

# An Evaluation with Recommendations for Richmond Consolidated School's Plan for the Fall School Reopening

**Date of Plan's Review:** August 18, 2020

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Mr. Steven Soules, Director of Building Operations at Berkshire  
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## Masks/Face Coverings

### CDC & MA Department of Education Guidance:<sup>1,2,3,13</sup>

- Students in grade 2 and above are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth.
- Adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear masks/face coverings.
- Masks/face coverings should be provided by the student/family, but extra disposable face masks should be made available by the school for students who need them.
- Transparent face coverings provide the opportunity for more visual cues and should be especially considered as an alternative for younger students, students who are deaf and hard of hearing, and their teachers.

### School's Plan

- All staff will be required to wear a face mask or face covering.
- All students in Pre K-8 will be required to wear a mask or face covering while at school.
- Exceptions to the masking requirement will be decided on a case by case basis for students with medical or behavioral health conditions that make masking difficult .

### Infection Prevention Evaluation of the School Plan:

The school's plan for masks/face coverings meets all recommendations of the MA Department of Education's Guidance for Reopening as well as the Center for Disease Control's recommendation.<sup>1,2,3,13</sup> **No infection prevention issues identified.**

### Infection Prevention Recommendations:

- Students that can't tolerate masks may do better with a slightly less restrictive face covering such as a bandana.
- Staff and students should have spare masks so that their mask can be changed if it becomes wet.
- Students can have their mask breaks when at their desks due to the 6 feet distance between desks which meets the state standard for mask breaks and social distancing.
- It may be beneficial to send a communication to the parents of younger students encouraging them to have their child mask for short intervals during the summer in order to allow the child to begin becoming comfortable with wearing a face covering.

## Handwashing and Hand Sanitizing (Hand Hygiene)

### CDC & MA Department of Education Guidance:<sup>1,2,3,13</sup>

- Provide handwashing or hand sanitizing stations in the following common areas sanitizing:
  - All entries and exits
  - In bathrooms
  - In classrooms
  - Shared activity spaces
  - Next to meal distribution and consumption areas
  - Next to water fountains that require touch to operate
- Ensure there are enough supplies (soap and sanitizer) at all times to accommodate frequent hand washing.

- Given the importance of maximizing handwashing and sanitization stations, it may be permissible to have students within 3 feet of distance for a brief period of time (20 seconds) during hand washing as long as masks are worn and students are not directly facing one another.

**School's Plan:**

- Hand sanitizer will be available at the entrance, in classrooms, in common areas, and at convenient locations throughout the school.
- Upon entry to the school, students will use hand sanitizer.
- The school has sufficient supplies of soap and hand sanitizer.
- Signs will be hung to identify where hand sanitizer is located.

**Infection Prevention Evaluation of the School Plan:**

The school's plan for Hand Hygiene meets all recommendations of the MA Department of Education's Guidance for Reopening as well as the Center for Disease Control's recommendation<sup>1,2,3,13</sup> Hand Hygiene is the one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infections.<sup>7</sup> Confirmed that the hand sanitizer contained the correct amount of alcohol to be effective (>62% ethyl alcohol or 70% isopropyl alcohol). **No infection prevention issues identified.**

