



August 3, 2021

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Approval of Updates to Section A-Items A1 & A4 through A12 & Section B-Item B1 of the Cambridge Public Schools COVID-19 Safety & Facilities Procedures Manual

Recommendation: That the School Committee approve updates to Section A: items A1 and A4 through A12 and Section B: item B1 of the Cambridge Public Schools COVID-19 Facilities Procedures Manual.

Description: During the month of July, the Superintendent's Health, Safety and Facilities Working Group met to review and update the CPS COVID-19 Safety and Facilities Procedures Manual. Upon approval this manual will continue to serve as a living document that guides the daily safety protocols in CPS buildings. As the need for changes occur, the proposed changes will be presented to the Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee for a determination of whether a proposed change is minor and can be implemented or if the proposed change affects a policy and should be referred to the full School Committee for approval.

As the public health situation continues to evolve over the next several months, it is the district's intention to continue to engage in dialogue with the Health, Safety and Facilities Working Group to identify any needed changes to the Manual. The protocols listed in the existing Safety and Facilities Procedures Manual that are not presented will remain in place for the start of the new school year.

Supporting Data: An updated copy of section A items A1 and A4 through A12 and section B item B1 of the Cambridge Public Schools COVID-19 Safety and Facilities Procedures Manual.

Respectfully submitted,

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Superintendent of Schools

A. Preventing Transmission Of COVID-19

A1. Vaccination is the Most Effective Prevention Strategy

As the vaccine becomes more readily available to individuals aged 12 and older, CPHD and CPS are actively collaborating on making vaccination as accessible as possible to staff, participants, program partners and families. In addition, we will continue to collaborate on distributing information about the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines and emphasizing vaccination as an important safety strategy.

CPS and partner organizations operating within CPS buildings will actively promote availability of COVID-19 vaccines, including the fact that according to [CDC Guidance](#), vaccination is **highly effective at protecting fully-vaccinated people against severe COVID-19**. While breakthrough cases can occur, the vast majority of life-threatening cases are among people who are unvaccinated.

Proof of vaccination (vaccine card or vaccination record) must be shown to the relevant administrator or supervisor as part of the regular background check or application process in the following instances. Records will not be kept but these activities will not be approved without this step:

- Individuals wishing to participate in CPS-related travel, including staff wishing to attend conferences and professional meetings
- Individuals applying for internships or student teaching
- Volunteers including field trip chaperones

Cambridge is an international city, and CPS and CPHD will follow the practice of Massachusetts Department of Public Health, which accepts any vaccine as valid if it has received Emergency Use Authorization from the World Health Organization.

Fully vaccinated is defined as **14 days** past:

- Your second dose of a 2-dose vaccine such as Moderna, Pfizer, Astrazeneca, Sinopharm
- Your one and only dose of a 1-dose vaccine such as Johnson & Johnson.

You **are not** fully vaccinated if:

- You have received only one dose of a 2-dose vaccine
- You have received all doses, but 0-13 days have passed
- You have not received any vaccine shots

A4. Symptomatic and Surveillance Testing

CPS and the CPHD will continue to provide a comprehensive COVID-19 testing program for the foreseeable future. Testing is voluntary and a signed consent form must be provided for individuals under age 18.

- CPS encourages all families to sign consent forms for symptomatic testing, regardless of vaccination status.
- Surveillance testing is most important for unvaccinated individuals, who are encouraged to participate in this important safety benefit.
- Individuals who have had COVID within the past 90 days must not participate in any testing because of the likelihood that they will receive a false positive

Beginning August 2021:

- **Once-weekly pooled testing** will be available for employees, students, and programs operating within CPS buildings. In a pooled testing approach, individual nasal swabs are collected and then grouped (or pooled) together before being sent to a lab for analysis. If a pool tests positive, follow-up testing is performed to identify the specific individual(s) actually carrying COVID.
- **Symptomatic testing** will also be offered on-site to individuals through the School Health Department, for individuals who develop symptoms during the day

