

# COVID-19 Testing Program

## School Year 2021-2022

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### Program Overview

Framingham Public Schools is implementing a free COVID-19 testing program as part of its overall health and safety protocol and COVID-19 risk mitigation strategy. The district is partnering with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Cambridge Innovation Center (CIC) to implement a comprehensive COVID-19 testing program. The testing program is available to all pre-K-12 students and district staff. Testing will be available weekly for all participating students and staff.

**Although this program is voluntary, participation is strongly encouraged for both unvaccinated and vaccinated students and staff.** Greater participation will allow the district to quickly identify positive cases and prevent further spread of COVID-19 in the school community.

### Testing Components:

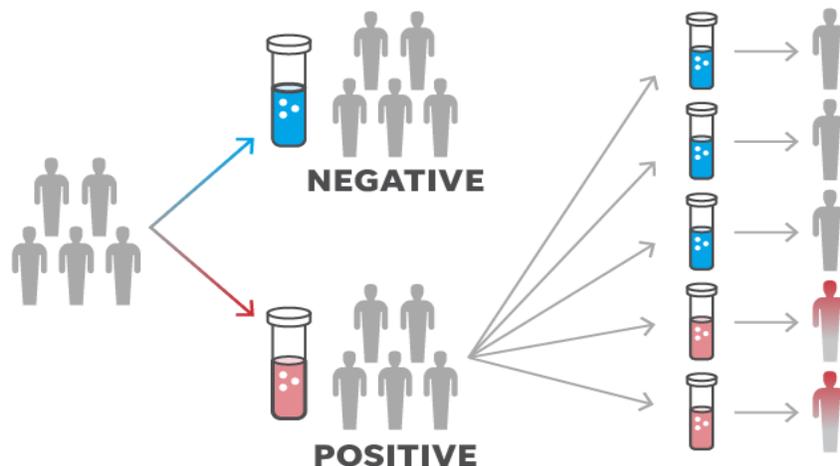
#### 1.) Routine COVID Safety Checks (Pooled Testing)

Routine COVID safety checks (pooled testing) will be available weekly for students and staff. Testing will take place on site at school during the school day. Shallow nasal swab samples are collected, pooled and tested in groups of 5-10. Schools will receive the results within 24-48 hours. Students can continue to come to school while awaiting safety check (pooled) results; they do not need to quarantine while awaiting results. If a safety check test is **positive**, the students in the pool will be administered follow-up testing with a second sample collection at school with a BinaxNow (rapid antigen test) and an individual PCR testing, as necessary. Parents/guardians will only be notified if their child is in a positive pooled test. If you do not receive notification from the district, then your child's results were negative.

- Routine COVID Safety Checks or weekly COVID-19 pooled testing will **only** be provided for all students/staff who have consented and are present in the school on the testing day. Please complete an online consent form [here](#).
- Participation is voluntary and testing is free of charge.
- Participation in pooled testing is **required** for all participants (vaccinated and unvaccinated) in after school extracurricular sports, marching band, jazz band, chorus and theatre performances.
- Individuals who have previously tested positive for COVID 19 in the past 90 days should not test. After 90 days, individuals can participate.
- Pooled testing combines respiratory samples from several people and runs a single laboratory PCR test on the combined pool of samples.
- At this time, Framingham Public Schools will be combining a maximum number of 5-10 tests per pooled tube based on the community metrics. We will continue to monitor community metrics and may adjust the pooled sizes accordingly.
- The test is done using a shallow nasal swab. The shallow swab is not inserted deep into the nasal cavity but just into the nostril opening.
- Trained CIC staff will administer the nasal swab for students in grades Pre-K-5 and any child with a physical handicap or disability. Self-administration of the nasal swab will be performed by students in grades 6-12;
- Results will be received within 24-48 hours. Parents/Guardians will be notified of results **only** if your child is in a positive pooled sample. ***If parents/guardians do not receive notification from the district, then you can be confident that your child's results were negative.***
- If the pool of tests is flagged as positive, each person in the pool will be tested individually. Each person will be administered a BinaxNow rapid antigen test and an individual PCR test to identify if someone in the pool is positive for COVID-19.
- Follow up testing, BinaxNow and individual PCR testing will be administered at your child's school and is free of charge.
- The state is using a technology platform/system that meets HIPAA/FERPA privacy protections. Samples will be used for COVID-19 testing only. Only approved school administrators and nurses will be able to view results.
- The Framingham Board of Health will be notified of positive individual PCR test results and follow established public health COVID-19 guidelines and protocols for isolation and quarantine.

## How pooled testing works

- 1** People are broken up into groups and a group is tested together.
- 2** A combined sample from the group either tests negative or positive.
- 3** If positive, people are tested individually to find the positive cases.



SOURCE USA TODAY research  
Karl Gelles/USA TODAY

## 2.) "Test and Stay" Quarantine Protocol and Testing

"Test and Stay" allows students and staff who were exposed to a person **at school** who tested positive for COVID-19 to remain in school as long as they have no symptoms. Instead of missing school, these students and staff will be administered a daily BinaxNOW rapid test at school. They will continue to quarantine outside of the school day. The goal of the "Test and Stay" protocol is to allow students and staff to remain in school as safely as possible, while lessening the burden of quarantine on students, their families, teachers, and school administrators

- Under the "Test and Stay" protocol, unvaccinated students and staff who come into contact with an individual who tests positive **at school, on the school bus or at a school sponsored extracurricular activity** and have been able to follow the district's safety measures will have the option to:
  1. Adhere to a strict quarantine out of school (not attend work/school) or
  2. Participate in the "Test and Stay" quarantine protocol and be allowed to attend work/school with daily COVID 19 testing
- Those who participate in the "Test and Stay" quarantine protocol may remain in school as long as they have no symptoms and participate in daily COVID-19 testing at school.

- The “Test and Stay” protocol consists of a daily nasal swab performed by a qualified healthcare personnel for 5-7 days following exposure.
- For your child and/or a staff member to be eligible for this program, we **must** have a signed consent on file before testing can occur. If we do NOT have a consent form on file, your child will need to quarantine at home for a **minimum** of 7 days and follow Framingham Public Health Department quarantine guidance. Please complete an online consent form [here](#).
- Since current data indicate that vaccinated individuals are testing positive for the virus, **we strongly recommend participation in the Test and Stay protocol for all individuals regardless of vaccination status.**
- In addition, the following additional safety measures will be implemented for students and staff in the Test and Stay protocol:
  - All individuals regardless of vaccination status must wear masks at all times, other than eating or drinking;
  - When unmasked, (e.g., eating/drinking, mask break) physical distance from others should be maintained, whenever possible;
  - Individuals must continue to actively monitor for the following COVID-19 symptoms for 14 days:
    - Fever 100 F or 37.7C or chills
    - Cough
    - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
    - Fatigue
    - Muscle or body aches
    - Headache
    - New loss of taste or smell
    - Sore throat
    - Congestion or runny nose
    - Nausea or vomiting
    - Diarrhea
  - If symptoms develop, individuals must isolate at home and check in with School Nurse/HR