



MIDDLEBOROUGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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August 30, 2021

Dear Middleborough Public Schools Faculty, Staff and Families,

On Wednesday, September 1, 2021, our school district will welcome back all of our students for the 2021-2022 school year. We are very excited about the beginning of another year but unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to impact our school community.

Last Tuesday, August 24th, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) voted to authorize Education Commissioner Jeff Reilly of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to require masks for all Massachusetts public school students and staff regardless of vaccination status. In response to this mandate, the Middleborough School Committee voted to reinstate the district's [Face Covering Policy](#) and amend it to include the Commissioner's "[Implementation of DESE Mask Requirement](#)" document.

This means that effective immediately, all students, staff and visitors, regardless of vaccination status must wear a mask while inside any of our Middleborough Public Schools or on any Middleborough Public Schools mode of transportation. Please know that face coverings are not required when adults and students are outside, during mask breaks, while eating or drinking, or when an individual is alone working in a classroom or office. Our district's policy states that, "A face covering which covers the nose and mouth must be worn by all individuals on school grounds and on school transportation" The policy further states that, "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". Please note that our district has been flexible regarding face coverings (single use and cloth gaiters/bandanas are OK) but masks constructed of mesh, netting, cheesecloth or the like will not be allowed.

When a student does not comply with the face covering requirement, the situation will be handled similarly to a "school-readiness" matter such as when a student arrives at school inappropriately dressed or not in a condition to attend school in a manner that is safe for the student or others in the building. The student will need to meet with the Principal or his/her designee to discuss whether the student can come into compliance and return to class in a manner that is safe for all. If necessary, the student's parent/guardian will be contacted. Students may also be subject to progressive discipline for deliberate non-compliance.

I also want to provide you with a link to the [most recent DESE/MassDPH guidance](#) regarding how we will be determining close contacts, quarantine procedures and testing. Our Middleborough Public School students (with parent/guardian permission) and staff will participate in "diagnostic" and "test and stay" testing as necessary. This will be done in partnership with CIC Health and is designed to keep our students in school as much as possible. This is a new partnership through DESE and more information about this testing will be communicated to families, students and staff in the near future.

The Covid-19 pandemic will continue to present challenges for everyone as we move forward with the school year but we must focus on the "positives" including having everyone back in school five days a week. Our entire school system is very much looking forward to welcoming all faculty, staff and students back this week and we thank everyone for your patience and cooperation regarding the mandated Covid-19 restrictions.

Sincerely

Brian E. Lynch

Superintendent of Schools