



August 25, 2021

Dear Blue Hills Community,

It is with great excitement and anticipation that we welcome you to the 2021-2022 school year! There is important information contained within the document "Reopening 2021." Please review this carefully in the next few days, and be sure you **complete the following by September 7, 2021:**

- Complete the [SY 2021-2022 Mandatory Registration & Student Emergency/Contact Information](#) on Family ID. This is required of all students each year.
- Complete the [SY 2021-2022 Parent/Student Handbook](#) sign off on Family ID. This is required of all students each year.
- If riding the bus this year, please register - remember, bus ridership is provided at no cost to our families: [Bus Registration](#).

School reopens for **all students** on **Tuesday, September 7, 2021**. Homeroom begins at 7:48. Please make sure you review bus and drop off procedures in the Reopening 2021 document.

As you are likely aware, masks will be required in indoor spaces to begin the school year. Our goal is to help students be and feel safe and welcome during each and every day. Right now, masking is a part of that. Mask breaks will be allowed throughout the day, and students will not need to mask outside or while eating. Seats in the cafeteria will be spaced out to provide as much space as possible while eating lunch, with the goal being three feet of distance. We will continue to monitor the COVID-19 numbers and make adjustments to protocols and procedures as necessary throughout the school year. [Here](#) is the link to our COVID-19 Dashboard which is updated weekly on Friday.

Despite all mitigation measures, there will be Covid-19 cases and there may be times when a student or staff member is a close contact of somebody who tests positive for Covid-19. Protocols for quarantining and isolating will be followed at school based on the latest Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Department of Public Health guidelines. The current guidelines can be found [here](#). These guidelines are likely to change throughout the year. The newly released mandate to mask in school is an example of this. We will do our best to stay on top of these changes and communicate with our families as needed. Thank you in advance for your patience, understanding, and support.

We can't wait to see all of our students in just two weeks! Please contact the main office if you have any questions or concerns that are not addressed here.

Sincerely,

Jill M. Rossetti, Superintendent

Geoffrey L. Zini, Principal

## 2021-2022 Back-to-School FAQs

- **What are the health and safety rules that Blue Hills will be following this year?**
  - 7/19/2021: American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a “layered approach to make school safe for all students, teachers, and staff.” The AAP’s guidance “includes a recommendation that everyone older than age 2 wear masks, regardless of vaccination status.”
  - 7/27/2021: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggest a return to indoor mask-wearing in this CDC guidance, stating that the “CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status.”
  - 7/30/2021: In collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA DPH), the Commissioner of Education released this new guidance for PK-12 public schools. Governor Baker spoke in support of the Commissioner’s recommendation later in the day.
  - On August 24, 2021, the MA Board of Education authorized Commissioner Riley to convert the “strong recommendation” into a universal mask mandate for ALL staff and students, at least until October 1, 2021.
  
- **The guidance from the AAP, CDC and MA DPH is inconsistent. What are the health and safety rules that BHR will follow in the 2021-2022 school year?**

Governor Baker noted that MA has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country, which may account for the variation in the approach to back to school guidance. BHR has consistently followed the guidance from the DESE. In an effort to avoid confusion and keep staff and students in school, we will continue to do so. The simplest way to frame the health and safety protocols and expectations for the upcoming school year is this--BHR will start the school year the same way we ended it:

  - Masks are required for all students and staff, vaccinated or unvaccinated, when indoors and on school buses.
  - Physical distancing will be required while eating indoors and during defined activities.
  - Outdoors is still the safest place to be! No masking or physical distancing is required when outdoors.
  
- **I am vaccinated. Will I need to wear a mask in the upcoming school year?**

Yes. Consistent with the CDC’s current guidance, all BHR students and staff, vaccinated or unvaccinated, are required to wear well-fitting masks when they return to school in the fall. Effective August 24, 2021, all students, staff and visitors regardless of vaccinations status **MUST** wear a mask indoors while in BHRTS. **Face masks are not required (1) when outside; or (2) when an individual works alone or in a separate space (e.g., cubicle, office).**
  
- **If a student or staff member is sick and experiencing symptoms, such as fever, cough, runny nose, what should they do?**

**School Personnel:** If a staff member has any symptoms, please call the absence line, report the symptoms to the school nurse and **stay home from school**.

