

**Stoneham School Committee  
Public Hearing  
August 18th, 2021**



STONEHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- The Commissioner of Education has determined that face covering decisions should be made at the local level.
- Tonight, August 18, 2021, the Stoneham School Committee will publicly review the materials contained in this presentation.
- The Committee is seeking public comment regarding the return to school.

In short, absent a local Board of Health or local municipal mandate, school committees currently have the authority to adopt district mask policies as they see fit, the implementation of which is subject to bargaining relative to any changes to unionized staff's working conditions.

- All students will have access to equitable, inclusive and reasonably safe learning environments that uphold COVID-19 safety measures and protocols.
- The mental, social, and emotional health of students and staff will be considered in decision-making.
- The District and its community members will value diversity as an asset to learning and promote social justice and post pandemic healing.

- We have input from three governing agencies: DESE, MDPH, CDC. While each agency strongly recommends the wearing of masks, each stopped short of requiring them.

**The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) issued its guidance on face coverings for the upcoming school year.**

- The Department came up with its guidance in consultation with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), as follows:
  - This fall, DESE and DPH strongly recommend that all students in kindergarten through grade 6 wear masks when indoors, except students who cannot do so due to medical conditions or behavioral needs. Masks are not necessary outdoors and may be removed while eating indoors.

- DESE and DPH also strongly recommend that unvaccinated staff in all grades, unvaccinated students in grades 7 and above, and unvaccinated visitors wear masks indoors, in alignment with the statewide advisory on masking.
- DESE and DPH recommend that schools allow vaccinated students to remain unmasked.
- Any individual at higher risk for severe disease from COVID or with a household member who is at high risk is encouraged to mask regardless of vaccination status consistent with the updated DPH Advisory on Face Coverings and Masks.

- Any child or family who prefers to mask at school should be supported in this choice.
- By federal public health order, all students and staff are required to wear masks on school buses at this time.

- On July 9th, the CDC issued the following: "CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Children should return to full-time in-person learning in the fall with layered prevention strategies in place."

- Finally, the American Academy of Pediatrics, "strongly recommends in-person learning and urges all who are eligible to be vaccinated to protect against COVID-19. In addition to vaccinations, the AAP recommends a layered approach to make school safe for all students, teachers and staff. That includes a recommendation that everyone older than age 2 wear masks, regardless of vaccination status."

- Finally, the American Academy of Pediatrics, "strongly recommends in-person learning and urges all who are eligible to be vaccinated to protect against COVID-19. In addition to vaccinations, the AAP recommends a layered approach to make school safe for all students, teachers and staff. That includes a recommendation that everyone older than age 2 wear masks, regardless of vaccination status."

# Summary of Guidance

	DESE / DPH	CDC	AAP
Masking K-6: <i>Indoors</i> (students & staff)	Strongly recommended	<u>Vaccinated</u> : Recommended <u>Unvaccinated</u> : Recommended	Recommended
Masking K-6: <i>Outdoors</i> (students & staff)	Not necessary	May Be Recommended <a href="#">CDC Guidance – August 5, 2021</a>	No guidance offered
Masking 7-12: <i>Unvaccinated</i> (students & staff)	<u>Indoors</u> : Recommended <u>Outdoors</u> : Not necessary	<u>Indoors</u> : Recommended <u>Outdoors</u> : May Be Recommended <a href="#">CDC Guidance – August 5, 2021</a>	<u>Indoors</u> : Recommended <u>Outdoors</u> : No guidance offered
Masking 7-12: <i>Vaccinated</i> (students & staff)	<u>DPH</u> : Advised if in a home with unvaccinated or immunocompromised people (7/30/2021 updated guidance) <u>DESE</u> : Allow vaccinated students to remain unmasked; silent on vaccinated adults	Recommended	Recommended
Distancing	Not necessary	<u>Vaccinated</u> : No guidance offered <u>Unvaccinated</u> : 3 feet recommended (but not required*)	No guidance offered
Cafeteria	Masks may be removed No distancing guidance offered	No mask guidance offered Distancing not required if vaccinated	No guidance offered
Vaccination	Encouraged school sites for vaccinations; <i>additional guidance to come...</i>	Recommended	Recommended
Testing	Encouraged; <i>additional guidance to come...</i>	Recommended for symptomatic cases and as a prevention strategy	No guidance offered
Contract Tracing & Quarantining	<i>Additional guidance to come...</i>	<u>Vaccinated</u> : Not recommended if symptom-free <u>Unvaccinated</u> : Recommended <a href="#">CDC Guidance – August 5, 2021</a>	No guidance offered
Bus Transportation & School Health Offices	Masks required for all students and staff	Masks required	No guidance offered

# IMMUNOCOMPROMISED STUDENTS

- Unfortunately, universal remote learning is no longer an option in the upcoming school year per the Commissioner of Education. (Please refer to the DESE COVID-19 guidance issued on May 27, 2021.)
- As noted above, districts and schools will be required to be in-person, full-time, five days a week this fall.

