



September 2021

Dear Lawrence Public Schools families,

Thank you for your continued support as we kick off the 2021-2022 school year. At Lawrence Public Schools, keeping your students safe and in school is our top priority. We have learned a great deal over this past year and our current guidance and procedures reflect the most updated recommendations from the CDC and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

For the 2021-22 school year, we are offering an extra layer of protection to prevent the spread of COVID-19, our COVID-19 testing program at school. To start the year in LPS, this program has two components: **symptomatic testing** for students who show symptoms of COVID-19 at school, and **routine COVID safety checks** to prevent the spread of the virus undetected among students who are not showing symptoms. Each of these is a quick, non-invasive nasal swab that is collected under the supervision of a school nurse or trained health provider. Unlike COVID-19 tests of the past, these are not uncomfortable and are easy for students to do themselves.

Students only participate with permission from a parent or guardian. It is important to LPS that you are fully informed regarding the process and that we can answer any questions that you might have in advance of asking you to sign the consent form. Below we describe both parts of our current testing program, how they are conducted, and what they are used for.

Symptomatic testing is used when a student is showing symptoms of COVID-19 during school; students should not come to school if they are feeling sick while at home. Some symptoms of the virus look identical to other illnesses like the cold or flu, and this test tells us whether a symptomatic student has COVID-19 or not. This is a rapid test, and we receive the results of this test within 15 minutes. If a student has minimal symptoms and tests negative, they can remain in school.

Routine COVID safety checks minimize disruption to learning by helping us catch potential spread of the virus before it starts. Each student administers the safety check on a weekly basis. Samples are collected at school in groups of 5-10 individuals. The samples are grouped together at school and sent to the lab. Once the samples get to the lab, all the samples in the group are tested for COVID-19 together. In almost all cases, it will take less than 24 hours to receive safety check results. Students can continue to come to school while awaiting safety check results; they do not need to quarantine while awaiting results. If a safety check test is positive, the lab will automatically process each individual sample to determine which student(s) in the group produced the positive test.

If a student tests positive for COVID-19, they must quarantine at home for the CDC-recommended ten days since symptoms appeared or ten days since the positive test before returning to school. The student must also be without a fever for 24 hours.

Although students who are vaccinated are much less likely to contract and spread the virus, it is important for us to create an inclusive environment for both vaccinated and unvaccinated students.

To participate in these programs, you must provide consent on behalf of your student consent as soon as possible in one of two ways:

- Complete the paper form attached to this letter in English and Spanish and return it to school, or...

- Provide consent online – and learn more about our COVID-19 testing program – by scanning the QR code at the bottom of this letter with your smartphone, or visiting www.LawrencePublicSchools.org.

There is no charge for participating. If you have additional questions regarding the program, please contact your school nurse.

It is our hope that these measures will work together to keep our schools safe and your student in school. Thanks again for your support.



Cynthia Paris
Superintendent of Schools

