August 31, 2021

Dear students and their parents, caregivers, and guardians,

In an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we have been working closely with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) to implement a **free COVID-19 screening testing program for our students, teachers, and staff for the upcoming school year. Screening testing is routine testing of individuals who do not have COVID-19 symptoms. Many COVID-19 infections come from contact with a person who does not have symptoms; screening testing can help identify infected people who may be contagious as early as possible so measures can be taken to keep the virus from spreading.** Testing is an extra layer of prevention combined with vaccination and other mitigation strategies at our school such as wearing a mask, washing our hands, maintaining social distance and can help keep students, teachers, and staff healthy and in school. The school testing program will be open to all students, teachers, and staff. Although testing programs are primarily intended for people who are not fully vaccinated, vaccinated individuals may also participate. **Testing will be completely free.**

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the program, called Virginia School Screening Testing for Assurance (ViSSTA), and ask your permission to enroll your student, which would involve regular COVID-19 testing as part of the program at our school. **All testing will be voluntary and only students with a signed consent form on file will be tested.** To allow your student to receive free COVID-19 testing, please complete the attached consent form and return it to your Child's School.

We are extremely grateful to our committed staff and families that continue to show great flexibility and resilience as we navigate through this school year. We are excited to add screening testing as another mitigation strategy for our school community as we

continue to work together to keep students and staff safe and in school. *I urge you to please consider allowing your student to participate in the program, as it is an important tool available to us to keep our school community healthy and our schools open.*

Attached is a Frequently Asked Questions document, which may answer many of your questions. If you have other questions, please contact your School Principal.

Remember, if your student feels ill or has symptoms of COVID-19 prior to the school day, please keep your student home. When a sick child goes to school, this puts others in our school community at risk. Please take your student to get a COVID-19 test at one of the testing sites in our community or to your own healthcare provider. You can search for a testing site near you at the Virginia Department of Health page here: https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-testing.

Frequently Asked Questions

How will testing be conducted?

Vendors provided by the Virginia Department of Health will conduct pooled PCR testing. Vendors will provide trained staff to swab the front of the student's nose. This is a non-invasive shallow swab. The vendor will then combine samples from several students and/or staff members into a "pool" and analyze the pool. If a pool comes back negative, we can assume that every individual who was part of that pool had a negative result. If the pool comes back positive, we will need to determine which individual(s) in the pool has/have COVID-19. Some vendors are able to analyze the sample again to identify the infected person, while others will need to return to the school and collect a second sample.

Where will testing take place?

Testing will primarily take place weekly at your child's school. This will be a random sample testing and you will be notified if your student has been selected for testing that week.

When will I receive results?

Each time your student is tested, you will receive notification of the result. In most cases, this result will be available within 24 hours of when the sample was collected. If your student is part of a positive pool, you will be notified of next steps, including how individual confirmatory tests will be conducted. Typically, the vendor will return to the school to swab the student again. This result will also typically be available within 24 hours of when the sample was collected. If the individual test is positive, your student is assumed to have COVID-19. You will receive next steps for isolating the student and may be asked to participate in case investigation and contact tracing efforts.

Can my student remain in school if they are part of a positive pool, but have not yet received the result of their individual follow-up test?

Yes. While waiting for results from individual confirmatory testing, individuals in the positive pool do not need to quarantine and may remain in school, unless they develop symptoms. Students who are in a positive pool and waiting on a confirmatory result will be allowed to attend class, but will not be allowed to participate in group extracurricular activities (e.g. sports) until a confirmatory result is available. If a student declines a confirmatory test or the individual cannot be tested within the 24 hour window, the student will be treated as a positive case and will be excluded from school facilities until a test result can be obtained, or a timeframe consistent with VDH *isolation and quarantine protocols* has passed.

Any individual who develops symptoms should stay home from school, notify the school, and follow VDH's *isolation* guidance. Students who develop symptoms at home should obtain a COVID-19 test in the community. You can search for a testing site near you at the VDH page here: https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-testing/.

Who will have access to my student's results?

Negative results will be reported to the tested individual (or parents of minors), but will **only be reported to school officials or the health department in the aggregate (i.e., the report will only contain the number of tests that returned a negative result)**. Students in a positive pool will be notified that follow-up testing is required, but **the names of the students in a positive pool are not reported to the health department**. An individual test that returns a positive result must be reported to the student or parent/legal guardian and the Virginia Department of Health and may also be reported to the school.