

NORTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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John A. Provost, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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September 24, 2021

Dear NPS staff and caregivers,

We are writing to share some important updates to our health and safety protocols, including COVID-19 testing and changes to our quarantine and return to school guidelines.

COVID-19 Testing

Routine Covid Safety Check Testing is scheduled to begin next week. Testing will occur over two days each week. The safety check testing will be conducted at NHS, JFK, and Leeds on Thursdays and at Bridge Street, Jackson Street, and Ryan Road on Fridays. This will be a double swab test, with one swab placed in the pool and the other saved for individual testing in the event of a positive pooled result.

Symptomatic BinaxNOW antigen testing will be available for staff or students with symptoms during the school day only. Nursing staff will perform the antigen test for those presenting with potential COVID-19 symptoms during the school day. Staff or students whose test is negative will be allowed to remain in school if they are experiencing **mild symptoms of concern**: If symptoms persist, increase or change during the school day, these individuals will be referred to their primary care physician for further care and testing.

Regardless of vaccination status, staff or students that present with any of the following **significant symptoms of concern** will be immediately sent home, and referred to their primary care physician for further care and testing, fever (100.0 Fahrenheit or higher) , chills, or shaking chills, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, new loss of taste or smell, muscle aches or body aches.

Please remember that active consent is required to participate in either routine covid safety check testing or symptomatic BinaxNOW antigen testing. The link for consent is on our district website.

Return to School Guidelines for Individuals with Symptoms

We are refining our return to school guidelines to differentiate protocols for those experiencing significant symptoms of concern and those with mild symptoms of concern.

Significant symptoms of concern include the following:

- Fever (100.0 Fahrenheit or higher)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Muscle aches or body aches
- New loss of taste or smell

Regardless of vaccination status, staff and students experiencing **any one significant symptom of concern** should not participate in school, extracurricular, and out-of-school activities. They should **remain at home and seek COVID-19 PCR testing**. Antigen testing will not be accepted for significant symptoms of concern. **If the PCR test is negative, they still must remain home until symptoms fully resolve without medication.**

Mild symptoms of concern include the following:

- Headache
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting
- Undue Fatigue (without another known cause, such as lack of sleep)

Regardless of vaccination status, staff and students experiencing **one mild symptom of concern**, may return to school upon obtaining a negative medically **monitored/ proctored** rapid antigen test, such as those currently available at Walgreens, CVS, and MedExpress. If a staff or student has two or more mild symptoms of concern, a negative PCR test and resolution of symptoms will be required to return to school.

Home antigen testing that is not medically monitored is not acceptable at this time.

If the PCR test or antigen test is positive, the individual who has tested positive must follow up with the school and local board of health to determine follow up steps regarding isolation and quarantine.

We believe these updates to our protocols will enhance the safety of our schools and minimize disruptions to learning for our students as we move forward.

Sincerely,



John A. Provost, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



Lisa Safron, BSN, RN, NCSN
Director of Health, Safety, & Equity Programs