

CHELMSFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Jay Lang, Ed.D., Superintendent

Update to Chelmsford Public Schools COVID Mitigation Strategy Additional Information Regarding At-Home Rapid Antigen Tests

January 25, 2022

Dear CPS Community,

Last week, Commissioner of Education Riley and Governor Baker announced a new testing option for school districts given our experience this past year managing COVID, including the analysis and review of statewide data from in-school and out-of-school transmission of COVID. In September, we initiated Test and Stay as an option to minimize disruption to learning and allow unvaccinated close contacts of COVID positive individuals to remain in school by testing negative each morning. Since the start of the school year, statewide 98% of all tests administered in the Test and Stay program yielded negative results. In Chelmsford, over 99% of all individual tests administered in the Test and Stay program yielded negative test results – only 37 of 4,671 individual tests were positive. **Test positivity rates in Test and Stay indicate individuals identified as close contacts in school are very unlikely to contract or spread COVID-19.** A significant amount of staff time and resources are spent contact tracing and administering daily tests to *asymptomatic* individuals. We are at a point where we need to refocus our attention and efforts on case management of *symptomatic* and COVID positive individuals in our school community.

New COVID Testing Option to Optimize In-Person Learning

Our district will be transitioning from the Test and Stay program to providing weekly at-home rapid antigen tests for all interested students and staff. This new at-home testing option is voluntary, however highly recommended for all vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals in our school community. We will discontinue contact tracing and the Test and Stay program once we receive and distribute at-home rapid antigen test kits to individuals that elect to participate in this new program. We will continue our weekly Pool Testing initiative, providing all interested students and staff with the ability to receive two (2) weekly COVID tests – 1 at-home rapid antigen test and 1 PCR test through the Pool Testing initiative at school. While we strongly encourage students and staff, regardless of vaccination status, to participate in weekly pool testing, students and staff may opt-in to receive at-home rapid antigen test kits even if they do not participate in pool testing.

A few notes about the new at-home rapid antigen test program:

- 1) Interested students and staff who register for the new program will receive one (1) test kit every two (2) weeks to enable them to test weekly. iHealth is the manufacturer of the test kit provided.

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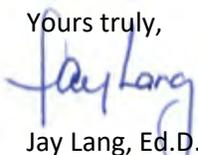
- 2) The district will recommend participating students and staff take the at-home test several days apart from when Pool Testing is provided at their school. For example, if Pool Testing is conducted on Mondays, it will likely be recommended that participating students and staff administer the at-home test on Thursdays to maximize the utility of the at-home tests.

- 3) When an individual student or staff member tests positive on an at-home rapid antigen test, they must inform the school of their positive test result and follow the required COVID isolation, quarantine, and return to school/work protocol.

This new at-home rapid antigen testing program and change in our response procedures is a natural progression of our COVID mitigation strategies as we learn from our data in Chelmsford and that of state. We remain vigilant in maintaining the health and safety of our students and staff as a top priority in the Chelmsford Public Schools. We have worked hard to provide in-person learning as we begin to restore a more traditional look and feel to schooling while the COVID pandemic persists. This change in our COVID response procedures in no way reduces our commitment or efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID in our school community, in fact, it allows us to focus our attention and time on symptomatic and COVID positive individuals in our school community, ensuring they receive the care needed to recover from the virus and are well when they return to school/work. It is imperative that COVID positive individuals have sufficiently recovered and are returning to in-person learning at the appropriate post-COVID time interval.

Instead of embedding the registration and consent forms in hyperlinks throughout the text of this letter, please find below links to register for and receive at-home rapid antigen test kits through this new program. I have also provided the links for students and staff to register and consent for weekly Pool Testing if you would like to do so at this time. I appreciate your continued support in adapting to and supporting our COVID protocols and procedures. Thank you for helping to keep our students and staff healthy and safe.

Yours truly,



Jay Lang, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

LINK: [Student and Staff Opt-In/Register for At-Home Rapid Antigen Testing Program](#)

LINK: [Student Consent/Register for Weekly COVID-19 Pool Testing Program](#)

LINK: [Staff Consent/Register for Weekly COVID-19 Pool Testing Program](#)