



Building a Healthy Boston

June 8, 2022

TO: Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Superintendent, Boston Public Schools

FROM: Dr. Bisola Ojikutu, Commissioner of Public Health, City of Boston and Executive Director, Boston Public Health Commission

RE: Masking Requirement

Over the last 14 days, the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) has observed a sustained downward trend in case rate and hospital admission along with a stabilization of viral wastewater concentration. See Graph Below. Based upon these trends, we advise that masking **no longer be required** indoors in Boston Public Schools beginning **Monday, June 13th, 2022**. Under specific circumstances described below, BPHC will continue to recommend required masking.

Indoor masking remains an important strategy to reduce COVID-19 spread and can protect students and staff against other respiratory pathogens, including influenza. BPHC compared publicly available COVID-19 case rate data (reported cases per 1000) among students in Boston Public School District versus 3 neighboring school districts (Brookline, Cambridge and Newton). The number of cases per 1000 students was significantly lower among Boston school students than among each of the other three public school districts during the period when BPS required masking and the other districts were mask optional (See Graph Below).

Masking is encouraged in indoor public settings, on transportation, and at school-sponsored activities. Indoor mask use is strongly recommended among adults and children who are not fully vaccinated and those who have or live with individuals with medical conditions that place them at higher risk for severe COVID-19 disease. Students, parents and staff who choose to mask will be supported in that choice.

Consistent with state and federal guidance, the Boston Public Health Commission, in consultation with Boston Public Schools, proposes that BPS continue to require indoor masking under the following circumstances:

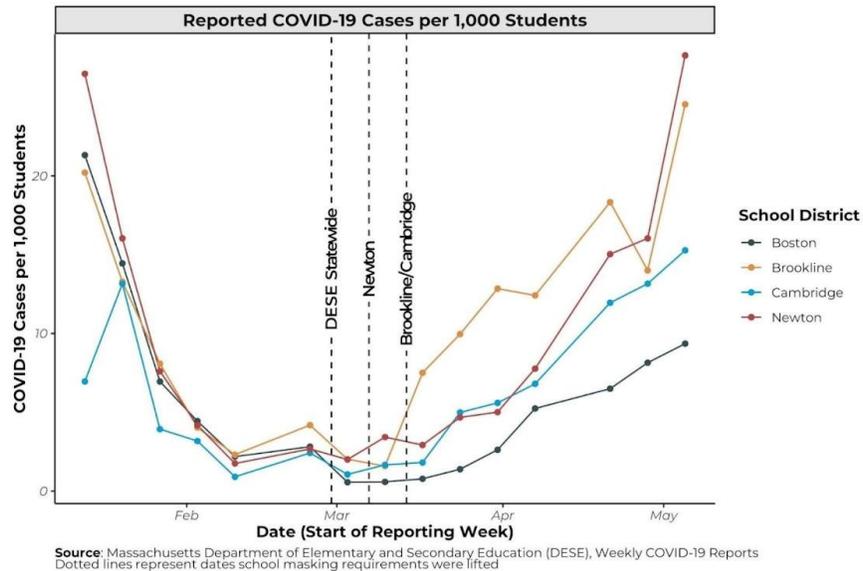
- Students and staff who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and are returning to school before a full 10 days of isolation, must mask for the remaining days. *Example: A Student comes back to school on Day 6 because they have a negative COVID test, the student should be masked for Day 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.*
- Students and staff who are identified as part of a cluster investigation with in-school transmission, or while a potential cluster within the cohort is being investigated, for a duration of time as determined in consultation with BPHC*
- Students and staff who are identified as experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 while in school, including students who are identified as having possible symptoms of COVID-19 and are awaiting pick up from school by parents or caregivers.

