



Pandemic Response Update

March 10, 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 = 4

Cumulative cases since start of school = 362

Cases traced to possible exposure in school = 7

Cases in Remote Program

Cases this week to date = 2

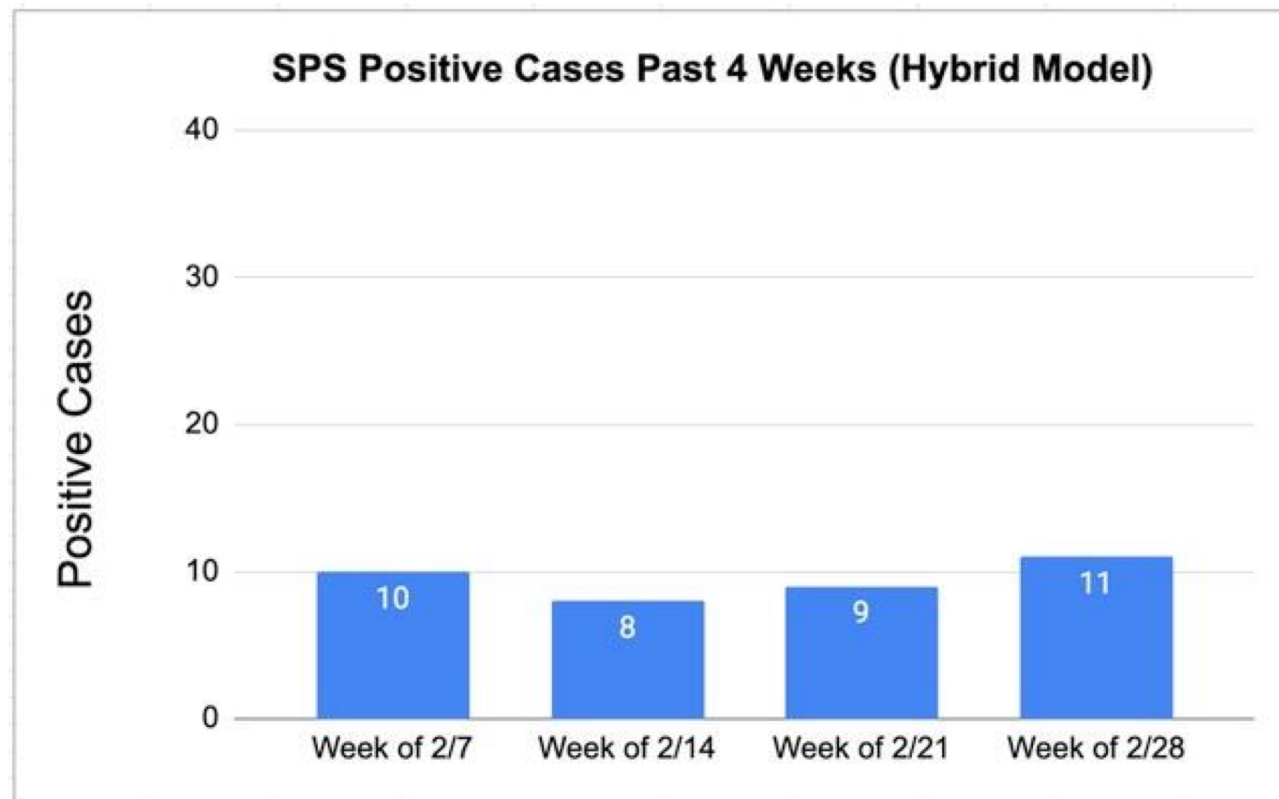
Cumulative cases since start of school = 31



