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September 8, 2021

Dear families,

Thank you for your continued support as we kick off the 2021-2022 school year. At MRUSD, 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 [Vermont Department of Health](#).

For the 2021-22 school year, we are offering an extra layer of protection to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our schools — our COVID-19 testing program. This program is free for students and staff, and participation in the program is highly encouraged, regardless of vaccination status. Although students who are vaccinated are less likely to spread or contract the virus, unvaccinated individuals are still at risk of exposure, and it is important for us to create an inclusive environment for both vaccinated and unvaccinated students.

Vermont schools will be conducting weekly testing by way of a quick, non-invasive nasal swab, collected under the supervision of a school nurse, or other trained staff. Unlike many COVID-19 tests of the past, these are easy for students 5 years and older to perform themselves under supervision.

Through weekly testing, our schools will be better equipped to:

- Prevent the spread of the virus, especially among those individuals who are asymptomatic.
- Make evidence-based decisions. By deploying a school testing program, MRUSD will be able to make well-informed decisions with regard to relaxing other prevention measures, such as masking.
- Prepare our community for future curveballs in the pandemic, such as the possibility of new, more virulent strains, having a comprehensive testing program in place in schools will help inform our community of new strains and viral patterns.

Students may only participate in the program with permission from a parent or guardian. To participate in the program, you must sign this [consent form](#) on behalf of your student. There is no charge for participating. Any student aged 5 years or older is eligible to participate.

In advance of signing the [consent form](#), it is important to MRUSD that you are fully informed regarding the process and that we answer any questions you might have. To learn more about our COVID-19 testing program, please visit the Agency of Education's [Covid-19 Surveillance Testing Program Overview](#).

If your child has been vaccinated for COVID-19, please complete the [Student Vaccination Attestation form](#) and return it to your school nurse with a copy of the Vaccination Record Card. We will be using this data to inform our decision about requiring masks for all vaccinated students indoors. In addition, your child's vaccination status on record at the school will allow us to keep your student in school uninterrupted if your child has been a close contact to a positive COVID case and has no symptoms.

With this testing program in place and attestation forms on file, we can keep our schools safe and your student in school. Thanks again for your support during this challenging time. We look forward to welcoming your students back to the classroom.

Sincerely,



Bill Kimball

FAQS

Is the school responsible for reporting results to parents/guardians?

No, the results are sent from the testing software to the parents/guardians. The number of positive tests will be reported in the Health Department's statewide and county-by-county daily case totals.

How long will it take to receive results?

Except for extenuating circumstances, test results will typically be received within 72 hours from the time of the self-swab test collection.

Approximately how long will the entire process take for each test?

The entire process takes under 1 minute to complete.

Should we really have young children self-swab?

Yes! In a study of over 16,000 samples at a Massachusetts school in spring 2021, 2-8 grade students generate meaningfully fewer failed sample collections when self-swabbing vs. administered collection. Further, K-1 students swabbed 200 times, with zero failed collections. This compares with one failed collection in the previous 655 samples that had been collected on the same group in an administered basis. Overall this suggests there are simply very low failure rates in this age-group in general and, importantly, no increase in collection issues when kindergarteners and 1st graders self-collect samples.

[COVID-19 Routine Testing for Kids](#)

(link)