



**Berlin-Boylston Regional School District
Re-Entry Plan '21
Presented to the School Committee
August 31, 2021**

Superintendent's Introduction to the Plan

As we prepare for the full re-entry of our students to the Berlin-Boylston Regional School District, we continue to honor our commitment to the students, staff and families to whom we owe a promise of a safe and equitable learning environment.

Beginning in March 2020, our school district faced challenges to learning the likes of which we have never experienced. In March of 2020, as schools closed, none of us, staff, parents, community members, and certainly, our children, could ever imagine that we would be facing not days, weeks, or even months ahead, but more than a year of a world that turned us upside down and permeated every aspect of our lives. When we returned to school in April 2021, school looked and felt very different.

This year, our school opening is refreshingly different, and we welcome the chance to bring all of our students, staff and administrators fully back in-person to the district. We have revisited our earlier re-entry plan created in March 2021 (Re-entry 2.0) and revised the information to better reflect the current conditions within which we will need to operate to effectively return.

I invite you to carefully read our Re-Entry Plan '21 so that you are familiar with the procedures and practices that will be implemented in our full-return to school as well as requirements for in-person attendance in our schools.

I would like to thank you for your patience and understanding as we navigate through these latest challenges to educating our students in a safe environment and to what is in the best interests of the students, families, and staff in the Berlin-Boylston Regional School District.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey T. Zanghi, Superintendent of Schools

Table of Contents

Section 1 - Full Time, In Person Learning.....	3
Section 2 - Health and Safety Precautions.....	3
Section 3 - Transportation.....	6
Section 4 - Testing & Quarantine Response Protocols.....	7
Section 5 - Disciplinary Protocols.....	11
Section 6 - Frequently Asked Questions.....	12
Appendix A- August 25, 2021 Updated Guidance by DESE and Massachusetts DPH.....	14
Appendix B - August 13, 2021 - MA DESE Testing & Quarantine Response Protocols.....	14
Appendix C - Department of Elementary and Secondary Education & Department of Public Health Frequently Asked Questions, August 20, 2021.....	14

Section 1 - Full-Time, In-Person Learning

The Berlin-Boylston Regional School District will provide full-time, in-person education for all students. A remote schooling option will **not** be provided; remote schooling is not legally permitted for public school attendance for this school year per the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Students who miss school due to illness or quarantine will be provided with reasonable opportunities to keep up with and/or make up academic work, per existing school policies. The school district will follow its usual approach in supporting students who must miss school for a significant, extended period of time (more than 14 days) due to serious illness. Families who choose not to send their child to in-person public school in the District must either homeschool their child, enroll their child in an approved Commonwealth Virtual School, or enroll them in an approved private school.

As students return to school this year, they will be provided with appropriate instruction based upon the standards indicated for their grade level. Student learning gaps, whether individual or collective, will be addressed through classroom instruction followed by additional support through our Response to Intervention Model. Formative, summative, and benchmark assessment results, taken in regular intervals, will be used to guide the level of interventions necessary to ensure that students are approaching or have met grade level expectations.

Section 2 - Health and Safety Precautions

Upon the full return of students into our schools, our approach to health and safety will be to continue to follow guidance by the MA DESE and Department of Public Health.

A. Training: All staff have been trained in safety protocols and nursing staff will continue to reinforce hygiene training for students.

B. Masking: We will adhere to the August 24, 2021 mandate voted by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. At the start of the school year, and currently until October 1, 2021, all students K-12, staff, and visitors in all schools will be required to wear a mask indoors regardless of vaccination status. [See the mandatory requirements here.](#) It is strongly recommended that students younger than age 5 also wear a mask in school.

Masks should cover an individual's nose and mouth. For more information about appropriate mask use, please see: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/cloth-face-covering.pdf>.

Masks will be removed when eating and drinking, and we will continue our approach from last spring in which mask breaks will be provided according to the age and needs of students. Only individuals with a documented and district-approved medical exemption, or whose disability prevents them from wearing a mask, will be exempted from the masking requirement.

