

Safe Schools Update: LHJs

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Topics for today

- Guidance changes
 - Physical distancing
 - Re-opening criteria
 - Cohort Guidance
- Physical distancing rationale
- Preparing for surge



Guidance Changes

- Physical distancing in the context of masking
 - Between students: Strongly recommend minimum of 3 feet
 - Masking, masking, masking
 - Staff maintain 6 feet of distancing
 - When eating or drinking, continue 6 feet of distancing
- Re-opening criteria for high school and middle school now aligned with Elementary school in Purple



Guidance Changes (2)

- Cohort guidance for youth in indoor, supervised settings updated on Monday
 - Now applies only to counties in the Purple Tier
 - Populations for whom this is relevant: Child care, before and after school, day camps
 - Removes the cap of 16 for these settings
 - However, does not change the emphasis on stable groups, which remains in Industry Guidance for these settings



Physical Distancing

- Context:
 - CDC MMWR paper on the ill effects on children and families
 - CDC guidance
- Data supporting 3 feet in the setting of masking
 - Massachusetts, Utah, Wisconsin, Chicago
 - CA data, unpublished



Harms associated with school closure

- Survey of 1290 parents with child in public or private school (October-November 2020)
 - 46% all virtual; 31% all in-person; 23% hybrid
- Worse reported student outcomes for those in hybrid or virtual learning
 - Decreased physical activity
 - Time spent outside
 - In-person time with friends
 - Worsened mental or emotional health



<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7011a1.htm>

Harms associated with school closure

- Worse reported parent outcomes for those in hybrid or virtual learning
 - Loss of work
 - Loss of job stability
 - Emotional distress
 - Difficulty sleeping



<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7011a1.htm>

Low secondary attack rate in schools with 3 feet distancing between students

- Salt Lake city 20 elementary schools
- 51 index patients, 1,042 contacts
- Secondary attack rate of 0.7%
- Median distance between seats 3 feet



[Hershow RB](#), et al. “Low SARS-CoV-2 Transmission in Elementary Schools — Salt Lake County, Utah, December 3, 2020–January 31, 2021”. MMWR 2021; March 19, 2021.



Low case rates in MA schools with 3 feet and 6 feet policies

- 251 school districts; 537K students; 99K staff; 16 weeks of school in Sept 2020-Jan 2021
- Masking required
- Incident rate ratios similar 3 vs 6 ft
 - Students: 0.89 (0.59-1.3)
 - Staff: 1.1 (0.75-1.4)

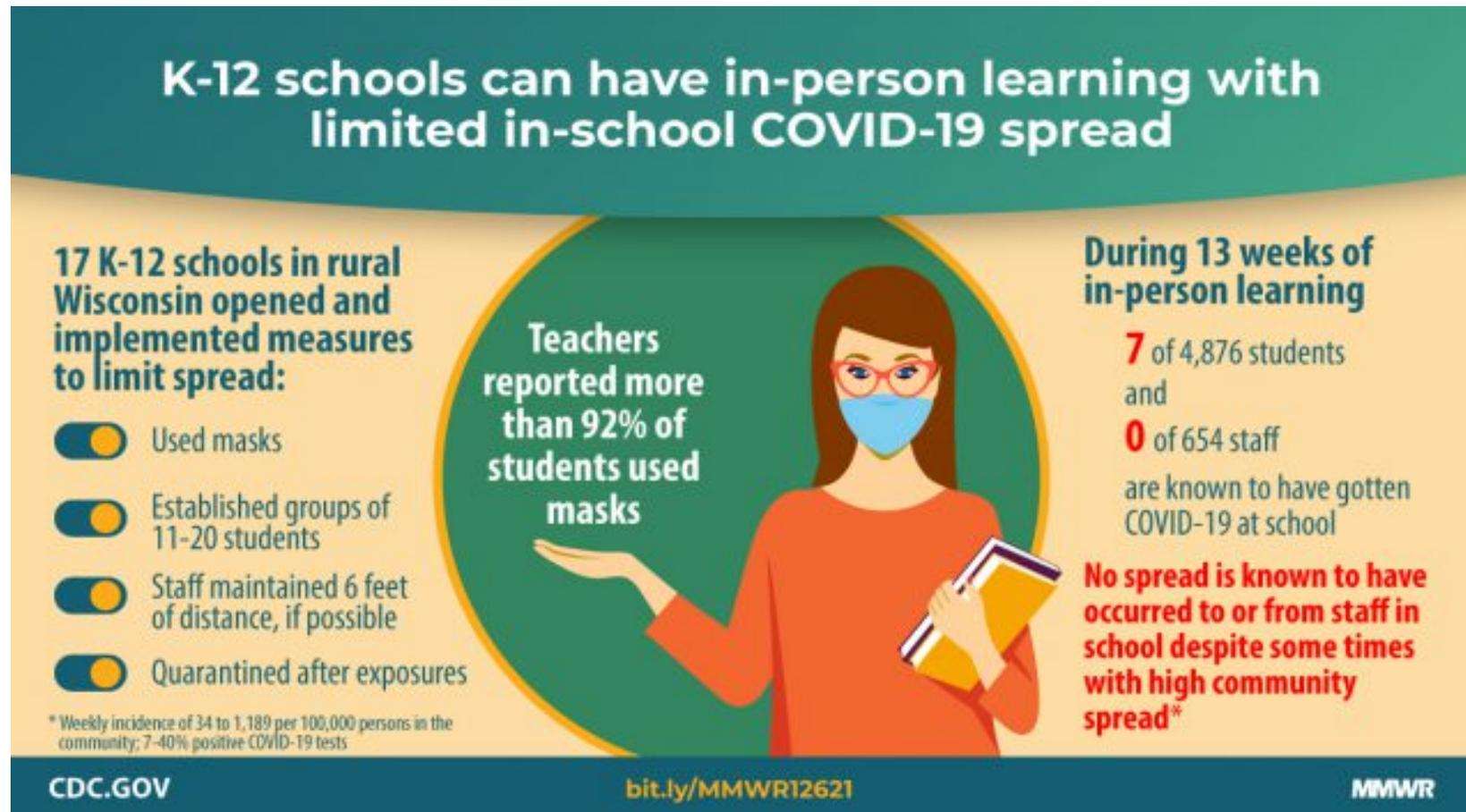


Low case rates in MA schools with 3 feet and 6 feet policies (2)

- Community case rates varied over time
- Adjusted for community case rates
- Limitation: case rates only; written policies, but would have to have had 3 feet schools be placing students at 6 feet in order to change the implications of the article



Limited transmission with masking, stable groups, and physical distancing



Low attack rate in Chicago Parochial Schools with limited physical distancing in cohorts

- 94 K-12 schools in Chicago Aug-Oct 2020
- Attack rate 0.2%
- 6 feet required between cohorts, but not within cohorts
- Masking, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, daily symptom monitoring, contact tracing, and 14-day quarantine for close contacts



[Fricchione MJ](#), Seo JY, Arwady MA. Data-Driven Reopening of Urban Public Education Through Chicago's Tracking of COVID-19 School Transmission. *J Public Health Manag Pract.* 2020; December 30, 2020.



Implications

- Taken together, compelling case to change to a 3 feet of physical distancing policy
- Supports twin goals: safe and successful schools



Thinking ahead

- Light at the end of the tunnel
- Still in the tunnel
- ? Surge
 - Variants
 - Spring break
- School based testing is something schools can and should be thinking about accessing, especially if vaccination rates are not high



Thinking ahead

- Testing task force for schools
 - PCR
 - Antigen
 - Anterior nares
 - Students supervised self collection





The pathway forward (this...)



Questions and Answers

