

New Bedford Public Schools launches online COVID Tracker

In a letter today to New Bedford Public Schools families, staff and students, Superintendent Thomas Anderson announced the launching of a dashboard-style tracker of COVID-19 test positivity rates for the district. Linked directly to the district homepage, www.newbedfordschools.org, the data will be updated weekly.

Emphasizing transparency and noting the district has “been working to ensure families are informed of the most up-to-date information,” Superintendent Anderson stated the work includes strict adherence to health and safety guidelines “in collaboration with the New Bedford Department of Public Health, the Mass. Department of Health and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). This includes steps we must take to address individuals who test positive.”

If a NBPS student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the contact tracing protocol starts immediately. Any adult or student who is considered a CDC Close Contact of a person who tests positive is notified by the Public Health Department and/or New Bedford Public Schools. NBPS follows this 5-step protocol:

- 1). Families and staff considered “close contacts” are advised to call their healthcare provider for evaluation and to get a COVID-19 PCR test.
- 2). Children and/or staff in certain classes or in certain schools must stay home during contact tracing.
- 3). If individuals are not notified, they are not close contacts and do not need to be quarantined.
- 4). Specific school cases are communicated directly with the school community.
- 5). If there is a suspected in-school or in-district

transmission, the Superintendent will communicate next steps with staff and families as well as with the public. Steps could include: a) closing part of a school, the entire school, or the district for a short time for thorough cleaning; b) closing for the duration of a 14-day quarantine; and c) school will communicate with families about how learning will continue during this time.

Communication is supported by launching the NBPS COVID-19 Tracker on the NBPS homepage to provide timely and updated information about positive cases within the NBPS (updated by 4:00 p.m. every Friday). Please refer to the dashboard for updated information.

The NBPS COVID-19 Tracker is for informational purposes only. Located on the district website homepage, it shares the number of known COVID-19 cases. Tracker data does not include any personally identifiable information and is reported, as required, to DESE. Currently, the Tracker notes: "To date there has been NO evidence of transmission in our schools or offices."

Superintendent Anderson emphasized, "Families can help by keeping sick students and those students who have been tested but are awaiting test results at home. If your student is ill, please call your school nurse first so that we can ensure you receive the appropriate information to confirm contact tracing begins immediately. Our communication process is dedicated to supporting the health and safety of our students, staff and families."