IMPORTANT: Individuals must not come to school to obtain COVID testing if they have symptoms of the virus or have been ordered to quarantine. These individuals must be directed to community-based testing sites, which can be found at the following links:

- Cambridge testing sites for residents and employees of the City of Cambridge (including CPS employees): www.cambridgema.gov/covid-19.
- Testing locations in other communities: [Mass.gov listing of testing sites](#)

Confidentiality

Pooled and symptomatic testing are performed with the highest level of respect for individual privacy and compliance with HIPPA regulations. To ensure a swift response and the protection of all building occupants / program participants, CPHD does need to coordinate with CPS to carry out contact tracing and quarantine activities. See [section to be specified] for more detailed quarantine procedures.

Type of Tests

Pool tests and symptomatic tests use a PCR Test, which looks for genetic material from COVID. These tests take about 24 hours to process and are the most sensitive type of testing. Rapid tests are used during the pooled testing process but are followed up with an individual PCR test when it is necessary to confirm or clarify results.

- Please see [appendix to be specified] for detailed Pooled Testing Procedures
- See [appendix to be specified] for Principal/Supervisor Contact Tracing Procedures

A5. Masks Are Required Indoors in CPS

Masks are not required outdoors.

[Current Massachusetts guidelines](#) mandate masks inside schools, along with other settings. Whether or not this mandate remains in place, masks will be universally required indoors in CPS at the start of the 2021-22 school year. The mask requirement will be in place for the first semester of the school year which ends in January. At that point, community public health conditions will be used to evaluate this requirement to determine if mask mandates can be lifted or altered.

The reasons for maintaining the mask mandate include the following:

- This is the safest and fairest method of ensuring the health of everyone in our buildings, which contain a mix of vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals.
- While the CDC recommends that unvaccinated individuals wear masks when indoors, the following make it difficult to impose different standards for different people:
 - there is no system currently in place for verifying whether an individual is vaccinated or unvaccinated
 - Roughly half of CPS students are too young to be vaccinated at this time
 - CPS buildings, school buses, and households may contain children of different ages and it is therefore impossible to prevent interaction between vaccinated and unvaccinated populations
- Some proportion of those who are fully vaccinated remain at higher risk if exposed to COVID-19 due to being immunocompromised or having another health condition, and our community is not yet at a stage to be able to protect these individuals through “herd immunity”
- Some of our school community members may be unable to receive the vaccine due to their own very specific health requirements, and so are at high risk
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends universal masking in schools for everyone age two or older

Masks may be exempted in very limited circumstances where the needs of individuals demand it, for instance due to a health condition or in classrooms where facial expressions are an explicit component of the curriculum and the public health department, educators/staff, and parent/caregivers are in agreement about the risks and benefits of this accommodation.

Guidance on Appropriate Masks

- CPS Resource: [Masks Keep You Healthy](#)
- [CDC: Your Guide to Masks](#)

Mask Requirements & Recommendations

- [American Academy of Pediatrics - COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools](#)
- [CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#)
- MA DPH [Advisory Regarding Face Coverings and Cloth Masks](#)
- [COVID-19 Mask Requirements \(mass.gov\)](#)

A6. Ventilation Plans Must Be Followed

Because COVID-19 is an airborne virus, it remains important to maximize ventilation to the greatest extent possible. All CPS buildings have a specified ventilation plan that ensures a minimum of 4 Air Changes per Hour (ACH) for occupied rooms. No room that is unable to meet the recommended standard of 4.0 ACH will be used for teaching, learning or meetings. (Individual offices may be used by one person without meeting this standard.)

Classrooms and offices may look very different from building to building, and ventilation plans will make use of a variety of ventilation and air filtration methods to achieve the required standard. In each location, ventilation measures will include several (but likely not all) of the following:

- Central ventilation systems that provide a standard air change across the building
- Central air filtration systems (air scrubbers), which remove particles from all of the air in the building
- Room-based HEPA filters (air scrubbers), which remove particles from air in the room
- Open windows and/or doors, which add to the air exchange in the room
- Box fans, which add to the air exchange in the room

It is not necessary for every room and building to have all of the above measures in place. What is crucial is that **every room and building uses a mix of these strategies to achieve 4ACH minimum.**

Specific instructions for room-based ventilation measures are as follows.

