



New DPH Metrics & Information on COVID-19 Protocols in School



New Color-Coded Metrics for Massachusetts Cities and Towns

CITY & TOWN METRICS

Population			
Group	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

Learn more at [Mass.gov/StopCOVID19](https://www.mass.gov/StopCOVID19)



- New categorization by population size
- Percent positivity added as secondary deciding measure for larger populations
- Higher threshold for cities and towns to meet before transitioning to yellow or red

Old Metrics:

For Belmont: Not divided by population size

Grey: Less than 5 reported cases (over the last 14 days)

Green: Less than 4 reported cases per 100k people (on average per day over the last 14 days)

Yellow: 4-8 reported cases per 100k people (on average per day over the last 14 days)

Red: Greater than 8 reported cases per 100k people (on average per day over the last 14 days)

New Metrics:

For Belmont: 10k-50k Residents

Grey: Less than or equal to 10 reported cases (over the last 14 days)

Green: Greater than 10 reported cases (over the last 14 days) **AND** an average of less than 10 cases per 100k (on average per day over the last 14 days)

Yellow: An average of greater than or equal to 10 cases per 100k (on average per day over the last 14 days) **OR** percent positivity greater than or equal to 5% (over the last 14 days)

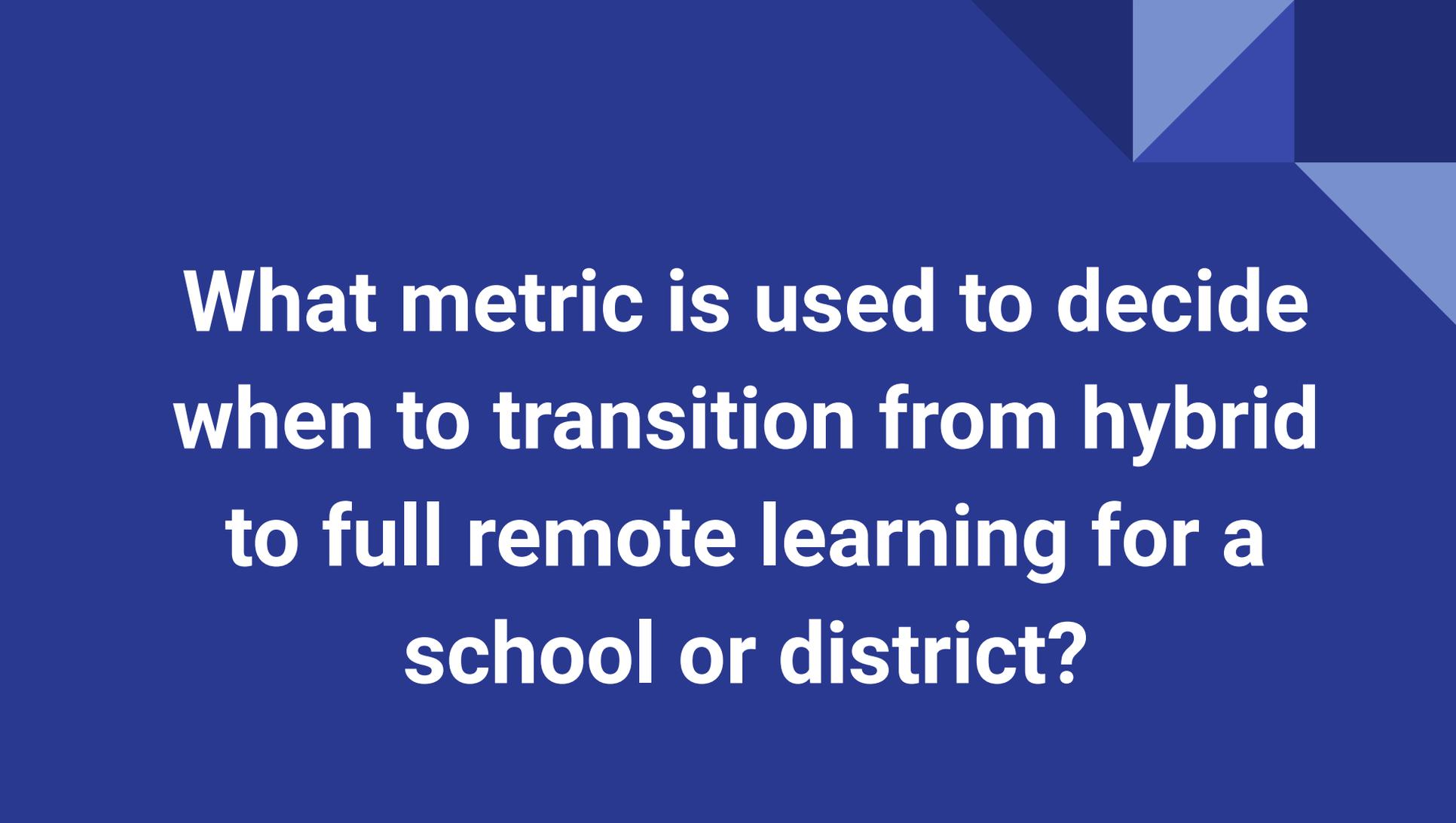
Red: An average of greater than or equal to 10 cases per 100k (on average per day over the last 14 days) **AND** percent positivity greater than or equal to 5% (over the last 14 days)

