

Dear Families,

The health, safety, and well-being of our students and staff is our top priority. As we prepare for the return to school buildings, it is important to educate children about the new safety guidelines issued by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the CDC (Center for Disease Control), such as [practicing social distancing](#), proper hand washing, and wearing face coverings to prevent the spread of germs. Students will be assigned seating in classrooms that will ensure six feet of social distancing.

As you are all aware, the CDC recommends that individuals over the age of two wear cloth face coverings in public settings and when around individuals who do not live in their household. Masks are the first line of defense in reducing the spread of COVID-19 in public settings and will be worn by all students. Students will be required to wear a mask at all times during the school day, except when they are eating lunch or taking a scheduled mask break. We understand that mask-wearing may not be possible for students with certain medical conditions or other extenuating circumstances.

SPS is asking that each family provide each child with 3 masks while at school. One should be worn while traveling to and from school, if on a school bus or van, and the other two are to be worn, as needed, throughout the day should the original mask need changing. Cloth masks are simple barriers that sit comfortably over your nose and mouth. These face coverings protect others from droplets that are released out when individuals breathe and speak by reducing the number of droplets released into the air and how far these droplets can travel.

The best mask for your child is any mask made out of fabric as long as it covers your child's face and mouth completely, can be worn close to the face and is comfortable. It should block exhalation but allow your child to breathe comfortably so children do not have to touch their faces to readjust the mask. Please help your child become proficient at applying and removing their own mask and getting used to wearing a mask for an extended period of time before the return of school.

Steps to wear a face mask correctly:

- 1. Wash hands prior to putting on a mask.**
- 2. Put it over the nose and mouth and secure it under the chin.**
- 3. Try to fit it snugly against the sides of the face.**
- 4. Make sure your child can breathe easily.**

Steps to remove a cloth face mask:

- 1. Untie the strings behind the head or stretch ear loops over the ears.**
- 2. Handle only by ear loops or ties. DO NOT touch the front of the mask with your hands.**
- 3. Fold the outside corners together.**
- 4. Wash hands immediately.**
- 5. Masks should be washed by families daily.**

Important: Masks with one way exhalation valves are not to be worn by students as those masks allow for the exhaled air to move forward in a forceful, steady stream.

If your child is unable to wear a mask while at school, there will be another communication where you will have the opportunity to complete a form in order to share this with your principal and nurse.

Mask Wearing Preparation:

Wearing a mask for an extended period of time will be a new experience for our students. Children are adaptable and capable of wearing a face covering, however, they will need to practice wearing a mask in order to be comfortable doing so for extended periods of time. Parents and caregivers can help children prepare for school reentry by having them wear a mask for short periods of time and gradually work up to longer time frames to help build stamina for this safety measure. The suggestions listed below may be helpful as you work with your child:

- Explain why face coverings help prevent the spread of COVID-19.**
- Normalize wearing face masks.**
- Model healthy behavior and wear a mask.**
- Provide fun and colorful mask options for your child, if possible.**
- Ensure your child's mask fits properly and comfortably.**
- Practice wearing a mask at home, gradually extending the time periods.**

Additionally, you may find the resources listed below useful as you work with your child(ren) to teach them about school safety protocols and the importance of wearing a face covering to help prevent the spread of illness.

Format	Resource	Target Audience
1 Page	Poster on Safely Wearing Face Masks	Grades 5-8

1 Page	How to Effectively Wear a Face Covering	All grades
1 Page	Helping Your Child to Wear a Mask	Family
Visual	Wearing Masks - English Version	Family
Story	Wearing Masks - Spanish Version	
Video	Helping Your Child Get Used to Wearing a Mask	Family
Video	Why do people wear masks / Face Mask Song (2 minutes)	PK-3
Video	Wellness 101 - How to Properly Wear a Mask (2 minutes)	All grades
Video	How to Wear a Mask Safely (2 minutes)	6-8

Upon the return to school, students will be educated about the new safety protocols. Instruction and positive behavioral support will be on-going and is intended to reinforce the health habits recommended by the governing bodies. Educators will address handwashing, social distancing, respiratory etiquette, and wearing masks through the use of slideshows, videos, social stories, posters, infographics, and demonstrations.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter, and we hope you and your families are safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Jeff LaBroad, Principal, Haynes Elementary School
 Sara Harvey, Principal, Loring Elementary School
 Susan Woods, Principal, Nixon Elementary School
 Annette Doyle, Principal, Noyes Elementary School
 Jeff Mela, Principal, Curtis Middle School