

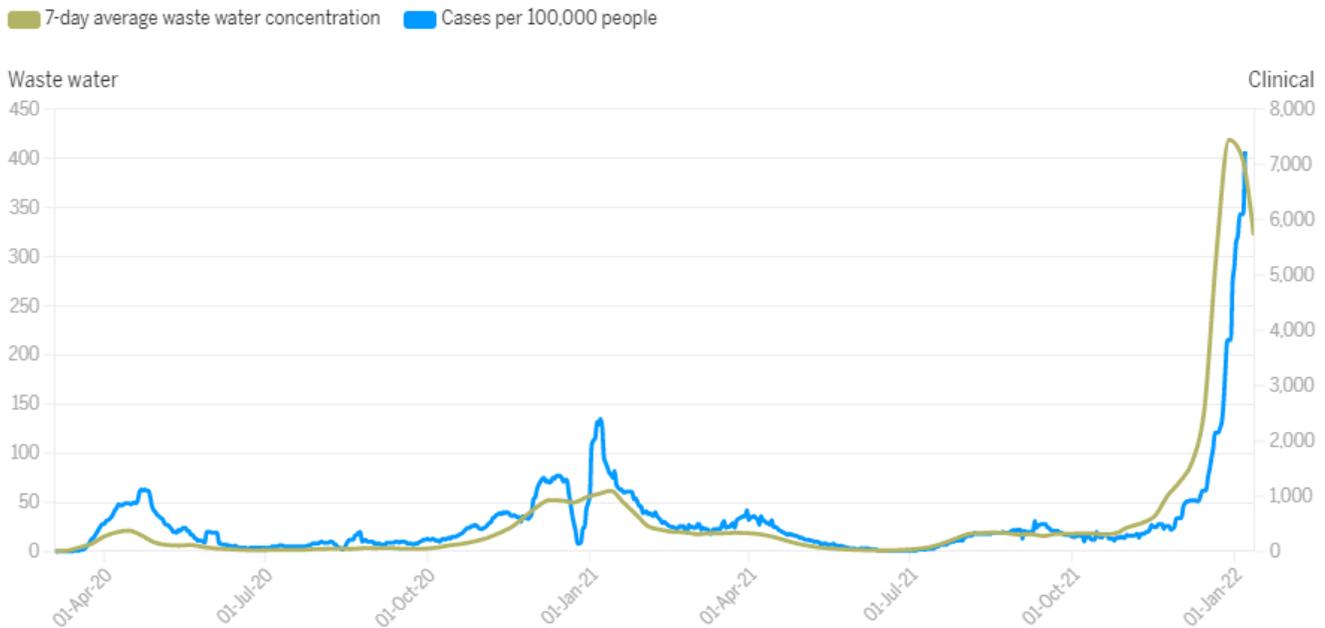
Superintendent's COVID-19 Update

February 16, 2022

This week's pooled testing at all schools reveals how much overall case counts have dropped. This week we tested a total of 367 pools that included 1283 individuals. We received 9 positive results out of those 1283 individuals for a percent positivity of 0.7%. There were **NO positive pools** at Greenlodge, Riverdale, DHS, or DMS this week. There were 6 positive pools from Avery (3 students of the same family), 2 from ECEC, and 1 from Oakdale.

Recently, there has been increasing confidence in the ability to predict future COVID-19 case spikes by analyzing virus concentrations in wastewater. An excellent overview of this process may be seen in a [recent article from the Boston Sunday Globe](#). The graph below shows how accurately this metric predicts future (3-5 days in advance) trending for actual COVID-19 cases.