**Infection Prevention Recommendations:**

- All individuals upon entering the building should be required to use hand sanitizer. This will help reduce the likelihood that bacteria or viruses on hands will be introduced to the school environment.
- Before leaving the school for the day, all individuals should be required to use hand sanitizer to reduce the likelihood that bacteria or viruses on a student's hands will leave the school environment and be brought to their home.
- Hand sanitizer should be used upon re-entry into any classroom.
- Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten students will perform hand hygiene before and after playing.
- Students should be instructed to perform hand hygiene before having snacks or lunch.
- At the beginning of the school year, teachers should go over the importance of hand hygiene and set the expectation for when it should be done.
- At the beginning of the school year, teacher should review the steps of handwashing and instruct students to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds (singing the "Happy Birthday" song slowly is approximately 20 seconds).<sup>13</sup> These steps are:<sup>3,7</sup>
  1. Turn on the faucet and make sure the water is warm (**NOTE:** temperature can affect a soaps ability to adequately clean a person's hands).
  2. Apply an adequate amount of soap (**NOTE:** both antibacterial and regular soap are acceptable for handwashing because it's the soap and suds which hold dirt, oils, bacteria, and viruses in suspension and allow them to be rinsed off the hands).
  3. Vigorously rub all surfaces of hands and fingers.
  4. Rinse Hands with water.
  5. Use a clean paper towel to turn off the faucet (**NOTE:** a person's hands were at their dirtiest when they initially touched the faucet to turn on the water so when a paper towel is used to turn off the faucet it prevents a person from re-contaminating their hands).
- If leaving a bathroom, a clean dry paper towel should be used to open the door so that hands remain clean. A waste receptacle near the door will allow for the proper disposal of the paper towel after its use.
- Hang reminder signs on hand hygiene at bathroom sinks, at hand sanitizer dispensers, and in classrooms.

- Instruct students to cough or sneeze into a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown into the trash and the student should perform hand hygiene immediately.<sup>3</sup>

### Entry & Exit Points

#### MA Department of Education Guidance:<sup>2</sup>

- Consider assigning multiple entry points or staggering arrival times to avoid crowding in entry areas.
- Post appropriate signage and reminders about the health and safety requirements that everyone needs to follow.
- Ensure hand washing or sanitization is available upon entry, as well as appropriate disposal containers.
- Ensure that all students, staff, and visitors, with noted exceptions for medical needs, are wearing masks covering their nose and mouth.
- Ensure that additional masks are available at the entry as may be necessary.
- Consider having staff monitor entry to ensure everyone properly disinfects their hands and is wearing masks.
- While there are no screening procedures required at the point of entry, school staff should observe students throughout the day and refer students who may be symptomatic to the school healthcare point of contact.

#### School's Plan:

- Students that take buses to school will enter and exit the school through the main entrance. As children wait to enter or exit, they will be reminded to maintain social distancing.
- Students who are dropped off or picked up by a parent/guardian will enter or exit the school by the back door near the drop off location. As children wait to enter or exit, they will be reminded to maintain social distancing.
- If a rise in COVID-19 cases in the community or state occur, additional entry points may be added to further optimize social distancing.
- Signs will be used to remind staff, students, and visitors to use hand sanitizer upon entering the building.
- Signs will be used to remind staff, students, and visitors that a face covering is required when entering the building.
- Additional masks are available for situations where an individual entering the school does not have a mask.
- The entry and exit points will be monitored by staff.
- Staff will be instructed on the signs and symptoms associated with COVID-19. Any symptomatic students will be referred to the school nurse for evaluation.
- Daily Screenings
  - Students: Prior to allowing their child to board a school bus or enter a school building, parents will be responsible for doing a daily health screening for their child(ren) to ensure their child is free of illness symptoms.
  - Staff: Prior to reporting to school, all staff will be responsible for completing a daily health self-screening and must attest that they are free of illness symptoms

#### Infection Prevention Evaluation of the School Plan:

The school's plan for the entry and exit points meets all recommendations of the MA Department of Education's Guidance for Reopening as well as the Center for Disease Control's recommendation.<sup>2,3</sup>  
The school's entry and departure processes will allow for orderly movement into and out of the

school as well as maintain social distancing and limit the mixing of cohorts. The daily self-screening of staff and students provides an additional layer of safety. **No infection prevention issues identified**

**Infection Prevention Recommendations:**

No recommendations to provide.

