

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BROOKLINE POLICY MANUAL

SECTION E

SUPPORT SERVICES

4. Accident Prevention and Emergency Plans

f. Policy on Face Coverings (Voted 8/17/21; #21-70)

The Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) are committed to providing a safe environment at schools during health pandemics. According to public health experts, one of the best ways to stop the spread of airborne viruses and to keep members of our school community safe is to wear face masks or face coverings (hereafter referred to as face coverings). Consequently, the PSB are mask-friendly environments that strongly encourage voluntary use of face coverings when students and staff are or may be sick with airborne viruses, or trying to protect themselves and others from those who are or may be sick. Students or staff who know that they are significantly ill should not attend school.

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Acknowledging that there may be times where these encouraged voluntary measures are insufficient to mitigate the risks of a health pandemic, the superintendent, in consultation 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), may implement the following requirements under exigent circumstances;

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A face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth, worn by all individuals upon arrival at and in school buildings, school transportation, and school-sponsored activities even when social distancing is observed. If a PSB activity is hosted at a non-PSB venue, the stricter rules will apply at the non-PSB venue. Face coverings must fit snugly against the sides of the face, secured with ties or ear loops. Gaiters, balaclavas, bandanas, and coverings with valves are prohibited.

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

The individual:

- has trouble breathing;
- is unconscious;
- is incapacitated.

In addition, face coverings will not be required for anyone who has a medical, behavioral or other challenge making it unsafe to wear a face covering. Face shields or physical barriers may provide an alternative to face coverings as an exemption in some instances, subject to the approval process outlined below.

A written note from a physician is required prior to approval of a requested exemption. In the event that a written note from a physician cannot initially be obtained due to hardship with timely access to a doctor, a written note from an NP or RN may be accepted on an interim basis, subject to the discretion of the school principal after consultation with the PSB Coordinator of School Health Services. Parents or guardians may not excuse their child from the face covering requirement by signing a waiver. Until an

exemption waiver is approved, students must abide by the general terms of the PSB Face Coverings policy.

Additionally, face coverings will not be required:

- while taking face covering breaks under strict protocols to be laid out in detail by the superintendent in consultation with the PSB Coordinator of School Health Services;
- while eating or drinking in a seated position;
- outdoors, unless PSB educators or staff determine otherwise at their discretion.

A student's face covering is to be provided by the student's family or caretakers. Families and caretakers are recommended to provide students with two face coverings so that a spare will be readily available. Staff members are responsible for providing their own face coverings. However, the district will supply disposable face coverings for individuals who arrive at a building, or board school transportation without one.

If students are in violation of this policy, they will first be offered assistance with how to properly wear their face covering and/or be provided with a suitable face covering in order to be in compliance. In the interest of public safety, non-exempted students who intentionally refuse to wear a suitable face covering properly and/or even after being provided with one by the school will be sent home on an emergency basis while the building principal consults with the parent/guardians to determine whether an exception is appropriate. If an exception is not appropriate the students may be removed from the school building for in-person learning until such time as 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.

The superintendent, in consultation with the Director of Public Health and Coordinator of School Health Services, may exercise discretion in amending one or more of these provisions. In the event that the superintendent elects to implement mandatory face coverings, the rationale for that decision and for any subsequent discretionary amendment(s) to one or more provisions of this policy shall be presented to the School Committee for its review within 14 days of the implementation date.

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