

## STUDENT AND STAFF FACE COVERING POLICY DURING PANDEMIC

### V. Students and Staff

#### A. Administrative Policies

##### 6. School Health Programs

##### F. Requirement for Face Coverings During 2021-2022 School Year

The CDC recommends that all school reopening plans address adherence to behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19. When used consistently and correctly face coverings are important to help slow the spread of COVID-19. The CDC provides [considerations](#) for wearing cloth face [coverings](#) and recommends that people wear cloth face coverings in public settings and when around people who live outside of their household. The use of cloth face coverings is especially important when [social distancing](#) is difficult to maintain.

This policy defines and sets forth the Narragansett School System's response to guidance set forth by the Rhode Island Department of Health for the safe return of all students to in-person learning in the 2021-22 school year. The CDC recommendations state, "To reduce the spread of COVID 19, CDC strongly recommends that people who have not been vaccinated wear cloth face coverings in public settings when around people outside of their household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain." Additionally, the CDC states that:

Consistent and correct use of face masks reduces the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and, with some exceptions, is recommended for use indoors among people aged 2 and older who are not fully vaccinated. In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors. However, particularly in areas of substantial to high transmission, CDC recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated. Masks work through the combination of source control and protection for the mask wearer. Most studies that have shown success in limiting transmission in schools have required that staff only or staff and students wear masks as one of the school's prevention strategies.

As stated in a joint release of the PreK-12 Health and Safety Guidance for the 2021-2022 School Year by RIDE and RIDOH, "It is strongly recommended that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) create masking policies requiring all unvaccinated individuals wear a mask while indoors."

#### I. Definitions

**Cloth face covering:** Cloth face coverings are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. Cloth face coverings are an example of source control. Several studies have documented asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic SARS-CoV-2 transmission; meaning that people with COVID-19 who never develop symptoms (asymptomatic) and those who are not yet showing symptoms (pre-symptomatic) can still transmit the virus to other people. [Cloth face coverings](#) are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected. Cloth face coverings are not personal protective equipment, such as surgical masks or respirators. Masks with exhalation valves or vents should NOT be worn to help

prevent the person wearing the mask from spreading COVID-19 to others (source control).

Student Vaccination Rate: The percentage of eligible students who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Facemask: Facemasks are Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and are often referred to as surgical masks or procedure masks, and are used in accordance with product labeling and local, state, and federal requirements. FDA-cleared surgical masks are designed to protect against splashes and sprays and are prioritized for use when such exposures are anticipated, including surgical procedures. Facemasks that are not regulated by the FDA, such as some procedure masks, which are typically used for isolation purposes, may not provide protection against splashes and sprays.

Disease Prevalence: Disease prevalence refers to the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 per 100K residents in a given area during the past 7-day period. 0-9 confirmed cases per 100K residents is considered low transmission, 10-49 cases per 100K residents is considered moderate transmission, and 50 or more confirmed cases per 100K residents is considered substantial to high transmission.

The following graphic displays the CDC Indicators of Community Transmission:

Indicator	Low Transmission Blue	Moderate Transmission Yellow	Substantial Transmission Orange	High Transmission Red
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days	0-9.99	10-49.99	50-99.99	≥100
Percentage of PCR/NAAT tests positive in the past 7 days	< 5.0%	5.0%-7.99%	8.0%-9.99%	≥10.0%

Community transmission rates for Rhode Island, and for each Rhode Island community, are updated daily at <https://ri-department-of-health-covid-19-data-rihealth.hub.arcgis.com/>

Cases per 100,00 residents can be found at

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1c2QrNMz8pIbYEKzMJL7Uh2dtThOJa2j1sSMwiDo5Gz4/edit#gid=2009233256>

## II. Recommendations During Periods of Low Transmission

During periods of low transmission of infection (see chart above) in Narragansett, it is strongly recommended that all individuals who are not vaccinated wear a face covering when entering a district facility or attending school.

During sports and related activities, all athletes must follow the athletic guidance from the Superintendent (or designee), which is informed by the Rhode Island Principal’s Committee on Athletics, the Rhode Island Interscholastic League and the CDC based on the requirement of their individual sport. Otherwise, masks/face coverings are not required for outdoor activities.