SPS COVID-19 Data Dashboard

Daily cases on weekdays with weekly count on Mondays

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





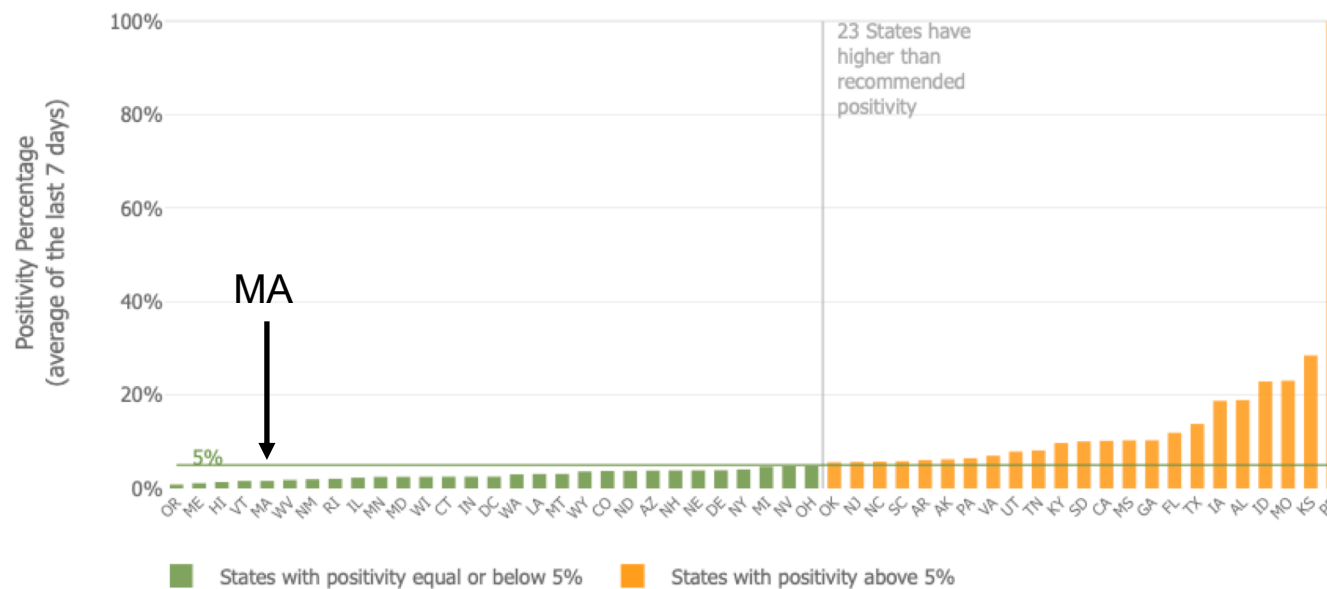
Current Public Health Data

MA 7-Day Positivity Rate = 1.62%

(Down from **1.85%** from last report on 2/24)

Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center

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



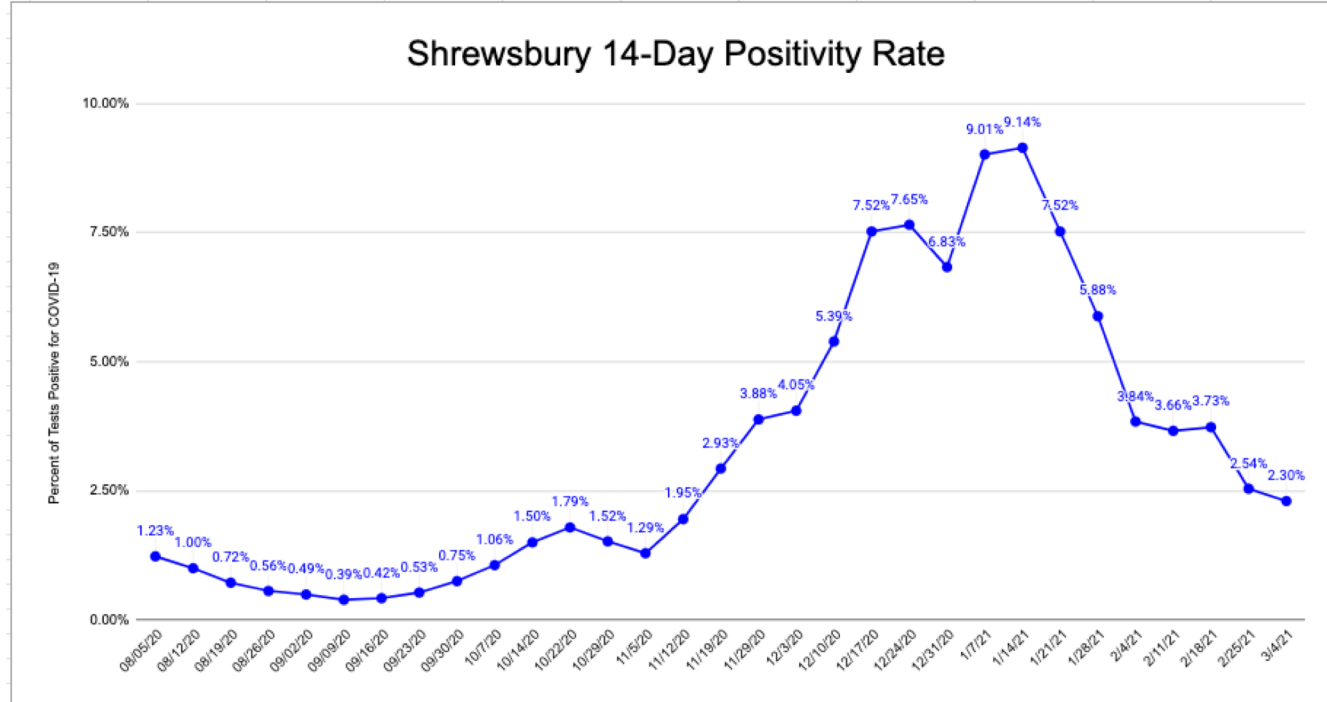


Current Public Health Data

Shrewsbury 14-Day Positive Test Rate

(2.30% vs. 5.0% Benchmark)

As of March 4 (Last Published)

