



Pandemic Response Update

January 27, 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 = 13

Cumulative cases since start of school = 287

Cases traced to possible exposure in school = 4

Cases in Remote Program

Cases this calendar week = 0

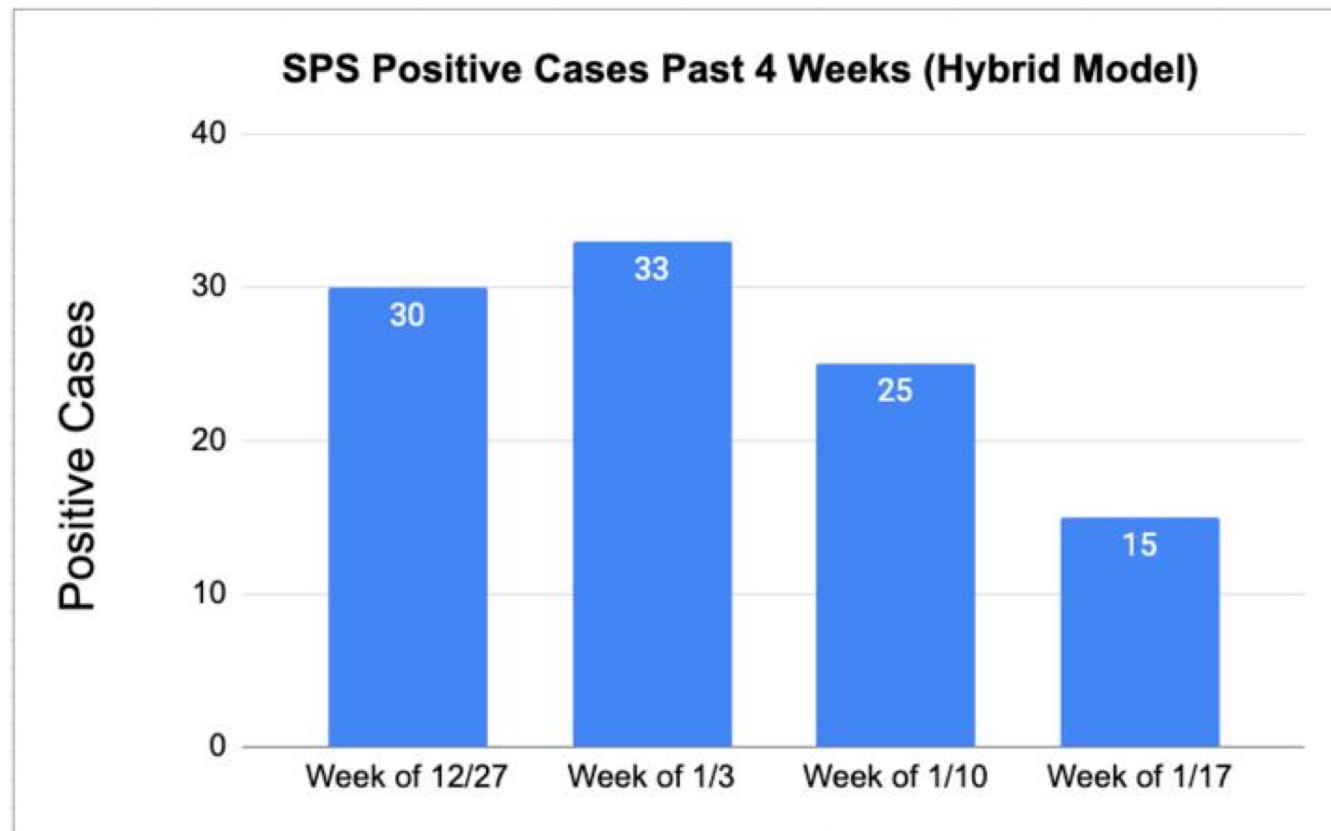
Cumulative cases since start of school = 18