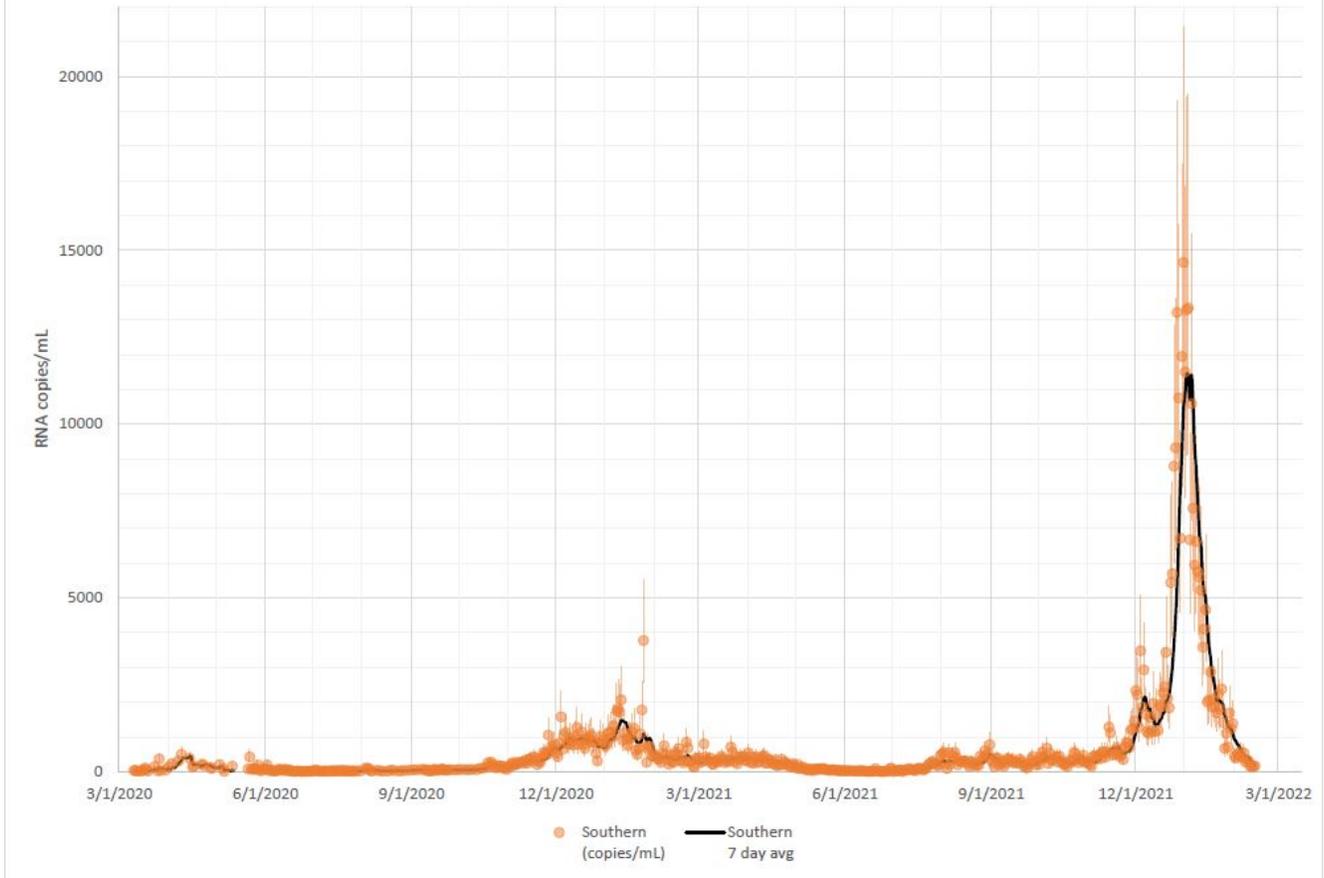
Compare Suffolk County waste water and reported COVID-19 cases



Source: [Waste water / BioBot](#) • Ryan Huddle / Globe Staff
Wastewater: Normalized SARS-CoV-2 virus concentration (copies / mL of sewage) • Clinical: New daily clinical cases per 100k people

This next graph below shows this concentration over time for MWRA wastewater (which includes Dedham). The graph clearly shows the most recent spike of COVID cases due to the OMICRON variant, and the subsequent plummeting of cases.

South System Viral RNA Signal by Date



Information regarding the current vaccination rates for DPS students is included below.
Overall, 97.7% of DPS faculty/staff are fully vaccinated.

