Pandemic Response Update

January 6, 2021

Key Messages

1) The health & well-being of students, families, & staff is priority #1.

2) Our focus for this school year is to develop a safe school environment for our students and staff that prioritizes everyone's well-being and enables high levels of learning for all.

3) We are operating based on guidance from public health authorities and the MA Department of Elementary & Secondary Education while closely monitoring the latest information from medical experts and the evolving data regarding the pandemic both in Massachusetts and in Shrewsbury.

Current Case Count in District

In-School Hybrid Model Cases

Cases this week to date = 23

Cumulative cases since start of school = 224

Cases traced to possible exposure in school = 3

Cases in Remote Program

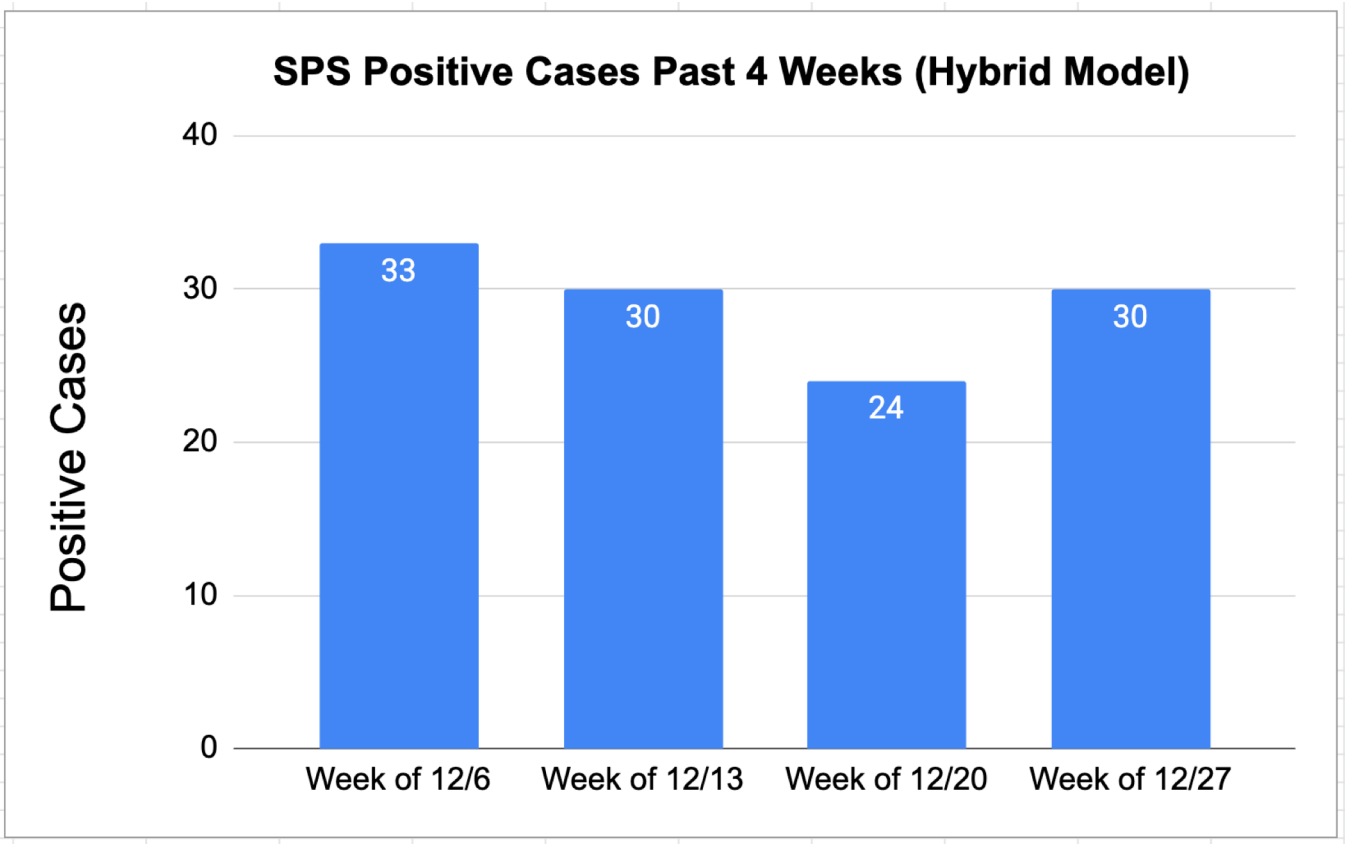
Cases this calendar week = 1

Cumulative cases since start of school = 12

SPS COVID-19 Data Dashboard

Published weekly on Mondays

https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/district/sps-weekly-covid-19-data-dashboard



