

## I. PURPOSE

The COVID-19 pandemic may require extraordinary action or protocols to keep the school community safe and facilitate orderly education of our students. The School Committee is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy environment for students, staff, and their families. Pursuant to RI General Laws 16-2-9, 16-2-9.1 and 16-2-18, the School Committee has the responsibility to enforce applicable Federal and State laws, Executive Orders, rules and regulations, best practices and guidelines set forth from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and RI Department of Health (RIDOH) for face coverings.

## II. FACE COVERINGS WORN IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

It is strongly recommended that all unvaccinated individuals wear a face covering when entering a district facility or attending school.

Anyone entering upon or attending school may wear a face covering to protect themselves. Face coverings shall, at a minimum include:

- cover 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.

During sports and related activities all athletes must follow the athletic guidance from the Superintendent, (or designee), the Rhode Island Interscholastic League and CDC based on the requirement of their sport.

## III. BUSING AND STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

When bussing students:

- Where possible, household members should sit together in the same seat.
- Students using the bus are scheduled as a stable group.
- Students shall wear face coverings as required by federal and or state law.
- Bus personnel should continue to have seating charts with assigned student seats as much as possible to assist with case investigation and contact tracing if needed.
- To the extent feasible, the same group of students should be assigned to the same bus every day. Students should be encouraged to ride the same bus to and from school whenever possible.
- Windows should be opened to improve ventilation when it does not create a safety hazard.

#### **IV. EXCEPTIONS TO FACE MASK REQUIREMENTS**

The following categories of people shall be exempt from any universal face masking:

- Children under the age of 2 years.
- A person with a disability who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.). Also, in carrying out this policy, the administration shall apply, as appropriate, rules, regulations and requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 794), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 USC 12131-12134) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 USC 1400, et seq) all as amended from time to time as well as any other applicable laws, rules and regulations.
- A person for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations.

#### **V. EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES**

The School Committee recognizes that the continued prevalence of COVID-19 and all its variants creates 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, the Superintendent is directed to forthwith amend the District's response to COVID-19 pandemic and to conform with all such orders.

#### **VI. DEVELOPMENT OF PROTOCOL**

The Superintendent of Schools shall develop a protocol to facilitate this policy. This protocol should include: (1) staff and family and student engagement; (2) public facing efforts to educate students, families, staff and other third parties around the need to wearing face coverings; and other actions to support the staff, student and families to promote healthy and safe decisions for students.

East Providence School Committee  
Policy Adopted: November 10, 2020  
Policy Amended: September 14, 2021