Masks are required on school buses per federal mandate. "Masks are Required On Public and Private Transportation, including on the MBTA, commuter rail, buses, ferries, and airplanes, and while in rideshares (Uber and Lyft), taxis, and livery vehicles, as required by the [Centers for Disease Control January 29, 2021 Order](#). Face coverings are also required at all times in transportation hubs, including train stations, bus stops, and airports. The requirement applies to riders and workers."
(<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-mask-requirements>)

C. Handwashing and Hand Sanitizing: According to the CDC, while handwashing with soap and water is the best option, alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol) may be utilized when hand washing is not feasible.

- a. **Hand Washing** - When hand washing, individuals should use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds, wait for visible lather, rinse thoroughly, and dry with an individual disposable towel.
- b. **Hand sanitizing** - If handwashing is not feasible, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropyl content can be used. Hand sanitizer should be applied to all surfaces of the hands and in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry. Hand sanitizer should be placed at key locations (e.g., building entrances, cafeteria, classrooms, outside bathrooms).

D. General Cleaning and Hygiene: Regular cleaning and sanitization of high touch areas will take place throughout the day.

E. Physical Distancing - The MA Department of Elementary & Secondary Education has removed any mandates regarding physical distancing and strict physical distancing between students will not be required, even during meals. We will separate students as much as possible when masks are removed indoors during mealtimes.

In order to provide a more normalized school experience, there will be times when the distance between students in the classrooms will also be less than three feet. This is due to the importance of flexibility for instructional seating arrangements for small group work, the social emotional importance of a more normal lunch experience, and the ability to utilize gymnasiums for physical education and activity.

F. School Events - We expect to hold indoor school events with masking. Events that typically have larger audiences may be modified.

G. Clubs, Activities and Electives - Currently, there are no restrictions on indoor activities. Schools are encouraged to maintain distance between individuals as feasible or use outdoor space.

H. Music Ensembles - Chorus, band, and orchestra classes will be held with modifications as warranted based upon guidelines such as those recently issued by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education in conjunction with the Massachusetts Music Educators Association. Masks may be removed indoors when necessary to participate in elective classes (e.g. the use of wind instruments in band). When traditional masks cannot be worn, we will consider additional mitigations, such as the use of instrument masks (masks with a slit or hole cut for the mouthpiece) or bell covers, along with physical distancing or outdoor classes as feasible.

I. Athletics - Interscholastic athletics will be held and will follow Massachusetts [Interscholastic Athletic Association \(MIAA\) guidelines](#).

J. Visitors/Volunteers - Visitors will be allowed in buildings, subject to the mask requirement indoors. Volunteers will also be allowed; given that this is an unusual transition year, it is likely that teachers will establish classroom routines before inviting classroom volunteers to come in. Please be patient as teachers and principals work out these details.

K. Illness - We will continue to request that all staff and students review the [Daily Self Screening](#) checklist prior to going to school.

L. Vaccinations - The District's commitment to providing opportunities for staff vaccinations will continue beyond the return date to school and throughout the remainder of the 2021-2022 school year.

BBRSD will hold a mobile vaccination clinic on September 15, 2021 at Tahanto Regional Middle/High School, 1001 Main Street, Boylston, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Please click [here](#) for more information or please click [here](#) to make an appointment.

M. Ventilation - Ventilation is one of the important layers of mitigation to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The District will continue its enhanced ventilation practices that were in place last year. This includes maximizing fresh air exchange through HVAC systems that meet or exceed air turnover standards, regular cleaning of filters, opening windows wherever and whenever possible, and providing air purifiers for occupied spaces without windows.

Section 3 - Transportation

Mask mandate: Masks are still required to be worn by all passengers on all transportation systems (including public school transportation) per a federal mandate from the [Federal Department of Transportation](#). Parents are responsible for providing their children with masks. **Students will not be permitted to board the bus without a mask, so please be mindful of this requirement.**

Other safety considerations: Physical distancing requirements have been lifted, so the buses will be operating at full capacity. Windows will be kept open for ventilation purposes as often as possible, except in cases of severe weather. High touch areas will be wiped down and cleaned on a daily basis by drivers.

Bus routes information: With capacity and distance restrictions lifted, we have returned to our past practice of assigning all Berlin and Boylston resident students to a bus and bus stop. We know from past experience that there are a fair number of students that will drive, or get a ride to school, so the ridership levels on each route are going to be overstated, and travel times will also adjust, as routes and traffic patterns settle into a more predictable routine after a few weeks of school. The posted bus routes show estimated pick-up and drop-off times for each stop on the route – these times shown are estimates only, generated automatically from the bus routing software. Actual times will differ from what is shown.

