

EBCFA: FACE MASKS

The Westwood Public School district 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 Centers 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.

A face mask that covers the nose and mouth must be worn by all individuals in school buildings, ~~on school grounds~~ and on school transportation, even when social distancing is observed. **Masks must be worn on school grounds when social distancing is not observed or at large gatherings or events.** For purposes of this policy, the term “social distancing” shall refer to the CDC definition of social distancing, which is six feet of distance or more). Masks can be disposable or reusable. Masks must fully cover the nose and mouth and secure under the chin, be made with at least two 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 coverings containing valves, mesh material, or holes of any kind will not be considered appropriate masks.

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

The individual:

- has trouble breathing;
- is unconscious;
- is incapacitated; or
- cannot remove the mask or face covering without assistance.

In addition, masks will not be required for anyone who has a medical, behavioral, or other challenge making it unsafe to wear a face mask. A written note from a physician is required for a requested policy exemption. Parents/guardians may not excuse their child from the face mask requirement by signing a waiver.

Finally, face masks will not be required during the following periods as long as appropriate social distancing is enforced:

- during mask breaks;
- while eating or drinking;
- while outside.

All exemptions to this policy , such as for students with medical, behavioral, or other challenges who are unable to wear masks, must be approved by the Student Services Department.

A student's mask is to be provided by the student's family. Staff members are responsible for providing their own face masks. In the event that a student or staff member arrives at a school building, or attempts to board school transportation, without a mask, the district will provide a temporary, disposable mask to the individual and, if a student, will consult with the parent/guardian to ensure that the student has an appropriate mask going forward.

If a student is in violation of this policy, the building principal will consult with the parent/guardian to determine whether an exemption is appropriate. If an exemption is not available, the student may be removed from the school building for in-person learning until such time as the student can comply with the requirement or the requirement is lifted. A student who refuses to wear a face mask and does not fall within one of the policy exemptions will be subject to Student Handbook Grounds for Discipline; specifically, endangering the safety and well-being of others.

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 rescinded by the School Committee.

LEGAL REF: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, COVID-19 Order No. 31 -
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/may-1-2020-masks-and-face-coverings/download>

REFS.: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Considerations for Wearing Masks -
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.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>

SOURCE: MASC – August 2020

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