Current Public Health Data

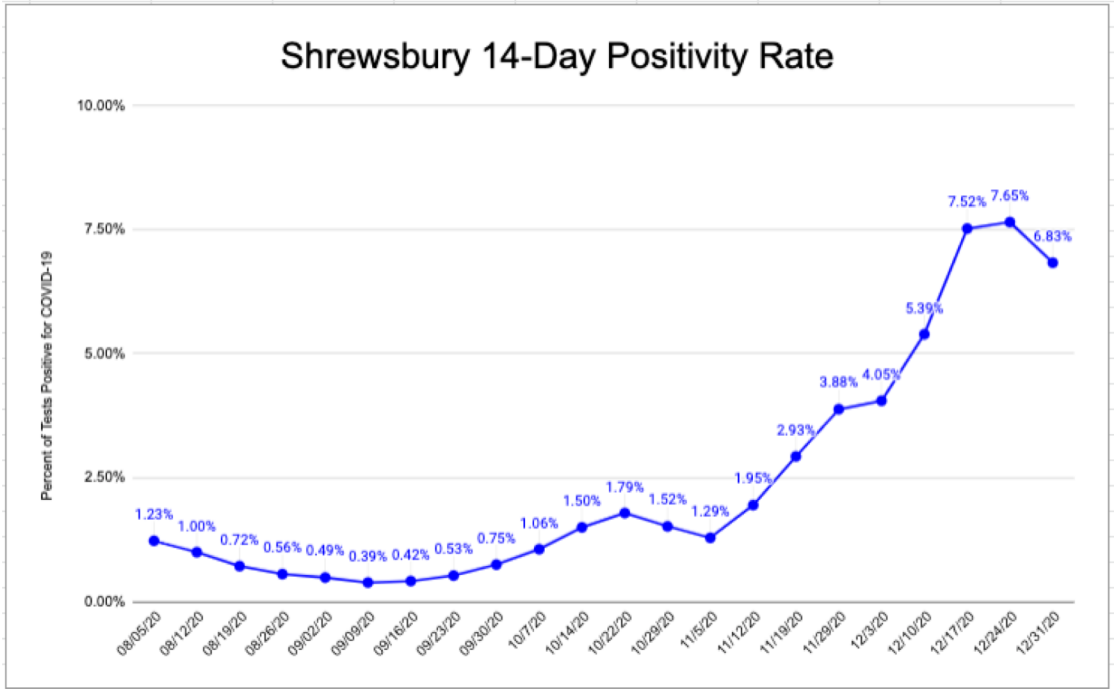
MA 7-Day Positivity Rate = 8.15%

(Up from 5.66% from last report on 12/16)

Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center

https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/testing/testing-positivity

Current Public Health Data
Shrewsbury 14-Day Positive Test Rate
(6.83% vs. 5.0% Benchmark)
As of December 31 (Last Published)



https://www.mass.gov/doc/weekly-covid-19-public-health-report-december-31-2020/download

Shrewsbury Weekly Public Health Data

(As of last report of December 10)

Case Count Dec 13-Dec 26 = 304 (21.7 cases/day)
14-Day Cases per 100,000 = 55.0: Red Zone

Case Count Dec 5-Dec 19 = 362 (25.8 cases/day)
14-Day Cases per 100,000 = 65.5: Red Zone

	Population		
Group	**Under 10K**	**10K-50K**	**Over 50K**
Grey	Less than or equal to 10 total cases	Less than or equal to 10 total cases	Less than or equal to 15 total cases
Green	Less than or equal to 15 total cases	<10 avg cases/100k AND >10 total cases	<10 avg cases/100k AND >15 total cases
Yellow	Less than or equal to 25 total cases	>=10 avg cases/100k OR >= 5% pos rate	>=10 avg cases/100k OR >= 4% pos rate
Red	More than 25 total cases	>=10 avg cases/100k AND >=5% pos rate	>=10 avg cases/100k AND >=4% pos rate

Medical Literature Focusing on In-School Transmission Risk

https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Risk-Assessment-and-Testing-Protocols-for-Reducing-SARS-CoV-2-Transmission-in-K-12-Schools_Final-10-14-2020.pdf

Table 1: Modified from "CDC indicators and thresholds for risk of introduction and transmission of COVID-19 in schools" (published September 2020).

