

INITIAL FACE MASK PROTOCOL

Tewksbury Public Schools (TPS) is committed to providing a safe environment as schools reopen during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to public health experts, 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. Therefore, in accordance 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), the following requirements are in place until further notice.

All staff and students attending TPS shall be required to wear a mask (a) while attending school or a school function in any school building, facility or other area of a school campus, and (b) when riding in school-provided bus or van transportation. Masks can be disposable or reusable and will need to: fully cover the nose and mouth and secure under the chin, be made with at least 2 layers of breathable material, fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face, and be secured with ties or ear loops. **Based on [guidance from health authorities](#), neck gaiters, open-chin triangle bandanas and face covering containing valves, mesh material or holes of any kind will not be considered appropriate masks.**

A student's mask is to be provided by the student's family. This requirement and protocol applies to students waiting outside school buildings both before and after school, and to students waiting at bus stops.

Exceptions to this protocol under certain circumstances, (such as for students with medical requirements) must be approved by the building principal in consultation with the school nurse and/or local Board of Health. A written note from a physician is required for a requested exemption.

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

- during supervised mask breaks
- during supervised snack or water breaks

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies that inform health & safety practices

Self-management - students independently wash hands, wear masks and adhere to social distancing practices. They advocate and ask questions. They adhere to policies to keep themselves safe and healthy.

Relationship building - students work with staff to understand health and safety policies of the school community.

Self-awareness - students understand that wearing masks and practicing social distancing help protect other members of the school community and their families

Responsible decision-making - students practice social distancing, wearing of masks and engaging in hand washing throughout the day and when prompted.

Social awareness - students are mindful of their spacing, interactions with peers and understand that adherence to health and safety protocols affect others in the educational community.

In the event that a student removes their mask or does not wear their mask without permission, we will follow our philosophy of restorative practices and supporting positive behavior. The process will be as follows:

- teacher gives verbal redirection
- teacher conferences with student and reviews the expectation and how refusing to comply causes harm to members of the community
- counselor, other support staff and/or principal or designee conferences with student

If a student continues to be in violation of this protocol, the building principal will consult with the parent/guardian to determine whether the student should be removed from in-person learning and be assigned to remote learning until such time as they can comply with the requirement or the requirement is lifted.

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

This protocol will remain in place until further notice.

Resources:

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, COVID-19 Order No. 31

https://www.mass.gov/doc/may-1-2020-masks-and-face-coverings/download?_ga=2.238871232.1780049149.1599135814-902046501.1599135814

Center for Disease Control and Prevention — Considerations for Wearing Masks

<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/p0714-americans-to-wear-masks.html>

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education — Reopening Guidelines –

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/>

Commonwealth of Massachusetts — Mask Up MA!

<https://www.mass.gov/news/mask-up-ma>

Masks Save Lives: Duke Study Confirms Which Ones Work Best

<https://hartfordhealthcare.org/about-us/news-press/news-detail?articleid=27691&publicId=395>