*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | September 13, 2021 |
| **Subject:** | Update on COVID-19 Action Steps to Support Schools, Students, and Families |

Since our meeting on June 22, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department or DESE) has continued to inform districts of new developments related to COVID-19 and to support schools and districts as they prepare for and begin the 2021-22 school year.

On July 30, DESE and the Department of Public Health released COVID-19 Guidance for Districts and Schools for fall 2021, and DESE updated the document with information about the mask mandate following the Board’s August 24 vote. In addition to the mask requirement, the guidance reiterates that schools must be in-person, full-time, five days a week this fall and includes information on back-to-school vaccine clinics, local vaccine sites, and public awareness materials for families. The guidance also includes information on no-cost COVID-19 testing in schools, including diagnostic testing, screening (pooled) testing, and testing for “test and stay,” a protocol districts can use instead of requiring asymptomatic close contacts to quarantine. More details about all of the testing options are available on [DESE’s COVID-19 Testing Program webpage](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/testing/).

On August 13, DESE and DPH released Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios for the 2021-22 school year, which gives more information about the test-and-stay protocol and other situations. DESE also released flowcharts to help illustrate the protocols on August 30.

On August 20, DESE released (and on August 25 updated) an FAQ, which includes information about the state contract for air purifiers and how to address learning while students are quarantined.

On August 25, following the Board’s August 24 meeting, DESE issued details on implementation of the mask requirement.

The Department continues to hold webinars and release additional resources on COVID-19 testing and other matters. As always, the DESE COVID-19 Help Center remains open and available for consultation with districts and schools.

Attachments:

* [DESE/DPH COVID-19 Guidance for Districts and Schools: Fall 2021](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/fall-2021-covid19-guide/) — July 30, 2021; Updated August 27, 2021
* [Message about Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios — SY 2021-22](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2021-0813protocols-message.pdf)
  + [DESE/DPH Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios — SY 2021-22](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/protocols/)
  + [SY22 COVID-19 Protocols Webinar Recording, August 17, 2021](https://youtu.be/_UI52FHKz78)
  + [COVID-19 Protocols Flowcharts, August 30, 2021](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/flowcharts.pdf)
* [August 20, 2021 Installment of FAQs (about the 2021-22 school year)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/faq/2021-0820faq-installment.docx) *(download)* — Revised August 25, 2021
* [Implementation of DESE Mask Requirement](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2021-0825mask-requirement.pdf) — August 25, 2021

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