

# CHELMSFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Jay Lang, Ed.D., Superintendent

August 27, 2021

Dear Chelmsford School Community,

I look forward to welcoming back all our students to full-time, in-person learning next week. Every summer seems to go by quicker than the last, and this summer has been no exception. After last school year, we all needed a much-deserved break and time to relax and recharge. I hope you were able to take some time to care for yourself and families this summer and are now ready to return for another successful school year. Our caring and committed staff has been very busy preparing to meet their new students next week; this is going to be a great school year!

Earlier this week, I shared a [presentation](#) at the school committee meeting detailing our return-to-school plan. In addition to touching on our curriculum and instruction approach to the fall, I reviewed our COVID-19 protocols and procedures we will implement to ensure our students and staff remain healthy and safe in our schools. One of the significant changes this year, over last, is that asymptomatic vaccinated individuals are not considered close contacts to a confirmed COVID positive individual and do not need to test or quarantine. Parents are asked to provide documentation of vaccine status for their child so we may appropriately identify "close contacts" exempt from COVID-19 testing and quarantine protocols in the event a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19 this school year. Vaccination is a key mitigation strategy as we work to provide a healthy and safe learning environment in our school community. If a parent elects not to share the vaccine status of their child, the child must follow COVID-19 test and quarantine protocols for unvaccinated individuals. Parents may access the COVID-19 vaccination notification status form at the following link to inform CPS nursing staff of their child's vaccination status: <https://forms.gle/7ovjaPWQVijtEwhS8>. You are required to log-in to a Google account to upload your form. If you do not have a Google account, you may upload the form through your child's school issued Google account. Please complete a separate form for each child that attends a Chelmsford Public School.

## **COVID-19 Pool Testing**

One of our COVID-19 mitigation strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our school community is pool testing. We will continue to provide free weekly COVID-19 pool testing to any interested students and staff this upcoming year. We have worked closely with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) to implement this initiative. Participation is recommended and strongly encouraged for unvaccinated individuals.

Pool testing involves mixing several individuals' test samples together into one "pool" and then testing the pooled sample for COVID-19. This approach increases the number of individuals that can be tested at one time and allows us to regularly test our school community for COVID-19. The pool tests will be performed once per week with a shallow nasal swab for all participating students and staff members. Schools will receive the pool test results within 24 - 48 hours. If the result of the pool is negative, then all individuals in the pool are presumed to not have COVID-19. If the result of the pool is positive, then

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all individuals in the pool must be retested individually. Because pool testing does not provide individual test results, you will only be notified if your child requires follow-up testing. Our schools will provide the Abbott BinaxNOW Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Test for follow-up testing, so that students or staff in a positive pool may be tested on-site as soon as possible and receive individual test results in 15 minutes. Below please find a link to a short video that provides an example of a second-grade student illustrating how to perform a nasal swab for pool testing. If you have questions regarding the COVID-19 Pool Testing Program, please reach out to Ms. Peggy Gump, Coordinator of School Nursing Services, at [gumpp@chelmsford.k12.ma.us](mailto:gumpp@chelmsford.k12.ma.us).

## **PLEASE NOTE:**

**Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days will be excluded from weekly pool test participation.** After conclusion of the 90 days, participation is encouraged and welcomed.

## **Test and Stay Program**

We are also happy to offer an additional program this year, Test and Stay, for individuals who are identified as “close contacts” due to a COVID-19 positive school exposure. This testing protocol will minimize the amount of time individuals (students and staff) are out of school due to an in-school COVID-19 positive exposure and is a safe alternative to at-home isolation. The Test and Stay protocol requires an individual take a rapid antigen test, BinaxNOW, upon arrival to school each day and receive a negative test result. The duration of the Test and Stay protocol is seven (7) days from the date of exposure, and close contacts may remain in school if they:

- Are asymptomatic;
- Wear masks in school at all times, other than when eating or drinking (when eating or drinking 3 feet of distance from other individuals should be maintained);
- Take a rapid antigen test – BinaxNOW, each school day and receive a negative test result. When the 7 days from date of exposure includes weekends or holidays, individuals should quarantine on weekends/holidays and if they remain asymptomatic, upon return to school be tested immediately. If the individual remains negative, they may stay in school;
- Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14, and self-isolate at home if symptoms develop.

Individuals who elect to participate in the Test and Stay protocol may be eligible to participate in school sports and extracurricular activities. For school events and sports that take place on non-school days, testing will be required on those days to participate. Test and Stay is only applicable to in-school COVID-19 exposure. Exposures outside of school require a traditional quarantine protocol response.

## **Important Information – Consent to Participate Required**

For your child to participate in the COVID-19 Pool Testing Program AND/OR the Test and Stay Protocol if they are identified as a close contact to a COVID-19 positive individual, consent is required to test. Please refer to the consent form for additional information. Our nursing staff is thoroughly trained on how to administer pool tests, as well as the Abbott BinaxNOW Rapid Antigen Diagnostic Test, if required

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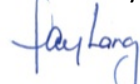
for follow-up testing. You will be informed if your child is part of a positive pool and requires on-site follow-up BinaxNOW testing. You will also be notified of the individual follow-up test results, whether your child tests positive or negative, and what to do in each situation.

To provide permission for your child to participate in the COVID-19 Pool Testing Program and/or Test and Stay Protocol in our schools, including consent to transmit student information via the pooled testing technology platform, consent for any necessary follow up tests, and consent to share the test result information with the Department of Public Health and CIC Health (a third party organization contracted to compile consent for testing and to share test results), please select the following link to complete the consent form: <https://forms.gle/79Hv4twPifgrrIM57>.

Consent must be received by **Friday September 17, 2021**, to participate in weekly COVID-19 pool testing beginning the week of September 20, 2021. Consents received after this date will be eligible to participate in the following week's pool collection. **\*Please note the consent includes an option for Symptomatic Testing, however, symptomatic testing is not currently available in our schools.** The consent is applicable only for weekly COVID-19 pool testing and/or the Test and Stay Protocol. Consent is required for your child to participate in the weekly COVID-19 pool testing and/or the Test and Stay protocol.

I am extremely grateful to our committed staff and families that continue to exhibit great flexibility and resilience as we look to navigate this upcoming school year together. It takes all of us working together to contain the spread of this virus. We are excited to add the Test and Stay Protocol as another mitigation strategy for our school community, as we work to ensure the safe return of all students and staff to full-time, in-person learning this fall. I hope you enjoy the last weekend of summer, and I look forward to seeing you children next week and supporting you in the coming school year.

Yours truly,



Jay Lang, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools

Video: [Video: Learn how to do a nasal swab, from a 2nd grader](#)