

# Introducing The Pooled Testing Program to School Staff and Caregivers

Dear NPS Caregivers:

We are starting a voluntary **free weekly COVID-19 testing program** to help keep our staff, students and community safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Regular COVID-19 testing of students and staff will help us lower the risk of the disease in our school by finding and isolating individuals who have COVID-19 quickly, even before or if they never show symptoms. We have confidence in our safety protocols including masking, distancing, ventilation improvements, and sanitization. The weekly COVID-19 testing program is just another way we are striving to keep our school environment safe for everyone.

**We hope that you will participate by signing a consent form: To enroll in the pooled testing process, please complete the informed consent form found at [this link](#).**

## What is the COVID-19 testing program?

- Participating individuals will be tested for COVID-19 once a week by County Ambulance
- The program starts on or about May 7, 2021
- The test is performed at each school on Fridays; **the pooled testing program will replace the staff asymptomatic testing program. Staff and students will be tested on the same day moving forward.**
- **We are developing a smooth scheduling system so that testing does not interrupt teaching and learning, MORE INFORMATION TO COME PRIOR TO THE START DATE**
- The COVID-19 test is quick, easy and it does not hurt. It is a nasal test you can administer yourself that gently swabs the lower inner nostril.
- The test is free. You do not need to pay for the test or have insurance to get the test.
- The program is optional, but we hope you will participate to help us keep our schools as safe as possible.

## How can I participate in the program?

To participate in the testing program, you need to **sign a consent form**. You only need to sign once to consent for testing each week.

**No personal health information is provided to anyone outside of the district in the first round of pooled testing.** Our contact tracing staff will call any individuals in a positive pool to explain next steps and discuss follow-up testing options. Test results will only be shared with the Department of Public Health if you test positive on an individual follow-up test.

The program is voluntary. You are not required to participate in the program. If you do not consent to participate, you can still come to school. However, we strongly encourage you to participate to help us reduce the spread of COVID-19.

## How does it work?

The type of testing we are using is called “Pooled Testing.” Pooled testing makes it easier and faster to find individuals who might have COVID-19.

**Pooled testing also helps ensure a smooth system that does not interrupt teaching and learning; we can test entire classes/cohorts at once in a short period of time to minimize interruptions to classroom time.** More details will be provided.

Here is how it works:

- Participating individuals are tested individually once a week with a nasal swab test.
- Then, ten swabs will be mixed together into a group of swabs called a “pool.” The pool is sent to a lab where the whole pool is tested for COVID-19 at one time.
- If the pool test comes back negative, all students in the pool are COVID-negative. In this case, you will not hear from us.
- If the pool test comes back positive, it means that at least one person in the pool is COVID-positive. In this case, all members of that pool will receive a phone call from our contact tracing staff regarding next steps.
- Abbott BinaxNOW antigen reflex testing for individual follow-up tests produce results in 15 minutes. If the individual follow-up test comes back negative, the person may return to school as normal. If the individual follow-up test comes back positive, we will work with the person to quarantine and get connected to care. NPS contact tracing staff will also reach out to start the contact tracing process.

Thank you and we hope to see you soon!

Sincerely,

Sarah Madden, Principal