- **HEPA Filter procedure:** HEPA filters serve as air scrubbers and provide at least 1.15 additional ACH (air changes per hour) on low and at least 2.3 ACH on high.
 - Units must be placed in as central a location as possible without blowing air directly across students.
 - Portable HEPA filters/air scrubbers must be set at the highest setting if windows must be closed. When windows are open, HEPA filters must stay on but may be switched to low.
 - Cords must be taped down to prevent tripping.
- **Windows:** Tests have proven that leaving at least 2 windows open at least 4 inches provides the equivalent of 2 ACH. Windows may not be present in all classrooms and offices for 4ACH to be achieved through other means. If windows are present:
 - Place box fans in 1-2 open windows, blowing outwards.
 - If multiple windows are present, fans must be placed as far apart as possible or on opposite walls if available. If possible, open hallway doors and doors that lead to a safe exterior location (e.g. a fenced playground)
- **When windows are not present or windows must be closed,** such as during cold weather, Carbon dioxide (CO2) testing will be performed on a regular schedule, to measure the amount of recirculated versus fresh air.
- **When Air Conditioners are In Use**
 - Window air conditioners and Central air may be necessary on very hot days. If windows are present, they should remain open (4 inches for safety) to maximize ventilation when the room is occupied.
 - Close windows when people are leaving the room empty and overnight to prevent moisture from building up and causing mold.

A7. Physical Distancing

The CDC recommends increasing or decreasing physical distance based on community monitoring, operational needs and the risk level of the activity. In communities experiencing low to moderate transmission rates, they recommend a goal of 3' of physical distance between unvaccinated individuals when feasible.

For the 2021-22 School Year in CPS, classroom set-up must provide as much physical distancing as feasible, with all students facing in the same direction. The following activities **require** 3' of physical distancing and maximum ventilation when taking place indoors:

- Indoor rest/nap time for our youngest students, when masks must be removed for safety. Although masks are off during this activity, transmission rates are very low for this age group.
- When meals or snacks must be eaten indoors due to outdoor weather conditions, with all students facing in the same direction
- Indoors during PE or sports. It is recognized that some sports will involve students coming into closer contact with one another, and this is acceptable because physical and mental health benefits of these activities outweigh the risks. However, when participants/students are seated on the sidelines, lining up, or inside locker rooms, it is important to maintain distance as much as possible.

- Quiet singing in Pre-K, Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten classrooms is an important feature of early childhood education and is allowed with masks on with distancing.
- When playing wind instruments or singing, such as during band, chorus or music class.
 - These activities must take place with maximum ventilation provided and should receive priority use of outdoor spaces and tents.
 - Singers must remain masked.
 - For wind instruments, students should wear instrument masks (masks with a slit cut in them) and bell covers/instrument covers must also be used.
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A8. Surface Transmission

Surface transmission is no longer considered a major contributor to the spread of COVID-19. However, the following procedures will be continued:

- CPS will maintain limited increases in staffing levels in an effort to address high touch areas and provide enhanced disinfection when cases are identified in schools.
- Students must wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after handling shared supplies.
- Items that touch the mouth or may come into contact with bodily fluids (e.g. water bottles, musical instruments, towels, mouth guards) may not be shared.
- Disposable protective covers must be used for equipment that touches the eyes (e.g., cameras, microscopes)

Hand Washing

All students and adults working in CPS buildings must engage in frequent handwashing, including upon arrival, after time outdoors, before and after meals and snacks, after bathroom use, after coughing or sneezing, and before dismissal. Proper hand washing technique will be covered in student and employee training: wash for at least 20 seconds, making sure there is visible lather and that all surfaces of the hands have been thoroughly cleaned. Rinse thoroughly and then dry with an individual disposable towel.