Indicators	Lowest risk of transmission in schools	Lower risk of transmission in schools	Moderate risk of transmission in schools	Higher risk of transmission in schools	Highest risk of transmission in schools
Core Indicators					
Number of new county-level cases per 100,000 persons within the last 14 days	<5	5 to <20	20 to <50	50 to ≤ 200	>200
Percentage of county-level RT-PCR tests that are positive during the last 14 days	<3%	3% to <5%	5% to <8%	8% to ≤ 10%	>10%
Ability of the school to implement 5 key mitigation strategies: • Consistent and correct use of masks • Social distancing to the largest extent possible • Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette • Cleaning and disinfection • Contact tracing in collaboration with local health department	Implemented **all 5** strategies correctly and consistently	Implemented **all 5** strategies correctly but inconsistently	Implemented **3-4** strategies correctly and consistently	Implemented **1-2** strategies correctly and consistently	Implemented **no** strategies

These are the core indicators CDC issued to inform risk assessment decisions for school reopening. Secondary indicators included hospital and ICU load and local indicators of outbreaks.

Updated State Guidance to Decision-Making Process for Determining Change in Educational Program (i.e., Potential for Moving to Remote Learning): Determine Whether There is Transmission in Schools

From the MA COVID-19 Command Center & DESE (November 6, 2020):

"Districts are expected to prioritize in-person learning across all color-coded categories, unless there is suspected in-school transmission, in accordance with DESE's *Guidance on Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios*. **Transmission in schools is defined as spread of the virus between people during interactions in the school setting."**

Updated State Guidance to Decision-Making Process for Determining Change in Educational Program (i.e., Potential for Moving to Remote Learning): Expectations for In-Person Learning

From the MA COVID-19 Command Center & DESE (November 6, 2020):

"...Districts and schools in communities designated gray, green, or yellow are expected to have students learning fully in-person, **if feasible**. A hybrid model should be used only if there is no other way to meet health and safety requirements. Parents and caregivers will continue to have the option to choose a district's remote learning program for their children.

Schools in red communities should implement hybrid models, while maximizing in-person learning time for high-needs students."

Maintaining stability

- Our current hybrid program minimizes close contacts needing to quarantine due to six-foot distancing and an alternating schedule
- Districts in Massachusetts and elsewhere have needed to move to full remote instruction because of staffing shortages due to quarantining
- Community case count and positivity rate increases are concerning; **we continue to follow guidance from public health and medical experts**

Suspected In-School Transmission

- Three suspected cases of in-school transmission, each between two individuals, in December
- For two of these, Massachusetts Department of Public Health sent its Mobile Testing Unit to investigate further spread: Zero additional positive cases found out of 67 tests (no clusters identified)
- The third case was between two staff in a small, self-contained work group; no other positives

COVID-19 related occurrences

as of 1/6/2021

	Total students & staff
Positive cases	**236**
Close contacts	**147*** ***47 related to winter athletics**

3 (2%) of the individuals who were identified as close contacts tested positive for COVID-19 within the next 14 days and are therefore considered cases of possible in-school transmission of the virus

Mobile testing provided by DESE was utilized in 2 of these cases; a total of 67 individuals were tested and no positive results were found

How can we protect ourselves and others? A combination of strategies

- A combination of mitigation strategies is required; one will not work on its own
  - All students and staff must wear face masks consistently and in the proper manner
  - Everyone should do their best to avoid “close contact” by not being within 6 feet distance of others for 15 minutes
  - Students and staff should wash/sanitize their hands frequently
  - Students and staff must stay home if they are sick

- We are all in this together and ask that staff and families partner in maintaining a safe school environment