# QUARANTINING? TEST AND STAY...

- When individuals are found to be in close contact with a COVID-19 positive person while at school, rather than quarantine, we may have the ability to use the BINAX NOW Rapid antigen test. We are exploring this option.
- Tests are administered daily for at least five days from the date of exposure.
- If the student remains negative, the student stays in school

# REVIEWING OUR MASKING PRACTICES

- Roughly once a month the School Committee and Superintendent will review the COVID-19 data at the School Committee meeting

# Priority questions for discussion tonight

- In order to fulfill the DESE mandates and after reviewing federal/state/local guidance, here are the questions that remain:
  1. Will masking be required for all students & staff?
    - Indoors vs. outdoors

# Priority questions that are awaiting additional guidance

## 2. What will be our approach towards vaccination, testing, quarantining, and contact tracing?

- *Still awaiting final guidance from DESE on:*
  - *State-wide testing program*
  - *“Test and stay” approach*
  - *Quarantine exemptions*

# Priority questions that are awaiting additional guidance

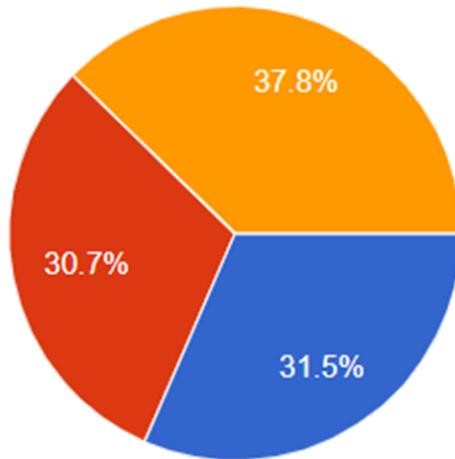
**3. As metrics and data change, what will be Stoneham's approach for making decisions?**

- **Do we use the Board of Health to make the recommendation?**

# Survey Data

\*Please select one of the following statements based on LOW/MODERATE transmission rates within the community.

1,398 responses

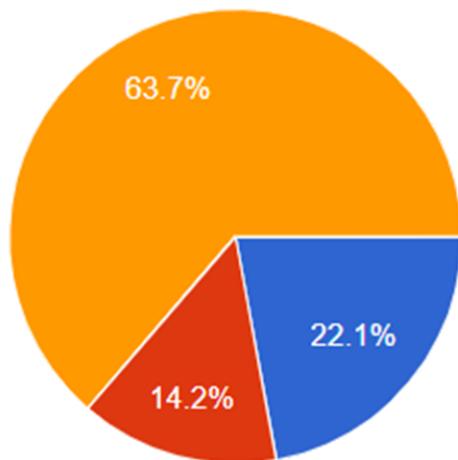


- Masks should be made optional for all students/staff regardless of vaccination status.
- Masks should be required for unvaccinated students/staff.
- Masks should be required for all students/staff regardless of vaccination status.

# Survey Data

\*Please select one of the following statements based on SUBSTANTIAL/HIGH transmission rates within the community.

1,398 responses

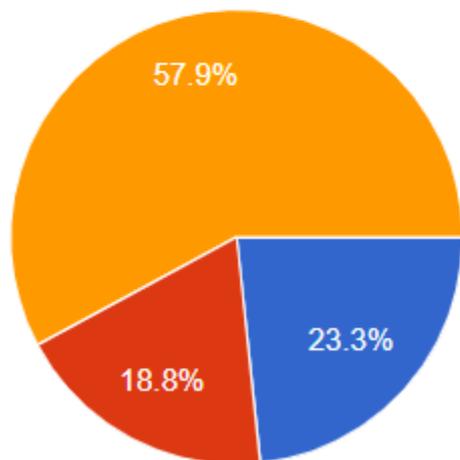


- Masks should be made optional for all students/staff regardless of vaccination status.
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# Survey Data

Specific to outside individuals entering to our schools including visitors, volunteers, student teachers, and/or contractors:

