

5005-A1. Face Coverings

The Belmont Public School District is committed to providing a safe environment as schools reopen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Maintaining a safe environment is critical to the District's ability to return 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 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), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), and/or the Belmont Board of Health, the following requirements are in place when voted by the School Committee. When this policy is not in effect, 5005-A2 will be in effect 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.

Individuals may be excused from the requirement for the following list of reasons:

The individual:

- 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. 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 when appropriate physical distancing is enforced:

- during mask breaks;
- while eating or drinking;

Students and staff should adhere to the protocols for mask breaks outlined by Belmont Public Schools Nursing staff. Nursing protocols document, "Belmont Public Schools Mask/Face Covering Protocols" is available at this link: [Health and Safety – Masks 2021-22](#)

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, and where appropriate will be provided by the district.

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.

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

This policy will remain in place until rescinded or suspended 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>

COVID-19 Public Health Mandate of the Belmont Board of Health
emergency regulation under the provisions of MGL Chapter 111, § 31
adopted on August 6, 2020 - <https://www.belmont-ma.gov/home/news/indoor-mask-mandate-in-the-town-of-belmont-effective-on-1201am-august-9-2021>

REFS.:

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>

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>

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

Updated 2022-9

Updated 2022-3-7

*Suspended on 2022-3-7 by a vote of the Belmont School Committee