Why Change

- As cases continue to surge in Massachusetts, DPH altered these metrics to better fit the general trends in numbers
 - The thresholds for different levels of assessed risk no longer fit the existing metrics
 - Too many cities/towns were surpassing the red threshold, and there was no further classification once a city/town passed an average daily incidence rate of 8 cases per 100k people
 - This new method has taken into account city/town population, as well as adding percent testing positivity to the criteria
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Percent Positivity

- Percent positivity was added to the metrics sheet as a secondary part of determining risk category
 - This is calculated based on number of positive tests in Belmont residents, divided by total number of tests in Belmont residents (over a 14 day period)
 - At the state level, DPH calculates three percent positivity numbers:
 1. The separate higher education percent positivity
 2. The overall state average percent positivity
 3. The state average percent positivity minus (-) the higher education percent positivity
 - This is not done on the town level by DPH, but if a town has higher education institutions they can choose to do that calculation too
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The background is a solid dark blue color. In the top right corner, there are several overlapping triangles in various shades of blue, including a medium blue and a very light blue, creating a geometric pattern.

What metric is used to decide when to transition from hybrid to full remote learning for a school or district?

Most Recent Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education guidance:

- There is no one threshold or metric to indicate that a school or district should suspend in-person learning.
- District and school leaders can work closely with DESE's COVID Reporting Unit when there is a positive case in their district to determine the appropriate next steps.
- These next steps can include:
 - Implementing existing DESE protocols to notify close contacts for testing and isolation
 - Conferring with local public health and/or the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to determine if transmission is occurring in the class or school, or
 - Seeking advice on whether to suspend in-person learning for that class, grade, or school.



These decisions need to be made based on local context, occur in collaboration with DESE and the local board of health, and may be based on the following factors:

1. If there is a need for an extensive cleaning of the building or other facility mitigation
 2. If the mobile testing unit results, or other test results, suggest widespread transmission is occurring
 3. If there are widespread absences among students and staff due to illness
 4. If the school is in a district reported as “Red” by the DPH health metric for the past three weeks, and risk of transmission to students and/or staff is increased
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BPS and Belmont Health Department COVID Management Protocol: Process Overview

1. COVID positive case is identified per confirmation of positive PCR
 2. Collaboration with Health Department and administration
 3. Contact tracing interview with positive individual(s) and staff
 4. Communication and education to close contacts (if needed)
 5. Collaboration with Superintendent, Health Department, nursing, and DESE
 - a. Reporting to DESE
 - b. Next steps determined per DPH risk-level metrics and DESE
 6. Communication email to BPS community
 7. Continued follow up with all individuals and plan, as needed
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Additional Considerations

- **Other metrics to review:** While number of new cases, average daily cases per 100,000, and percent positivity are the metrics that determine the color coding for each community, districts and schools should also monitor whether the trend is increasing or decreasing as compared to previous weeks. In conversation with their local boards of health, districts should consider whether these metrics and underlying data indicate concerning trends.
- **Multiple weeks of data are necessary to understand trends:** Districts should look at multiple reports to inform any changes to their learning model at the start of or during the school year



Process and Required DESE Reporting Protocol for Positive COVID-19 Cases

1. District/school is notified by a staff member (or their designee) or student (or their guardian) that the individual has tested positive for COVID-19
2. The proper school official, as predetermined by the superintendent, contacts the DESE COVID Call Center and reports the positive case. No personally identifiable information is shared.
 - a. Required reporting information:
 - i. Identify known positive case as staff member or student
 1. Student:
 - a. Grade level of positive case
 - b. Remote or Hybrid/In-person
 2. Staff:
 - a. Educator or Support Staff
 - b. Present in school building within the last week
 - ii. District & school name
 - iii. Reporting person's name
 - iv. Contact information (email & phone number)
3. Intake specialist will log information into to DESE COVID-19 tracking system*
4. DESE reviews information several times per day
5. DESE contacts district/school within a minimum of 24 hours to identify next steps

*Important to note, the data collected in this process is self-reported by provider



Mobile Rapid Response Program Overview

The purpose of the mobile rapid response unit is to provide testing of asymptomatic individuals who are not known to be a close contact, when there is evidence that COVID-19 transmission may have occurred within a classroom or school within the past 14 days.

The following describes minimum conditions for when a mobile response team may be deployed:

- Within a 14-day period, if two or more individuals within a single classroom test positive for COVID-19 and transmission/exposure is likely to have occurred in the classroom, a mobile rapid response unit may be deployed for all asymptomatic individuals within that classroom.
- Within a 14-day period, if 3 or more individuals or 3 percent, whichever is greater, of a given grade or cohort test positive for COVID-19 and transmission/exposure likely occurred in the school, a mobile rapid response unit may be deployed for all asymptomatic individuals in that grade or cohort.
- Within a 14-day period, if more than 3 percent of a school tests positive for COVID-19 and transmission/exposure likely occurred in the school, a mobile testing unit may be deployed for the entire school population that is asymptomatic.
- Within a 14-day period, if two or more individuals within the same bus test positive COVID-19 and transmission/exposure likely occurred on the bus, a mobile rapid response unit may be deployed for all asymptomatic individuals on that bus.

For all scenarios described above, school administrators must contact their local board of health before reaching out to the Department of Public Health (DPH). The mobile response unit can be requested by a school administrator or the local board of health and may be deployed by the COVID-19 Response Center after consultation with a DPH epidemiologist.

