

# Health Watch USA OHN talking points

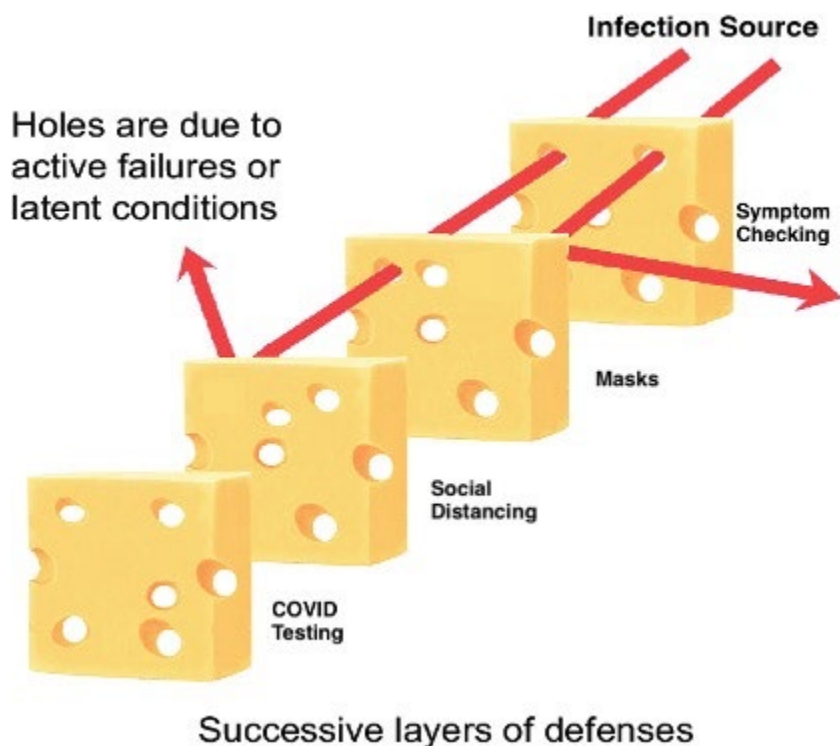
[Amanda Mulcahy](#) RN BSN

## Swampscott Public Schools (SPS)

### Health Watch USA<sup>sm</sup> Meeting 2/16/2022

SPS GOALS: Keeping students and staff safe with significant consideration to minimize the disruption to learning for our students and their families, has been our priority from the start of the school year. The best way to decrease the spread of this virus in our schools has been by implementing a multi-layered mitigation approach:

With every layer of mitigation added it helps decrease the risk of exposure and spread



[Swampscott Public School COVID -19 Testing Program \(LIVE\)](#)

Intro about me: what I do

About our school: almost 2100 students and over 400 staff

- **Improve Air Quality:**

- Purchased air purification systems for classrooms/lunchrooms
  - Educated/encouraged staff to open windows during increase-risk activities like eating lunch and snacks to help increase air quality.
- Purchased tents for outdoor learning spaces. Weather permitting, eating & holding classes outside as much as possible to increase air quality

- **Mask mandates:**

- In August 2021, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education gave the commissioner the authority to require masks for public school staff and students (ages 5 and above) in all grades through at least October 1, 2021; this was and was extended to February 28th, 2022,
  - Now that this change, our district is revealing our data on our current vaccination/up to date individuals, covid case to make informed decisions

- **Emphasize and promote the importance of being vaccinated & vaccines boosters:**

- In November 2021, with the anticipated approval for the CDC/FDA of the Pfizer vaccine for children ages 5-11, we decided to be proactive by educating our families about the new changes and arranging clinics to be held at our schools.
  - Our district teamed up with a 3rd party Vaccination clinic and provided our schools with 7 vaccination clinics with at least 200 available appts and accepted walk-ins from November to January at one of our schools.
    - Benefits more assessable for our students and families and staff to get vaccinated at the end of the school day
    - When the booster approval was announced, we already had clinics scheduled and ready to go

