



COVID-19 Policy Document SY 2022-23 Updated August 2022

The safety and wellbeing of BPS students and staff are of the utmost importance. In order to contain COVID-19 exposure and spread in our community, BPS is committed to the following COVID-19 prevention and response policies. We will continue to work in partnership with our colleague at the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), whose expertise guides our decisions.

The steps BPS is taking to prevent and respond to COVID-19 are described below. Recommendations for BPS parents and caregivers are also included.

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1) COVID-19 Vaccinations

Vaccination, including booster shots, remains the number one way to protect students and staff and reduce interruptions in learning. Vaccination clinic information and COVID-19 Pediatric Vaccine FAQs available in 9 BPS languages are available at [Boston.gov/covid19vaccine](https://boston.gov/covid19vaccine).

Community recommendations: COVID-19 vaccination is strongly recommended for all students and staff, including parent or community volunteers. Everyone aged 6 months and older should be vaccinated against COVID-19. Everyone aged 5 and older should stay up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines by getting boosted when eligible. Students and staff are also strongly encouraged to receive an influenza vaccine during Fall 2022. Reducing the amount of flu infection in our schools will help limit the number of individuals displaying COVID-like symptoms.

BPS Policy: BPS will host vaccine clinics at school and community events throughout the year and will include information about clinics in regular communications to families. Parents/caregivers will be required to fill out a consent form if they would like their student to be vaccinated at school. Schools will be working to obtain consent forms from parents/caregivers ahead of clinics.



2) Masking and PPE availability

Wearing a well-fitting mask reduces the risk of spreading COVID-19. Individuals should be supported to wear a mask during all COVID-19 community levels as defined by the CDC based on personal preference.

Community Recommendations: The [CDC currently recommends](#) universal indoor mask use at a HIGH COVID-19 community level. While at MEDIUM community level, in order to help reduce COVID-19 transmission, indoor masking is still strongly recommended and a mask friendly environment will be encouraged. At LOW community levels, a mask friendly environment is still encouraged. BPHC strongly recommends indoor mask use among adults and children who are not fully vaccinated, and those who have or live with individuals who are immunocompromised or have medical conditions that place them at higher risk for severe COVID-19 disease. In specific instances detailed below, students in school will be required to mask.

BPS Policy: Schools and buses will be mask-friendly spaces. Masks are optional but recommended with the exception of some specific situations. As we follow the data we will adjust our mask policies accordingly.

- Masks will be required indoors at schools and/or on buses for the following specific instances:
 - In all school health offices (*This is required by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health*)
 - Classroom-wide clusters or school-wide outbreaks (*BPHC and Health Services will work directly with schools if there is an outbreak. Families will also be notified from their school.*)
 - The student or staff feels ill or is exhibiting symptoms while in school or on a bus
 - The student or staff is exposed to an individual who tested positive for COVID-19 (they must wear a mask for 10 days after exposure)
 - The student or staff are returning to school from isolation within 10 days following their first positive test

- Universal masking may be required for the following situation:
 - When COVID-19 levels are HIGH as designated by the CDC guidelines, BPHC and BPS will review our local metrics and determine if masking should be required. It is likely that if numbers are high, masking will be required. If this decision is made, the district will notify families and staff that universal masking will be required in schools and offices until the Community Level returns to MEDIUM.

During periods when masking is required indoors, outdoor mask breaks are strongly encouraged and should be coordinated at the school level. With the warmer weather, educators are encouraged to explore class activities and lunches outdoors where students can socialize without masks, as well as to continue opening classroom windows when possible for better air ventilation.



Mask availability at schools: Medical masks or KF94/KN95/N95 masks are strongly recommended as offering superior protection compared to cloth masks. Medical masks (all sizes) will be available in all schools for staff and students. Each school will have a stock of medical masks at all times.

3) COVID-19 Testing & Case Reporting

COVID-19 testing is an essential tool for early identification of COVID-19 among students and staff and helps in timely implementation of measures, including isolation, to stop the spread of infection.

Community Recommendations and Requirements: Rapid at-home antigen tests are available for all students and staff and should be used in the following situations:

- Symptoms compatible with COVID-19 (required)
- Known or suspected COVID-19 exposure (required)
- Once a week on Sunday evening or Monday morning before school (encouraged)
- Recent participation in high-risk transmission activities including inter-school activities like sports competitions, performances etc. (encouraged)

BPS Policy: Rapid tests kits containing two tests each will be distributed at the school to students every two weeks and will be available in the nurse's office for symptomatic testing. Students experiencing COVID-19 symptoms while in school must wear a mask, and those with parental consent will be tested for COVID-19 in school. Consent forms will be sent via *PermissionClick* the week before school begins.

- If a student tests positive outside of school, parents / guardians must notify the school.
- If a student tests positive while at school (symptomatic testing), parents/guardians will be notified and asked to pick up their student and follow the isolation guidelines.
- If a staff member tests positive they must notify their supervisor and follow the [Protocol for Employees Impacted by Coronavirus guidelines](#).
- All reported positive cases will be shared on the BPS COVID-19 dashboard. This dashboard is updated weekly.

