to school in-person
- Classroom configurations and layout will resume in pre-COVID fashion
 - Limit close contact
 - Avoid crowded indoor settings whenever possible
 - Learning spaces will look and feel like learning environments

Coronavirus Symptoms

 Headache, sore throat & a runny nose*	 A fever	 Loss of smell or taste
 Aches and Pains (recent onset)	 A new persistent cough	 Sore throat
 Chest pain or pressure (call 999)	 Tiredness (recent onset)	 A rash on skin, or discoloration of fingers or toes (call your GP today for a clinical assessment)
 Loss of speech or movement (call 999)	 Headache (sinus pain, pain around eyes)	 Conjunctivitis
 Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath (call 999)	 Diarrhoea	 Conjunctivitis

*Some younger people with the Delta Variant are presenting with headache, sore throat and a runny nose.

Children and over 80s - loose stool, mild fever, not themselves with a cough presenting later.

Reviewing the Guidance

Back to School Protocols



Back to School Overview - Testing:

- **Test and Stay Program**
 - Close contacts can test and stay rather than quarantine
 - Rapid test (15 mins), test five times
 - Opt not to test - 10 day quarantine
 - Vaccinated individuals are exempt from testing and quarantine as long as they remain asymptomatic
- **Diagnostic Testing** - Abbott BinaxNOW antigen test

Back to School Overview - Transportation:

- Per federal public health order, **masking is required by all occupants** on public transportation, including school transportation.
- No restrictions on bus capacity
- Windows slightly open to promote air circulation
- No contact tracing



Reviewing the Guidance

Back to School Protocols



Back to School Overview - Facilities:

- Maintaining upgrades from last school year
- Maintain and sustain regular cleaning protocols
- Hand sanitizer available throughout buildings, etc.

Back to School Overview - Vaccination:

- We will work to provide clinics as needed, and promote vaccination whenever possible
- Required vaccinations - students/staff/visitors
 - Not at this time, but we are monitoring federal and state discussions.
- Considering strategies to increase vaccination at the high school and upper middle school level, which could create cause to rescind other protocols in the effort to return closer to “pre-COVID” typical learning environments



Reviewing the Guidance

Back to School Protocols



Back to School Overview - *Masking:*

There is currently a School Committee policy in effect - EBCFA "Face Coverings" that needs clarification for the 2021-2022 school year.

- Masks required under this policy
- Adopted under guidance of Massachusetts Association of School Committee policy EBCFA. MASC policy EBCFA has since been revised and was last updated by MASC on August 10, 2021
- Action needed
 - Rescind former policy, and adopt updated MASC policy EBCFA
 - Rescind former policy, and adopt a revised policy
 - Make no revisions and reinstate the policy in its current form



Reviewing the Guidance

Back to School Protocols



District Next Steps:

- Send out a communication informing all families and staff of the Fall 2021 Back to School Protocols
- Add protocols to the website
- Add a “Frequently Asked Questions” section to all Back to School communications, and on the website, to answer some of the anticipated questions going into the new school year
 - FAQs will be updated continuously and new questions arise



Weymouth

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*Thank
You!*

