

Fall 2021 COVID-19 Testing and DPH/DESE Guidance Update



Matthew Ferron, Superintendent
Patricia Smith, Director of Health Services
Hanover Public Schools
School Committee Meeting
September 29, 2021

Masks/Face Coverings: Required

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- » **Extended to at least November 1, 2021: All students, staff, and guests, ages 5 and older, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear masks indoors in schools. (Extension of DESE Mask Requirement September 27, 2021)**
- » On school busses (Federal requirement)
- » For indoor sports only (MIAA guidance 8/26)
- » In school health offices
- » If in quarantine and staying in school under “test and stay” protocols

Masks/Face Coverings: Considerations

- » Masks not required for any outdoor activities
- » Masks may be removed when eating or drinking
- » Masks breaks will be provided during the school day: *Masks breaks should be provided throughout the day, preferably outdoors. When outdoor mask breaks are not feasible, mask breaks may occur in the classroom, preferably with windows open. Indoor mask breaks should be brief (5 - 10 minutes or less), and students should be 3 - 6 feet apart whenever possible. Any student who requests a mask break should be provided the opportunity to do so*
- » Parent/Guardian may request a waiver for medical or behavioral reasons. A signed waiver form or letter from the child's licenced health care provider is required. (Waiver available on the HPS website)

Masks/Face Coverings: Vaccination Rate Threshold

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- » As of October 15, **if the vaccination rate of all students and staff \geq 80%, then:**
 - » Fully vaccinated individuals in that school would no longer be subject to the mask requirement
 - » Would require School Committee approval
 - » DESE will continue to work with medical experts and state health officials to review and consider additional metrics to determine when individuals in schools will no longer be subject to the mask requirement

Vaccination Threshold: Considerations

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- » Methods for accessing vaccination information:
 - » Signed self-attestation form* (subject to MIIS verification)
 - » COVID-19 Vaccination card* or, vaccination record from a health care provider*, print out from MIIS
 - » * Approved designated staff to verify records or self-attestation forms
 - » Transfer of immunization records directly from MIIS to the Electronic Medical Record
- » All documents will be maintained confidentiality in the Electronic Medical Record, shared as needed as de-identified aggregate data, may be used for contact tracing and quarantine protocols.

Current Hanover Vaccination Rates

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- » According to Mass.gov:
 - » 12 - 15 y.o. 60% Fully vaccinated, 70% 1 Dose
 - » 16 - 19 y.o. 86% fully vaccinated, 93% 1 Dose (may be skewed due to private school and college vaccination requirements)

Testing

Testing Options

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- » Symptomatic*
- » Test and Stay*
- » Pooled Testing*
- » Mobile Integrated Health Testing at Sylvester School

**Parent/guardian consent is required for school-based testing*

Symptomatic Testing

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- » Abbott BinaxNow Rapid Antigen Test
- » If symptoms develop while at school
- » If positive -> dismiss to home with isolation instructions -> contact trace
- » If negative and 1 major or 2 minor symptoms -> confirmatory PCR
- » If negative and 1 minor symptom -> return to class/work
- » Discordant tests within 48 hours, use PCR result
- » If asymptomatic, and positive rapid antigen test, get confirmatory PCR within 48 hours

Test and Stay: Who should participate

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- » The individual who is subject to quarantine
- » Must be asymptomatic
- » Willing to mask and test at school for duration of 7 days (minimum testing 5 days)
- » Requires parental consent
- » Fully vaccinated individuals do not have to test or quarantine if a close contact, but should monitor for symptoms

Test and Stay: Protocol

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- » Abbott BinaxNow rapid antigen test each morning at school
 - » Short anterior nasal swab
 - » 15 minute processing time
- » Testing at start of school
- » Testing done by nurse or paramedic
- » Distance and mask awaiting results, return to class if negative
- » Call parent/guardian only if positive test result
- » If positive -> self-isolate -> contact trace

Test and Stay: Results

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- » To date: 11 Students present in school during infectious period of COVID-19
- » 90 susceptible in-school close contacts were identified
- » No positive test results from the in-school close contacts using the test and stay protocol

Routine COVID Pooled Testing: Benefits

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- » Catch cases before they spread to other students and staff
- » Prevent further time away from in-person learning and friends by knowing if its COVID, cold or flu
- » Prevent infecting another member of household or community
- » Helps to understand how COVID-19 spreads in school so we can move forward with more relaxed mitigation measures (helped Massachusetts move from 6 to 3 feet for close contacts during 2020-2021)

Routine COVID Pooled Testing: Protocol

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- » 1 day/week, takes just a few minutes out of class
- » 10 swabs per pool
- » Positive pool - all return to school for rapid test
- » Two swabs per person. 1st swab -> Rapid test
 - » Positive case -> self-isolate -> contact trace
- » If all negative -> send second swab out to lab for PCR
- » If all PCR tests negative, consider false positive

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Routine COVID Pooled Testing: Results

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- » Participation: 626 students (24% of student population)
- » 1604 individual swabs
- » 1 positive result (not related to school exposure)
- » No positive cases found among school-based close contacts

PCR Testing at Sylvester School

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- » Free test, 7 Days/Week 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM, starting first day of school
- » Sylvester School, Drive Thru
- » Results in 12 - 24 hours
- » Can test for any reason, including travel
- » Hanover Fire Department administers program
- » Hanover VAN & School Nurses communicate results and provide contact tracing/isolation information
- » Students and staff who have a test for symptoms or close contact should inform their school nurse

Works Cited

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- » Riley, J. & Cooke, M. DESE *Guidance for Districts and Schools*. July 30 2021
- » Riley, J. & Cooke, M. DESE/DPH *Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios*. August 13, 2021
- » Riley, J. SY2021 - 22 COVID-19 *Testing Program for Districts and Schools*. August 11, 2021
- » Department of Elementary and Secondary Education & Department of Public Health, *Frequently Asked Questions*. August 20, 2021
- » Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Extension of DESE Mask Requirement, September 27, 2021
- » Massachusetts Department of Public Health, *Additional Information for School Health Offices*. July 19, 2021. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/information-for-school-health-offices/download>

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/>