Pandemic Response Update

January 20, 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 = 8

Cumulative cases since start of school = 267

Cases traced to possible exposure in school = 3

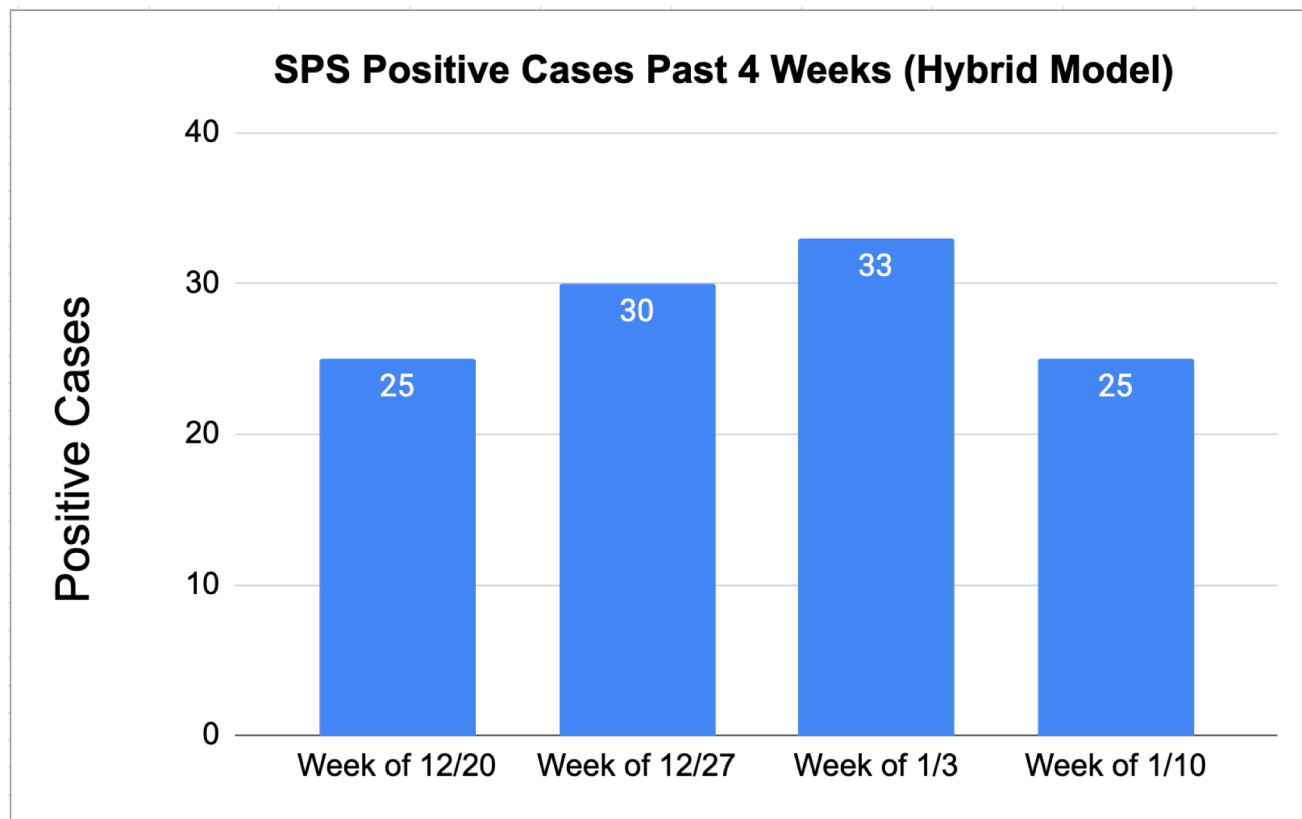## Cases in Remote Program

Cases this calendar week = 0

Cumulative cases since start of school = 17

SPS COVID-19 Data Dashboard
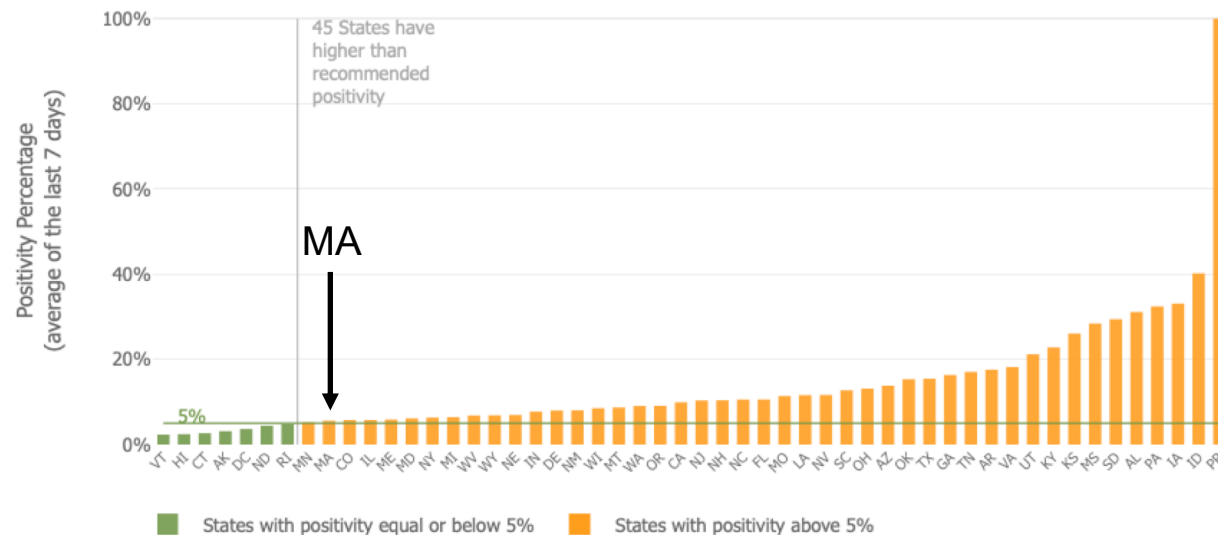## Now published DAILY with weekly count on Mondays
https://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/district/sps-weekly-covid-19-data-dashboard

SPS Positive Cases Past 4 Weeks (Hybrid Model)