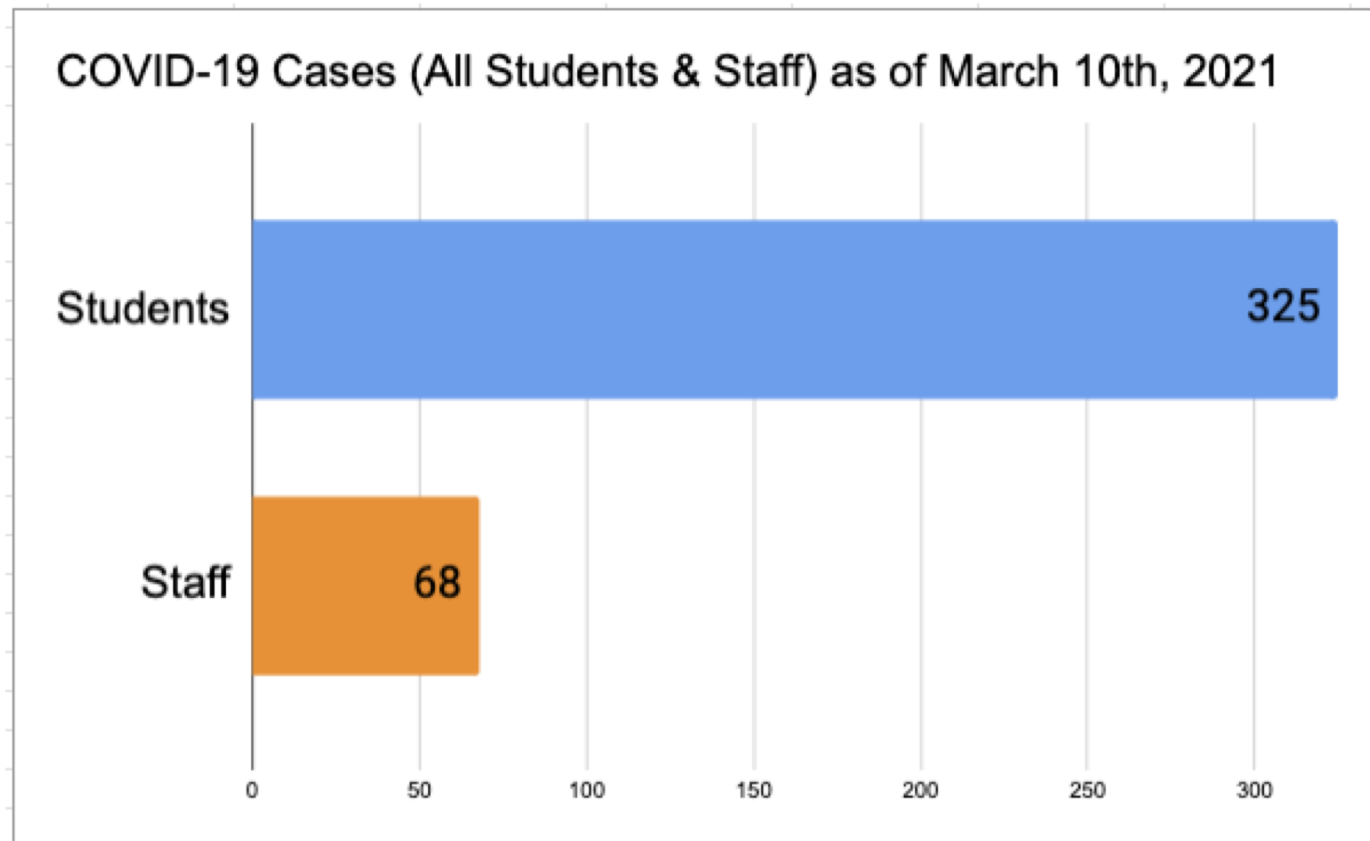


<https://www.mass.gov/doc/weekly-covid-19-public-health-report-march-4-2021/download>



