



LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Henry J. Mroz Central Administration Offices
155 Merrimack Street
Lowell, MA 01852

January 4, 2022

Dear Lowell Public Schools Families,

I am writing to provide an update regarding the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on our schools and where our district currently stands, post holiday break.

We are excited to have our students back in school this week. Our staff has been working hard and taking every precaution available to maintain our in-person learning environments. This has included thorough cleaning of classrooms and common areas, continued pool testing in all of our buildings, and continued adherence to masking guidelines.

However, the post-holiday surge in COVID-19 cases, coupled with the annual winter cold and flu season, continues to put a strain on school staffing and substitute coverage.

- For the past two days, we have experienced a staff absence rate of approximately 10% due to COVID-required health and safety protocols.
- Our substitute fill rate this year has consistently been much lower than the fill rate in past years, typically covering just one-third of teacher absences on most days.
- We anticipate these shortages will rise as the week continues and as we receive the results from our Monday and Tuesday pool testing.
- Pool testing so far this week has resulted in about 40% of pools needing follow-up testing to identify who in the pool was positive for COVID-19.

We are continuing to exhaust every resource at our disposal to minimize disruptions and provide coverage for classrooms that are affected by COVID-related quarantining. However, if the trend in COVID-19 cases continues in an upward direction in the coming days and weeks, we may reach a level of staff absences that compromises our ability to safely operate one or more schools.

As other districts have already experienced, it is possible that one or more LPS schools could be forced to close on a given day due to COVID-related staffing shortages. In this situation, our decisions will be made daily based on the data we receive every evening after the work day has ended and prior to the start of transportation services in the morning.

In the event of a required cancellation in LPS, we will contact you immediately using the same protocols that are followed for cancellations due to snow and inclement weather. This includes email and telephone calls as well as posting information on our website and social media channels. We strongly encourage you to make sure your contact information is up to date within our student information system, including language preference for receiving communications. You can do this by submitting an online [form](#) or calling your school office.

Our top priority is always to provide a safe and welcoming educational environment for your children. Thank you for your continued partnership as we continue to work our way through this ongoing health crisis.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joel D. Boyd
Superintendent of Schools