



MEMORANDUM

To: Berlin-Boylston Regional School District

From: Jeffrey T. Zanghi, Superintendent of Schools

Date: August 13, 2021

Re: Decision on Masking for the Reopening of Schools (pending Berlin-Boylston School Committee Approval on Tuesday, August 31st and additional updated DESE guidance)

Greetings:

By now, many of you are aware that updated masking guidelines from the MA DESE have been sent to all school districts in the Commonwealth. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) language on mask guidance for indoors has changed from "*required*" (May 27, 2021) to "*strongly recommended*" (July 30, 2021). This is in accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The July 30th mask guidelines which now "*advise*" all vaccinated individuals to wear masks indoors while masking continues to be "*mandatory*" for all individuals on public and private transportation systems. (To read DESE Guidance of July 30, 2021, in full, please click [here](#).)

We have consulted, to date, with the following stakeholders: MA Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, the MA Superintendents Association, parents in the Berlin and Boylston school communities, the local Boards of Health in Berlin and Boylston, the Center for Disease Control, the Berlin-Boylston Regional School District legal counsel, the MA Department of Public Health, members of the Berlin-Boylston Regional School Committee, and the Berlin-Boylston Educators Association.

At this time, therefore, it is my decision to recommend to the School Committee that we follow the DESE guidelines as they stand today, in the reopening of our schools on August 26th for staff and August 30th for students. While this decision may not be agreeable to all families, this option gives parents the ability to make decisions individually about their own student's well-being in relation to the larger school community. We realize that a large portion of our community is expecting mask mandates, it should be noted that at this time, mask mandates would largely be unenforceable and create additional disruptions to the learning process.

Specifically, we will be following these actions taken from the guideline:

- *"This fall, DESE, and DPH strongly recommend that all students in kindergarten through grade 6 wear masks when indoors, except students who cannot do so due to medical conditions or behavioral needs. Masks are not necessary outdoors and may be removed while eating indoors."*
- *"DESE and DPH also strongly recommend that unvaccinated staff in all grades, unvaccinated students in grades 7 and above, and unvaccinated visitors wear masks indoors, in alignment with the statewide advisory on masking." **While this advisory only recommends masks for unvaccinated visitors, BBRSD will require ALL visitors to wear a mask while visiting our buildings, regardless of vaccination status.***
- *"DESE and DPH recommend that schools allow vaccinated students to remain unmasked."*
- *"Any individual at higher risk for severe disease from COVID or with a household member who is at high risk is encouraged to mask regardless of vaccination status consistent with the updated DPH Advisory on Face Coverings and Masks."*

It is important to note that **any child, family member or staff member who prefers to mask at school will be supported in their choice.**

- By federal public health order, all students and staff are required to wear masks on school buses at this time.
- All staff and students must wear masks while in school health offices. Additional guidance for school health professionals is forthcoming from DPH.

The School Committee will vote on this recommendation at its first school committee meeting of the school year on **Tuesday, August 31st.**

Also, as promised, I am sending out the results of the Berlin-Boylston district-wide survey that was distributed this past Monday.

Total respondents:

Responses to the two survey questions: 794

1. Do you think that the Berlin-Boylston Regional School District should require students to wear masks when we return to school this year?

Yes - 54.7% (434)

No - 45.3% (360)

2. If you answered "yes" to the first question, what grades should be required to mask?

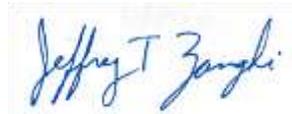
All grades K-12 - 64.6% (282)

K-6 - 26.1% (114)

7-12 all - 5.3% (23)

7-12 unvaccinated - 26.8% (117)

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeffrey T. Zanghi". The signature is written in a cursive style and is contained within a light blue rectangular border.

Jeffrey T. Zanghi,

Superintendent of Schools

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