

APS COVID-19 Update

School Committee Meeting - October 21, 2021

APS COVID-19 – Update

At the meeting on August 16, 2021, the School Committee voted to update its policy to implement masks in school buildings.

Why:

- Delta variant indicated an increase in COVID-19 cases
- Some breakthrough cases occurring in vaccinated individuals
- Schools reopening for 2021-22 with decreased distancing in classrooms
- Schools reopening with full classrooms, doubling the classroom occupancy from last year and potential exposures

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At APS - positive news:

- 85% of students at the high school are vaccinated
- Overall number of positive cases remains low in district
- Transmission occurs minimally in schools. Our data reflects no change in this area from last year. Most transmission occurs in households or within the community
- *Note: Vaccination rate for students in middle schools range from 28% to 51%. Elementary and a number of middle school students are not yet eligible for vaccine.*

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Challenging factors:

- Student and staff data
 - Student immunization data is required through state's Department of Public Health
 - Staff have been encouraged, but not required, to provide vaccination status
- Continued breakthrough cases of vaccinated individuals
- Equity for those unvaccinated and required to wear mask
- Who enforces policing of masks for those unvaccinated?
- Delta variant still a factor
- If masks are removed - district will potentially see an increase in quarantine and testing
 - This will result in an increase in the nurse workload and impact time on learning

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Challenging factors:

- All unvaccinated individuals and those in *Test & Stay program* will need to continue to wear masks indoors
- Elementary and middle schools - increases students who need to quarantine if defined as a close contact of positive case
- Children under 12 are not yet eligible for vaccination and will not be eligible until and unless the FDA and CDC authorize vaccination.
- While vaccination for students 5-11year-olds is pending, it is not required
- **Note:** *Mask mandate continues on buses - federal requirement*

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- DESE’s mandate that all schools in Massachusetts be in school, in-person five days a week. The mitigation strategies and protocols in place are to protect all students and staff in our buildings.
- Masks appear to be working to decrease transmission - this has been a successful intervention and is keeping students in school.
- The FDA will be meeting to discuss emergency use of Pfizer in 5-11-year-olds on October 26th
 - Early November - the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices will write recommendations
 - If approved, vaccinations for younger students could begin by mid-November
 - If 2nd dose if recommended, it would provide coverage by the new year.

Thank you

Questions?