SPS COVID-19 Data Dashboard

Now published DAILY with weekly count on Mondays

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





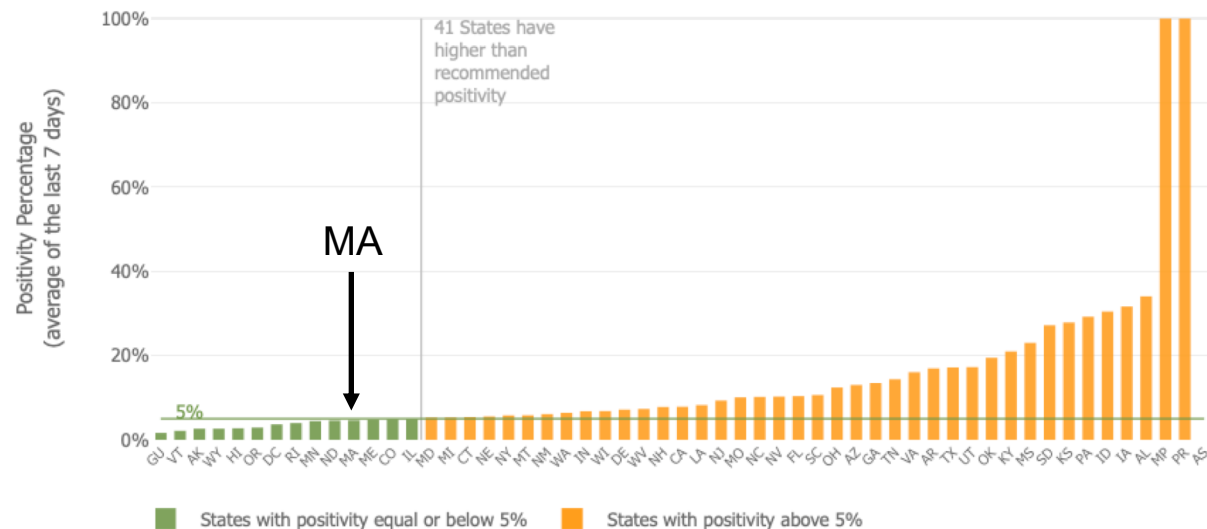
Current Public Health Data

MA 7-Day Positivity Rate = 4.62%

(Down from 5.58% from last report on 1/20)

Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center

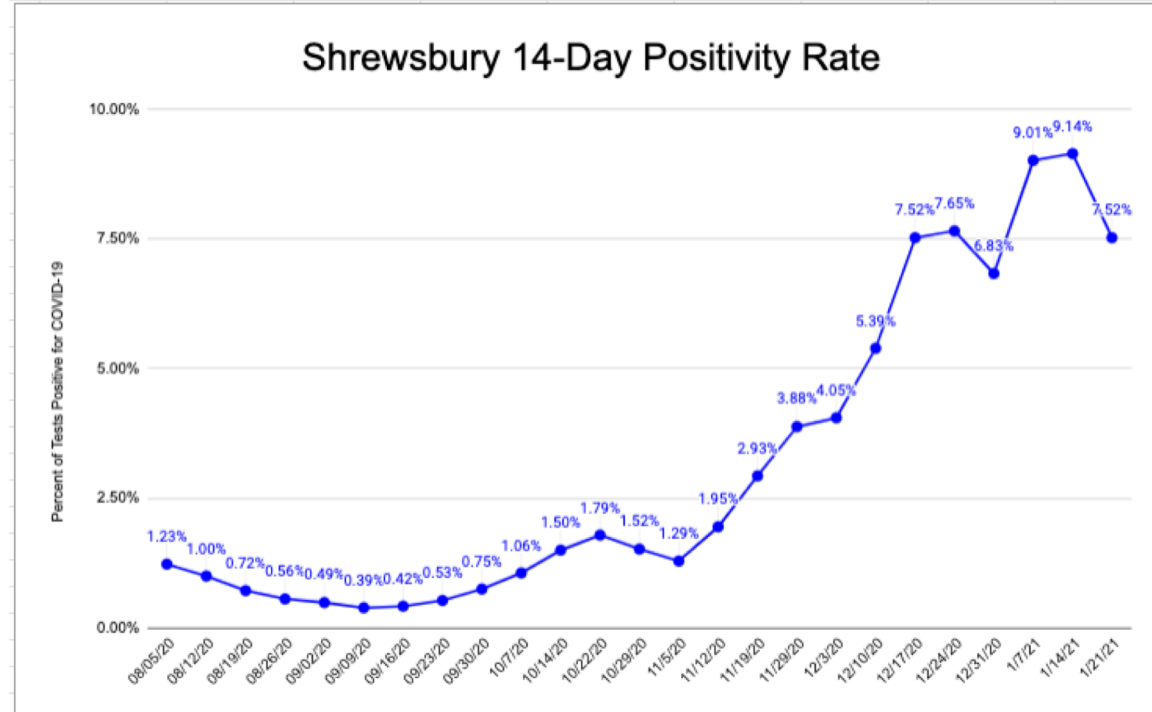
<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/testing/testing-positivity>





Current Public Health Data

Shrewsbury 14-Day Positive Test Rate (7.52% vs. 5.0% Benchmark) As of January 21 (Last Published)



<https://www.mass.gov/doc/weekly-covid-19-public-health-report-january-21-2021/download>



Shrewsbury Weekly Public Health Data

(As of last report of January 21)

Case Count **Dec 27-Jan 9** = 413 (29.5 cases/day)
14-Day Cases per 100,000 = 74.7: Red Zone

Group	Population		
	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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

- Fourth suspected case of in-school transmission emerged today (Coolidge)
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health will send its Mobile Testing Unit to investigate further spread as a precaution (limited to one cohort of students in one classroom)
- Previous three cases were all isolated between two individuals
- Suspected in-school transmission cases represent **1.4%** of positive cases among students and staff

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 **next week**
- 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 weekly “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



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, after reviewing data and consulting with medical and public health experts