- Metco students (from Boston) could receive their vaccine before going home.
- Helped increase the overall vaccination rate in town rapidly

• **Robust Testing Programs:**

- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)& the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Public Health developed and funded COVID19 Testing Program for districts and schools to opt into:
  - Our district quickly opted into the testing programs offered by DESE, filed out our CLIA waiver in August, and was able to get the testing up and running all the 3 programs by the end of September
    - Routine Screening Pool testing: PCR test
    - Symptomatic testing: Rapid Antigen testing
    - Test and stay: Rapid antigen testing

Testing was available to all students and staff in all 5 of our schools.

- As of January, they collectively changed the testing to include At home testing as another preventive measure and increased screening capability.
  - Individuals will take their at-home test on a specific day and report those results back to school.
    - Although other districts are not monitoring the results, it is beneficial to collect this information because
      - To monitor the numbers who are participating
      - Create a routine of testing weekly
      - To monitor for cases.

- The district released a ***Parents [Toolkit for COVID Testing -FAQ](#)*** so families would be able to have more information

○ **Benefits of in-school testing**

- ability to identify both asymptomatic/ symptomatic positive individuals in our buildings, and thus
  - identify their close contact, quickly Testing those Close contact, and preventing further spread,
    - this also helped decrease in the number of students who need quarantine at home and reduce loss of learning

- Stop further spread by quickly identifying those positive before they return to the classroom

- **Cohorts and seating charts/ extra mitigations**

- Played an essential role with contact tracing in a timely fashion and helped our faculty and staff maintain social distancing.
- At the HS, QR codes were used for students and staff to sign into seating areas like the lunchroom to let students have the autonomy to sit with friends and help monitor exposures.
- Purchased dividers and partitions to help in offices that have multiple occupancies and also for the student who needed services like speech therapy and could not wear a mask can access their services.
- We recommended eating outside as much as possible.
- The district purchases additional washing stations for handwashing and promotes/ educated the importance.
  - Hand sanitizer before and after entry/at lunchtime
- Routine disinfecting and cleaning during the height of the pandemic (Surge)
  - When students/staff are sick in school, became positive, we would clean/ disinfect that classroom.

- **Vigilance about monitoring COVID symptoms in students and staff**

- Frequent reminders about covid symptoms (2 more symptoms stay home and get tested)
- Created a District [COVID-19 Resources Website](#)
  - With added information for families
- Disclosure form to report symptoms and test results for students and staff
- At home antigen testing program (as secondary screening) with a reporting system
  - Help monitor changes and see participation follow-through

- **Data collection & tacking:**

- The district developed a detailed COVID-19 log where the nursing staff would enter their positive cases through a google form. This form asked specific questions to help identify trends

like exposures, case count, common symptoms, vaccination status.

- This data is essential in making decisions about increasing/ decreasing mitigation measures in our district.
- For example, our district noticed an increased percentage of positive cases linked to extracurricular activities. In December, the district implemented additional mitigation that required testing for participants' that partake in extracurricular activities.
- Also when we notice an increase of cases in a particular class that was related to rug time exposure or lunchroom we add another layer of defense of decreasing the number of students at rug/lunchtime to account for additional social distancing and also added desk shields
  - This also helped our faculty who now had to monitor the addition lunches in classrooms comfort of protection.
- **Staff and infrastructure to support nurses within the school district.**
  - Reporting systems of COVID-19 disclosure form student and staff
  - Benefits:
    - Creating a systematic approach to triaging calls and emails regarding quarantine and isolation guidance
    - When CTC shut down more calls came to school nursing for guidance
- **Collaboration with local Health Department & Board of Health**
  - Was able to confirm cases
  - Collaborate on isolation and quarantine guidelines
  - Worked with them on Contact tracing and reporting to [COVID-19 Community Tracing Collaborative \(CTC\)](#)
    - Make sure people are in isolation and quarantine
  - Able to factor in the effect that would take place in the town.