

**Franklin Public Schools
Franklin, Massachusetts 02038**

Action Required

Subject: Policy Adoption

Date: September 28, 2021

Dept: School Committee

Reason: Required Vote

Enclosure: yes

Recommendation:

Policy Adoption

I recommend adopting policy EBCFA - Face Coverings as discussed.

Action Requested of the School Committee:

Majority vote of the School Committee is required.

<u>Vote Tabulator</u>	
A Bergen:	Y / N T Keenan: Y / N
J D'Angelo:	Y / N M J Scofield: Y / N
J Pond-Pfeffer:	Y / N D Spencer: Y / N
E Stokes:	Y / N Action: _____



Franklin Public Schools

*Office of the Superintendent
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To: Franklin School Committee
From: Sara Ahern, Superintendent
Date: September 23, 2021
Re: Agenda Item for Discussion/ Action - Policy EBCFA Face Coverings

On August 25, 2021 Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley announced a mask requirement for all public K-12 students, educators, and staff through at least October 1. After October 1, the commissioner's may allow middle and high schools to lift the mask mandate for vaccinated students and staff only if at least 80 percent of students and staff in a school building are vaccinated. Unvaccinated students and staff would still be required to wear masks.

The press release can be found [here](#).

DESE has indicated that we can expect more information as October 1 approaches and we are still waiting for that information. In the meantime, we have been collecting vaccination information in advance of October 1.

The Franklin policy subcommittee forwarded policy EBCFA Face Coverings to the full school committee in August, which the School Committee voted to remove from the agenda on August 24, 2021. Since then, the policy subcommittee met on September 22, 2021 to further review policy EBCFA to align with DESE's current mandate, to clarify steps taken if a student is not compliant, and to anticipate further modifications, as this continues to be an evolving process.

The item is on your agenda as a reflection of the policy subcommittee's discussion. Given the need for timeliness of having this policy reflect current conditions, I recommend waiving the first reading of this policy and adopting this policy to reflect the evolution of mask wearing practices since your original policy was adopted in September of 2020.

FACE COVERINGS

The Franklin Public Schools is committed to providing a safe environment in schools during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Maintaining a safe environment is critical to the District's ability to returning students to a full-time classroom learning experience.

According to public health experts, one of the best ways to stop the spread of coronavirus, and its variants, 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), and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), the District has established the following requirements which will remain in place until further notice.

A face covering that covers the nose and mouth must be worn by all individuals in school buildings and on school transportation. ~~Face coverings must also be worn outside when social distancing cannot be observed.~~

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

The individual:

- has trouble breathing.
- is unconscious.
- ~~isn~~ 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 **qualified health professional** is required for a requested exemption. Parents/**guardians** may not excuse their child from the face mask requirement by signing a waiver.

Additionally, face masks or face coverings will not be required ~~when appropriate social distancing is enforced:~~

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

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 **D**istrict will supply a disposable face covering for individuals who arrive at a building, or board school transportation, without one.

~~If students are in violation of this policy, the building principal will consult with the parent/guardians to determine whether an exception is appropriate, or the student 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.~~

Students are expected to comply with the mask or face covering requirement. Student noncompliance will be handled on a case-by-case basis, with the first goal to encourage compliance. Principals will consult with parents/guardians and health professionals to determine if an exception should be made. Where appropriate, additional supports/accommodations may be provided in order for students to comply. Students in violation of the mask or face covering requirement may be removed from the school setting until such a time as they can comply with the mask or face covering requirement. Disciplinary action, as a last resort, may be applied. Discipline will be progressive but could include suspension from school.

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 **modified or** rescinded by the School Committee.

Guidance Statements

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

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

Center for Disease Control and Prevention – Guidance for Covid-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools Updated August 5, 2021 -

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

Center for Disease Controls – 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 – Fall 2021 Covid-19 Guidance

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2021-0730fall-2021-covid19-guidance.pdf>

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - Implementation of DESE Mask Requirement - August 25, 2021

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/mask-requirement/mask-requirement.pdf>

Adopted by School Committee: 9/8/20

Reviewed: 7/28/21; 8/12/21; 8/19/21; 9/22/21

To School Committee for Adoption 9/28/21

SOURCE: MASC – August 10, 2021