Staff should follow up with their health care providers for further evaluation and testing. They will be allowed to return to school based on their symptoms, further evaluation and clearance from the Blue Hills School Nurse. Staff who become ill at school will be sent home immediately.

**Students and Families:** Before coming to school or getting on the bus, families should assess their child's state of wellness before leaving home for school. It is expected that each family will assess each of their children every day.

If the student has any COVID-19 symptoms, **they should stay home from school.** The family should notify the school nurse that the child will be absent and the reason for the absence. The school nurse will follow up with the family regarding the child's symptoms, when the child was seen by a medical professional, and any testing that was done. The child can return to school once cleared by the school nurse and their local Board of Health.

- **My child is immunocompromised and in-person learning does not feel safe to me. Is there a remote option this year?**

No, remote learning is no longer an option this year per the Commissioner of Education. Please refer to DESE COVID-19 guidance issued on May 27, 2021, page 4:

*Districts will no longer be able to offer remote learning as a standard learning model. As noted above, districts and schools will be required to be in-person, full-time, five days a week this fall. Pathways existed prior to the pandemic for offering virtual learning to individual students in limited cases will remain available to districts and schools. These include home/hospital tutoring programs due to a documented medical condition, 3 single district virtual schools, and other narrow circumstances.*

- **What are the COVID-19 symptoms?**

- **Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills**
- **Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath**
- **New loss of taste or smell**
- **Muscle aches or body aches**
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Sore throat, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea when in combination with other symptoms
- Headache when in combination with other symptoms
- Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) when in combination with other symptoms

- **Will masks be required on school buses?**

Yes. Passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses as required by the federal government. Our school buses will still be disinfected like last year. Please dress accordingly as windows may be open several inches.

- **Will there be assigned seating this year?**

Yes. Whenever possible, seats should be assigned. We will continue our contact tracing efforts, so assigned seating in classrooms remains important.

- **Will BHR continue to test staff/students with COVID-19 symptoms?**

We may continue to test staff/students with mild symptoms with BinaxNOW tests, if available. So long as

these tests are negative, individuals with mild symptoms should remain in school.

- **What if I am a close contact?**

If you are a close contact, you will need to quarantine at home for at least 7 days from the point of exposure. The list of close contacts who do not need to participate in testing and quarantine protocols has been updated to include individuals on school buses, when students are masked with windows open, regardless of distancing. In addition, the following groups **continue to be exempt from testing and quarantine**: asymptomatic, vaccinated close contacts; classroom close contacts spaced at least three feet apart while students are masked; and individuals who have had COVID-19 in the past 90 days.

- **What if a student tests positive for COVID-19 in school?**

If a student tests positive or presents COVID-19 symptoms during the school day, they should be masked, and when feasible, be in a separate room with the door closed until they can be picked up.

- **What are the current travel restrictions? Will I be able to travel out of state without a quarantine?**

Massachusetts [COVID-19 Travel Guidance](#) suggests that if you are vaccinated there are no restrictions on domestic travel and you can travel freely. Here are the CDC's recommendations for [unvaccinated people](#), including a viral test 3-5 days after and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel. If you have any questions, please contact the school nurse.

- **Will BHR host a vaccination clinic? If yes, when?**

Yes; please mark your calendars! We plan to host a BHR **Optional** COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic at Blue Hills Regional Technical School in September. More information will be coming soon, and the clinic is open to all BHR students with parental consent as well as staff members.

- **Will BHR require additional physical distancing when we return to school?**

No. We will do our best to maintain three foot physical distances when eating, but there are no other physical distancing requirements for the upcoming school year.

- **Will we ever get to attend school without strict health and safety measures in place?**

Yes! One way to get this pandemic behind us is by following our "do your part" core value and get fully vaccinated as soon as it is available to you. When Blue Hills Regional Technical School is 80% fully vaccinated, we can revisit the restrictions with health experts. This will be a function of the rates of COVID-19 in the nine communities.