Decision-Making Regarding Return to Hybrid

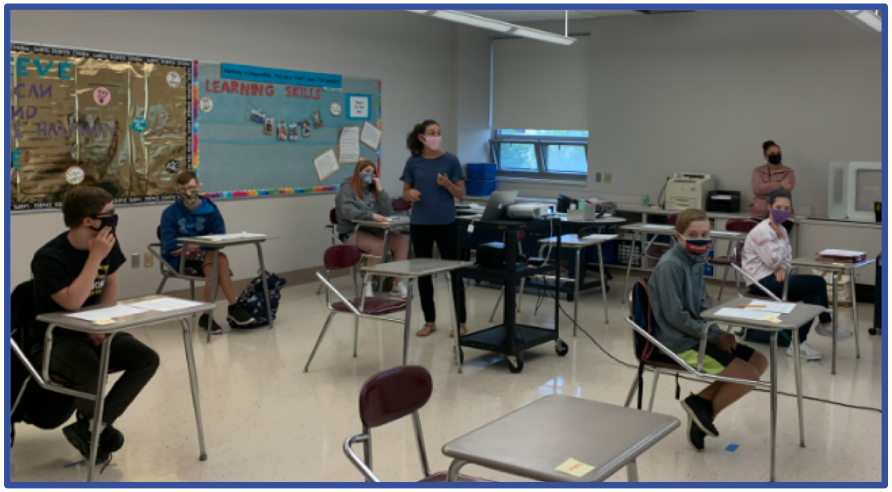
- Reviewing case numbers this week (trending slightly higher than previous weeks, but no large spike); expecting to make decision by midday on Friday
- Consulting with medical experts and public health authorities
- Very small % of suspected in-school transmission; testing showed no clusters, nature of contacts may have played a role in isolated cases
- DESE guidelines are to employ hybrid model and prioritize high-needs students when community is in “red” status

Exploring Pool Testing as a Surveillance Tool

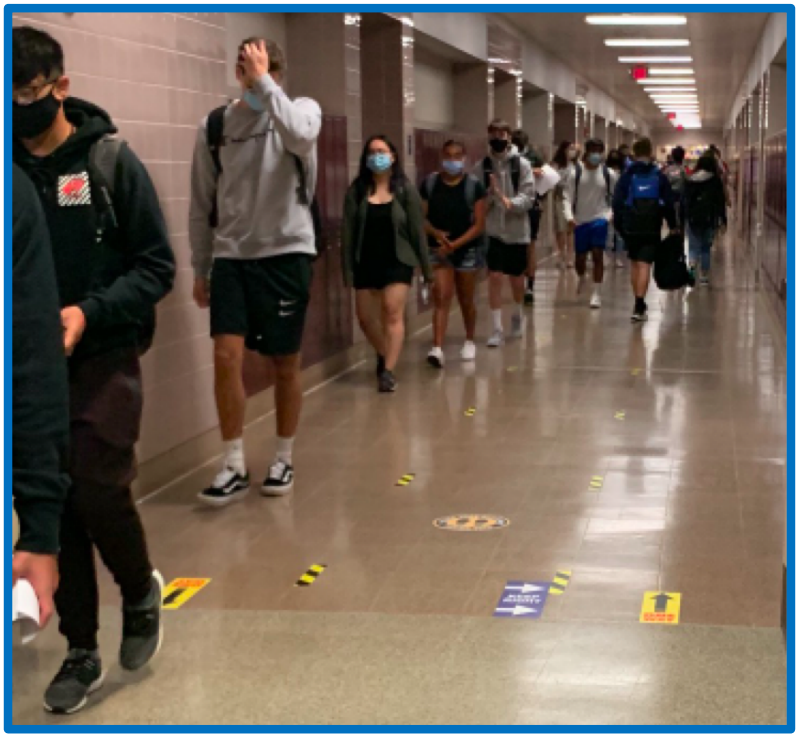
- COVID-19 testing hasn't been an option due to lack of funds vs. investment needed for frequency and volume
- New and continued federal stimulus funding for COVID-19 related costs may provide opportunity
- Have met with multiple vendors to learn about options
- If we pursue, would need to phase in the program, likely begin with staff
- Testing could assist with maintaining in-person school while awaiting the vaccine