Positive Case Notifications to Families:

BPHC, and BPS Health Services monitor positive COVID-19 cases multiple times a day and meet every afternoon to discuss positive case trends. Below are the notifications families can expect.

- **Positive In-School Symptomatic Communication:** If a positive case is identified from in-school symptomatic testing, notification will be sent to the classroom or cohort impacted.
- **Cluster Communication:** Schools will send notifications to classrooms or cohorts when clusters of 3 or more cases are reported. Students may continue to attend school as long as they remain asymptomatic and are required to mask in school for 10 days.



It's important to note, the only positive cases BPS can verify are the positive cases reported from in school symptomatic testing therefore, BPS will only communicate positive case notifications on these individual results.

4) Isolation and Exposure

Isolating when sick with COVID-19, and maintaining appropriate precautions when exposed to COVID-19, will continue to help us minimize the spread of COVID-19.

Community Recommendations & Requirements:

Isolation: Students and staff who have tested positive for COVID-19 should isolate at home for at least 5 days. Parents / guardians must notify the school if their child tests positive for COVID-19. If after 5 or more days of isolation, symptoms have resolved, and the student/staff member has tested negative, they may return to school and must mask for the remaining days until day 11 following their first positive test.

Exposure: Students and staff who have been exposed to COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status, are no longer required to quarantine at home unless COVID-like symptoms are present. Instead, students or staff with a suspected COVID-19 exposure may return to school but are required to wear a mask for 10 school days following the exposure. For students who are unable to mask and who have a reported COVID-19 exposure, they should be offered rapid tests that they can use at home before going to school on days 2, 3, and 5 after exposure.

BPS policy: If a student or staff is symptomatic with COVID-19 symptoms while in school, they must immediately put on a medical mask and be directed to the nurses office. The symptomatic individual should go to an isolation space or room (which may be a space typically meant for other regular use which can temporarily become an isolation space) while awaiting test results if they are eligible for symptomatic testing or while they wait to be picked up from school. With parental consent, students experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, while in school, will be tested for COVID-19 using rapid antigen tests. Consent forms will be sent via PermissionClick the week before school starts. If the test is negative and they have mild symptoms they can remain in school, but must mask.

If a student or staff member is exposed to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 they should assess for symptoms and take a rapid antigen test. If they are not showing symptoms and they receive a negative test, they should come to school and must wear a mask for the 10 days following the exposure.

5) General Hygiene & Air Quality

Staying home when sick, practicing respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene, and having good indoor ventilation all continue to be important tools for supporting the health and well-being of everyone in our schools.



Community Recommendation: Families are asked to monitor their child’s health and keep them home if they are sick, and practice proper handwashing and mask wearing with their child. We ask that students use the [home health checklist](#) every day to determine if they should attend school in person. Covering coughs and sneezes and keeping hands clean, known as “respiratory etiquette” can help prevent the spread of many respiratory illnesses, including influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and COVID-19.

BPS policy: Schools will monitor indoor air quality and provide access to sanitary supplies including hand sanitizers and surface disinfectants. Air quality sensors are in every classroom and are monitored by the building staff and environmental team. Any issues with readings not being within the required parameters are immediately addressed by the environmental team. You can view the dashboard [here](#). Regularly maintained air purifiers are in every classroom and other common spaces (e.g. gyms, cafeterias). Weather permitting, windows in classrooms will be open at least 4 inches and be supplemented by fans and doors as necessary. BPS has entered into a contract with a vendor to provide industrial tents seasonally (Spring, Summer, and Fall) at schools that request them for outdoor eating. Schools will remind staff and students of regular hand hygiene and provide hand sanitizers and tissues for ready use.

6) [Field Trips:](#)

BPS Policy: Day, overnight and out of state travel for field trips is currently permitted. As a reminder all field trips must follow General Guidelines and Procedures as outlined in the [superintendent’s circular](#).

Whether a field trip is in Boston, another city or town in Massachusetts, or in another state, the COVID-19 community level of that destination will be considered, and appropriate precautions taken based on the location of the trip. When COVID-19 community levels are high at the field trip destination, field trips there may be restricted. If a field trip must occur while at high community level risk, masking will be required, rapid testing will be utilized to minimize risk of COVID-19 transmission outside of school, students and staff will be assigned to cohorts when possible, and trips with multiple classrooms should be avoided. When COVID-19 community levels are medium at the field trip destination, students and staff are still strongly recommended to wear masks, students and staff will be assigned to cohorts when possible, and trips with multiple classrooms should be avoided. If a field trip is out of the country, BPS will review travel plans on a case-by-case basis to ensure travel is safe.

7) [Other Infectious Diseases](#)

Many families may also be concerned about monkeypox or the recent polio cases in New York State. The Boston Public Health Commission is actively monitoring the situation and will provide updated guidance as necessary. Current guidance on monkeypox can be found at [Boston.gov/monkeypox](https://www.boston.gov/monkeypox). Parents and teachers should be aware that rashes, particularly those which present first on the face and hands, could indicate monkeypox and seek medical attention if these arise.