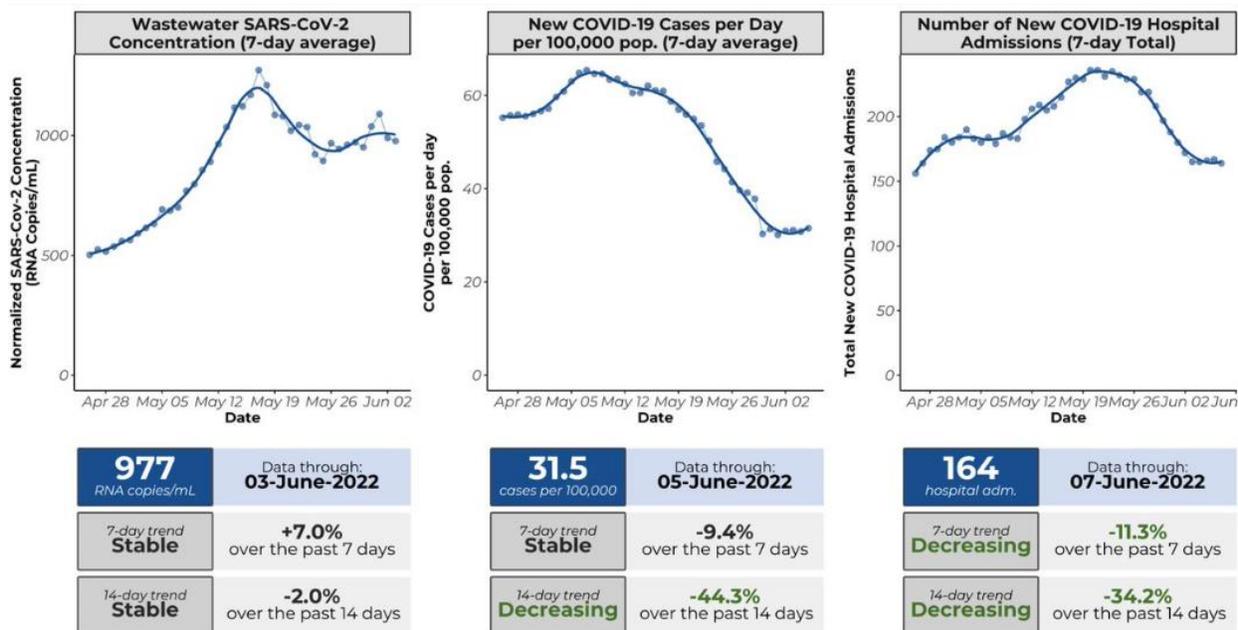
- Masking will continue to be required in school health offices.

The Boston Public Health Commission continues to recommend a layered approach to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in school settings. Mitigation strategies include participating in the districtwide COVID-19 testing program; maximizing outdoor activities, classes and lunches; opening windows in classrooms, school buses, and other transportation vehicles; maintaining good hand hygiene practices; staying home when sick; and following all quarantine and isolation guidance.

We continue to strongly urge all eligible individuals to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and booster, and we continue to support schools with vaccination clinics. In the past weeks, there has also been a critical development in COVID-19 vaccinations for children, which remains our leading public health strategy to prevent COVID-19 severe disease. With the approval of pediatric booster COVID-19 doses for children ages 5-11, Boston families now have an additional-and critical- tool to protect their children and families from getting sick with severe COVID-19 disease as they finish the current school year and prepare to enjoy much anticipated, fun childhood activities with the upcoming summer camp season.

BPHC remains committed to working with schools over the summer season and the 2022-2023 school year to inform COVID-19 mitigation planning and use of preventive as well as layered mitigation strategies based on COVID-19 community levels. BPHC’s Infectious Diseases Bureau (IDB) will also continue to support K-12 schools, camps, and other institutions in COVID-19 and other communicable disease cluster response efforts.





Updated: 08-June-2022 | **Wastewater data:** MWRA North, source: <https://www.mwra.com/biobot/biobotdata.htm> | **Case Data:** MDPH MAVEN | **Hospitalization Data:** MDPH data, self-reported by Boston hospitals

Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologist cluster definition: “Multiple cases comprising at least 10% of students, teachers, or staff within a specified core group OR at least three (3) within a specified core group* meeting criteria for a school-associated COVID-19 case; with symptom onset or positive test result within 14 days of each other.”

References:

[COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine Guidance for Children in Child Care, K-12, Out-of-School Time \(OST\) and Recreational Camp/Program Settings | Mass.gov](#)

[COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine Guidance for the General Public | Mass.gov](#)

[CSTE-Standardized-COVID-19-K-12-School-Surveillance-Guidance-for-Classification-of-Clusters-and-Outbreaks.pdf](#)

[DESE/DPH Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios - SY 2021-22 \(mass.edu\)](#)

[Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning | CDC](#)