

# The Berlin-Boylston Regional School District

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Dear Parents and Caregivers::

At Berlin-Boylston Regional School District, keeping your students safe and in school is our top priority.

We are writing to let you know, in accordance with recommendations from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Department of Public Health (DPH), our district is updating our COVID-19 Testing Program, effective January 25, 2022.

We are opting into an at-home testing program that will increase the testing of our participating students and staff, regardless of vaccination status. For more information about this update to the statewide testing program, please [click here](#). Current Contact Tracing requirements are overwhelming the nurses' ability to do their jobs effectively and without substantial benefit to student and staff safety. Because this is a common theme for nurses in public schools, DESE and DPH strongly recommend districts select the new COVID-19 Testing Program Option for K-12 Schools. The updated Testing Program Option eliminates Contact Tracing and Test and Stay protocols and instead focuses on testing symptomatic students and staff, regardless of vaccination status, who opt-in to the program.

“With over 2,000 schools in the state participating in some form of our current testing program this school year (i.e., symptomatic testing, routine pooled testing, and Test and Stay), we have robust data on the prevalence of COVID-19 in schools. Those data are overwhelmingly strong: Schools are safe environments for teaching and learning.

For example, the individual positivity rate in K-12 schools in the state's pooled testing data reveal case rates significantly lower than the statewide positivity rate. Last week, despite elevated K-12 positivity, the estimated individual positivity rate was still only ~1/5 of the statewide positivity rate.<sup>1</sup> On top of these much lower-than-average positivity rates, schools are one of the few types of settings in the state where individuals are tested on a regular basis.

Data from our Test and Stay program are equally strong about school safety. Students and staff individually identified as asymptomatic close contacts and repeatedly tested in school through the Test and Stay program test negative over 90% of the time. As of January 9, 503,312 Test and Stay tests had been conducted; 496,440 of them were negative (98.6%).” (DESE Memorandum, January, 2022)

#### BBRSD Test & Stay Data is consistent with state data:

- All three schools have less than 1% Test and Stay positivity rates
- Nurses have observed the majority of positive cases in the district have had origins outside of school such as a COVID positive family member.

The at-home testing option will (tentatively and based on delivery) begin during the week of February 7, 2022. In addition to this new at-home antigen test option, we will continue with symptomatic testing during the week.

As part of this shift in the program, we are discontinuing Test and Stay and contact tracing for in-school close contacts. This means that if your child is a potential contact in school, they may continue to come to school and do not have to quarantine. If your child is a close contact outside of school, you should continue to follow DPH guidance: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-isolation-and-quarantine-guidance-for-the-general-public>

**This new at-home testing opportunity is voluntary and only those who opt-in will receive tests.** If you do not opt-in you will not receive at-home test kits. We strongly encourage you to fill out the form by noon Friday, January 28, 2022, to opt-in to the first test-kit distribution (anticipated distribution is February 4th.) If you opt-in later, you will be added to the next available distribution.

**Tentative At-Home Testing Kit Distribution and Testing schedule  
(based on district’s receipt of test kits.)**

February						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1	2	3	4 Distribute test kits to participating <b>students</b>	5
				Last day of Contact Tracing	Last day of Test & Stay	
6	7	8	9 Participating <b>staff and students</b> test after school	10	11	12
13	14	15	16 Participating <b>staff and students</b> test after school	17	18 Distribute test kits to participating <b>students</b>	19
20	21 vacation	22 vacation	23 vacation	24 vacation	25 vacation	26
			Participating <b>staff and students</b> test after school			
27	28					

**March**

		1	2 Participating <b>staff and students</b> test after school	3	4 Distribute test kits to participating <b>students</b>	5
6	7	8	9 Participating <b>staff and students</b> test after school	10	11	12

If you have questions, please contact your school’s Principal.

