

## **INTERIM POLICY ON ISSUES RELATED TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The School Committee establishes an emergency, interim policy for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic that will:

- promote public safety and the safety of students, faculty, and staff;
- maintain the district's commitment to an inclusive, equitable education;
- ensure support for all students, including those at highest risk educationally, socially, and/or economically;
- adhere, to the extent possible, to the guidance of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), MA Department of Public Health and other agencies of state and federal government; and expedite, in collaboration with the Natick Board of Health, the COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

The School Committee will authorize the Superintendent to act expeditiously in executing COVID-19 related school plans for students, their families, and the community.

### **Interim changes to policies affected by the pandemic**

The Superintendent, with the advice and consent of the School Committee, may suspend or modify individual district policies to address the COVID-19 emergency.

The goal of emergency pandemic policies shall be to:

- ensure the safety and health of students, faculty, staff, and all persons who may come in contact with them;
- provide the most effective education across all learning models, to the extent possible under the circumstances;
- authorize changes to operating protocols, as needed, to open and operate schools effectively from various venues or platforms;
- conduct the business and operational functions of the district as efficiently as possible;
- allow the Superintendent and staff to act quickly to carry out a schooling plans; and
- facilitate the re-establishment of a safe and productive school day and year.

The development and implementation of school operations and procedures falls under the purview of the Superintendent. Per policy File BGD - School Committee Review of Procedures, the School Committee may review procedures developed by the Superintendent for the school system, but does not officially approve procedures and operations except when inconsistent with policies adopted by the Committee, required by state law, or other necessary circumstances. In order to allow the Superintendent to make COVID-related changes to operating protocols that would have been inconsistent with current policy, the School Committee is temporarily amending selected policy subsections.

## **Added/Amended Sections to the Policy Manual**

The following sections of the NPS Policy Manual are hereby added or amended to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Face masks and face coverings (File: EBCFA)

A face mask or face covering that covers the nose and mouth must be worn by all individuals in school buildings, and on school transportation, even when social distancing is observed.

Face masks or face coverings may be removed only during school-designated periods for mask breaks and eating or drinking breaks, and while outside whenever permitted by school staff. During mask breaks, individuals must still maintain appropriate social distancing.

Exceptions to this policy under certain circumstances, such as for students with medical, behavioral or other challenges who are unable to wear masks, must be approved by NPS staff in consultation with the school nurse, Director of Health Services, or local Board of Health. Face shields or physical barriers may provide an alternative in some instances.

Visitors in violation of this policy will be denied entry to the school/district facility.

- Operations and plant maintenance and security (File EC, ECA)

Subject to the provisions of law, regulation and collective bargaining agreements, the Superintendent may suspend or amend current policy to ensure the efficient operation of business functions and maintenance of school buildings, and other such offices as the district maintains.

- Transportation and busing (File EE, EEAE EEAEC, EEAG)

Subject to current law and regulation, the Superintendent may suspend or modify policies related to the transportation of students by the school district. Legal requirements relating to IEP's that contain transportation for students shall not be altered without the appropriate family consent. These modifications shall be consistent with the district return to school plan.

- School calendar/school year (File IC/ICA)

Subject to the provisions of law, regulation, and collective bargaining agreements, the Superintendent may revise the school calendar with the approval of the School Committee.

- Time on learning and length of school day (File IC/ICA and ID)

Subject to the provisions of law, regulation, and collective bargaining agreements, the Superintendent may suspend or amend requirements for time on learning and may alter daily school hours as needed.

- Home-bound instruction (File IHBF)

The district shall provide remote instruction for students who are temporarily homebound due to illness, quarantine, or disability.

- Student assignment to schools (File JCA)

Subject to the provisions of law, regulation, and collective bargaining agreements, the Superintendent may alter or revise the assignment of students to schools.

- Student absences (File JH)

Subject to operative law and regulations, the Superintendent may suspend or modify policies related to student attendance.

- Discipline and Suspension/Expulsion (File JIC, JK)

The Superintendent, subject to the approval of the School Committee, shall adopt protocols for serving students who are disciplined or suspended during the pandemic emergency. The schools must include opportunities for students to make academic progress during that time. Students may elect to remain at home under the provisions of the policies related to homeschooling.

- Students at risk (JIE, JL, JLC, JLCC)

During the COVID pandemic, the Superintendent or principal of a school may revise or suspend provisions of policy to facilitate the education of students who are at risk, have special physical needs, or play a role as their family caregivers. This includes, but is not limited to, caring for or educating students with disabilities, illness, pregnancy, child rearing responsibilities, or special education needs consistent with law and regulation.

- Eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities including programs outside of the school day, school and school club-sponsored events, and school-sponsored athletics.

Subject to law, regulation, and standards established by the appropriate and legitimate regulatory body, the Superintendent may propose changes to district protocols for participation in extracurricular activities, including programs outside of the school day, school and school club-sponsored events, and school sponsored athletics subject to the rules established by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association.

For the 2021-2022 school year, FDA approved vaccination against SARS-CoV-2 is required for all age-eligible students to participate in extracurricular activities, events and athletics that occur outside of the school day.

1. Age-eligible students
  - a. Students who participate in extracurricular activities including programs outside of the school day, school and school club-sponsored events, and school sponsored athletics. are required to be vaccinated except as outlined in b (below) .
  - b. Students who are unvaccinated are required to participate in state-sponsored testing through Natick Public Schools or submit evidence of a weekly negative COVID-19 PCR test delivered on the same timeline and due dates as the Natick Public Schools program.
2. Age-ineligible students
  - a. Students are required to participate in state-sponsored pooled, test and stay and symptomatic testing through Natick Public Schools or submit evidence of a negative COVID-19 PCR test delivered on the same timeline and due dates as the Natick Public Schools program.

- Exemptions from health and safety requirements for particular groups of students (File JL)

The Superintendent shall provide protocols to principals and educators teachers regarding students who may require special exemptions from health and safety standards during the pandemic emergency. Such protocols may address, for example, exemptions on the use of masks for the youngest children and/or high risk students.

- Illness and contact tracing (File JLCC)

The Superintendent may establish protocols for tracking student contacts as a means of locating others from whom students may contract or expose other persons to the COVID-19 virus. Such protocols will be consistent with law and regulation and be consistent with standards to protect the privacy of students, their families, and other persons.

- Privacy of Students (File JRA, JRA-R, JRD)

During the pandemic, the rights to privacy held by students and their families shall not be abridged by the public schools. Such rights extend to the confidentiality of student academic records, health data, economic status, and other such information as may be considered confidential by law.

Massachusetts law prohibits the recording of individuals without their permission. Similarly, students may not be recorded in classrooms by audio, visual, or remote means without the permission of parents or, if of age, by individual students. During periods of remote learning, the privacy of students participating in on-line classes shall not be violated by recording them without appropriate permissions.

- Visitors in schools and buildings (File KI)

Subject to current emergency declarations, the Superintendent may propose suspension or modification of district policies regarding visitors to school buildings during the school day and after school hours.

REFS.: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Declaration of State of Emergency To Respond to Covid-19

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, COVID-19 Order No. 31

Center for Disease Control and Prevention Considerations for Wearing Masks

CROSS REF.: [BGD](#) - School Committee Review of Procedures

Adopted and Approved by School Committee on September 20, 2021