**Learning Spaces**

**Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8**

**MA Department of Education Guidance:**<sup>1,2,13</sup>

- Schools should aim for a physical distance of 6 feet when feasible; 3 feet is the minimum distance allowed. During meals, mask breaks, and other times when masks are not worn, 6 feet is the minimum distance allowed.
- Directly related to physical distancing is the idea of creating cohorts (e.g. self-contained groups) of students wherever possible and limiting the cohort from interaction with others. By grouping students and staff into cohorts, interaction will be limited. This means that if there is a positive COVID-19 case in the school, fewer individuals will have interacted with that person. Cohorts should be used to the extent feasible for classes, transportation, mask breaks, meals, recess, and extra-curriculars. To assist with establishing cohorts, all students should have assigned seating in each class and to the extent feasible for meals and other activities.
- Develop clear movement protocols to avoid crowding, maintain cohorts, and minimize unnecessary person-to-person interactions. These protocols should include a plan for arrival and dismissal times, transitions between classes, and bathroom breaks, as well as outlining one-way movement pathways for hallways and cafeterias.

**School's Plan:**

- All desk within the classrooms will be positioned so as to maintain a distance of 6 feet between students.
- Each student will be assigned for the school year a specific seat within the classroom or other area that is utilized.
- Each grade will be treated as a cohort. Interactions between cohort groups will be restricted.
- Staff and students will be required to walk on a specific side of the hall to go in a specific direction so that unnecessary mingling can be prevented.
- Water fountains will not be used.
- Students will store their jackets and belongings in their locker.

**Infection Prevention Evaluation of the School Plan:**

The school's plan for student placement and spacing meets all recommendations of the MA Department of Education's Guidance for Reopening as well as the Center for Disease Control's recommendation.<sup>1,2,3,13</sup> Assigning specific seats within the classroom minimizes risk by restricting the number of individuals sharing a common space. The school's student movement plan will minimize unnecessary interactions between students from different cohorts and allow for easier maintaining of

social distancing. Existing lockers can be used by students because each locker confines a student's belongings and restricts them from coming in contact with another student's belongings. **No infection prevention issues identified.**

**Infection Prevention Recommendations:**

- Make arrows in the hallways with colorful tape to indicate the direction flow for each side of the hall. Signs could also be used to reinforce the direction of student traffic.
- Any textbooks used for the year should be assigned to a specific student and not shared among students.
- Library materials, including but not limited to books and magazines, can be used if each item is limited to use by a single student. Current research has shown that COVID is undetectable on circulated library materials after 72 hours.<sup>4,5</sup> A process where library materials are returned to a drop off location by Friday morning would provide sufficient time for the materials to remain untouched so that by Monday morning the materials could be returned to their storage location or be used by another student.
- A bleach-based disinfectant should not be used on computers. Alcohol wipes containing at least 70% alcohol are available for purchase and may be gentler on the keyboard while also sufficiently disinfecting it. If alcohol wipes (or 70% alcohol and a soft cloth) are not available then a non-bleach disinfectant wipe can be used.<sup>8,9,10</sup>
- The playground could be divided up into 3 or more areas. A specific cohort should be assigned to a specific area of the playground to prevent mixing of cohorts. Use of the playground areas could be rotated daily so each cohort has an opportunity to play in each of the areas.
- Water fountains that are built to allow for the filling of water bottle could be used just for the filling of water bottle and not for direct consumption. This is allowed under the Department of Education's Guidance.<sup>2</sup> Since the water fountain would not be used to drink from directly and everyone is masked, there is no risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- **For Pre-Kindergarten & Kindergarten:** Limit the number of toys available to make the cleaning & disinfection of those items manageable.<sup>1,2</sup> Consider rotating selections of toys that are available at a given time.
- **For Pre-Kindergarten & Kindergarten:** The school should not provide stuffed animals to be used for toys because of the inability to adequately wash and disinfect them. If children bring in stuffed animals from home, they should not share them with the other children.
- **For Pre-Kindergarten & Kindergarten:** Themes could be used to make the wearing of masks and assigned seating more palatable to the children. An example would be a superhero theme where the children are wearing a face covering to hide their true identity and their assigned seat is their superhero base.

