



Dear Excel Families,

As we approach the start of the 2021-2022 school year, Excel Academy is working to keep our school community safe and provide an excellent education to our students. I'm writing to share an overview of our COVID-related preparations for the coming school year.

The plans below are based on recent recommendations issued by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Department of Public Health (linked here in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)) and conditions in our local community. We will adapt our policies as needed to ensure our safety plans reflect current public health recommendations.

For the 2021-2022 school year, all Excel Academy students will return to school in person five days a week. Like other public schools in Massachusetts, Excel Academy will return to a fully in-person model and will not offer a remote school option. We know that the majority of our students learn best in person and believe that we can operate in person safely using a variety of safety measures.

Excel strongly encourages all eligible community members to get vaccinated against COVID-19. However, Excel does not require vaccination at this time. As of this writing, about 88% of Excel staff members and more than 50% of eligible Excel students are vaccinated. Vaccination remains the most effective tool we have against the transmission of COVID-19. Further, vaccinated individuals are far less likely to have severe cases of COVID-19. The more people in the Excel community who become vaccinated, the less likely it is that we will have disruptions to schooling this year. COVID vaccines are free and widely available to people 12 years old and up at community health centers, CVS and other locations. See [this link](#) for more information on vaccine availability.

Excel Academy will require staff and students to wear masks in some school settings.

- At all campuses, all unvaccinated community members will be required to wear a mask inside the school building. This applies to both students and staff who are not vaccinated against COVID.
- At our Middle School campuses: All students at Middle School campuses (regardless of vaccination status) will be required to wear a mask indoors. Middle School leadership is considering whether, in line with DPH recommendations, vaccinated teachers will be allowed to remove masks in the classroom to allow for more ease of communication while teaching. Middle School families are asked to provide your comments on mask policy via the survey. [Middle School Survey](#)



- At our High School campus: In line with DPH recommendations, the High School may allow vaccinated staff and students to go without a mask in some parts of the school building. Alternatively, the High School may require all staff and students (regardless of vaccination status) to wear a mask in the school building. High School families are asked to provide your comments on mask policy via the survey: [High School Survey](#)
- At all campuses, students and staff will be able to remove their masks during lunch period and designated mask breaks.
- At all campuses, masks will not be required outdoors on school grounds.

This mask policy is based on Massachusetts DPH recommendations, which include the recommendation that unvaccinated people wear masks and vaccinated people be allowed to remove masks.¹ Given the low rate of vaccination at the middle schools (due to our younger students being ineligible for vaccination), all students at Excel middle schools should remain masked.

Excel will not plan for physical distancing in the Fall of 2021. With all of our students attending school in person, physical distancing is not possible. Physical distancing was possible in the Spring of 2020 because only approximately 50% of students were attending school in person.

Excel will conduct on-site COVID testing of all unvaccinated staff and students weekly and engage in contact tracing. The Department of Elementary and Secondary education strongly encourages public schools to conduct COVID testing in the school setting. This free, quick, and painless testing will help Excel become aware of any presence of COVID among our community so that we may take action steps to protect the community. Excel asks that all unvaccinated students participate in the weekly testing in order to support our safety plans. (Unvaccinated staff are also required to participate in testing.) If you have questions or concerns about testing for your student, please reach out to your school's Nurse for further information.

In the event of a positive test result, Excel staff will reach out with specific guidance about quarantining for both the individual and close contacts. As always, anyone experiencing symptoms or feeling unwell should not come to school.

¹ As many of you are aware, the state guidance issued on July 30th is not entirely consistent with guidance from the Center for Disease Control, which recommends that all students and staff, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks indoors when schools open in all grades K-12. In issuing its guidance, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health acknowledged the discrepancy, and noted that the difference in recommendations is in part due to the high rate of vaccination in Massachusetts as compared to the rest of the country. Since the state of the pandemic in Massachusetts changes frequently, it is likely that we will update our mask guidance throughout the year based on recommendations from the State and changes in local conditions.



Excel will continue to engage in other COVID-19 mitigation measures including increased air circulation and filtration and daily cleaning and disinfection. All Excel buildings meet or exceed recommended levels of air filtration and circulation set by public health leaders.

Please provide your feedback on our plans for the 2021-22 school year through the links below.

- Families with students at the middle schools: [Middle School Survey](#)
- Families with students at the high school: [High School Survey](#)

We are excited to see all of our students back on campus this fall, and we look forward to a safe and strong start to the school year.

Sincerely,

Owen Stearns
CEO Excel Academy