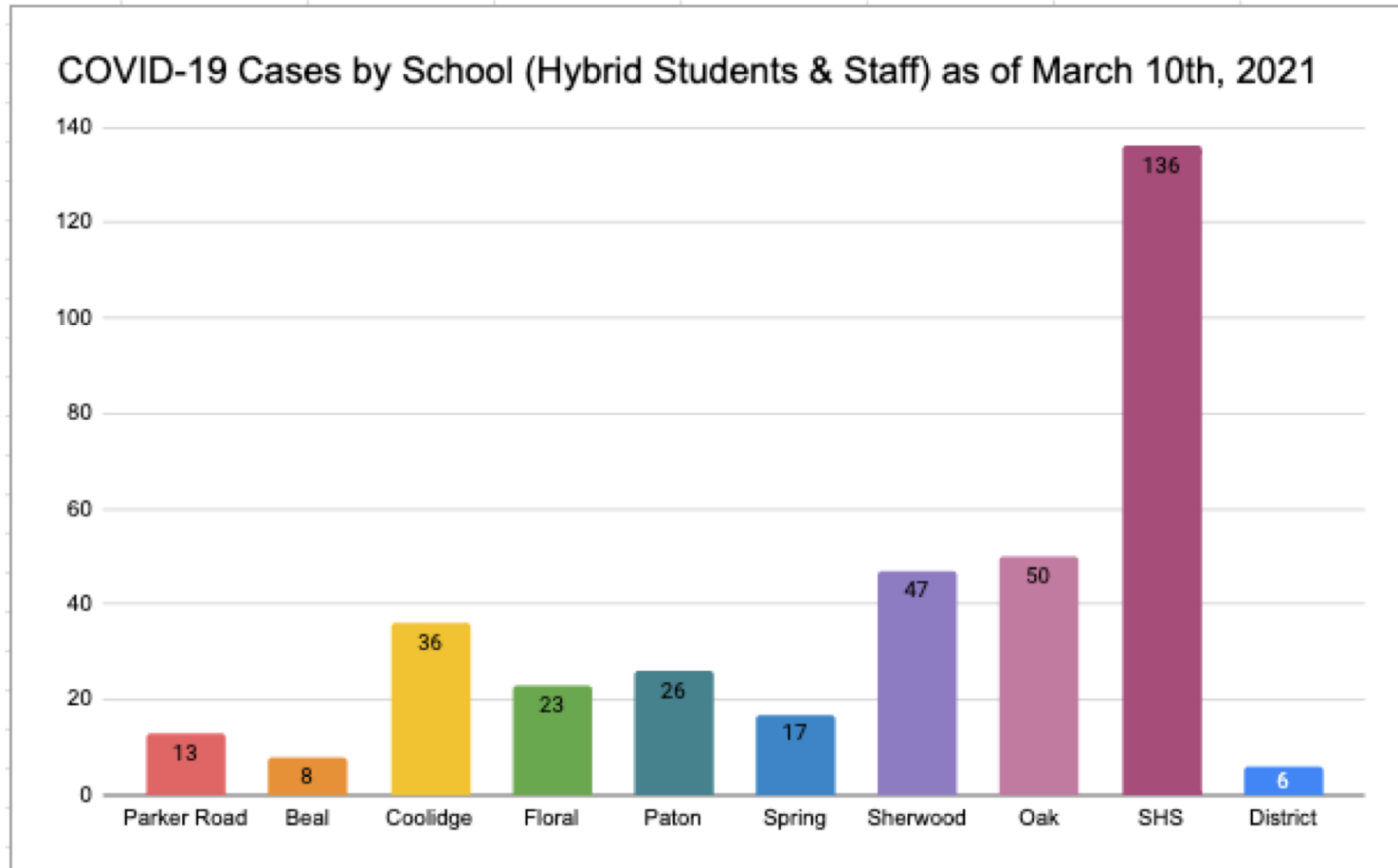
Student & Staff Case Ratio

Students = 83% of Positive Cases
Staff = 17% of Positive Cases



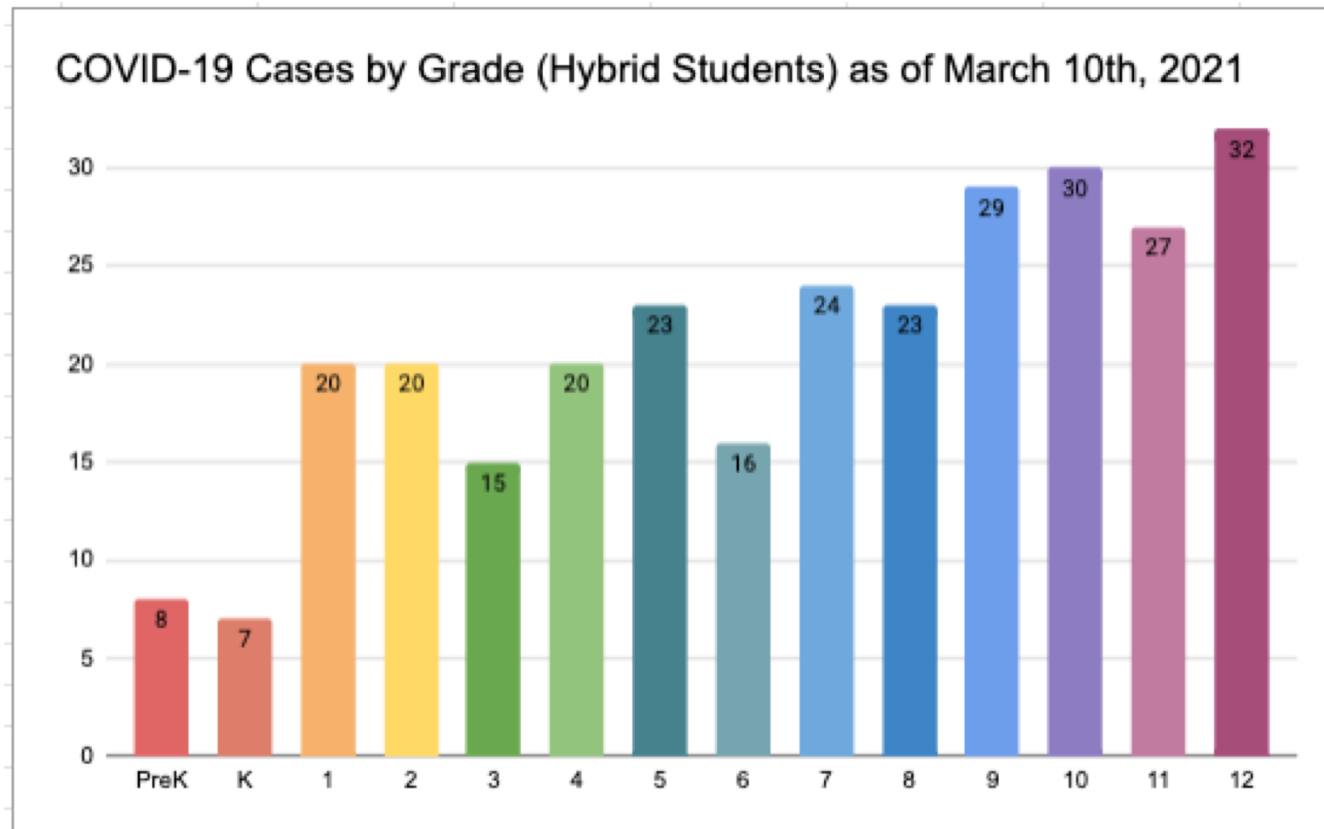


Cases by School (Hybrid Model)



