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PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration, COVID-19 Command Center & Department of Elementary & Secondary Education Release Updated Metrics, Guidance on Schools

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

11/06/2020

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Department of Public Health

Executive Office of Education

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Governor's Press Office

MEDIA CONTACT

Sarah Finlaw, Press Secretary, Governor's Office

Phone

(617) 725-4025 (tel:6177254025)

Online

gov.press@state.ma.us (mailto:gov.press@state.ma.us)

BOSTON — Today, the Baker-Polito Administration and COVID-19 Command Center released updated metrics for schools and municipalities. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education also released updated school guidance.

This update builds on the state's ongoing efforts to refine data that is reported publicly to track the impact of the virus in the Commonwealth. The updated metrics for communities will give school districts more data to make informed decisions regarding in-person learning. Local officials have also used these metrics to make decisions for schools and businesses in their communities.

Understanding of the virus continues to evolve. Studies have shown that there is low transmission in schools, even in communities where there are high rates of COVID.

UPDATED METRICS FOR SCHOOLS & MUNICIPALITIES

The updated metrics adjust for the reporting of cases by a municipality's population size. These metrics incorporate cases per 100,000 residents and the test positivity rate when determining a municipality color designation.

Using one metric to determine school reopenings community by community does not reflect the state's current understanding of the virus in the Commonwealth that there is more transmission across the Commonwealth due to increased cases of COVID-19.

The Command Center has also been reviewing metrics used by other states as well as what is available in the academic and national data sets. This updated metric also will better account for communities that conduct a significant amount of testing.

This metric will continue to be used to determine whether a community is in Step 1 of Phase 3 or Step 2. Communities currently in Step 1 of Phase 3 will need to have 3 weeks of data where the community is designated yellow, green or grey in order to move to Step 2 of Phase 3.

Under the new methodology, the color coded designations are: 16 red communities, 91 yellow communities, 79 green communities, and 165 grey communities based on this week's data.

Details on the 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

DESE's UPDATED SCHOOL GUIDANCE:

In coordination with this data metric update, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has issued updated guidance to prioritize in-person learning statewide and support municipalities.

Scientific evidence and COVID-19 transmission data supports that with strong health and safety protocols in place, schools are able to operate safely and successfully with in-person learning. This updated guidance was developed in conjunction with medical professionals and public health experts.

Under this guidance, districts and schools in communities designated gray, green or yellow are expected to have students learning fully in-person when possible.

The guidance states that schools in red communities should implement hybrid models while maximizing in-person learning for high-needs students.

In communities with the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases, DESE and DPH will work with local school officials to develop and implement risk reduction strategies.

Fully remote instructional models should be implemented only as a last resort, and classrooms should reopen after appropriate mitigation strategies have been implemented.

This update replaces previous guidance, Interpreting DPH COVID-19 Health Metrics, issued on August 11, and structured learning time requirements for students and related regulatory and statutory standards remain in effect for all districts.

Read the full DESE guidance here (https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/interpreting-dph-metrics.html)**.**

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Media Contact

Sarah Finlaw, Press Secretary, Governor's Office

Phone

(617) 725-4025 (tel:6177254025)

Online

gov.press@state.ma.us (mailto:gov.press@state.ma.us)

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito
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The Executive Office of Health and Human Services is the largest secretariat in state government and is comprised of 12 agencies, in addition to 2 soldiers' homes and the MassHealth program. Our efforts are focused on the health, resilience, and independence of the one in four residents of the Commonwealth we serve. Our public health programs touch every community in the Commonwealth.

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Department of Public Health (/orgs/department-of-public-health)

DPH promotes the health and well-being of all residents by ensuring access to high-quality public health and healthcare services, and by focusing on prevention, wellness, and health equity in all people.

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Executive Office of Education (/orgs/executive-office-of-education)

From pre-school to post-secondary education, the Executive Office of Education works to connect all Massachusetts residents with an education that creates opportunities.

While Massachusetts' students rank first in the nation on many educational measures, the Executive Office of Education strives to strengthen the foundations of education reform, empower schools and educators, and develop pathways to college and careers so all students in the Commonwealth can succeed, regardless of their zip code.

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Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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ESE oversees the education of children grades pre-k through 12 in Massachusetts, striving to ensure that all students across the Commonwealth succeed.

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