

Weston Public School's COVID-19 Response Protocols

Dear Weston Public Schools Families and Staff:

Weston Public Schools (WPS) cares about the health and safety of our students and staff. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the District has taken steps to mitigate outbreak and maintain student and staff safety as we transitioned through several phases of reopening.

Our successful transition from a hybrid learning model to full in-person learning was made possible through frequent collaboration with our school community and local health officials. It is through these partnerships that we were able to successfully navigate this pandemic with zero identified cases of in-school transmission. As this pandemic continues to evolve, we again are asking for our school community to remain vigilant and adhere to the known mitigation strategies.

To ensure our continued success this school year families and staff will again need information regarding expectations for in-person instruction and how these expectations will be implemented. The Protocols & Guidelines in this Plan provide that information. Please keep in mind, they are not intended to be fully exhaustive of all possible scenarios. These are in-person behavioral guidelines that must be maintained for safety reasons. Learning these guidelines as early and as often as possible is meant to help you be prepared.

Administration continues to work closely with the Weston Health Department to identify the best possible solutions for implementing updated guidance coming from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). As changes take place, we will continue to work with our unions and other members of our school community to adjust to the best of our abilities.

You may have questions or concerns as you read this, and I encourage you to ask these questions. Our intention will be to provide clarification and understanding in responding. I also welcome your feedback and suggestions as we move forward together.

Regards,
Midge Connolly
Superintendent of Schools

Wear a Mask

Masks are one of the single most important measures to contain the spread of COVID-19. WPS will require all students and staff, regardless of vaccination status, to wear masks that adequately cover their nose and mouth while indoors. Refer to the links below for the latest CDC recommendations, and WPS mask protocol.

CDC K-12 Guidance:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

WPS Mask Protocol:

<https://www.westonschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/WPS-Mask-Protocol-21-22.docx-1.pdf>

Wash your Hands

Hand hygiene is another vital measure in containing the spread of COVID-19. WPS students and staff will be required to exercise hand hygiene (hand washing or sanitizing) upon arrival and dismissal to school, before eating, and in conjunction with restroom use and mask breaks. Hand hygiene with soap and water is the preferred method; however, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be used in some instances. Refer to the links below for the latest CDC recommendations for hand hygiene.

CDC Hand Hygiene Guidance:

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/show-me-the-science-hand-sanitizer.html>

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing significantly decreases the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Maintaining a physical distance of 3 feet or greater from others reduces risk. WPS will be maintaining a physical distance of 3 feet or greater for all students and staff whenever possible. Classrooms will be organized with a 3-foot distance between each student and teacher. Hallways will be either unidirectional or bidirectional to facilitate distancing between students. Distancing will also be enforced during mask breaks, recess whenever possible, and physical education. Refer to the link below for the latest CDC distancing recommendations.

CDC Distancing Guidance:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#physical-distancing>

Stay Home when Sick

Early identification of symptoms combined with active decision making to remain home when sick are two of the most important things any of us can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 regardless of vaccination status. Our community health relies on individual attention and responsibility. Many of the COVID-19 symptoms are like common illnesses, ***PLEASE DO NOT*** assume it is another condition. When in doubt, stay home, follow-up with a primary care provider, and access testing.

Get Vaccinated

Vaccination is the primary tool against COVID-19. Individuals who are vaccinated against COVID-19 are less likely to develop severe illness. In most settings, vaccinated individuals can safely resume most of their daily activities. Persons 12 years of age or older are eligible for vaccination. Contact your building-based school nurse or the Director of Health Services if you would like more information or assistance scheduling an appointment.

CDC Vaccine Guidance:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/>

Get Tested

Early identification of COVID-19 infection through testing has proven effective at controlling disease spread. WPS will be shifting our testing model to align with that recommended by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. This model includes the following components:

1. Routine COVID-19 Safety Screening (formerly known as pool testing).
2. Symptomatic Testing
3. Test-to-Stay

Routine Weekly COVID-19 Safety Screening

Two individual nasal swabs are collected from the lower portion of the nose. One of the swabs is placed into a large tube with up to 10 other swabs, and the other swab is placed into an individual tube for follow-up testing if the combined sample yields a positive result. All samples are shipped to and analyzed by the Broad Institute. *ONLY POSITIVE RESULTS WILL BE REPORTED.*

Symptomatic Testing

It is imperative that individuals who develop symptoms at home remain home and do not attend school. There may be times that students or staff develop symptoms while in school. In such cases individuals will be tested for COVID-19 using a rapid antigen test, Abbot BinaxNOW.

