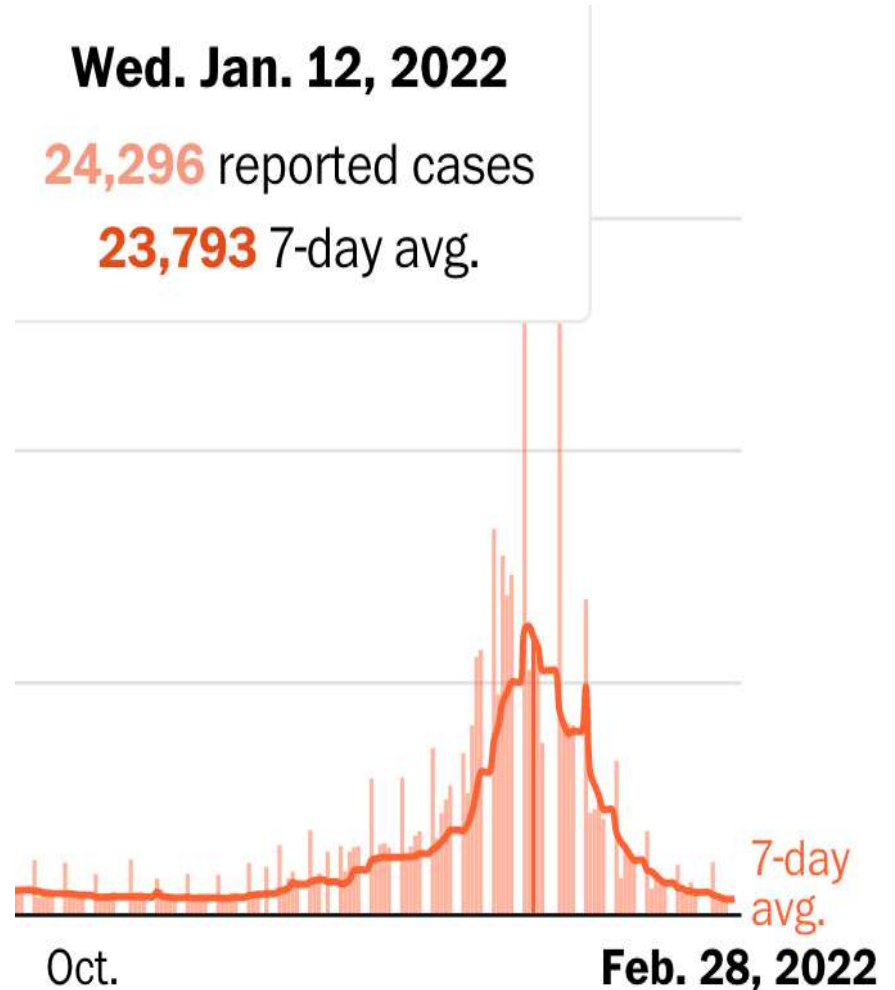


# COVID Update & Masking

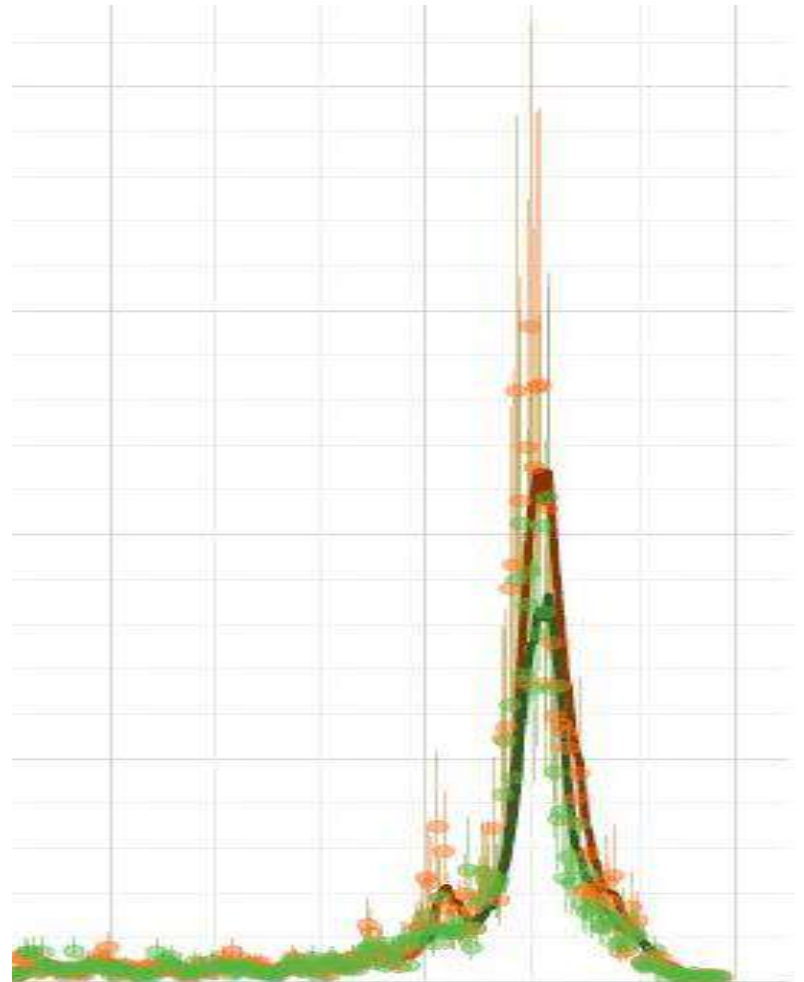
# Omicron

- Happened as predicted