Dedham High School Vaccination Status				
As of 2/14/22				
	Total	Vaccinated	Percent	NOT
	Members	Members	Vaccinated	Vaccinated
Faculty & Staff	159	146	91.82%	8.18%
Gr. 9 students	193	137	70.98%	29.02%
Gr. 10 students	165	122	73.94%	26.06%
Gr. 11 students	172	145	84.30%	15.70%
Gr. 12 students	172	134	77.91%	22.09%
DELTA students	20	8	40.00%	60.00%
Overall Total	881	692	78.55%	21.45%

Other DPS Schools Vaccination Status				
	Total	Vaccinated	Percent	Percent NOT
	Students	Students	Vaccinated	Vaccinated
DMS	574	411	72%	28.40%
GREENLODGE	261	185	71%	29.12%
OAKDALE	244	170	70%	30.33%
RIVERDALE	169	103	61%	39.05%
AVERY	288	156	54%	45.83%
ECEC	338	189	56%	44.08%
	1874	1214	65%	35.22%

The most recent data regarding COVID cases in Dedham and the Dedham Public Schools are included in the links below:

[COVID-19 data for Town of Dedham](#)

[COVID cases in MA schools](#) (For comprehensive statewide results, click [HERE](#))

[Positive COVID Cases in DPS Schools](#)

[DPS Pooled Testing Participation and Results](#)

On Tuesday, February 8, DESE issued a [memo regarding action steps](#) the Department has taken to provide at-home rapid antigen tests to school districts. These are currently being distributed to all students and faculty/staff who “opt-in” to participate.

On Wednesday, February 9, DESE Commissioner Jeff Riley issued an [update](#) indicating he would not be extending the DESE mask requirement for all MA K-12 public schools beyond February 28, 2022.

On Friday, February 11, the MIAA issued [updated masking guidelines](#) for all sports effective 2/28/22.

On Monday, February 14 I sent a [one-question survey](#) to all faculty, staff, and families of the Dedham Public Schools asking them to provide their opinion on how DPS should proceed after the state’s mask mandate expires on 2/28. In less than 24 hours this survey received over [2100 replies](#) and over [500 narrative comments](#). I have read through every single comment, and it is safe to say there are very many strong opinions on this matter.

Yesterday (Tuesday, February 15), the MA Department of Public Health (DPH) updated their [advisory regarding mask wearing](#).

At last night’s (Tuesday, Feb. 15) Dedham Board of Health meeting, members voted 3-0 in favor to support lifting the mask mandate in all Dedham schools as of Monday, 2/28/22. Confirmation of this vote via email from Dedham Health Director Kylee Sullivan can be seen [HERE](#).

Based upon all this information, my recommendation tonight is to transition to masks being “highly recommended” for all students and faculty/staff whenever indoors in any Dedham Public School beginning on Monday, February 28, 2022.

The District will continue to provide weekly COVID-19 PCR Pooled Testing for all consented faculty, staff, and students.

The District will continue to provide weekly rapid antigen test kits to be used by all students, faculty, and staff who choose to “opt in” to this program.

The district would continue to follow the updated [DESE protocols for responding to Covid 19 cases](#). Individuals who have tested positive for Covid 19 are permitted to return to school after five days if they have been fever free for 24 hours and have seen an improvement in symptoms, however these individuals will be required to mask indoors for an additional five days.

Masks will continue to be required for all staff and students at all times when riding on school buses. This is a [federal CDC transportation order](#) and not under the jurisdiction of local School Committees.

Masks will also be required whenever students or staff enter school health (nurses) offices. These areas are considered “healthcare facilities” by MA DPH, and according to [MA DPH COVID-19 masking requirements](#), they fall under the requirement for masking at all times.

We recognize that many students and staff members will prefer to continue wearing masks in order to protect their own health and safety or that of others in their household. It is important for us to support all students and staff regarding their individual mask wearing choices. Schools will not tolerate disparaging remarks, taunting, or inappropriate commenting about anyone’s mask wearing choices in the Dedham Public Schools.

Please note my recommendation to transition to a “highly recommended” indoor mask policy is based on current conditions. Should there be a significant change in local or statewide conditions, or if new guidance is issued from the Department of Public Health, DESE or other government agencies, we reserve the right to re-evaluate this decision.

This decision, if supported by the School Committee, will involve a transition period while all members of the school community adjust and become more comfortable with this new situation. We will have many additional decisions to make within the schools and I ask for your patience as we adjust during this transition phase.