The routes for each school can be accessed via the links below:

Berlin Memorial: <https://www.bbrsd.org/Page/1576>

Boylston Elementary: <https://www.bbrsd.org/Page/1575>

Tahanto MS-HS: <https://www.bbrsd.org/Page/1574>

Section 4 - Testing & Quarantine Response Protocols

This section outlines the list of COVID-19 symptoms, provides the definition of a close contact, and outlines situations where close contacts are exempt from COVID-19 testing and directs individuals to quarantine response protocols including isolation, quarantine, and Test and Stay. (see the MA DESE/DPH Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 , August 13, 2021 [here](#)). Consent forms will be required by parents at the beginning of the year and/or prior to testing. Please click [here](#) to view the DESE Protocols Flow Chart.

Definition of a Close Contact: A Close Contact remains defined as someone who is within six feet of a COVID positive individual for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more in a twenty-four hour period.

Please note that the *at-risk* exposure time begins 48 hours prior to symptom onset (or time of positive test if asymptomatic) and continues until the time the COVID-19 positive individual is isolated.

In general, close contacts should follow the testing and quarantine response protocols outlined in this plan. Certain close contacts, however, are exempted from testing and quarantine response protocols as noted below:

Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts: Individuals who are asymptomatic and fully vaccinated are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.

Classroom close contacts: An individual who is exposed to a COVID-19 positive individual in the classroom while both individuals were masked, so long as the individuals were spaced at least 3 feet apart, is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols. Individuals who are not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols would follow Protocol B-1, the Test and Stay protocol with parental consent. Those without parental consent for the Test and Stay program will follow Protocol B-2.

Bus close contacts: Individuals on buses must be masked according to federal requirements. As such, individuals who are masked on buses when windows are open are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.

Close contacts who have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days: An individual who has been previously diagnosed with COVID-19 and then becomes a close contact of someone with COVID-19 is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols if:

- the exposure occurred within 90 days of the onset of their own illness AND
- the exposed individual is recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms.

Types of Protocols

Protocol A: COVID-19 Positive Diagnosis

For individuals who test positive for COVID-19 Protocol A for individuals who test positive • Duration: Self-isolation for COVID-19 positive cases is a minimum of 10 days after symptom onset or after positive PCR or antigen test, if asymptomatic. • Return to school: After 10 days⁵ and once they have: o Been without fever for 24 hours (and without taking fever-reducing medications); and o Experienced improvement in other symptoms; and o Individuals who do not meet these criteria after 10 days may receive clearance from either public health authority contact tracers (the local board of health or Community Tracing Collaborative) or school health professional before returning to school. • Note: Return to school should be based on time and symptom resolution. Repeat testing prior to return is not recommended.

The District will primarily focus on Protocol B-1 as a first option but will incorporate Protocols B-2 and B-3 as well.

Protocol B-1 (Recommended): Test and Stay Program

The Test and Stay Program will be available by October 1, 2021. Before this time, Protocol B-2 or B-3 will be followed.

The Test and Stay program is intended for school-based close contacts only. Individuals identified as close contact of an individual outside of school should follow Protocol B-2 or B-3 as outlined below.

Duration of Test and Stay: 7 days from the date of exposure. Some of these days could be non-school days (i.e weekends or holidays). Testing is only required on school days unless the individual participates in school-sponsored sports or extracurricular activities that fall on a non-school day. If the 7th day falls over a non-school day, the individual must be tested on the morning of their return to school. On the 8th day, a student will exit the Test and Stay protocol, assuming all tests were negative, and they remain asymptomatic.

Return to School: Close contacts can remain in school and do not have to quarantine, as long as they:

- are asymptomatic
- wear masks in school at all times, other than when eating or drinking. When these individuals cannot be masked (i.e., when eating or drinking) they should maintain 3 feet of distance from other individuals to the extent feasible.

- take a rapid antigen test (e.g., BinaxNOW) on each school day (upon arrival) and receive a negative result. When the 7 days from date of exposure includes weekends or holidays, individuals should quarantine on weekends, and if they remain asymptomatic, upon return to school be tested immediately. If the individual remains negative, they can stay in school.
- conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14, and self-isolate at home if symptoms develop.