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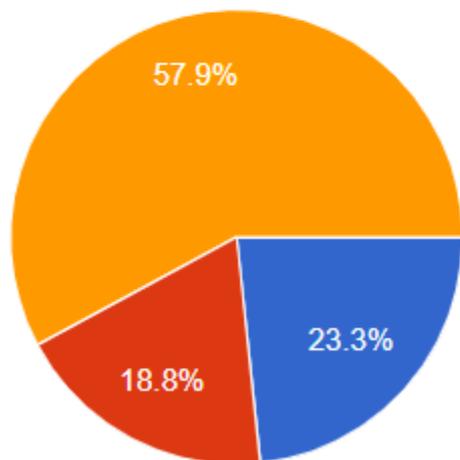


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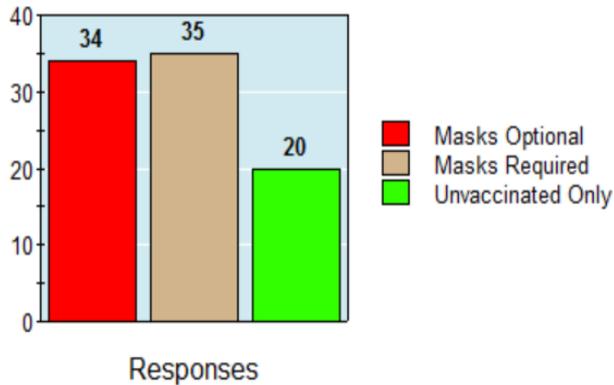
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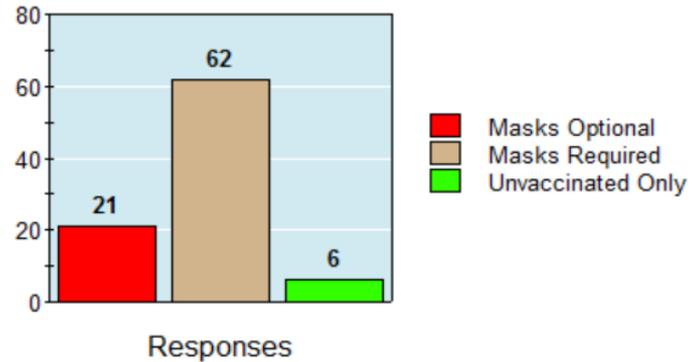
# Survey Data

## PreK Parent Responses/Low Transmission



38.2 % = Masks Optional  
39.3 % = Masks Required  
22.4 % = Masks for Unvaccinated Only

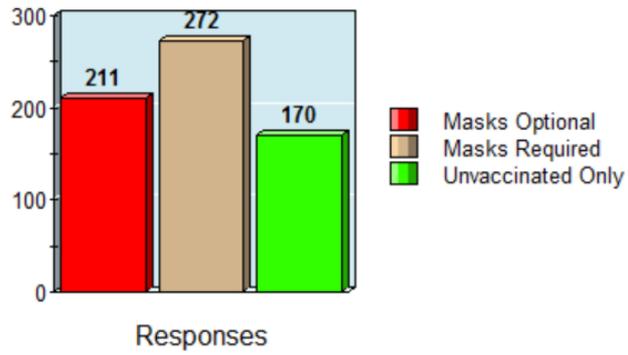
## PK Parent Response/Mod, High Transmission



23.6 % = Masks Optional  
69.7 % = Masks Required  
6.7 % = Masks for Unvaccinated Only

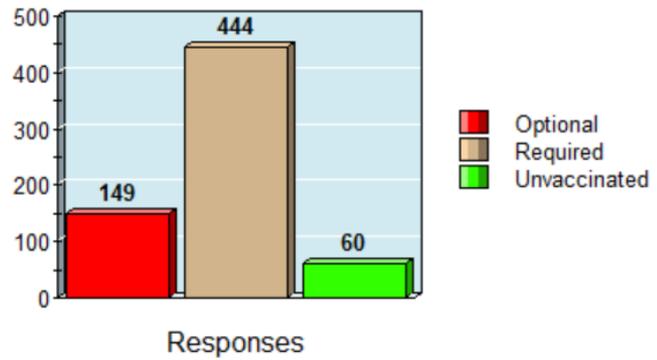
# Survey Data

### K-4 Parent Responses/Low Transmission



32.3 % = Masks Optional  
41.7 % = Masks Required  
26.0 % = Masks for Unvaccinated Only

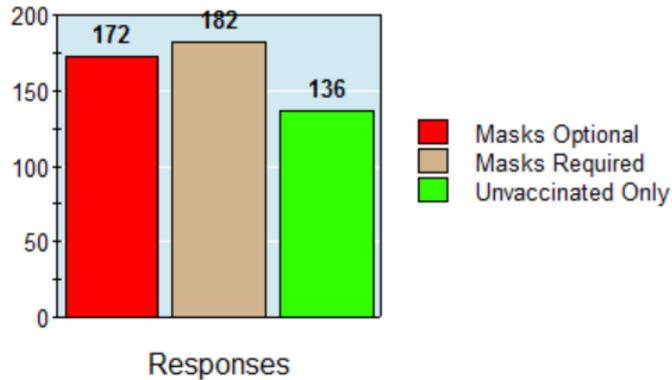
### K-4 Parent Responses/Mod, High Transmission



