

Proposal on Health and Safety

Belmont School Committee

January 11, 2022

Isolation CDC

- CDC provided **guidance** on shortening isolation to 5 days to rebalance risk/benefit supported by:
 - Data showing ~**90% of transmission** occurs in the first 5 days
 - **Omicron symptoms are mild**
 - **Vaccines work**
- To mitigate residual risk
 - If you had **severe symptoms, isolate for 10+ days**
 - **Additional layered mitigations** include:
 - Symptoms must be resolved or resolving
 - Fever free without the aid of fever-reducing meds
 - Masking for an additional 5 days indoor
 - Did not recommend antigen testing

For Discussion

Proposal 1. Isolation

- Given Belmont and BPS have among the highest vaccination rate in MA
- Given the scientific evidence that **unvaccinated** individuals **are more likely to transmit** the virus, have **more severe symptoms**, and have generally **longer infectious period** than vaccinated individuals
- Propose BPS follows DESE/DPH guidance AND adopt the following additional mitigations:
 - All **unvaccinated** students shall be required to complete a **10 day isolation** to return to school

Isolation DESE/DPH

- DESE/DPH followed CDC guidance for shortening isolation to 5 days, AND provided further guidance on lunch (Jan 6th), requirement for antigen testing for return to school is discouraged (Jan 11)
- **Can individuals returning from quarantine and isolation remove their masks to eat meals?**
 - Like individuals participating in Test & Stay, during meals, **masks should only be removed when individuals are actively eating.**
 - Recommends a physical distance of **at least 3 feet** while eating, **as feasible.**
 - **Masks must be worn** when individuals are waiting for meals or sitting at lunch tables after meals are finished.

Isolation Belmont BOH

- Agrees with CDC/DESE/DPH on 5 day quarantine but **disagreed** on two mitigation measures:
 1. **Negative antigen test** a condition to come back to school between day 6-10 days, **tested at school** prior to entering school
 2. **Distancing of 6 feet** for those returning from isolation, at a **separate table** from others

BPS Context

- Alignment between ALL 3 health boards on 5 days
- BPS employ **additional** mitigations, example:
 - Vaccination clinics
 - Surveillance (pool testing)
 - Mandatory masking indoors, when not eating
 - Ventilation
 - Symptom checks
 - Increased cleaning
- No evidence of substantial in-school transmission, positivity rate is lower than State/Middlesex
- **Need to balance the need for providing adequate education, student mental health with the residual COVID risk**

For Discussion

Proposal 2. Vaccine Mandate

- On October 4th, Belmont BoH passed a Motion by a vote of 3-0: To recommend to the school committee a vaccine mandate for eligible students following FDA approval.
- Propose that policy subcommittee develop a vaccine mandate policy to be completed and **voted on by the SC no later than June**