



Wachusett Regional School District

Holden - Paxton - Princeton - Rutland - Sterling

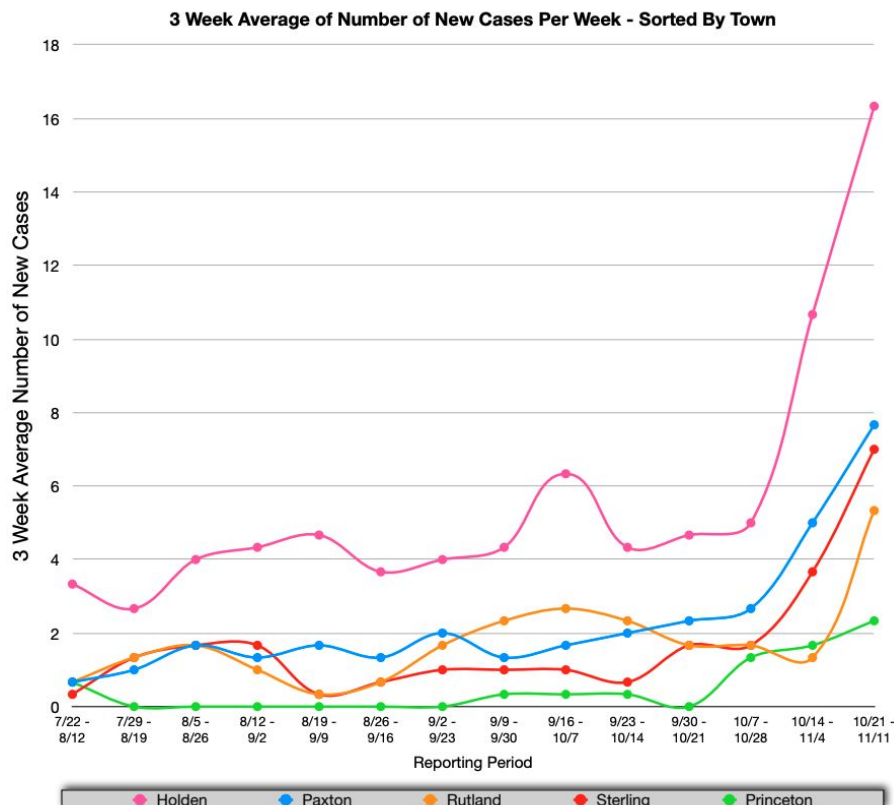
November 18, 2020

Dear Wachusett Families and Staff,

As I shared with you last night, the School Committee has voted to delay the district-wide transition to hybrid instruction. Tonight I want to provide more details about this delay.

The vote to delay the transition to hybrid was made after many hours of thoughtful discussion and deliberation. We thank our local board of health members and our district physician for attending the meeting and for providing detailed information on the current status and challenges of COVID-19 in our communities. They expressed concern, not only over the increase of cases in recent weeks, but also about the upcoming holidays and the expected rise in cases due to social gatherings. While they shared their desire to have students return to in-person instruction, they strongly recommended that we not transition to hybrid learning at this time.

The data in the chart below is from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Website and shows the dramatic rise in the number of COVID-19 cases in our towns over recent weeks.



Please follow [this link](#) to view the slide presentation from last night's School Committee meeting which includes additional information on the status of the virus in our communities.

Due to the increased number of cases in our towns, the following key concerns have been at the forefront of our thinking and ultimately led to our decision to delay the implementation of hybrid instruction.

- The health and safety of our students and staff continues to be our top priority. Transitioning to hybrid learning at this time puts both students and staff at a higher risk for exposure to the COVID-19 virus.
- The district is committed to providing students with consistent high-quality learning experiences. Due to state quarantine regulations when an exposure to the COVID-19 virus occurs, the number of available instructional staff could dramatically decrease if we transition to Hybrid learning at this time. This would jeopardize the district's capacity to provide consistent instruction to students.
- As noted by our board of health representatives, the contact tracing resources in our towns are already overburdened. The additional contact tracing demands that would result from in-person schooling would likely overwhelm both district and town officials, potentially leading to an ineffective response to outbreaks.
- Health officials have shared that, as a result of the upcoming season of holidays and the social gatherings associated with them, the spread of the virus in our towns is anticipated to increase. The decision to delay the transition to hybrid instruction to a date no earlier than January 19th allows for adequate quarantine time after the holiday season to help limit potential transmission in our schools.

Please know that we recognize this decision has caused disappointment, frustration, inconvenience, and hardship for many families. We also understand that there are very strong opinions and emotions both in favor of this action and opposed to it. Considering this challenging dynamic, we must follow and be guided by what we believe best ensures the health and safety of our students and our staff.

While I cannot predict what our immediate future will hold in the upcoming months, I commit to keeping you informed of our current status and update you regularly.

Thank you for your understanding and support.

Darryll McCall, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Wachusett Regional School District