

FACE COVERINGS

The Ipswich 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 or face coverings. 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.

A face covering must be worn by all individuals in school buildings, on school grounds, and on school transportation, even when social distancing is observed. Adults may only remove face coverings when alone in an enclosed space or in an outdoor space with greater than 6ft social distancing. Face coverings should:

- Cover the nose, mouth, and secure under the chin (no bandanas, valves, gators, or buffs)
- Fit snugly but comfortably against the face
- Be secured with ties or ear loops
- Allow for breathing without restriction
- If cloth, include at least two layers of fabric

Face coverings should be hygienically handled, cleaned, and stored according to CDC guidance. Never share or swap face coverings. Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled. In alignment with existing district policy regarding personal appearance, masks must not display insignia that are inappropriate to the schools such as advertising alcohol, drugs or sexually offensive material; or containing racial, ethnic, or religious slurs that are obscene, vulgar, or offensive.

The use of face coverings in educational settings may present challenges, particularly for younger students and students with special healthcare or educational needs. Families are encouraged to reach out to their building principals with concerns or questions. Individuals may be excused from the requirement for the following list of reasons, per CDC guidance:

The individual:

- is younger than 2 years old
- has trouble breathing
- is unconscious
- is 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. These exceptions to this policy under certain circumstances 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. Parents may not excuse their child from the face covering requirement by signing a waiver. A written note from a physician is required for a requested exemption.

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, outdoors only
- while outside as specified in the District's Return To Learn document

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 district will supply disposable face covering for staff members, students, or other 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. 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.: Center for Disease Control and Prevention – Considerations for Wearing Masks -
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/cloth-face-cover.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