Individual nasal swabs are collected from the lower portion of the nose and tested by the building-based school nurse. Results will be obtained in 15 minutes. If symptoms do not include fever greater than 100 degrees or persistent, productive cough AND the school nurse deems it appropriate the symptomatic individual will be allowed to remain in school if the test result was negative. All positive test results will be dismissed from school as soon as possible to begin isolation. Positive test results will be reported to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Weston Board of Health

Test-to-Stay

Close contacts, regardless of vaccination status, who do not have symptoms will be tested for five successive days during their identified quarantine period. Those individuals who test negative will be allowed to attend school in-person. Those who test positive or have symptoms will not be allowed to attend school until their isolation period or symptoms have resolved.

Testing of all students and staff is strongly encouraged, but not mandatory at this time. Additional information related to testing, including logistics will be communicated once planning is finalized by the state vendor [CIC Health](#). If you would like to participate in the testing program, please complete and submit the appropriate consent form below. -[Student Consent Form](#) -[Staff Consent Form](#)

Answer Board of Health Calls

Testing and early isolation of Covid positive individuals combined with contact tracing have proven effective in controlling the spread of COVID-19 in Massachusetts. All testing results are reported to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). When an individual has a positive test result their Local Board of Health (LBOH) will contact the individual and provide support to begin and maintain isolation procedures as well as identify any close contacts and provide additional support for these individuals to safely begin and maintain quarantine procedures. It is imperative that families and staff who are contacted by their LBOH answer the call and follow the advice of their LBOH representative.

The LBOH will provide exact isolation and quarantine dates, identify close contacts, as well as provide return-to work/school notifications to individuals. If you have not heard from your LBOH representative within a day or two of receiving your positive test result, please contact them with your results so isolation notifications, contact tracing, and quarantine of close contacts can commence.

Symptom Checks Before School Hours

Staff and students are asked to check for symptoms of COVID-19 daily. Parents for students under the age of 18 are asked to check their child for symptoms daily.

INDIVIDUALS MUST STAY HOME IF EXPERIENCING ANY OF THE SYMPTOMS LISTED. Below is the full list of symptoms for which caregivers should monitor their children, and staff should monitor themselves:

- IF ANY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:
 - Difficulty breathing/Shortness of Breath
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Diagnosis of pneumonia/ARDS
 - Fever 100° F or higher

■ DO NOT ATTEND SCHOOL

- IF TWO OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:
 - Cough (not associated to known cause)
 - Chills/Rigors
 - Sore throat
 - Headache
 - Nausea/Vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Nasal congestion/ Runny nose
 - Muscle aches
 - Fatigue

■ DO NOT ATTEND SCHOOL

Please refer to the current CDC link of COVID-19 symptoms for additional reference:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

If staff or students have any of the symptoms listed on the previous page, they should:

1. Seek advice from their primary care physician
2. Get tested for active COVID-19 infection prior to returning to school
3. If negative, must remain home until symptom free for at least 24 hours without medication
4. If not tested, must remain home for 10 days from the onset of symptoms and be fever free without medication for at least 24 hours
5. If positive, see below protocols
6. Send a copy of the test result to the building-based school nurse or the Director of Health Services prior to return to school

PROTOCOL: POSITIVE COVID-19 CASE

Self-isolation for COVID-19 positive cases is a minimum of 10 days.

Most people who test positive and have a relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days. People who test positive can resume public activities after 10 days AND once they have:

1. Gone for 24 hours without a fever and without taking fever-reducing medications like Tylenol or Ibuprofen; and
2. Experienced significant improvement in other symptoms (for example, their cough/GI symptoms have resolved); and
3. **Received clearance from public health authority contact tracers (the Local Board of Health or Community Tracing Collaborative).**

**Repeat testing prior to return is not recommended. Return to school should be based on time and symptom resolution per Board of Health guidance.*

Parents and Staff should notify the building principal or school nurse immediately that the individual has tested positive for COVID-19. The building principal/school nurse will notify superintendent, director of health services, public health nurse, and lead custodian of a positive case report.

If the individual was on school premises or used transportation, these areas will be cleaned and disinfected. The public health nurse will work closely with the school nurse to identify close contacts of the positive student. All close contacts, once determined by the LBOH, will be contacted by a public health nurse.

Elementary: Classroom will be notified of a positive case by superintendent/building principal *if notification occurs during school hours*. Close contacts will be followed by a public health nurse.

Middle/High School: Close contacts contacted by a public health nurse.

- Superintendent/Building Principal will notify each classroom of the staff or student(s) who are identified as close contacts *if notification occurs during school hours*
- Superintendent will notify the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
- As appropriate, the superintendent will notify the building or district.

Close contacts of a positive COVID-19 case will begin a 7 to 10-day quarantine as determined by the LBOH. Those close contacts who do not have symptoms have the option to attend school in person using the test-to-stay method as described above.