Note: If an individual has symptoms at the time they are designated as a close contact or develops symptoms during the Test and Stay period or the 14 days following initial exposure, they should follow the protocol for symptomatic individuals (Protocol C). If an individual tests positive at any time, they should follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 (Protocol A).

Protocol B-2: Traditional protocol (if school does not have access to rapid daily testing or family or adult individual chooses not to participate in Test and Stay)

Duration: Quarantine is at least 7 days from the date of exposure

Return to School: After 7 days, returning on day 8, provided that they:

- Remain asymptomatic
- Receive a COVID test (PCR or rapid antigen) on day 5 or later and receive a negative result
- Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14, and self-isolate if symptoms develop.

Note: If an individual has symptoms at the time they are designated as a close contact or within the 14 days following initial exposure, they follow the protocol for symptomatic individuals (Protocol C). If an individual tests positive at anytime, they follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 (Protocol A).

Protocol B-3: Alternate protocol for those who choose not to receive a COVID test

Duration: Quarantine is at least 10 days from the date of exposure

Return to School: After 10 days, returning on day 11, provided that they:

- Have not experienced symptoms up to this point
- Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14 and self-isolate if symptoms develop

Note: If an individual has symptoms at the time they are designated as a close contact or within the 14 days following initial exposure, they follow the protocol for symptomatic individuals (Protocol C). If an individual tests positive at any time, they follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 (Protocol A).

Protocol C for symptomatic individuals:

Protocol C-1 (Recommended): Return to school post-symptoms with test

Duration: Dependent on symptom resolution

Return to School: Individuals may return to school after they:

- have received a negative PCR test result for COVID-19. (Note: So long as the individual is not a close contact, if a medical professional makes an alternative diagnosis for the COVID-19-like symptoms, the individual may use this recommendation (e.g., for influenza or strep pharyngitis) in lieu of a PCR test).
- have improvement in symptoms
- have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. (Note: If the symptomatic individual was a close contact who is not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols, after symptoms resolve and they receive a negative PCR test, they should follow Protocol B-1 for Test and Stay.
- if Test and Stay is not available or the family or adult individual opts not to participate, they follow Protocol B-2 or B-3.

Protocol C-2: Alternative protocol for symptomatic individuals who are not close contacts and choose not to receive a COVID test to return to school.

Duration: Isolation is at least 10 days from symptom onset

Return to School: After 10 days, returning on day 11, assuming they:

- Have improvement in symptoms
- Have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.

Note: We will not be participating in nor following the requirements for Pooled Testing as they appear in Section 3 of the MA DESE document.

COVID-19 Related Medical Waiting Room Space

In order to minimize transmission of COVID-19, each school has a medical waiting space available for students displaying COVID-19 symptoms. The space must be separate from the main nurse's office or other space where routine medical care is provided. All students and staff that are sent home with Covid-related symptoms will be

asked to follow up with their physician. A negative covid test result or an alternative diagnosis from the physician will be required in order for the staff or student to return to in person learning. Should the student or staff not test, they must remain home in self-isolation for 10 days. For more details please see:

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/protocols/>, page 8

At **Tahanto**, the nursing suite has separate exam rooms and one room with a door will be designated as the isolated waiting room. A student who shows COVID-19 symptoms during the school day will be moved to the medical waiting room pre-designated for medically-related isolation until they can be picked up as soon as possible by a family member.

At **Berlin Memorial School**, the medical waiting room is located next to the nurse's office. A student that shows COVID-19 symptoms during the school day will stay in the medical waiting room until picked up by a parent/guardian. The parent/guardian will be asked to pull up to the front of the school and call the front desk on arrival. Their child will be escorted to the car by the school nurse.

At **Boylston Elementary School**, the medical waiting room is located in the old science lab across the hallway from the nurses office. A student that shows COVID-19 symptoms during the school day will stay in the medical waiting room until picked up by a parent/guardian. The parent/guardian will be asked to come to the back door of the school and call the nurse upon arrival. Their child will be escorted to the car by the school nurse.

Section 5: Disciplinary Protocols

The Berlin-Boylston School District is committed to maintaining and enforcing safety protocols on behalf of the best interests of students and staff. To that end, the District will take a proactive position in ensuring that all students and staff who do not fall under "exceptions" wear a mask at all times where and when required.

