

Health and Safety Considerations for the Reopening of Schools

Report to School Committee

July 22, 2020



Key Messages

- 1) The health & well-being of students, families, & staff is priority #1.
- 2) Our focus for the coming 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 planning based on guidance from 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.

Children benefit from being in school



- “Schools are fundamental to child and adolescent development and well-being and provide our children and adolescents with academic instruction, social and emotional skills, safety, reliable nutrition, physical/speech and mental health therapy, and opportunities for physical activity, among other benefits. Beyond supporting the educational development of children and adolescents, schools play a critical role in addressing racial and social inequity.... Policies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within schools must be balanced with the known harms to children, adolescents, families, and the community by keeping children at home.”

- American Academy of Pediatrics *COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry*

Initial DESE Guidance, June 2020



- Prioritizes bringing ALL students back to school in person, while prompting districts to come up with 2 alternative plans: hybrid of in school/remote, and full remote learning
- The medical literature at that point suggested transmission in schools is much lower than in other settings
- **“At this time, the evidence suggests schools have not played a significant role in COVID-19 transmission and that children, particularly younger children, are less likely than adults to be infected with COVID-19. Furthermore, if they become infected, it appears children may be less likely to transmit COVID-19 to others”**

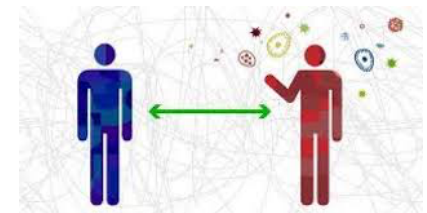
Initial DESE Guidance, June 2020



- Schools do not appear to have played a major role in COVID-19 transmission
- In general, rates of COVID-19 infection are lower for children than for adults
- If exposed, children may be less likely to become infected with COVID-19
- If infected, it appears children may be less likely to infect others with COVID-19

Initial DESE Guidance, June 2020

- Guidelines to help prevent spread of infection: near universal mask policy, frequent hand sanitizing, attempts at social distancing
 - Masks: mandatory grade 2 and above, almost no medical exemptions
 - Hand sanitizing: on arrival, through the day, on exiting
 - Social distancing: 3 feet is adequate when students are masked, 6 feet when possible
 - Attempts to keep cohorts together through the day



Lots of questions persisted....

- At several points during the Initial DESE Guidance document, references to “further guidance from DPH coming soon”
- Protocols needed for how to approach sick or exposed students or staff



Protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios in school, on the bus, or in community settings, July 17



- Protocols for reducing and limiting the spread of COVID in Schools.
- Most important: stay home if sick!
- Students and staff to be sent home if they develop illness during the day, with protocols for testing and when they may return



Protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios in school, on the bus, or in community settings, July 17

- If students or staff have one of any of the symptoms that are concerning for COVID-19, they are to be sent home
 - fever, and/or chills
 - cough
 - shortness of breath
 - loss of smell or taste
 - sore throat
 - body aches
 - nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
 - headache*
 - nasal congestion/runny nose*



* IF COMBINED WITH OTHER SYMPTOMS

Protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios in school, on the bus, or in community settings, July 17

- Once sent home:



- if they are tested and negative, they may return to school after symptoms resolve*



- if they are positive, they must be out of school 10 days from the beginning of symptoms AND 3 days from end of fever with improvement in symptoms

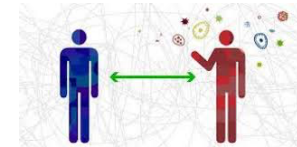
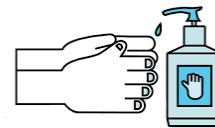


- if they are NOT tested, quarantine at home for 14 days from onset of symptoms

*documentation from a health care provider will be required for return

Protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios in school, on the bus, or in community settings, July 17

- Protocol for testing “close contacts”*: collaborate with DPH to help identify close contacts via contact tracers
- If community outbreaks occur, consider closing individual school or district for brief period of time in consultation with DPH



- Collaboration between community pediatricians and school nurses
- Still many issues to determine including where and how students will be tested when needed

*Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet for 10-15 minutes or more

Evolving Data and Research

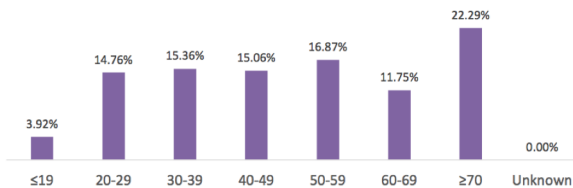
- Tracking of local and state data, combined with review of the ever evolving body of available research will continue to guide our decision making and the development of SPS specific policies and procedures

The New York Times

Older Children Spread the Coronavirus Just as Much as Adults, Large Study Finds

The study of nearly 65,000 people in South Korea suggests that school reopenings will trigger more outbreaks.

Positive COVID-19 Cases by Age, Town of Shrewsbury 7.17.2020



Two hair stylists with **COVID-19** spent at least 15 minutes with 139 clients

EVERYONE WORE FACE COVERINGS **NO CLIENTS ARE KNOWN TO BE INFECTED***

WEAR CLOTH FACE COVERINGS CONSISTENTLY AND CORRECTLY TO SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

*No clients reported symptoms, all COVID-19 test results were negative.

CDC.GOV bit.ly/MMWR71420 MMWR

Stakeholder Input



- Survey of initial parent preferences reported last week by Dr. Sawyer
- Additional feedback will be solicited as more specific plans are determined



- Survey form for questions, concerns and ideas is open to all staff through mid-August

Thank you!

Questions?