For general guidance, DPH defines close contact in the school setting as:

- Being within 3 feet or less of COVID-19 case for at least 15 minutes indoors masked or unmasked.
- Close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case while the case was symptomatic or within the 48 hours before symptom onset, OR
- Having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment.
- Vaccinated individuals *ARE EXEMPT* from at home quarantine if they are asymptomatic. Vaccinated individuals will be required to test using the test-to-stay method to remain in school.

Refer to the below links for helpful resources for testing and isolation/quarantine guidance.

Isolation versus Quarantine:

<https://www.hhs.gov/answers/public-health-and-safety/what-is-the-difference-between-isolation-and-quarantine/index.html>

Massachusetts COVID-19 Testing Guidelines:

<https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-testing>

COVID-19 Testing Sites in Massachusetts:

<https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-testing>

Weston Board of Health:

<https://www.weston.org/159/Board-of-Health>

PROTOCOL: SYMPTOMS AT HOME

Families and staff should monitor symptoms at home each morning. Please refer to the earlier list of COVID-19 symptoms.

- IF NO SYMPTOMS:

- **MAY ATTEND SCHOOL**

- IF ANY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:

- Difficulty breathing/Shortness of Breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diagnosis of pneumonia/ARDS
- Fever 100° F or higher

- **DO NOT ATTEND SCHOOL**

- IF TWO OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS:

- Cough (not associated to known cause)
- Chills/Rigors
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Nasal congestion/ Runny nose
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue

- **DO NOT ATTEND SCHOOL**

Contact the building principal or school nurse and inform him/her the student/staff member is staying home due to symptoms. Current Massachusetts DPH guidance is that all symptomatic individuals in Massachusetts, even those with mild symptoms, should be tested. Follow-up with your primary care provider for evaluation of symptoms and referral for testing.

Any student/staff member who remains home due to COVID-19 symptoms should seek advice and obtain a referral for COVID-19 testing from their primary care physician. Any student/staff member who does not wish to be tested and has not received an alternative diagnosis from their primary care physician may return to school 10 days from the start of symptoms, as long as their symptoms have improved, and they have been fever free without fever reducing medication for at least 24 hours prior to their return. Students/staff who have tested negative for COVID-19 may return to school once their respiratory symptoms have resolved and they have been fever free without fever reducing medication for the prior 24 hours. If a primary care provider makes an alternative diagnosis for COVID-19-like symptoms, the individual may return to school based on the recommendations for that alternative diagnosis (e.g., strep throat, influenza, bronchitis).

PROTOCOL: SYMPTOMS IN SCHOOL

Students and Staff demonstrating the following symptoms in school will be considered a possible case of COVID:

One of the following:

- Difficulty breathing/Shortness of Breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diagnosis of pneumonia/ARDS
- Fever 100° F or higher

Two or more of the following:

- Cough (not associated to known cause)
- Chills/Rigors
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Nasal congestion/ Runny nose
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue

For students, a school staff member will call the school nurse's office. The student will be directed to the isolation room if appropriate. If deemed appropriate by the school nurse, and consent is on file with the school, a rapid antigen test (Abbott BinaxNOW) test will be performed. Parent/guardian will be notified by the school nurse of the need for testing and test results. Parent/guardian will be called to pick student up from school (a 15-30-minute dismissal window is preferred) if the test is positive or the symptoms necessitate dismissal as determined by the school nurse. See above protocol for symptomatic individuals.

For staff, the building principal or designee will be notified by the staff member. As with students, symptomatic staff should consult the school nurse for testing. See above protocol for symptomatic individuals.

Any student/staff member who remains home due to COVID-19 symptoms should seek advice from his/her primary care physician and obtain a referral for additional COVID-19 testing. Any student/staff member who does not wish to be tested and has not received an alternative diagnosis from their primary care physician may return to school 10 days from the start of symptoms, if their symptoms have improved, and they have been fever free without fever reducing medication for at least 24 hours prior to their return. Students/staff who have tested negative for COVID-19 may return to school once their symptoms have resolved and they have been fever free without fever reducing medication for the prior 24 hours. If a primary care provider makes an alternative diagnosis for COVID-19-like symptoms, the individual may return to school based on the recommendations for that alternative diagnosis (e.g., strep throat, influenza, bronchitis).

