

CHELMSFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Jay Lang, Ed.D., Superintendent

August 13, 2021

Dear Chelmsford School Community,

The 2021-22 school year is just a few weeks away and I am looking forward to welcoming all our students and staff back to in-person learning this fall. We have been planning and working all summer to prepare for the upcoming year. While we would all like to return to a “regular” school year, the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to impact our staff, students, and families.

I know there is frustration felt by many members of our community due to COVID-19 rules and restrictions, as a district we are committed to moving forward with guidelines that will allow us to keep students and staff as safe as possible, as we return and welcome back all our students to in-person instruction. I know some members of our community would like to return to normal as soon as possible and refrain from wearing masks, however, it is going to take a little longer to get to that point.

I am encouraged by the progress to date on student and staff vaccination rates within our community, however, there is still work ahead. As of August 12th, data from the [Commonwealth of Massachusetts](#) indicates 57% of children ages 12 – 15 residing in Chelmsford are fully vaccinated. 78% of residents ages 16 – 19 are fully vaccinated; and overall, 68% of all Chelmsford residents are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Our student population under 12 years of age is still not eligible to receive the vaccine.

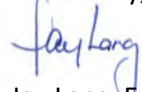
Varied approaches will be taken in school districts statewide regarding health and safety measures as school resumes this fall, in **Chelmsford Public Schools we will return to indoor mask-wearing**. Effective August 16, 2021, all students, staff, and visitors – regardless of vaccination status – must wear masks indoors while in any Chelmsford Public Schools facilities. Face masks are not required: (1) when outside; or (2) when an individual works alone or in a segregated space.

I know there will be more questions about the upcoming school year that will need to be answered in the coming weeks; please refer to the attached Chelmsford Public Schools Back-to-School FAQ document for some of the questions and answers we have so far. I will be updating the FAQ as additional information becomes available. Further, I’ll be meeting with our health advisors next week to review and refine COVID-19 procedures and protocols for such matters as how we will deal with COVID-19 positive cases, close contact identification, quarantine requirements, and voluntary testing options.

The COVID-19 virus will continue to be a challenge this year, however I am focused on the positives like having all our students and staff back in-person for the 2021-22 school year.

I hope you enjoy the last few weeks of summer, and I look forward to welcoming students and staff back to our buildings soon.

Yours truly,



Jay Lang, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Chelmsford Public Schools
Back-to-School FAQ
August 13, 2021

1. What PK-12 health and safety protocols are being recommended now by health experts and key decision-makers in light of the Delta variant of the virus?

Here is a timeline and summary of the most recent guidance issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA DPH) and elected and appointed State officials:

- 07-19-2021: American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a “layered approach to make school safe for all students, teachers, and staff.” The [AAP’s guidance](#) “includes a recommendation that everyone older than age 2 wear masks, regardless of vaccination status.”
- 07-27-2021: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggest a return to indoor mask-wearing in this [CDC guidance](#), stating that the “CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status.”
- 07-30-2021: In collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA DPH), the Commissioner of Education released this [new guidance](#) for PK-12 public schools. Governor Baker spoke in support of the Commissioner’s recommendation later in the day.

2. The guidance from the AAP, the CDC, and the MA DPH is inconsistent. What are the health and safety rules that Chelmsford Public Schools will follow in the upcoming school year?

Governor Baker noted that Massachusetts has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country, which may account for the variation in the approach to back-to-school guidance. The simplest way to frame the health and safety protocols and expectations for the upcoming school year is this – CPS will start the school year the same way we ended it:

1. Masks are required for all students and staff, vaccinated or unvaccinated, when indoors and on school buses.
2. No masking is required when outdoors.

3. I am vaccinated. Will I need to wear a mask in the upcoming school year?

Yes. Consistent with current CPS policy, all Chelmsford Public Schools students and staff, vaccinated and unvaccinated are required to wear [well-fitting masks](#) when they return to school in the fall. ***Effective August 16, 2021, all students, staff, and visitors—regardless of vaccination status—must wear masks indoors while in any Chelmsford Public Schools facilities. Face-masks are not required: (1) when outside; or (2) when an individual works alone or in a segregated space (i.e., cubicle).***

4. Will Chelmsford Public Schools require additional physical distancing when we return to school?

No. We will do our best to maintain physical distances where possible, but there are no other physical distancing requirements for the upcoming school year.

5. My child is immunocompromised and in-person learning does not feel safe to me. Is there a remote option this year?

Unfortunately, remote learning is no longer an option in the upcoming school year per the Commissioner of Education. Please refer to the DESE COVID-19 guidance issued on May 27, 2021, page 4:

Districts will no longer be able to offer remote learning as a standard learning model. As noted above, districts and schools will be required to be in-person, full-time, five days a week this fall. Pathways that existed prior to the pandemic for offering virtual learning to individual students in limited cases will remain available to districts and schools. These include home/hospital tutoring programs due to a documented medical condition, and 3 single district virtual schools.

6. Why is Chelmsford Public Schools not following the new masking guidance that was recently issued from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)?

We are following the advice of public health experts, including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Our primary goal this year is to ensure that we have as much uninterrupted in-person learning as possible. Masking, along with other layered mitigation strategies, is one way to achieve this.

7. Will masks be required on school buses?

Yes. Passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses. For more information, please review the [CDC's Order](#).

8. What are the current travel restrictions? Will I be able to travel out of state without a quarantine?

Massachusetts [COVID-19 Travel Guidance](#) suggests that if you are vaccinated there are no restrictions on domestic travel, and you can travel freely. Here are the CDC's recommendations for [unvaccinated people](#), including a viral test 3-5 days after and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel. Since children under the age of 12 are ineligible for a vaccine, we anticipate that many families will have questions about the rules. For example, someone may own a vacation home in New Hampshire where they have no contact with others and the rates of infection are lower than in some areas of Massachusetts. Do we require these individuals to quarantine under these circumstances? We ask all Chelmsford Public Schools families and staff to follow the State's travel guidance. Qualifying special conditions include serious family emergencies/illnesses, deaths, and custody arrangements. If you have questions, please contact your principal or school nurse.

9. If a student or staff member is sick and experiencing symptoms, such as fever, cough, runny nose, what should they do?

School Personnel:

If a staff member has any symptoms, they should contact their supervisor, report the symptoms to the school nurse, **stay home from school**, and report their absence in Aesop to obtain substitute coverage.

Staff should follow up with their Health Care Provider for further evaluation and testing. They will be allowed to return to school based on their symptoms, further evaluation, and clearance from the Chelmsford Public Schools nursing staff. Staff who become ill while at school will be sent home immediately.

Students and Families:

Before coming to school or getting on the bus: Families should assess their child's state of wellness before leaving home for school. It is expected that each family will assess each of their children every day for symptoms before the child comes to school.

If the student has any symptoms of COVID-19, they should **stay home from school**. The family should notify their school nurse that the child will be absent and the reason for the absence. The school nurse will follow-up with the family regarding the child's symptoms, when the child was seen by a medical professional, and any testing that was done. The child can return to school once cleared by the school nurse and/or the Chelmsford Board of Health.