- Incredible amount of work on staying open
  - Staff and admin
  - Students
  - Parents
  - Everyone, community



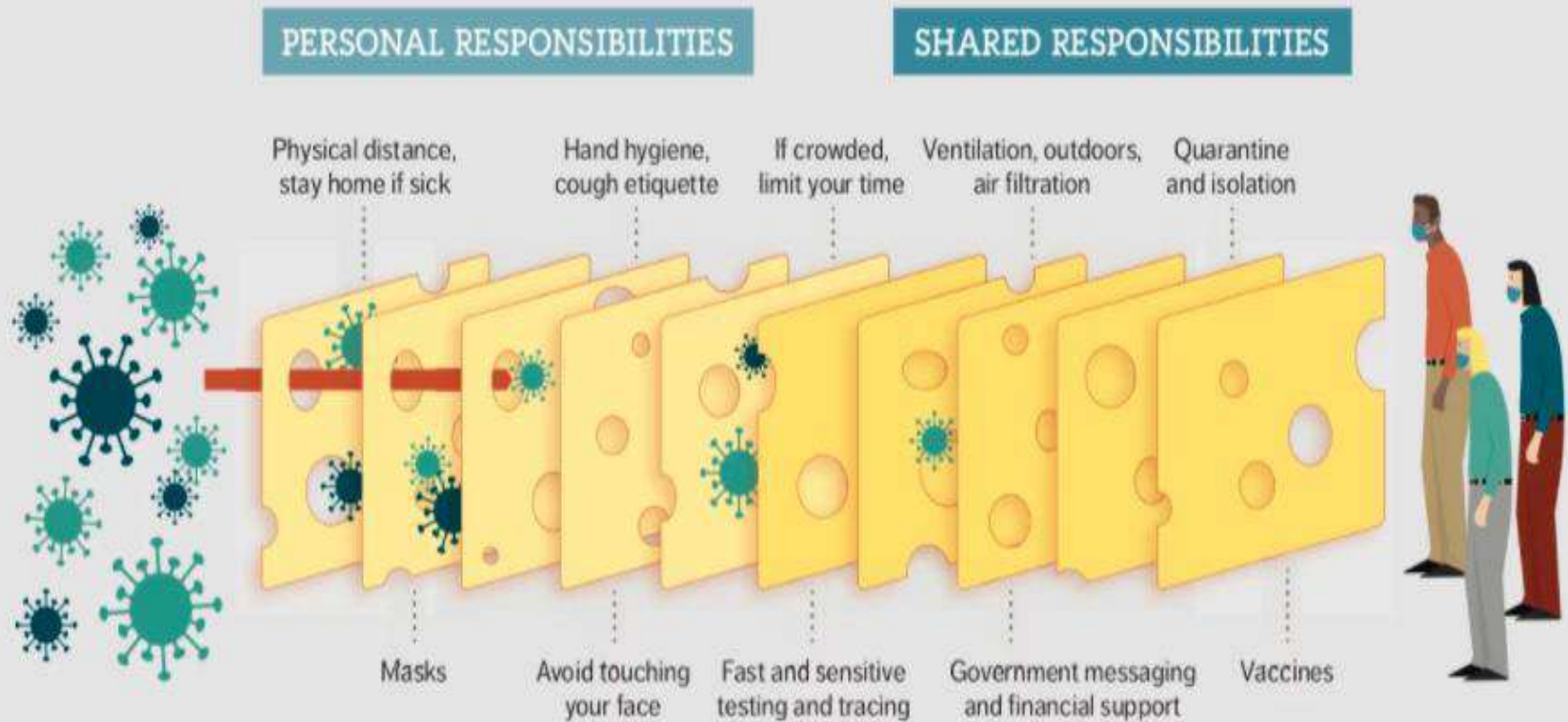
# Where are we now?

