

The Westwood Public Schools, under the guidance of the Westwood Public Health Department and the Westwood School Committee’s Medical Advisory Committee, has developed criteria for determining which WPS learning model -- fully in-person, hybrid, or fully remote -- should be implemented at any given time. The articulation of this criteria acknowledges the educational objective of returning students in fully in-person learning, while also considering the safety of students and staff.

The criteria below considers a variety of public health data in making decisions about the safety of having schools open for in-person learning. It’s important to note that while public health measures are an important component of fully reopening, there are other factors to be considered, such as the capacity of buildings, changes to the current physical distancing, active cases in buildings/cohorts, and collective bargaining obligations.

**Key Public Health Metrics:**

**Community Prevalence:**

This metric is generated by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to determine a community’s readiness for in-person school in a hybrid or fully in-person model. The metric is sometimes referred to as the “stop light” metric and is reported in four categories.

Red	≥ 10 average cases per 100K AND >5% positivity
Yellow	≥ 10 average cases per 100K OR ≥5% positivity rate
Green	< 10 average cases/100K AND > 10 total cases
Gray	≤10 total cases

The MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has recommended that school districts should use “several weeks” of data before making any decisions or changes to the learning model. For example, if a district finds itself in the “red” category, there should not be an immediate decision to change the model to fully remote. Instead, further investigation should be conducted to identify the root cause of the increase in cases, and that context should be considered when making decisions about the learning model.

To support moving to fully in-person learning in the Westwood Public Schools, this policy requires that the following criteria and conditions be met:

**Public Health Metrics:**

- Three consecutive weeks of MDPH data reporting in the gray or green category for Westwood; and
- No more than 3 positive cases in the schools for at least two consecutive weeks. This includes both students and staff; and
- A MDPH WW percent positive rate of less than 1% for at least two consecutive weeks; and
- Statewide percent positive rate of less than 1%.

The above metrics could be adjusted when the vaccine is distributed and the public health picture changes. They should also be reviewed with consideration to specific circumstances and community context (e.g. a cluster in a particular location that is impacting the overall metric, etc.)

**Testing Capacity:**

- The ability to conduct surveillance testing for faculty and staff, and
- Access to testing for all symptomatic staff and students and on average get results within 24-48 hours.

When considering a full remote pivot, the following criteria and conditions will be considered:

- Four consecutive weeks of MDPH data reporting in the red category. One week not in the red category could still be considered if there were special circumstances.
- A rising trend in school community cases, school spread, or clusters.
- Evidence of significant in-school transmission or operational considerations, such as capacity to contact trace or staff a building, could trigger a temporary building specific closure, even if other criteria are not met.

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The Westwood School Committee (WSC) will review the Town's COVID-19 data on a weekly basis in the context of the metrics set forth in this policy. In addition, the WSC will target the following benchmark dates for assessing the ability to return all remaining students to the fully in-person model:

- December 15th (for a return at the start of second semester February 1)
- January 15th (for a return on March 1)
- February 15th (for a return on April 1)

The district administration will also continue to assess strategies for returning our remaining elementary students to fully in-person learning within current health and safety parameters, as the district has already done for students in grades K-3.

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