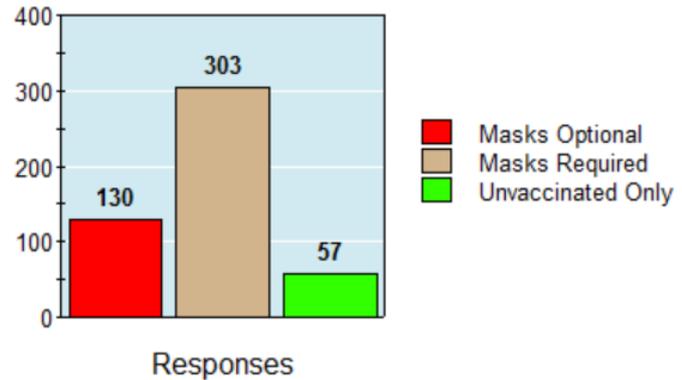
22.8 % = Masks Optional  
68.0 % = Masks Required  
9.2 % = Masks for Unvaccinated Only

# Survey Data

## 5-8 Parent Response/Low Transmission



## 5-8 Parent Response/Mod, High Transmission

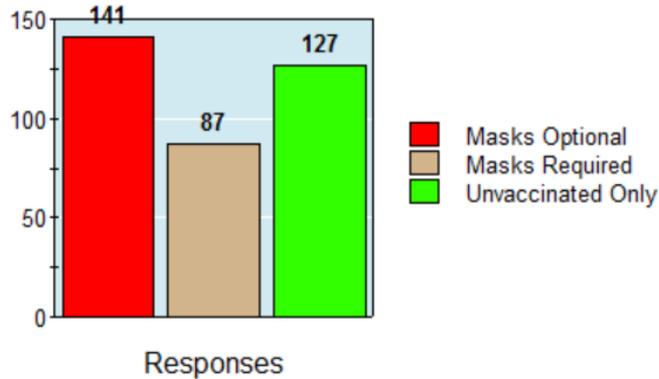


35.1 % = Masks Optional  
37.1 % = Masks Required  
27.7.7 % = Masks for Unvaccinated Only

26.5 % = Masks Optional  
61.8 % = Masks Required  
11.6 % = Masks for Unvaccinated Only

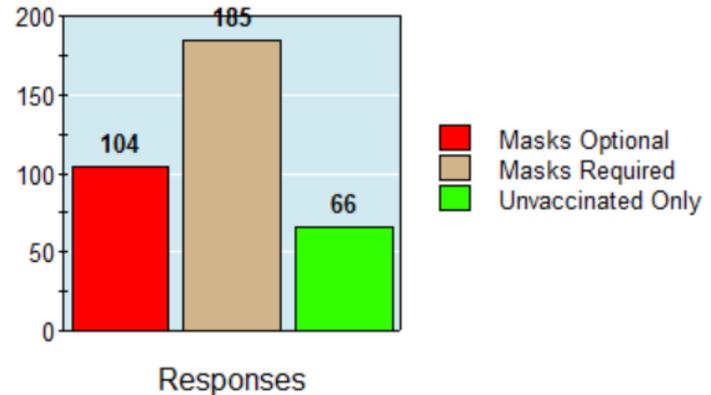
# Survey Data

## 9-12 Parent Response/Low Transmission



39.7 % = Masks Optional  
24.5% = Masks Required  
35.7% = Masks for Unvaccinated Only

## 9-12 Parent Response/Mod, High Transmission



29.2 % = Masks Optional  
52.1% = Masks Required  
18.5% = Masks for Unvaccinated Only

# Mitigation strategies...SPS We will continue to:

Encourage vaccinations

Implement mask wearing protocols

Utilize recommended cleaning protocols

Utilize hand washing protocols

Air exchange

Space as much as possible

Communicate positive cases to the community

Utilize transportation protocols (mask wearing)

Pursue testing opportunities

Provide on-site vaccination opportunities

Encourage adherence to community health guidance  
outside of school

# Moving Forward

- **SPS will move forward with planning additional operational details and communicate key aspects of plan with families & staff**
- **apply a consistent approach to guide future decisions**
- **Communicate plan for vaccination, testing, quarantining, and contact tracing as soon in response to updated guidance**