**Lunch**

**CDC & MA Department of Education Guidance:**<sup>1,2,3</sup>

- As students will be unmasked to eat, there is a strict requirement of 6 feet of physical distance between each student.
- Based on CDC recommendations, it is preferable for students to eat in classroom spaces.
- Meals can be delivered to classrooms, or students can bring food back from the cafeteria to eat.

**School's Plan:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohorts will rotate the location that they have meals – on a given day assigned to eating in the cafeteria or at their desk in the classroom.</li> <li>• Meals will pre-assembled by the dietary staff and distributed to the children.</li> <li>• Disposable containers and silverware may be used <u>or</u> reusable containers and silverware may be used – a final decision has yet to be decided.</li> <li>• Children will be instructed to perform hand hygiene before eating.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Infection Prevention Evaluation of the School Plan:</b>                  The school’s plan for lunch meets all recommendations of the MA Department of Education’s Guidance for Reopening as well as the Center for Disease Control’s recommendation.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Given the fact that desks in the classrooms are spaced 6 feet apart, there is no issue with maintaining a 6 feet social distance between students during lunch. Use of the cafeteria is acceptable if its use is limited to a specific cohort on a given day and social distancing can be maintained. There are no restrictions on the use of reusable containers, plates, and silverware. However, reusable silverware should be distributed to the children to prevent the handling of silverware by multiple student cohorts. <b>No infection prevention issues identified.</b></p> <p><b>Infection Prevention Recommendations:</b>                  No recommendations to provide.</p>

<b>Staff Office Spaces</b>
<p><b>MA Department of Education Guidance:<sup>2</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rearrange furniture to support physical distancing, with staff desks facing in the same direction when possible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>School’s Plan:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff will be masked and social distancing will be maintained.</li> <li>• Access to the office will be limited to necessary staff.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Infection Prevention Evaluation of the School Plan:</b>                  The school’s plan for the staff office spaces meets all recommendations of the MA Department of Education’s Guidance for Reopening as well as the Center for Disease Control’s recommendation.<sup>2,3</sup>  <b>No infection prevention issues were identified.</b></p> <p><b>Infection Prevention Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a copier is used, limit its use to office staff to minimizing the contact with the high-touch surfaces on the copier and also to assist in maintaining social distancing. Teachers should request copies in advance and have them made by the office staff. If multiple copiers are present in the school, teachers should be assigned to a specific copier to minimizing mingling among cohorts.</li> </ul>

<b>Nurse’s Office &amp; Medical Waiting Room</b>
<p><b>MA Department of Education Guidance:<sup>2,13</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A medical waiting room, which is a separate space from the nurse’s office, will be used when a student presenting with COVID-19 symptoms needs to be separated from other students.</li> <li>• From a facilities perspective, every effort should be made to find a self-contained space, ideally near an exit/entrance and with a dedicated bathroom.</li> </ul>
<p><b>School’s Plan:</b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The nurse’s office space will be located on the lower level of the building near the back entrance.</li> <li>• The space has an area for the nurse’s office, 2 separate medical waiting rooms, and a dedicated bathroom.</li> <li>• The bathroom will be closed and disinfected after it is used by a child with COVID-19 symptoms.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Infection Prevention Evaluation of the School Plan:</b>  The school’s plan for the staff Nurse Office &amp; Medical Waiting meets all recommendations of the MA Department of Education’s Guidance for Reopening as well as the Center for Disease Control’s recommendation.<sup>2,3,13</sup> The space to be utilized allows for the nurse’s office to supervise the two separate medical waiting rooms. Reviewed the draft of the <i>Health Office Protocols</i> – they are well written and exceed the current recommendations/guidance. <b>No infection prevention issues identified.</b></p> <p><b>Infection Prevention Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide goggles or a face shield to the nurse for use when interacting with a sick child.</li> <li>• The bathroom should be immediately cleaned and disinfected by staff before it is used by another child. There have been no cases of COVID-19 identified as having been transmitted through human waste.<sup>11</sup> Research has shown that COVID-19 becomes inactivated during transit through the colon which suppresses the spread of the virus from a fecal-oral route.<sup>12</sup></li> <li>• To the degree feasible, children in the nurse’s office and medical waiting room should remain masked.</li> </ul>

