



August 29th, 2021

Frequently Asked Questions regarding TRSD mask requirements

How do TRSD students and staff know if they are supposed to wear a mask in school buildings?

As of 8/20, TRSD has adopted the NH DPHS facemask guidance matrix, which is part of the “STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19) SCHOOL & CHILDCARE TOOLKIT 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR” produced by NH DPHS.

Since that time, the decision matrix has indicated that facemasks are required on all school buses per federal mandate and inside school buildings when six foot social distancing cannot be achieved.

TRSD recently informed families of the current mask status via email and will also make that information available by posting the mask status on the District website at: <https://www.timberlane.net/>. The indoor mask status will be communicated as “until further notice”, meaning that further communication will come out when the status changes.

What types of masks can be used?

CDC’s general guidance recommends cloth masks consisting of, “multiple layers of tightly woven, breathable fabric” and “the mask should block light when held up to a bright light source”. Disposable medical masks may also be used. There should be no gaps between the mask and your face, and your nose and mouth should be covered.

What is the NH DPHS Face mask guidance matrix?

The Facemask decision matrix was released by NH DPHS as a means to help schools decide when face masks should be used as a mitigation strategy. The metrics used in the matrix are NH DPHS research based and supported by state epidemiologists and medical professionals. The use of mitigation strategies such as this are supported by the district’s insurance carrier and legal counsel.

How does the facemask decision matrix work?

The matrix takes into account both Local (county) “level of community Transmission” and number of cases within the facility or school. The level of community transmission is based on the RATE of new cases per 100,000 population and the percentage of PCR test positivity. Those data points and the determination of “level of Community transmission” are communicated by the state Monday- Friday and can be found at: <https://www.covid19.nh.gov/dashboard/map>. This data is monitored daily and communicated to stakeholders as appropriate.

The number of cases within the facility is determined by school nurses and administration based on self reporting from families, and/ or information supplied to the district by NH DPHS/ NH DHHS.

Why use a decision matrix?

A research based, legally supported decision matrix allows non-medical professionals (school board members, school administrators, etc.) the ability to implement unbiased, science based, mitigation strategies to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff. The face mask decision matrix allows the decision to be made on COVID-19 metrics that are supplied to the district by NH DPHS and medical professionals. These metrics will be made available to the public, so that all stakeholders are aware of the data that is used in the decision matrix.