Masks/face coverings are required to be worn by everyone on the bus during school bus transportation by federal order unless guidance is updated and provided by the District.

### **III. Requirements During Periods of Moderate, Substantial, or High Transmission Periods**

Transmission of Covid-19 occurs more frequently in an unvaccinated population. Therefore, until there is a vaccination rate among eligible students deemed adequate by appropriate health officials (RIDOH, CDC, etc.) to prevent the spread of infection, all faculty, staff, and students, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear face masks when entering a district facility or attending school when the Narragansett community transmission rate is at moderate, substantial, or high levels.

It is recommended that students and staff provide proof of vaccination status to the school nurse teacher assigned to their respective building(s). Failure to provide proof of vaccination will result in the individual being considered unvaccinated for the purposes of contact tracing or other public health requirements.

Should the community vaccination rate among eligible individuals warrant it, the Superintendent or his designee may modify or reduce the requirement for masks for vaccinated students and staff when entering a district facility or attending school pending consultation with appropriate health officials. Furthermore, the Superintendent or his/her designee may require the wearing of masks during any “transmission phase” for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals when entering a district facility or attending school upon the recommendation or requirement of appropriate health or governmental officials (RIDOH, CDC, etc.).

During sports and related activities, all athletes must follow the athletic guidance from the Superintendent (or designee), which is informed by the Rhode Island Principal’s Committee on Athletics, the Rhode Island Interscholastic League and the CDC based on the requirement of their individual sport. Otherwise, masks/face coverings are not required for outdoor activities.

Masks/face coverings are required to be worn by everyone on the bus during school bus transportation by federal order unless guidance is updated and provided by the District.

### **IV. Face Coverings**

When required, face coverings shall, at a minimum:

- cover the nose and mouth and be secured under the chin, and
- fit snugly against the side of your face with no gaps, and
- may not have exhalation valves or vents.

Masks/face coverings should be provided by the student/family, but extra disposable face masks will be made available by the school for students and/or staff who need them. Reusable masks/face coverings provided by families should be washed by families daily.

CDC guidelines state that a mask may not be worn for the following reasons: 1) no one under the age of two should wear a mask, 2) if it would medically compromise an individual, or 3) for anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. A physician’s note cannot excuse mask-wearing, however, it can indicate the condition/disability and the impact it would have on the individual. Individual cases shall be reviewed and documented in accordance with requirements of Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

Mask breaks should occur throughout the day for individuals who are required to wear a mask. Breaks should occur when students can be appropriately socially distanced based on minimum requirements per RIDOH.

Should a student willfully refuse to wear a face covering, the following process shall take place:

**1<sup>st</sup> offence:** A teacher or administrator shall remind the student of the importance of face coverings in slowing the spread of COVID-19 and encourage compliance with the school and district requirement.

**2<sup>nd</sup> offence:** A teacher or administrator shall again remind the student of the importance of face coverings in slowing the spread of COVID-19 and encourage compliance with the school and district requirement and shall call home and impose a school based consequence to encourage compliance.

**3<sup>rd</sup> offence:** The student, parent, and administrator shall hold a conference to determine whether the student will comply with the face covering requirement in order to continue to participate in in-person learning or whether the student will access classes through an alternative format. A school based consequence shall be imposed.

## **V. Exigent Circumstances**

The School Committee recognizes that the continued prevalence of COVID-19 and all its variants create a dynamic emergent situation resulting in the potential change in public health and safety recommendations and orders from the CDC, the Rhode Island Department of Health, and the Governor of the State of Rhode Island or in the district's approach to health and safety measures.

In the event any mandatory order is issued in this regard, or in the event of an unanticipated change in circumstances in which the Superintendent determines it is necessary to immediately alter the District's response and notwithstanding this policy, the Superintendent is directed to forthwith amend the District's response to COVID -19 pandemic and to conform with all such orders.

Adopted: August 19, 2020

Revised: August 18, 2021

Narragansett School System

Narragansett, Rhode Island