<b>Bathrooms</b>
<p><b>MA Department of Education Guidance:<sup>2</sup></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider replacing hand dryers with disposable towels, as hand dryers increase the flow of air particles in the bathroom.</li> <li>• Consider not allowing students to use the bathroom during transition times, and otherwise using a bathroom sign out system to reduce the number of students in bathrooms at one time. Ensure that students use their own writing instruments for the sign out log.</li> </ul>
<p><b>School’s Plan:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper towels will be used for drying hands.</li> <li>• A limited number of students will be allowed to use the bathroom at a given time.</li> <li>• A process for logging/documenting bathroom usage is being developed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Infection Prevention Evaluation of the School Plan:</b>  The school’s plan for bathrooms meets all recommendations of the MA Department of Education’s Guidance for Reopening.<sup>2</sup> <b>No infection prevention issues identified.</b></p> <p><b>Infection Prevention Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because bathroom stalls act as barrier, much like Plexiglas in other settings, there is no need to prevent students from using some stalls.</li> <li>• Due to the minimal barrier between urinals, it is recommended that only every other urinal be used to ensure social distancing while there are being used.</li> </ul>

## Cleaning and Disinfecting

### MA Department of Education Guidance:<sup>2</sup>

- Cleaning and disinfecting should occur at least daily for shared spaces and furniture.
- For high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, light switches, water fountains, and toilet seats) cleaning and disinfecting should occur three to four times per day and/or between uses.
- Desks should be cleaned at least daily.
- If shared, electronics must be cleaned between use.
- Consider using an alcohol solution with at least 60 percent ethanol or 70 percent isopropanol, a diluted bleach solution (if prepared daily to ensure efficacy), or an EPA-approved disinfectant unless otherwise instructed by the manufacturer’s instructions.

### School’s Plan:

- Desks will be cleaned at the end of every day in preparation for the next day.
- High-touch surfaces will be cleaned three times per day.
- A cleaning/disinfecting schedule will be developed and documentation of the cleaning/disinfecting will be maintained.
- The school has an adequate supply of disinfectants and cleaners.

### Infection Prevention Evaluation of the School Plan:

The school’s plan for cleaning & disinfecting meets all recommendations of the MA Department of Education’s Guidance for Reopening as well as the Center for Disease Control’s recommendation<sup>.1,2,3</sup> Evaluated the disinfectant to be used at the school and it is an EPA-approved disinfectant for use with Human Coronavirus. Reviewed the importance of reading the instructions on every disinfectant to be sure that the disinfectant is used appropriately; different disinfectants require them to remain on the surface for a specific time in order to ensure the surface is disinfected. Reviewed the draft of the *Cleaning Protocols* – they are well written and meet the current recommendations/guidance. **No infection prevention issues identified.**

### Infection Prevention Recommendations:

- Consider a consistent cleaning schedule for high touch surfaces such as mid-morning, after lunch, and at the end of the school day.
- Document all disinfection and cleaning activities upon completion.
- Consider purchasing a steam cleaner that indicates it kill microorganisms or microbes. This would allow for a cost-effective way to do disinfection of surfaces. This should not be used to replace the use of a disinfectant/cleaner but as an adjunct method for disinfection.<sup>6</sup>
- Bathrooms should be cleaned daily and as needed (**NOTE:** always clean after use by an individual with COVID-19 symptoms). There have been no cases of COVID-19 identified as having been transmitted through human waste.<sup>11</sup> Research has shown that COVID-19 becomes inactivated during transit through the colon which suppresses the spread of the virus from a fecal-oral route.<sup>12</sup>

## References

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- <sup>2</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education (2020, July 22). Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations Guidance. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2020-0722facilities-operations-guide.docx>
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<sup>13</sup> MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2020, August 18). Joint Memo Clarifying Key Health and Safety Requirements for Schools.