At the building level, each administrator will maintain a progressive disciplinary approach with students to address non-compliance of the mandate. That approach will be handled through multiple steps including, but not limited to: Step 1 - conversations with, and reminders from the teacher; Step 2 - conversations with, and reminders from, the building administrator(s); Step 3 - conversations with, and reminders from the building administrator with parent involvement; Step 4 - Repeated non-compliance may result in disciplinary action including suspension.

Section 6 - Frequently Asked Questions

Who should receive a diagnostic test?

If staff or students are a close contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19, they should be tested and should follow the protocols outlined in Protocol B, unless they are exempted, as outlined above.

If staff or students have COVID-19 symptoms, they should be tested and follow the protocols outlined in Protocol C.

When and how should BinaxNOW tests be used for diagnostic purposes?

The BinaxNOW test is a rapid antigen test. Rapid antigen tests perform best when the person is tested in the early stages of infection with COVID-19, when the viral load is generally highest.

When a student or staff member presents to the school health office with any symptom from the list in Section 1, they should receive a BinaxNOW test if available. If the result is positive, they should be sent home and follow Protocol A. If the result is negative, they should be sent home. The student's parent/guardian, or the staff member, should be informed that the negative test is presumptive and they should follow Protocol C.

Note: BinaxNOW tests are less sensitive and less specific than PCR tests. PCR confirmation is recommended for asymptomatic persons with a positive BinaxNOW test, and for symptomatic persons with a negative test, unless those symptoms are unlikely to be due to COVID-19. If the results are discordant, for the purposes of these protocols the PCR result would be taken as the true result, assuming the two tests are done within 2 days of each other.

How should schools address individuals with mild symptoms?

If an individual has mild symptoms, the individual may be considered for testing using BinaxNOW, if available.

- If the result is positive, they should be sent home and follow Protocol A.
- If the result is negative, they should remain in school.
- If the minimal symptom(s) persist, the individual may be re-tested within the subsequent 3 days. If symptoms worsen, the individual should seek medical care and be evaluated for the need for PCR testing.

Can individuals identified as a close contact while at home (i.e., non-school based close contact) return to school and participate in the Test and Stay program?

The Test and Stay program is intended for school-based close contacts only. Individuals identified as a close contact of an individual outside of school should follow Protocol B-2 or B-3 in the SY22 DESE/DPH [Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios](#).

Can an individual who is identified as a close contact still participate in sports and extracurricular activities?

Asymptomatic close contacts will follow [Protocol B: Protocol for asymptomatic close contacts](#). For school-sponsored events and sports that take place on non-school days, testing is necessary on those days for close contacts to participate. If these close contacts do not consent to testing, or if testing is not available, individuals may not participate.

How many days will an individual be tested during the Test & Stay program?

The duration of the Test and Stay program is 7 days from the date of exposure. Some of these days could be non-school days (i.e., weekends or holidays). Testing is only required on school days, unless the individual participates in school-sponsored sports or extracurricular activities that fall on a non-school day (see question 8, above). If the 7th day falls over a non-school day, the individual must be tested on the morning of their return to school. On the 8th day, a student will exit the Test and Stay protocol, assuming all tests were negative, and they remain asymptomatic.

Can school health professionals check an individual's COVID-19 vaccine status in the Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS)?

In general, school health professionals who are authorized users of the MIIS can check MIIS to confirm adequate up to date immunizations, avoid unnecessary immunizations, control disease outbreaks or as otherwise needed to confirm compliance with immunization requirements. Authorized school health professionals may check the COVID-19 vaccination status of any individual in MIIS for those purposes regardless of whether vaccines are mandated.

Conclusion

The opening of the 2021-2022 school year represents an important transition for our students, families, and staff. The District remains committed to the health, safety, and well-being of all as our top priority. It is noteworthy that both families and staff identified mental health and social emotional needs as extremely important to address as we return to school. The protocols and actions outlined above seek to balance the risks associated with potential transmission of COVID-19 with the critical importance of providing an in-person school experience.

APPENDIX

1. [MA DESE Memorandum from the Commissioner, August 25, 2021](#)
2. [MA DESE Testing & Protocols, August 13, 2021](#)
3. [Department of Elementary and Secondary Education & Department of Public Health Frequently Asked Questions, August 20, 2021](#)