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Student or staff tests positive for COVID-19:

- Weston Board of Health (WBOH) will work in conjunction with the school nurse to determine those to be quarantined (entire class at elementary school, a minimum of close contacts at middle and high school, along with bus riders identified as close contacts)
- Collaboration between WBOH officials, superintendent, Director of Health Services, DESE and MDPH will indicate the need for a building or more substantial closure dependent on the number of close contacts, context of exposures, etc.
- See Positive COVID-19 Case Protocol
- Public health nurse will notify close contacts of their status and need to begin quarantine
- As appropriate, the superintendent will notify building administration or district administration of the presence of COVID-19
- Public health nurse will determine if short term school closure is required for cleaning and contact tracing in consultation with the Superintendent, Director of Health Services, and DESE
- For notifications of positive cases that occur after school hours, the building principal, Superintendent, and Health Services Director will determine if a short-term closure of identified classrooms will occur so contact tracing and testing can commence. In these instances, once contact tracing is complete, and all close contacts identified, the building principal and/or Superintendent will notify families and staff of next steps.
- In instances of at home isolation or quarantine, students and staff will transition to remote instruction for the isolation/quarantine period. Notifications to families regarding next steps will be distributed by the building principal and the classroom teacher.

Presence of multiple cases in the school or district:

If there is more than one confirmed COVID-19 case (students or staff) in the school at one time, or if there is a series of single cases in a short time span, school leaders and the superintendent will work with the local board of health to determine if it is likely that there is transmission happening in school.

When there is suspected in-school transmission *beyond one cohort or a small number of cohorts*, school and district leaders must consult with the local board of health as to proposed next steps. These steps could include, for example, deciding to (a) close part of the school or the entire school for a short time (e.g. 1-3 days) for an extensive cleaning or other facility mitigation, or (b) close the school partially or fully for the longer duration of a 10-day quarantine period.

Should there be circumstances where there are multiple cases in multiple schools, school and district leaders must consult with the local board of health as to proposed next steps. These steps could include, for example, deciding to (a) shut down the district for a short time (e.g. 1-3 days) for an extensive cleaning or other facility mitigation, or (b) shut down the district for the longer duration of time (e.g. 10-day quarantine period).

Before a final decision is made on a school or district closure, the superintendent will consult with DESE for further guidance.

If the decision is made to close for some number of days, the school and/or district will send clear information and instructions to families and staff:

- Informing them that it is possible COVID-19 is being transmitted in the school and/or district
- Noting that there may be more potential cases that are not yet symptomatic
Recommending students quarantine and not have contact with others
- Reminding families of the importance of not having contact with higher risk individuals (e.g., grandparents)
- Reminding families of the list of COVID-19 symptoms for which to monitor
- Ensuring that remote learning is immediately provided to all students

Before bringing students back to school, the school and/or district will:

- Check inventory levels of needed supplies (e.g., disposable masks, soap, hand sanitizer, cleaning products); re-order replacement inventory
- Consider a school-wide refresher training on the importance of correct hygiene procedures (masks, physical distance, handwashing)
- Reiterate the critical nature of masks, physical distancing, and hand hygiene when students return to school

Community Spread of COVID-19:

Each week, the CDC releases its Weekly COVID-19 Public Health Report that contains critical metrics for each municipality. A color-coded indication posted for each municipality calculated on a rolling two-week basis.

Level of Community Transmission	Number of U.S. Counties at this Level	Percent of U.S. Counties at this Level	Percentage Point Difference Since 7 Days Ago
High	1680	52.17%	17.08%
Substantial	551	17.11%	-0.34%
Moderate	741	23.01%	-11.06%
Low	247	7.67%	-5.68%

Indicator - if the two indicators suggest different transmission levels, the higher level is selected	Low Transmission Blue	Moderate Transmission Yellow	Substantial Transmission Orange	High Transmission Red
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days	0-9.99	10-49.99	50-99.99	≥100
Percentage of NAATs ¹ that are positive during the past 7 days	0-4.99%	5-7.99%	8-9.99%	≥10.0%

Because the impact of the virus is local, the concept of this COVID-19 health/safety designation is focused on the municipal level. The Town of Weston updates their [COVID-19 Local Case Report](#) weekly based upon the metric.

While average daily cases per 100,000 over a two-week period is the metric that determines the color-coding for each community, districts and schools should also monitor whether cases are increasing or decreasing as compared to the prior period. The local test positivity rate also remains an important metric to monitor. In consultation with local boards of health, districts should consider whether these additional metrics and underlying data may indicate other concerning

trends.

- In the case of significant municipal outbreak, as determined by the local board of health or DPH, the superintendent and school leaders must consult with the local board of health to determine whether it is appropriate to close a specific school, schools, or an entire district.
- Before a final decision is made on a school or district closure, the superintendent will consult with DESE for further guidance.

REFERENCES

1. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Message about Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios, July 30, 2021: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/fall-2021-covid19-guide/>
2. Massachusetts Department of Public Health. COVID-19 isolation and quarantine information, August 2021: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-isolation-and-quarantine-information>
3. Center for Disease Control. Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools (August 5, 2021): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>