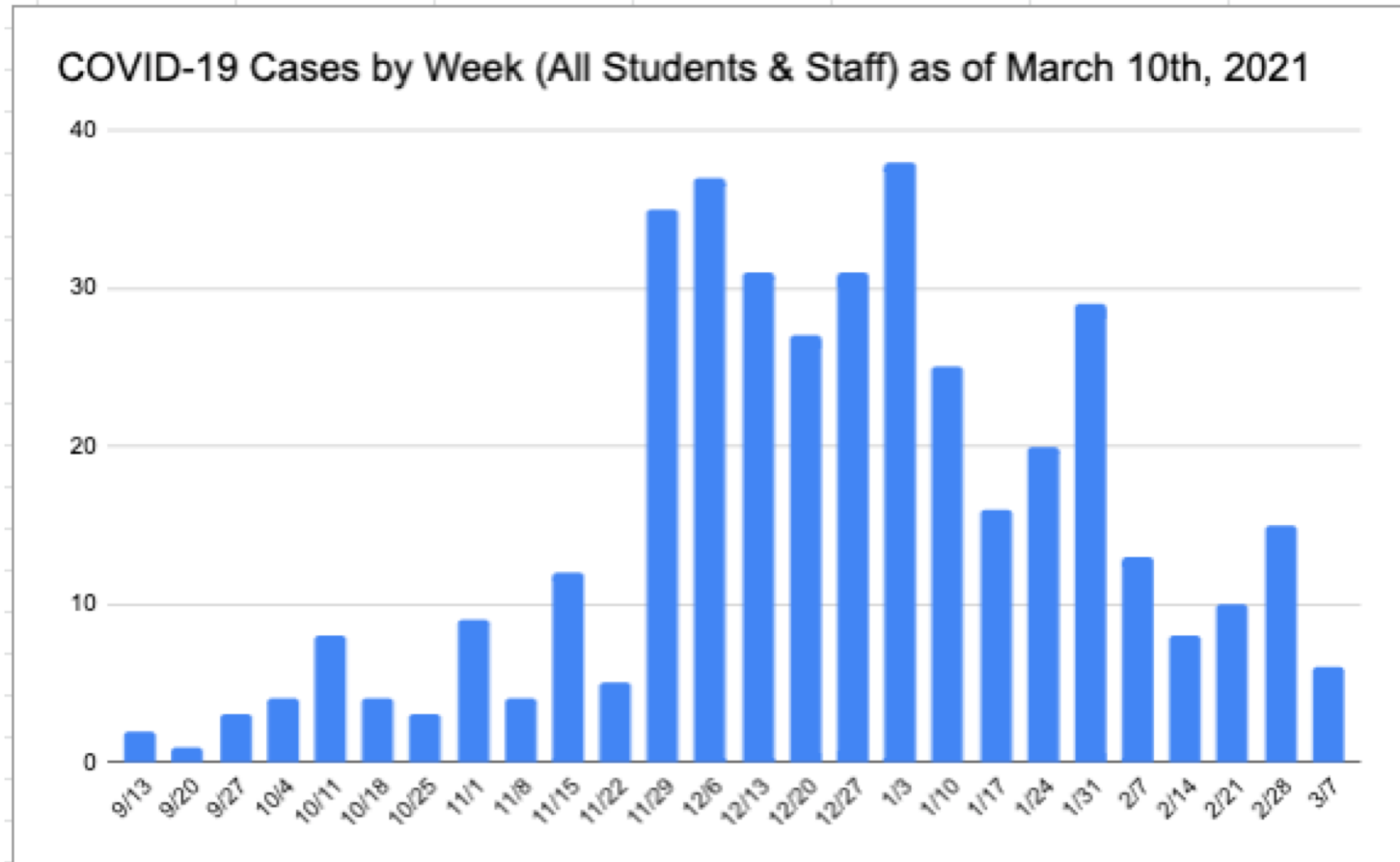


Student Cases by Grade (Hybrid Model)





Positive Cases by Week (Hybrid & Remote)





Shrewsbury Weekly Public Health Data

(As of last report of February 18)

Case Count **2/14-2/27** = 90 (6.42 cases/day)

14-Day Cases per 100,000 = 16.3

14-Day Positivity Rate 2.30%

Yellow 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.



Suspected In-School Transmission

- There remain 7 suspected cases of in-school transmission
- Suspected in-school transmission cases represent **1.9%** of positive cases among students and staff in the hybrid model; in other words, **98.1%** of positive cases in the hybrid model are not due to in-school transmission
- **Only 1 case of these 7 cases was suspected student-to-staff transmission.** The others were suspected staff-to-student, staff-to-staff, or student-to-student. 99.8% of in-school cases were not student-to-staff spread



Pooled Surveillance Testing

- Began for staff on February 3; SHS students added two weeks ago
- Over 4 weeks there have been approximately 1,950 staff tests with 4 positives (99.8% negative of those tested)
- Over 2 weeks of SHS student testing there have been approximately 700 tests and zero positives (100% negative of those tested)
- Testing of Oak students began this week, and Sherwood next week, with elementary to follow



Planning for Return to Full In-Person School

- This past Friday, the Commissioner of Elementary & Secondary Education was empowered by the state board to stop allowing hybrid learning models to “count” toward the mandatory days and hours of school under state law
- **The Commissioner announced yesterday that all elementary grades must return to full, in-person school by April 5 and all middle grades by April 28**
- High school return date has not yet been set by the state (will determine sometime in April)