Positive Cases

Week of 12/20	Week of 12/27	Week of 1/3	Week of 1/10
25	30	33	25

Current Public Health Data
MA 7-Day Positivity Rate = 5.58%
(Down from 8.15% from last report on 1/6)
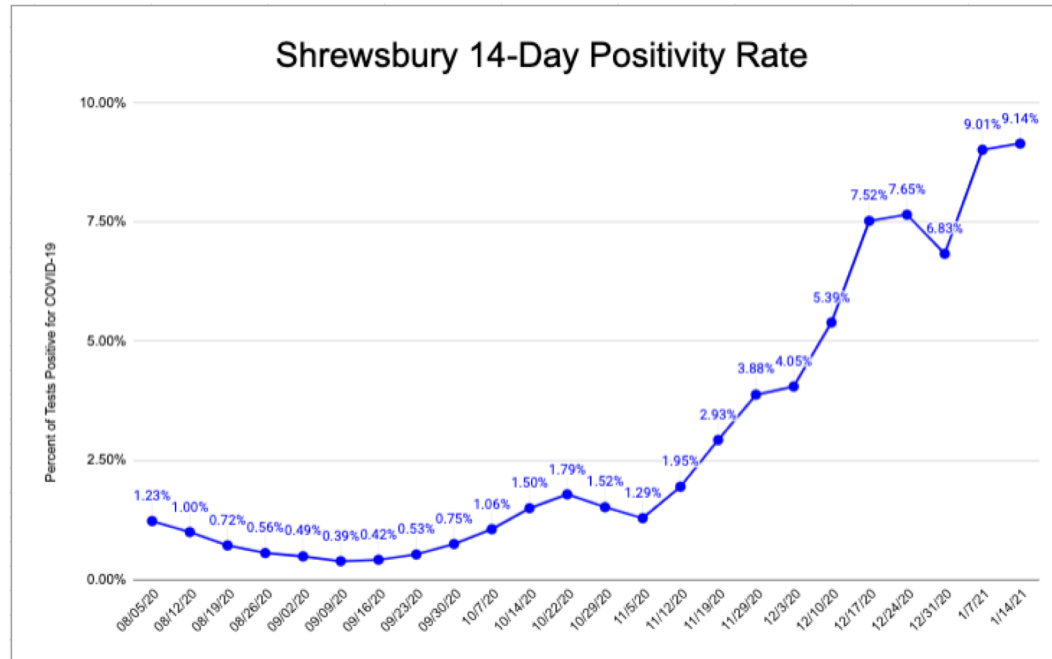### Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center
https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/testing/testing-positivity

Current Public Health Data
Shrewsbury 14-Day Positive Test Rate
(9.14% vs. 5.0% Benchmark)
As of January 14 (Last Published)

Shrewsbury Weekly Public Health Data
(As of last report of January 14)

