



September 30, 2021

Dear GCS Staff and Families,

The District has received a few questions concerning our ongoing surveillance testing for athletes and coaches as well as when the testing will be expanded to include other extracurricular activities, employees and students. The District has also received some inquiries regarding the contact tracing process and the subsequent need for quarantine.

**Q: Why are we testing vaccinated students and coaches when the recommendation from CDC, NYSED and DOH is to test unvaccinated persons?**

A: During weekly meetings with Greene County Department of Health (GC DOH) it was recommended to start testing both vaccinated and unvaccinated athletes and coaches. This was based on the county's high community transmission rates and the number of breakthrough cases. The official guidance recommends pausing all high risk sports if the transmission rate is high; but understanding the importance of athletics as it relates to social emotional learning, the county is supporting the Districts' efforts to continue testing participants rather than shut down high risk sports.

Before the implementation of surveillance testing for sports, the District reviewed with the school attorney its decision to require participants to consent to testing in order to participate in after school athletic programming. The review included the plan to test both vaccinated and unvaccinated athletes and coaches. After receiving affirmation from the school attorney we began weekly testing.

Consistent with the CDC guidance, schools/districts have the authority to decide how to implement the CDC guidance based on local conditions, needs, and with input from their local health department (LHD). Ultimately, the decision to adopt certain mitigation measures reside with the district based on local circumstances.

**Q: What are the District's plans for high risk winter sports?**

A: Based on CDC and NYS Education Department guidance some surrounding counties have moved forward with requiring participants to be fully vaccinated. While the District's plan will continue to evolve throughout the year, at this time we are highly recommending our participants to be vaccinated. If this threshold is not met, then we will continue required testing for all participants.

**Q: The guidance also recommends surveillance testing for unvaccinated participants in extracurricular activities that pose an elevated risk. These activities may include singing, shouting, band, and exercise that could lead to increased exhalation. Is Greenville CSD testing participants involved in other extracurricular activities at this time?**

A: Greene County DOH has supported a pause on beginning this additional surveillance testing due to the limited availability of the testing kits. Greenville CSD has been receiving their test kits from the

county and to date have been given an adequate supply to allow for the continued testing of our athletes and coaches. Other districts who have received their kits from other sources have had to limit their current surveillance testing. Due to the high demand for testing supplies, orders are taking up to six weeks to fill. An expansion of surveillance testing will occur once supplies and staffing are available.

**Q: When testing capacity is expanded, what are the updated requirements for testing faculty, staff and students?**

A: Testing Requirements per NYSDOH Commissioner's Determination: After careful review and consideration of the CDC recommendations for COVID-19 testing, all P-12 schools are required to implement testing consistent with the following:

All P-12 school district faculty or staff, including all teachers, substitute teachers, student teachers, school administrators, paraprofessional staff, and support staff (anyone working with students), including bus drivers and contractors working in a P-12 school.

- Testing requirement for teachers and staff: P-12 schools are required to ensure teachers and staff have testing performed for COVID-19 at least once per week when a school is in a geographic area identified by the CDC as having low, moderate, substantial, or high transmission rates. Teachers and staff may be permitted to opt-out of mandatory weekly screening testing if they provide documentation of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19. \*
- P-12 schools are required to offer screening testing to unvaccinated students on a weekly basis in geographic areas identified by the CDC as having moderate, substantial, or high transmission rates. Parent or guardian consent for minors is required.
- Schools must have the capacity (either directly on-site or via referral) to provide diagnostic testing, for any students, teachers or staff, who regardless of vaccination status and community level of transmission per the CDC, are symptomatic or asymptomatic following exposure to someone with COVID-19.

\*The requirements issued by NYSDOH are minimum standards. At this time Greenville will continue to test all students and coaches as sports are an extracurricular activity which requires significant exhalation. While testing is required, teachers who are also coaches will not have the opportunity to opt out of the testing requirement.

To read more click the link below.

<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/09/2.62-determination.pdf>

**Q: When will the surveillance and diagnostic testing requirement begin?**

A: Greenville has been working with Questar III BOCES (Rensselaer, Columbia and Greene County Schools) and the Greene County DOH to meet this requirement. Surrounding counties, including Greene County, have submitted grant applications to secure the Federal Stimulus funding available (Greene County \$1.2 million) to assist school districts in the testing requirements.

Questar III BOCES will be hiring a COVID Testing Coordinator to oversee the grant funded regional testing program which will cover Rensselaer, Columbia and Greene County public and non-public school districts. This position will provide coordination, scheduling and oversight to COVID Surveillance

Testing. In addition Questar is also hiring nurses to assist the districts with the onsite testing. Questar ordered an additional 35,000 test kits on September 16.

Once the capacity exists, the District will inform staff and parents of a start date for surveillance testing. Students will only be tested with parent permission. A survey requesting permission was sent out on August 24, 2021.

**Q: How does the district determine whose names are sent to the county as a contact of an onsite exposure?**

A: Typically, contact tracing begins 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms of the COVID positive individual. If the COVID positive individual is asymptomatic, contact tracing begins 48 hours prior to the positive test result. There are times when contact tracing is not required of the District because the COVID positive individual was not on campus 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms or a positive test result. In those cases, all contact tracing is conducted by the DOH.

As a region our local health department, with input from districts, put together an algorithm based on CDC and NYSED guidelines to use when identifying individuals who require isolation and/or quarantine/exclusion after a potential exposure. Based on these algorithms the District looks at the COVID positive individual's instructional setting, lunchroom, transportation and extracurricular activities. The District will also work with the local health department to review unique circumstances. The local department of health has asked districts to notify families that their child's name has been submitted and to expect a phone call from the DOH. In most cases, unless a student has been vaccinated, they will be quarantined. Unfortunately with the number of cases that the health departments are dealing with, it can take several days for families to receive that call.

**Q: Are students receiving academic support while in quarantine?**

A: Yes. At this time, the district will set up tutoring sessions for students at the elementary level. At the MS/HS, teachers will be sending out a google meet link and/or providing work via google classroom depending on the subject area. Students must participate in order to be marked present and to help them not fall behind. Students can also take advantage of extra help sessions after school.

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Greenville CSD Statistics as of September 30, 2021:

Number of COVID positive cases from the start of school as reported on the website:	Fourteen (14)
Number of COVID positive cases leading up to the start of school:	Five (5)

Of the total nineteen (19) positive cases:  
Four (4) athletes and/or coaches  
One (1) second time having COVID  
Three (3) Breakthrough Cases (Vaccinated)

Questar III (BOCES): For districts who are testing athletes/coaches onsite in Rensselaer, Columbia and Greene Counties there have been a total of twenty seven (27) positive cases.

While as a community we will never all agree with every decision that is made, please know that District decisions will evolve based on the safety of students and staff, as well as our efforts to keep our schools open for in-person learning.

Sincerely,

Tammy J. Sutherland  
Superintendent of Schools