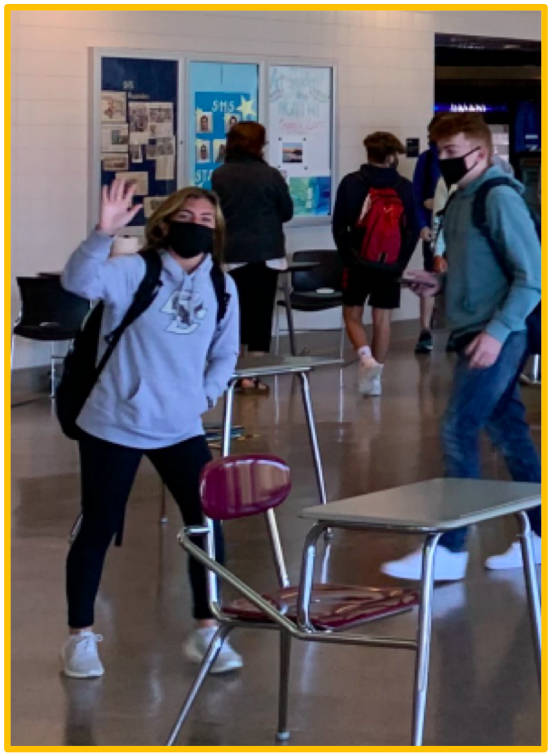
Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Update

January 6, 2021



Our Goal: Safe, Smart, Healthy & Well





Key Considerations

As you know, in creating the existing schedules, we prioritized:

- High Quality Instruction
- Student and Staff Well-being,
- Inclusion, and
- Equity

Imperfect AND Improving

- New DESE guidelines compel us to reexamine the amount of “live” instructional time ALL students receive.

- For Grades K-4 we are considering how best to preserve small group instruction while reconfiguring whole group instruction- together with our teachers.

Latest DESE Mandate

By January 19th, districts must adhere to new standards for minimum "live" times for their primary learning model as follows:

- Hybrid model: district average of 35 hours over a 10 day period
- Remote model: district average of 40 hours over a 10 day period
- Districts are also responsible for ensuring a daily live "check in" for all students in grades K-12. Optional "office hours" will NOT count towards this requirement. Our students in grades K-8 already get this through morning meeting and homeroom, but we will need to provide this to all high school students every day.

Aligning our Efforts

Since receiving word from DESE about our preliminary status, we have:

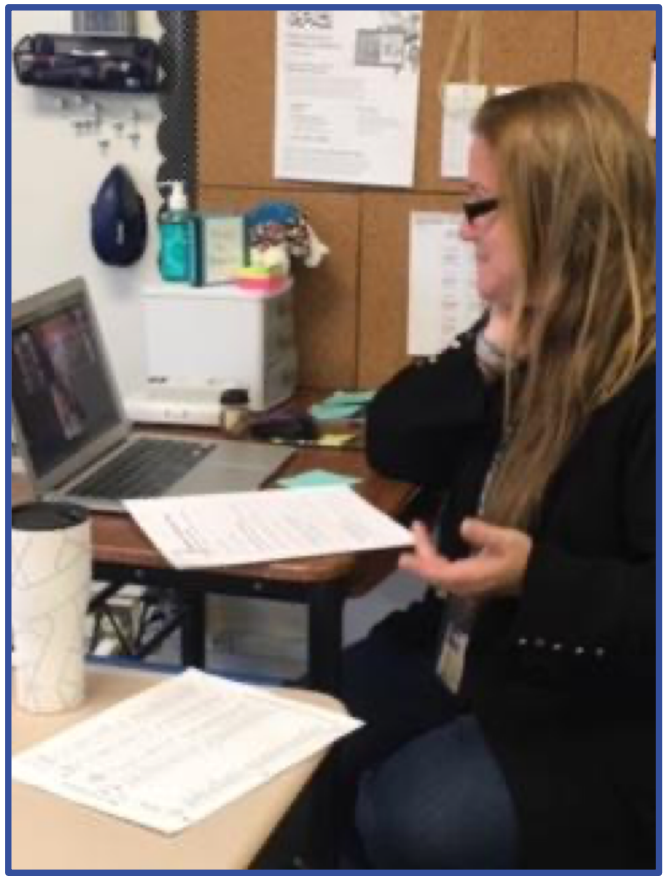
- Looked at districts that are meeting the standard to identify solutions by level
- Communicated the new guidelines to staff and
- Begun to collaborate with the leadership team, instructional teams and the SEA and SPA to propose solutions that work for SPS

Data Submitted	Status shared	Compliance Expected
11/6/20	12/11/20	**January 19th**

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

Calibrating is Key

We’re working together to balance “live” instruction, independent practice, timely feedback and accountability.



Maintaining Hope for Better Times Ahead; Viewing Our Current Situation with Candor

- Things will eventually get better and return to a more normal situation

- We must analyze our current circumstances and make decisions based on a balanced view of risk