

BOLTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 25, 2022

Dear Parents and Staff,

Thankfully, we continue to see improvements in the number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in our community and our state. The Department of Public Health has provided guidance to assist school districts as we move from pandemic emergency practices to more routine public health practices in managing this virus. Below please find several important updates.

Masks Are Optional in the Bolton Public Schools Beginning Monday, February 28, 2022

Last night, the Bolton Board of Education voted to make masks optional in our schools beginning this Monday, February 28, 2022. Even with this shift, masks will still be required in certain settings including school health rooms and preschool, and as previously stated, on buses due to a federal order. Further, the Board voted that if it is determined in consultation with the Eastern Highlands Health District and the Department of Public Health that there is an outbreak in a classroom, grade level, school, other school settings, or district, a new variant or other conditions that necessitate more enhanced COVID-19 mitigation strategies, including required masking, that those protocols be put in place by the Superintendent and will be reviewed by the Bolton Board of Education within two weeks. Additionally, if the wearing of masks is required by law in school and/or on a school bus, the health and safety protocols shall conform to the applicable law.

Mask wearing is a personal choice and each person's individual decision should be respected. We ask parents to please discuss their expectations for school mask-wearing with their children over the weekend. We will continue to have masks available for those who need them. Lastly, please be advised that our administrators, teachers, and staff will not be responsible for monitoring, reminding, or managing students in regards to mask wearing in our schools except in those locations where they are required including the health rooms, preschool, and the buses.

Masks Are Required on Buses

As a reminder, masks are still required on buses per federal order. This includes buses our student athletes and coaches take to attend competitions.

COVID-19 Quarantine and Isolation Guidelines

As we transition into this routine disease prevention model we ask that staff and students self-screen daily for any COVID-19 symptoms before coming to school. Current guidance regarding symptomatic individuals will continue to be followed.

- Any individual with COVID-19 like symptoms should stay home, isolate, and get tested.
- Any individual who exhibits COVID-19 like symptoms at school will be sent home, should isolate, and get tested. The individual can return to school with a negative test result or alternative diagnosis from a medical professional.

- For those individuals who have tested positive they will be required to isolate from school for five (5) full days. Day zero (0) is the day symptoms began or the day of the positive test result in alignment with current CT DPH and CDC guidance. Students may return on day six (6) if there are no symptoms; however, it will be mandatory to wear a mask at school on days 6-10 upon return after a positive case.
- We will continue to follow existing quarantine guidance for students and staff who have been notified of certain higher-risk close contact exposures (e.g., household exposures).
- We ask that parents notify the school nurse if their child or a household member tests positive for COVID-19.

Other COVID-19 Practices Remain

At this time, other COVID-19 practices will remain in place including, but not limited to, isolation and quarantine guidelines, social distancing, maintaining three feet of distance when possible, and limiting visitors. We are taking this approach so that we do not introduce other variables at the same time masking becomes optional in our schools. We will monitor the effect of optional mask wearing before we make any additional changes to our other current practices. In addition, we will continue to work with the Eastern Highlands Health District and the Department of Public Health to assess and respond to any increase in transmission or active outbreak in a class, grade level, school, or the district. Lastly, we will continue to notify families and staff on days when we have a positive case(s).

Athletics

Student athletes and coaches will continue to follow guidelines issued by the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) and CT DPH. Current guidance is that beginning Monday, February 28th, masks are not required at any outdoor or indoor practices and competitions. Further, student athletes, coaches, officials, game workers, and spectators will follow the protocols, including mask requirements, in place in the school district in which they are competing. Lastly, student athletes and coaches are required to wear masks on buses when traveling to sports contests per the federal mandate.

The Bolton Public Schools remains steadfast in its commitment to providing a safe and healthy environment for our students and staff. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me, your child's principal, or the school nurse with any questions or concerns. We have been through a great deal together over the last two years. Together we will create better days ahead for all of us. I hope you find this update helpful.

Stay safe and be well,

Kristin B. Heckt

Kristin B. Heckt
Superintendent of Schools