- Metrics
  - Cases, hospitalizations, deaths declining
    - To pre-Omicron levels and falling
  - Wastewater falling
- Currently, no new variants on the horizon



# Swiss Cheese Mitigations

## THE SWISS CHEESE MODEL



Source: Adapted from Ian M. Mackay ([virologydownunder.com](http://virologydownunder.com)) and James T. Reason

# Masking – Yes it does help!

- Lots of debate
  - Mask type
  - Does masking work?
- COVID
  - Transmitted by droplet and opportunistic aerosol
  - ALL masks work very well against droplet
  - Variable performance against aerosol
    - 50% cloth, 70% medical, 94% KF-94,
    - 95% N95 (not approved for kids)

# Where are we going?

- Lots of talk about endemic?
  - “infection is constantly maintained at a baseline level in a geographic area without external inputs.”
  - Flu, RSV are endemic..
  - Unclear this is true for COVID yet (?)
- What is clear now (and next 3-9 months ??):
  - Very low level of virus circulating in community
  - Very high level of natural immunity from having a case
  - Very high level of vaccination in adults (that protects kids) in community
  - Vaccination is holding against hospitalizations and death
- Next step:
  - Is a Pandemic Pause... which leads to the question:
  - What levels of the Swiss Cheese can we (should we) drop?

# Swiss Cheese Mitigations

## THE SWISS CHEESE MODEL

### PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

### SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

Physical distance,  
stay home if sick

Hand hygiene,  
cough etiquette

If crowded,  
limit your time

Ventilation, outdoors,  
air filtration

Quarantine  
and isolation

???

Masks

Avoid touching  
your face

Fast and sensitive  
testing and tracing

Government messaging  
and financial support

Vaccines



Source: Adapted from Ian M. Mackay (virologydownunder.com) and James T. Reason



# COVID-19 County Check

Find community levels and prevention steps by county.

Select a Location (all fields required)

Massachusetts



Middlesex County



Go

[< Start Over](#)

 **Low**

In **Middlesex County, Massachusetts**, community level is **Low**.

- Stay [up to date](#) with COVID-19 vaccines
- [Get tested](#) if you have symptoms

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People may choose to mask at any time. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask.

If you are immunocompromised, learn more about [how to protect yourself](#).



# Why mask-optional first?

- Masks are one Swiss Cheese Layer
  - Important when transmission is high
- Masks also:
  - Make communication harder
  - Make emotional communication harder
  - Make comprehension harder
  - Are difficult for some students to wear (sensitivity)
  - Can be esp. tough for youngest / special needs
  - There are drawbacks to masks
- Need to compare “risk of masks” and “risk of COVID”

# What about vaccination?

- Vaccination is a key strategy to control the spread of the virus
  - But we need to protect our un(under-) vaccinated <12's by:
    - Adult vaccination
    - Keeping virus levels low in community
  - <12's are at high risk of severe disease
    - Issues balancing dose to get antibody response and side-effects (also much lower COVID risk)

# Adjusting to COVID Mitigation Changes

- This is a big adjustment
  - For some, it is a very happy adjustment
  - For some, it is a very scary adjustment
- Masking is \*visible\* sign of mitigation
  - In areas with low “trust” around you, masks help you trust community.
- At very low virus prevalence, masks are unneeded, but this is harder to trust.

# What about more at-risk people?

- There are people who are at more risk of/from respiratory diseases (including COVID).
- For these people, we:
  - Maintain environmental controls (HVAC, etc.)
  - Maintain social controls
    - Testing, not coming to school when sick
  - Normalize support for individual masking
    - One-way masking in high-quality masks is efficacious

# Recommendations

Based on current state of COVID, data, and recommendations, current recommendations:

1. Move to mask optional policy in SPS
  - Deliberately and considering socio-emotional of all SPS members through this adaptation to COVID
1. Closely watch variants and numbers
  - Have rapid mechanism to come back to masking if needed (e.g. new variant)

Thank you!

Daniele Lantagne