Items that come into contact with bodily fluids

Saliva and other bodily fluids can contain COVID and other viruses, and care should be taken when handling these items including wearing gloves and other PPE. If an item comes into contact with bodily fluids (for instance a younger child mouthing an object) adults should wear gloves and wash the item with soap and water, setting the item aside to allow it to dry. Soiled clothing or masks should be placed in a plastic bag and sent home for laundering. Materials that can't be thoroughly washed may be set aside for 48 hours.

To prevent transmission via saliva, drinking fountains will remain switched off, but bottle fillers will remain operable. To avoid crowding at bottle fillers, students and staff will be encouraged to bring their own filled water bottle each day.

A9. Gatherings and Meetings

Employee Meetings Allowed Indoors

Due to the very high vaccination rate among CPS educators and staff members, indoor staff meetings are now allowed as long as ventilation is maximized in the space - with masks, as required indoors in CPS buildings. Accommodations (live broadcast for instance) must be made for employees who are not able to safely participate due to a documented medical condition. Eating food during indoor employee meetings is not allowed at the present time.

Small Meetings with Parents/Caregivers Allowed Indoors

While virtual meetings may continue to be preferred, it is allowable for small groups to meet in a room with at least 4ACH as long as masks are worn and physical distancing of 6' is maintained.

Outdoor Community Gatherings

Due to the mixed vaccination rate within the CPS community, larger gatherings of school communities will now be allowed, but must take place outdoors. Food *may* be eaten at outdoor meetings and gatherings.

Travel to Conferences and Meetings

For the beginning of the 2021-22 school year, travel to conferences and seminars will be allowed. However, in order to be approved, the staff member or students attending must provide proof of vaccination.

A10. Field Trips

The following types of field trips will be allowed for at least the first two months of the school year:

- Walking field trips to an outdoor destination
- Outdoor field trips requiring a school bus ride to a destination no more than 1 hour away, so long as masks are worn aboard the bus at all times and all windows must stay open on the bus. In addition, Principals must have a plan and enough space to isolate a student who develops symptoms while away on the field trip.

At this time, it is *not* allowable to use public transportation for field trips.

Non-employee adult chaperones must provide proof that they are fully vaccinated as part of their already-required background checks.

A11. Parent/Caregiver, Volunteer and Visitor Entry into School Buildings

Schools are encouraged to continue to open up to in-person family engagement, in addition to offering the option of virtual interactions for those who need it. However, entry into buildings must continue to be managed.

- Volunteers, parents and caregivers must have an appointment or be scheduled to enter the building.
- Fully-vaccinated adults (including parents and caregivers) will be allowed to volunteer in school buildings including as chaperones for allowable field trips. Proof of vaccination status must be provided as part of the regular background check process.
- Contactless delivery procedures should remain in place.
- All building visitors must wear a mask. Masks will be provided to anyone who does not have an effective face covering.

A12. Safety During Snacks and Meals

Beginning in September 2021 and continuing until further notice, school meals must take place outdoors unless weather or other weather conditions make it unsafe to do so. Physical distancing is not required when meals take place outdoors.

If meals must take place *indoors* due to outdoor conditions, at least 3 feet of distance must be maintained between students, with all students facing in the same direction. A quiet activity is advised, to ensure students do not talk or move around while masks are off. Adults should wear masks (as policy requires) and maintain at least 3 feet of distance from students while they eat.

Section B (Re-Titled) Infection Control and Response

B1. Infection Control Teams

Using a CPS-developed template, schools will document the specific application of required procedures within their school building. This will include appointing a designated COVID-19 point person who can be contacted with questions or concerns.

Each school has an Infection Control Team composed of staff members representing key roles including Principal, School Nurse, lead custodian, food services, educators (general education teachers, special educators, specialists, paraprofessionals) and parent/caregivers. This team is responsible for reviewing and updating school-based procedures, monitoring implementation and adherence to policies and identifying areas in need of further education and training. The purpose of these teams is to maintain the goal of zero in-school transmissions.