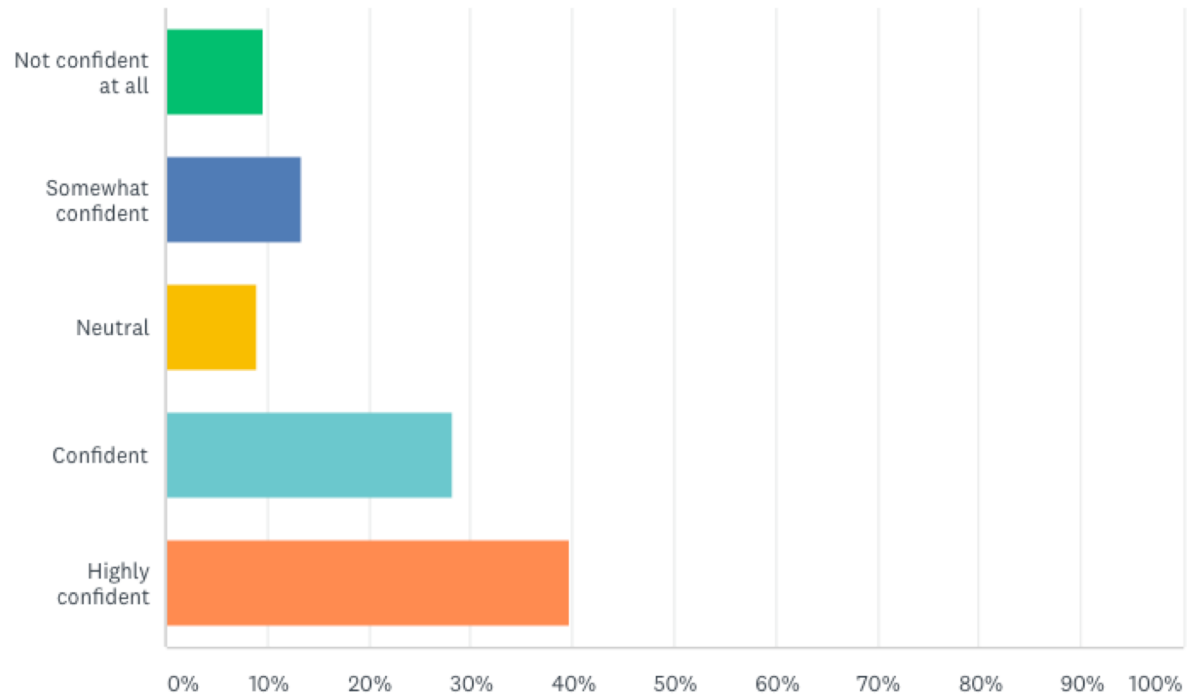
Planning for Return to Full In-Person School

- Surveyed families and staff
- Families with students in the all-remote program (Cohort D) needed to decide by Monday whether to have their child return when their grade returns to a full, in-person program
- Of 1,806 students in Cohort D, 1,512 will remain in the all-remote program (84%); 294 will return to the in-person program (16%)



Cohort B & C Families - Level of Confidence re: Child's Level of Risk w/3-foot distancing