Case Count Dec 20-Jan 2 = 460 (32.8 cases/day)
14-Day Cases per 100,000 = 83.2.: 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): <u>Expectations for In-Person Learning</u>

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 Pooled Surveillance Testing

- Pooled testing is a cost effective way to identify Covid positive people early and prevent transmission

- We will use a phased start with staff testing to begin in early-mid February

- Student testing will begin with the high school in mid-late February
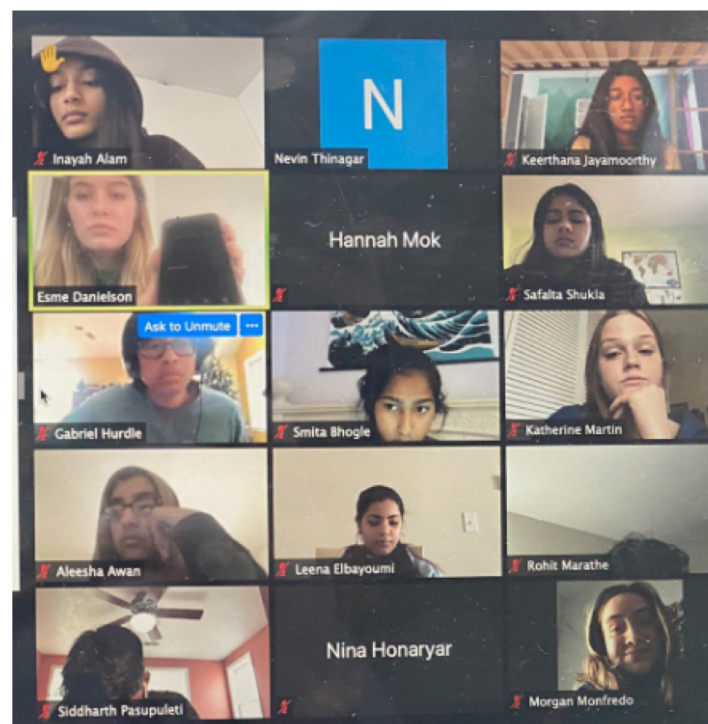
Covid-19 Pooled Surveillance Testing

• We will be using a shallow nasal swab test, self-administered by staff and students with results expected within 24-36 hours after shipping

• We will determine the need for testing lower grades based on virus case counts

• Testing will not be mandatory but it is highly encouraged in order to achieve the goal of early detection of asymptomatic, Covid-positive individuals

Covid-19 Pooled Surveillance Testing

•The District is finalizing a vendor contract for <u>weekly</u> "pooled" Covid testing

•We are moving ahead as quickly as possible and not waiting for the state program rollout, although the vendor we choose may be part of that program

•Funding will come from Covid-related federal grants

Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Update

January 20, 2021

Latest DESE Mandate

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
- Collaborated with the leadership team, instructional teams and the SEA and SPA to craft a plan that work for SPS.

Key Considerations

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

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

Key Considerations

In adjusting existing schedules, we prioritized:

- options that gave more time to valued activities
- solutions that alleviated a known challenge
- ideas that simplified implementation whenever possible

Imperfect AND Improving

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

- Solutions vary by grade span:

  Elementary (Grades 1-4)

  Sherwood Middle(Grades 5 & 6)

  Oak Middle   (Grades 7 & 8)

  SHS (Grades 9-12)

- DESE averages Student Learning Time across levels

Elementary

- Students will be logged in and "live" on Wednesdays from 9:15-12:15
  Started 1/19

- Students will participate in a 15 minute closing circle meeting or whole group read aloud to schedule 4 days a week
  Started 1/19

- Paraprofessionals will host 30 minute meetings with remote students on "home" days
  Starting 1/25

- Teachers will expand "live" time during English Language Arts.
  Starting 1/25

Sherwood Middle

- Add 10 minutes to Morning Meeting every day but Wednesday.
  Started 1/19

- Expand live time during Academic Focus Time (AFT) period for all teams to 45 minutes on Mondays, Tuesdays,Thursdays, & Fridays
  Starting 1/25

Oak Middle

- Add an opportunity for daily connection to existing schedule for each period to enable students to Zoom in from home

After 15 minutes, students who are at home are "released" to complete asynchronous work on their own.

Starting 1/25

SHS

- Add an opportunity for daily connection to existing schedule for each period to enable students to Zoom in from home

- After 15 minutes, students who are at home are "released" to complete asynchronous work on their own. Starting 1/25

- Reduce passing time by a minute Starting 1/25

Change is hard

We're working together to balance "live" instruction, independent practice, timely feedback and accountability.

Everything will be alright does not mean Everything will stay the same

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