

**Superintendent's Policy Proposal to the
Bristol-Warren Regional School Committee
Opening Protocols Related to COVID 19
August 30, 2021**

The Bristol-Warren Regional School District (BWRSD) acts consistently with the recommendations set forth by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and follows State and Federal Governmental direction when determining health and safety protocols in response to COVID-19, or any other transmissible virus. This policy directs the superintendent to implement procedures and protocols consistent with this policy.

I. Rationale

The BWRSD is aware that student health issues can affect their ability to learn. To provide the safest environment for in-person learning, the school committee requires that district schools implement health and safety protocols in compliance with Governor's, RIDE, RIDOH and/or CDC guidance. The administration of each school building shall implement pandemic related protocols, under the direction of the superintendent, in accordance with this policy.

Also, the district is aware that COVID infections had, and continue to have, the impact of disrupting education and causing both the quarantining of students and even the closing of schools to move to distance learning. The goal of this policy is to keep students safely in person in school for as much as possible.

II. Scope

This policy defines and sets forth the BWRSD'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.

Updated CDC recommendations (8-4-21) state,

- "Given new evidence on the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant, CDC has updated the [guidance for fully vaccinated people](#). CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status wherever there is substantial infection. Children should return to full-time in-person learning in the fall with layered prevention strategies in place."

The Governor announced an Executive Order requiring masks in schools. The Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, issued a statewide order on the wearing of masks at school. The council unanimously mandated masks for all students.

As stated in a joint release of the PreK-12 Health and Safety Guidance for the 2021-2022 School Year by RIDE and RIDOH (8-3-21):

- Indoors: RIDE in partnership with Governor McKee and the Rhode Island Department of Health, is strongly recommending, and the Governor is now ordering that districts require every person in a school setting to wear a face mask indoors, whether vaccinated or not.
- Outdoors: 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.

III. Face Coverings

Cloth face covering: Textile (cloth) covers are intended to keep the person wearing one from spreading respiratory secretions when talking, sneezing, or coughing. CDC has guidance available on the design, use, and maintenance of cloth face coverings.

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. Disease prevalence rates for Rhode Island, are updated daily at <https://ri-department-of-health-covid-19-data-rihealth.hub.arcgis.com/>.

During Periods of Low Transmission in Rhode Island or During Periods of Statewide Moderate Transmission and Local Low Transmission, and as long as such is consistent with state and federal requirements, it is strongly recommended that all individuals 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 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.

During Periods of Substantial or High Transmission Periods in Rhode Island, and as long as such is consistent with state and federal requirements, all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear a face covering when entering a district facility or attending school. Students and staff who are not fully vaccinated are required to wear a mask during recess, crowded outdoor settings, or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated.

During periods of moderate, substantial, or high transmission, all visitors to school buildings shall be required to wear a face covering before entering a district facility.

During sports and related activities, all athletes must follow the athletic guidance from the Superintendent (or designee), which is informed by 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.

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.

IV. 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.

V. Dissemination

This policy shall be disseminated to policy book holders and to all parents/students as part of the ongoing communication strategy of the district with respect to the opening of schools for the 2021-22 school year.

VI. Effective Date

This policy shall become effective upon adoption by the School Committee.