

FACE COVERINGS

The Webster 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 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 that covers the nose and mouth and secured under the chin must be worn by ALL INDIVIDUALS in school buildings, and on school transportation. Exceptions to this include mask breaks for students or when adults are working alone in their office or classroom or with other vaccinated adults.

Masks with one-way valves or vents allow exhaled air to be expelled out through holes in the material and are not considered PPE. This can allow exhaled respiratory droplets to reach others and potentially spread the COVID19 virus. Therefore, using masks that have an exhalation valve or vent are not allowed. The CDC does not recommend the use of gaiters or face shields. Evaluation of these face covers is on-going and the effectiveness is unknown at this time, therefore these mask types will not be allowed as a sole means of protection.

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

The individual:

- has trouble breathing and has a pre-existing medical condition with a doctor's note;
- is unconscious;
- in 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 physician is required for a requested exemption. Parents may not excuse their child from the face mask requirement by signing a waiver.

Additionally, face masks or face coverings will not be required:

- during mask breaks
- while eating or drinking
- during physical education
- while outside

Due to the low rate of outdoor transmission of COVID19, students and staff do not have to wear masks when outdoors even if social distance cannot be maintained. This applies to recess, outdoor physical education classes and outdoor learning environments.

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 district will supply 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 will 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.

SOURCE: MASC – August 2020

Adopted by Webster School Committee August 25, 2020

Amended by the Webster School Committee September 22, 2020

Amended by the Webster School Committee May 25, 2021

Amended by the Webster School Committee, July 27, 2021