



## **Vermont Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics Guidance on Masking and Return to School**

August 10, 2021

The American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter fully supports the administration's emphasis on getting students in-person full-time this school year and with the recommendation that schools require universal masking of all students and staff regardless of vaccination status to begin the school year.

Vermont pediatricians continue to support universal masking regardless of vaccination status as an important mitigation strategy to prevent spread of COVID-19 in the school setting. Masking will also help prevent the spread of other common respiratory viruses that can mimic the signs and symptoms of COVID-19. We feel strongly that universal masking should continue for students and staff in each school building until those under 12 years of age have had the opportunity to be vaccinated and when epidemiologic data tells us it is safe to remove them.

We know that distancing of students has been difficult to implement in school buildings, and while we know that layers of mitigation are best, the benefits of children being in school outweigh the risks. Therefore, we support schools not implementing distancing measures, but strongly recommend that schools pay special attention to distancing at times when students are eating in groups unmasked. This may mean eating in shifts or at alternative locations.

We also want to stress the importance of the stay home when sick guidance as outlined in the Agency of Education/Department of Health memo. Students and staff who are sick should stay home. AAP-VT will be working with the Vermont Child Health Improvement Program to update the guidance this week

Finally, thank you to everyone involved in the education and care of Vermont's young people. We thank you for the endless work and dedication you show to your students. We want you to know that we are here to collaborate to keep our kids in school and safe in the year to come. If you would like to connect with your local pediatrician please contact Stephanie Winters at [swinters@vtmd.org](mailto:swinters@vtmd.org).

Sincerely,  
Becca Bell, M.D.  
President