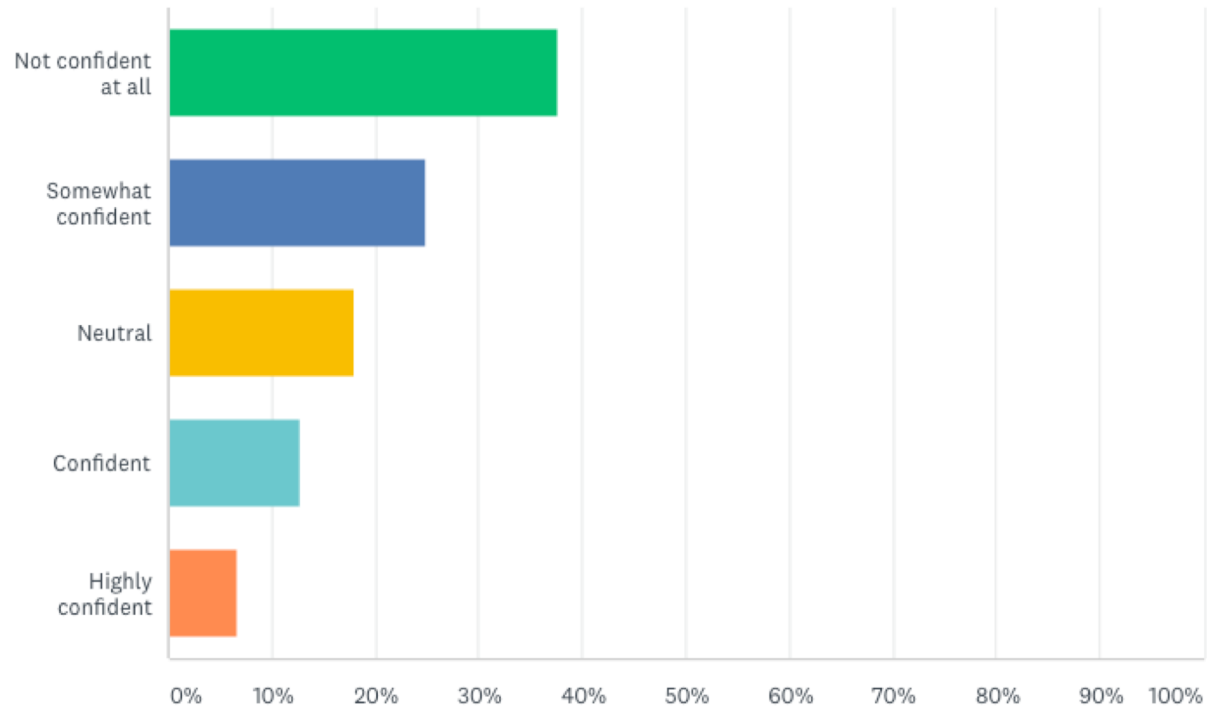
Answered: 3,041 Skipped: 0





Cohort D Families - Level of Confidence re: Child's Level of Risk w/3-foot distancing

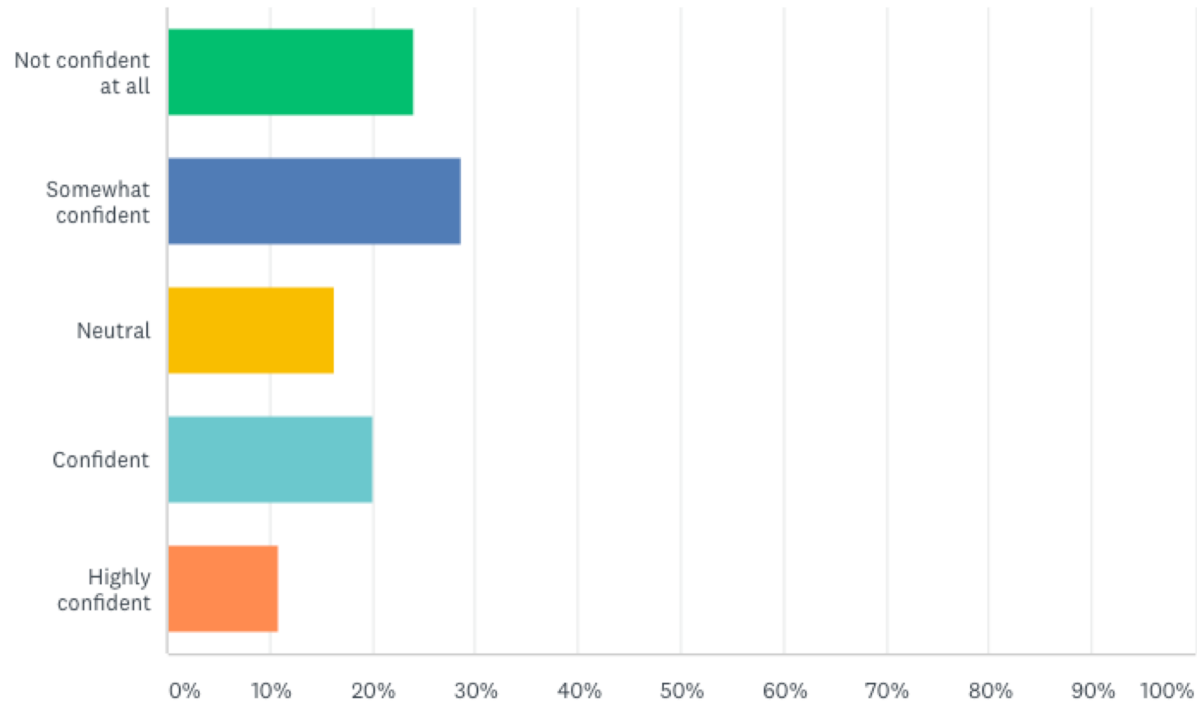
Answered: 883 Skipped: 0





Staff - Level of Confidence re: Own Personal Risk w/3-foot distancing

Answered: 620 Skipped: 0





Planning for Return to Full In-Person School

- Significant logistical challenges based on public health guidance (3 foot distancing in classrooms and 6 foot distancing for lunch/mask breaks, etc. chief among these)
- We will continue to utilize desks at elementary level to enable distancing; purchased approximately 1,000 desks to enable full return (using COVID grant funds)



Planning for Return to Full In-Person School

- Finalizing plans to use moving companies to remove additional furniture from elementary classrooms to provide more room for individual desks
- Strong possibility that we will need to have two all-remote learning days for elementary schools on Thursday, March 25, & Friday, March 26 for furniture removal and desk delivery



Challenges for Return to Full In-Person School

“For many districts, this will be a substantial programming shift mid-school year. Families should expect that districts may need to make challenging tradeoffs to accommodate the full in-person instructional mode. For instance, if students are currently learning in a hybrid model, the shift to more in-person days may require changes in classroom learning spaces and, in some cases, teacher-student assignments. If students are currently in a remote model or choose to learn remotely when these new requirements go into effect, the remote learning option may look different than the model offered prior to the implementation of these new requirements.”

