

New Bedford and Fall River top list of new COVID-19 public school cases

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Massachusetts education officials reported 923 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases in public schools over the past week, nearly twice as many as the prior week. Between Dec. 3 and Dec. 9, districts reported 503 new infections among students participating in either fully in-person or hybrid learning and 420 cases among staff in school buildings, according to data the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education published late Thursday.

Amid a statewide surge, the latest weekly total reflects significant growth over the 527 new student and staff cases reported last week and the 482 the week before that. New Bedford far surpassed any other district in new cases, reporting 42 among students and 23 among staff. The second-highest numbers were in Fall River, which reported 15 student cases and 18 staff cases.

One hundred and forty-three districts had at least one student case over the past week. Of those, 32 reported at least five. Baker administration officials have argued that despite confirmed cases, the overall rate of infection remains low in public schools, pointing to the roughly 450,000 students attending schools partly or fully in-person statewide. They have also cautioned for months about the negative effects of remote learning.