**COVID-19 Testing Program in our Schools:**

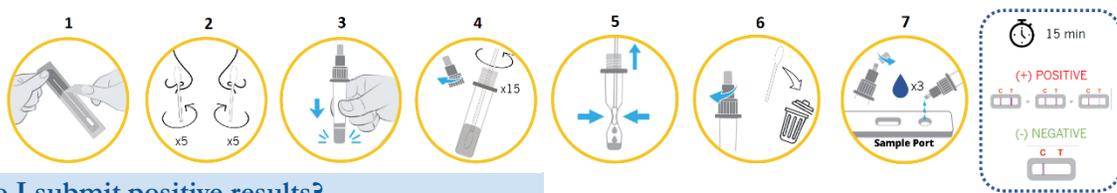
1. At-Home Rapid Antigen Testing sign up here: <https://forms.gle/CqGhD2D6DhCSC6EBA>  
**You must opt-in to take part in this new program.**
2. Symptomatic Testing <https://www.cic-health.com/consent/ma#consent>  
**You must provide consent if you wish for your child to participate in symptomatic testing (and have not already.)**

## Overview: At-Home Rapid Testing Program

- **About the Test:** [iHealth](#) is a 15-minute at-home FDA-approved rapid antigen test
- **Opt-In:** To participate, you must opt in by completing <https://forms.gle/CqGhD2D6DhCSC6EBA>
- By opting in, you will agree to review the training materials for test administration, report positive test results to your student's school, and administer the tests according to Berlin-Boylston's guidelines (see calendar.)
- **Weekly:** Every two weeks you will receive an iHealth at-home rapid test kit. Each kit contains two individual tests. Your student will administer one test each week on Wednesday.
- **Reporting Positive Test Results:** If your student tests positive on an at-home antigen test, you will inform their school of the positive result using <https://forms.gle/d5BFRqs7g5pEnB9k9>. The school will keep the results confidential and will not make individual results public. **In addition, it is strongly recommended that you inform your healthcare professional of the positive result.**
- **Easy, Free, and Flexible:** This test is administered at home (not at school), reducing the burden on school staff and time to administer tests and increasing a family's flexibility to do testing in the home for free.
- **Tests sent home with your child on Fridays:** Tests will be sent home with students on Friday afternoon. If you prefer to pick up your child's test, please contact your child's Principal.

## How do I administer the test?

- [Click here](#) for a full "how to" written guide in various languages
- [Click here](#) for a video of an individual self-testing



## How do I submit positive results?

- **Submit Results:** You must submit positive test results to your student's school. <https://forms.gle/zppxe2acLUow9E17> to submit positive test results.
- **Confidentiality:** Positive test results are shared with your school district for informational purposes only. Individual results will remain confidential, and they will never be made public.

## Overview: Symptomatic Testing

Symptomatic testing is available for vaccinated and unvaccinated students whose parents have provided consent for testing at school. A student presenting to the nurse with the following will receive a rapid test:

- Fever (100.0 Degree or higher), Chills, or Shaking Chills
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Muscle and/or body aches
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Sore Throat, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nausea, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Headache, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Fatigue, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other causes, such as allergies) *when in combination with other symptoms*

If the rapid test results are **negative**, the nurse will:

- Treat the child at their discretion. (Examples: A child with mild symptoms might return to class, be dismissed due to illness, re-tested in 3-5 days. The nurse may recommend that the parent/guardian follow up with the primary care physician.)
- Enter results into CIC-Health which will generate an automated email to the parent/guardian with the official test results.

If the rapid test results are **positive**, the nurse will:

- Contact the child's parent/guardian; provide education on next steps including the return to school protocol. The nurse will encourage the parent/guardian to contact the child's primary care physician and inform any out-of-school close contacts.
- Inform Superintendent and Principal
- Enter results into CIC-Health which will generate an automated email to the parent/guardian with the official test results.
- The nurses will be following the return to school protocol "Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19." (DESE Memorandum, December 2021).

### **Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19**

<b>Protocol A for individuals who test positive</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Duration:</b> Self-isolation for COVID-19 positive cases is a minimum of 5 days after symptom onset or after positive PCR or antigen test, if asymptomatic.</li><li>● <b>Return to school:</b> After 5 days and once they have:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Been without fever for 24 hours (and without taking fever-reducing medications); and,</li><li>○ Experienced improvement in other symptoms.</li><li>○ Following the 5-day isolation period, individuals must mask for 5 additional days when around others. Individuals who are unable to mask should follow the information provided in the <a href="#">FAQ</a> released on October 12, 2021.</li></ul></li><li>● <b>Note:</b> Return to school should be based on time and symptom resolution. <b><u>Even with a 5-day isolation period, repeat viral testing prior to return is not recommended.</u></b></li></ul>

We thank you, in advance, for your cooperation and participation in the District's updated approach to ensuring that our students and staff remain safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Zanghi