(from DESE Guidance Document – March 9, 2021)



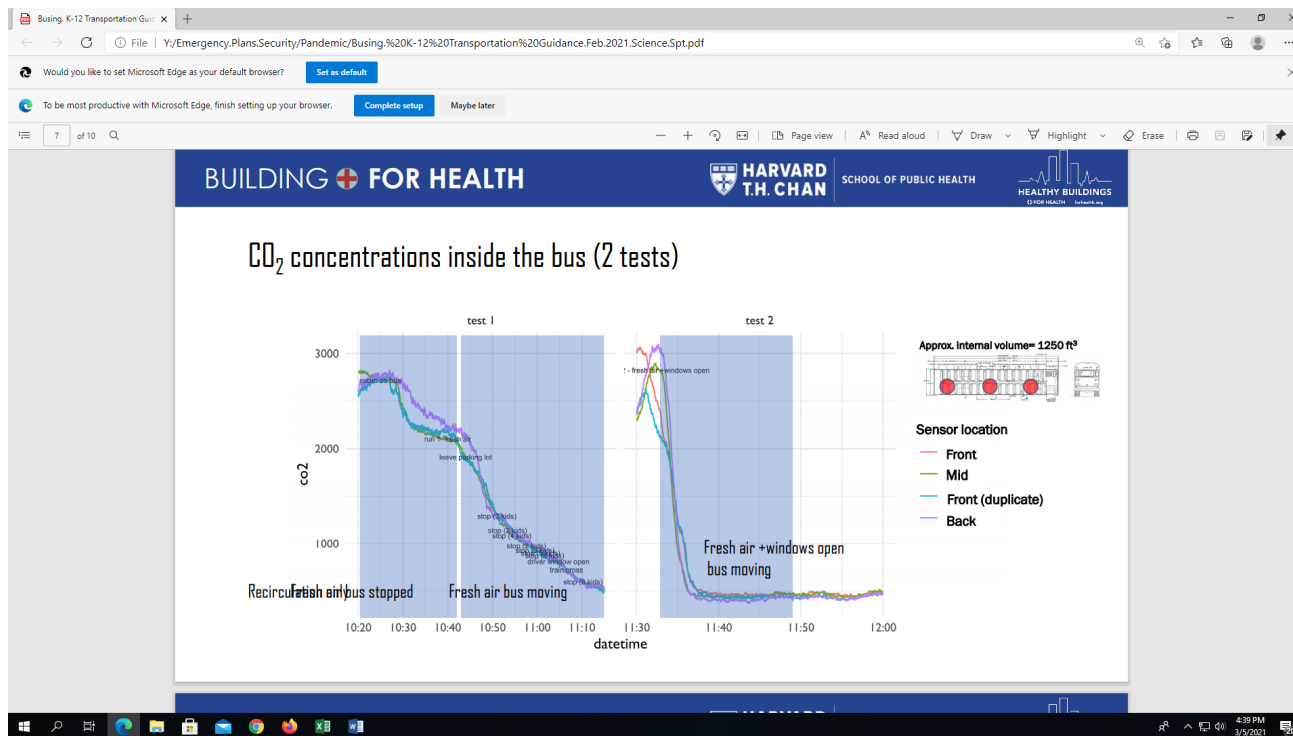
Planning for Return to Full In-Person School

- We will not be able to fit all students in the same class in some classrooms with 3-foot distancing; some changes to class or team assignment will be necessary (trying to minimize these but limited by space and enrollment)
- Particularly challenging with Grade 5 due to high class sizes (27+ students). Recommend requesting waiver from DESE to allow 5th grade to be part of middle school reopening timeline (by April 28)

School Bus Transportation

- As of February 11, 2021, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MA DESE] has updated their guidance on school bus transportation
- These changes will facilitate the planned return of elementary students to full-time, in-person learning
- Changes were based on science and a report from the Harvard Chan School of Public Health, not district-level policy changes

Harvard School of Public Health Report on School Reopening and Bus Ridership



School Bus Transportation

- **What's the same:**

- All students and the driver must wear a mask at all times on the bus
- Windows will be cracked two inches and during inclement weather, every other window will be cracked
- Students must ride in their assigned seat

School Bus Transportation

- **What's new:**

- **Elementary schools:**

- Capacity limitations and physical distancing requirements for students on buses are lifted.

- **Middle and high schools:**

- Capacity limitations and physical distancing requirements for students on buses are lifted, except for middle and high schools in districts with high community prevalence.
 - For middle and high schools in districts with high community prevalence, capacity limitations and physical distancing requirements on buses are amended to allow 2 students per bus bench.

School Bus Transportation

- Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics has reviewed and endorsed the updated guidance.
- Revisions to this guidance are based on data demonstrating significant air exchanges on moving school buses with open windows (21-43 air exchanges per hour) as well as the continued proven effectiveness of masking.
- Furthermore, this guidance is differentiated between elementary schools and middle/high schools based on continued evidence that younger students are less likely to become infected and may be less likely to transmit COVID-19.

Implementation & Expectations

- We will have some buses with students riding two per bench
- We will proactively communicate with all Cohort D families in elementary grades who are returning to full, in-person learning to see if they need bus service
- Given the new guidance, we have surveyed parents with students riding the bus to have them confirm their child's continued ridership or opt out

Implementation & Expectations

- On the first week of elementary students returning to full, in-person learning, families can expect that their bus pick-up times and drop off times may vary a bit with increased ridership and stops
- Schedules will resume a consistent yet possibly adjusted schedule after a week of service
- Parents dropping off or picking up their child **SHOULD EXPECT TRAFFIC DELAYS AT ALL ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**



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

- Things are getting better and will eventually return to a more normal situation; vaccine availability for K-12 staff is bringing more peace of mind
- We will continue to follow guidance from experts as we meet new mandates in the safest way possible, while balancing risk