

201 new student COVID-19 cases reported in Massachusetts

A total of 286 new COVID-19 cases were reported in Massachusetts schools this week, the highest number in the five weeks the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has been publishing data provided to it by local officials. That number includes 201 cases among students participating in hybrid or fully in-person education, and 85 cases among district staff who had access to school buildings from Oct. 22 to Oct 28.

Among districts reporting student cases this week, Beverly had the highest total, with eight, followed by Braintree and Rockland, with seven each. New Bedford had the most staff cases, with four, followed by the three each in Haverhill, Waltham and Taunton.

DESE's data shows no new cases logged in Bedford over the past week, but officials in that town sent a note to public school families Thursday, saying that recent "data and contact tracing details from current cases support the occurrence of in-school transmission of COVID-19 at Bedford High School," and that there are eight active cases in the high school community.

"We continue to get reports of gatherings and after-school and weekend 'hang-outs' where lack of social distancing appears to be contributing to transmission. Over the last 2 weeks, 19 new COVID-19 positive cases were identified in Bedford," superintendent Philip Conrad, School Committee chair Dan Brosgol, town manager Sarah Stanton and health and human services director Heidi Porter said in the message where they informed families that Bedford High School would operate in a

remote mode for at least the next two weeks.

Baker administration education officials said this week that districts should keep up in-person learning unless the virus is spreading in schools. "It is increasingly clear that schools are not a source of transmission," Education Secretary James Peyser said.