



Binghamton City School District

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Frequently Asked Questions – BCSD COVID-19 Testing (updated 10.29.20)

Q: Why does my child need to be tested? Why are employees being tested?

A: All schools in the Binghamton City School District are included in the Broome County cluster which was designated by New York State as a “yellow zone.” With the yellow-zone designation comes state-mandated testing requirements for schools, which involves regular testing of both students and employees.

Q: How many people need to be tested?

A: We are required to test a specific portion (20 percent) of our school population, including students and staff, each week, in order to comply with the governor’s order and have school remain open for in person instruction, the district must administer approximately 850 tests per week. We need your help to make this possible.

Q: How will you select which individuals will be tested in any given week?

A: Only students who have parental permission will be tested. Among the students who have parental permission in each building, a random selection of 20 percent of the total school population will be tested each week.

Q: How will the tests be performed, and who will be administering them?

A: The COVID-19 test that’s being utilized in our school buildings are not the long nasal swabs. Instead, it will be the Rapid Test (Abbott BinaxNOW) with a swab to the interior, lower portion of the nose. The swabs will be administered by nursing staff from our healthcare partner UHS.

Q: Is there another option other than nasal swab?

A: The testing kits being provided by NYS Department of Health are exclusively nasal swabs. If a parent or adult would like to have a different type of test, they can reach out to their healthcare provider or schedule directly through the Binghamton University site. Once the test is done off site, the results can be forwarded to COVID19COORDINATOR@binghamtonschools.org. The district is then able to count this as part of the 20 percent tested.

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Q: Where will the testing be done?

A: BCSD testing will be taking place in each school building in a gymnasium or auditorium.

Q: With two different cohorts, how are the results accurate if only testing with one cohort?

A: The schedule for testing across the district changes each week, with school who are testing on Monday and Tuesday, switching to Thursday and Friday the following week.

Q: What is the rate of false positive tests with this method?

A: The test has a low rate of false positives. The concern for error lies in the tests ability to detect asymptomatic people who have the virus but present with no symptoms at all.

Q: How much time will the students be missing instruction the day they are tested. Does the student wait for the result?

A: We will do our best to minimize students' time outside of the classroom. We are approximating that the total time out of the classroom will be 10-15 minutes. Students do not wait for their results.

Q: If a student/faculty member tests positive what happens to the students and staff who have been exposed to that student?

A: In the event that a student test is positive, the student will be taken to the COVID isolation room and the parent will be informed immediately to pick the student up from school. The Broome County Health Department will be notified, and the school will cooperate in contact tracing with the County Health Department. The school does not have the authority to isolate or quarantine anyone. The school's role is to assist the Broome County Health Department in identifying individuals who were in close contact with a COVID positive individual. Close contact is defined by someone who was within six feet of a COVID positive individual for a period of at least 10 minutes or someone who was in the same room as a COVID positive individual for a period of 41 minutes or more even if they were both socially distanced and wearing masks. We may contact parents if, in cooperation with the Broome County Health Department, we identify students who will likely be quarantined. We would request that those students stay home and participate in remote instruction until they are contacted by the Broome County Health Department.

Q: If teachers and staff are being tested, how will instruction proceed if they are waiting to be tested?

A: All efforts will be made to minimize the impact testing has on instruction. If needed, building principals will be providing coverage for any teacher who may need to step away from their classroom for the purpose of testing.

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Q: Who will take students to the testing?

A: Each building has an assistant principal assigned as a site coordinator who will work with the principal to ensure students have supervision to go to the testing location and that classrooms are provided coverage, if needed.

Q: Are different teachers teaching different cohorts because if one cohort has to quarantine along with the teacher, who would teach the opposite cohort for that class?

A: The same teacher is teaching both cohorts. If a teacher and the students in cohort A are quarantined, then a substitute teacher would need to be put in place to support supervision of Cohort B. The teacher will likely be able, along with the students in quarantine, to teach remotely. This has been a significant issue in neighboring districts at the secondary level. If a building runs into issues with not having enough substitute coverage, the building may need to go remote for a period of time due to the shortage of coverage.

Q: If a child is sent home with a positive test what will be done to make sure they do not fall behind in school work? What needs to be done before they can return to school?

A: The student will be able to continue with school remotely, under the direction of the same teachers. Students who have tested positive will be contacted by the county health department and placed in isolation for a period of time dictated by the department. This has typically been 10 days from the first day a symptom has occurred. Students may return after their isolation has been lifted and they have been symptom free for 72 hours.

Q: Will I be notified if my child is tested?

A: Yes, if your child is tested at school, you will be notified on the day that testing occurred. If your child tests positive, you will be notified immediately by telephone. Children will also be bringing home information packets on the day that testing takes place.

Q: I'm not comfortable with my child being tested at school. Can I opt out?

A: Of course. No child will be tested without parental permission. If you want your child tested by your healthcare provider or a community testing center, please share the results with the district. These results will count toward the district's 20 percent testing requirement.

Q: If I give permission, can I revoke it later?

A: Yes. You would need to complete the form again, placing the change in writing and inform the main office of the school building.

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Q: My child is tested up to twice a week at work. Can those results be provided to the school district and counted as part of the 20 percent?

A: Yes. The test results can be mailed to COVID19COORDINATOR@binghamtonschools.org and they will be able to count toward the 20 percent for your child's building.

Q: How can I consent to, or refuse, testing?

A: To refuse or consent to testing, please return the form that was mailed and emailed home to families to your child's school building/main office. You can also complete the form digitally through the GoCanvas app. It is extremely important that you complete this form, regardless of your choice.

Q: If my child has a symptom during the day, and I provide consent, will she be tested before being sent home?

A: If testing is being conducted on a day when a student demonstrates a symptom and consent has been provided, the team can conduct the test.

Q: Is there a cost associated with testing?

A: There is no cost for individuals to participate in testing.

Q: What if we don't get enough student volunteers?

A: The district is starting with faculty/staff testing on Friday, this week.

Q: How long will this testing take place? Once Binghamton is out of the yellow zone will we stop testing 20 percent of the population?

A: Testing will take place in BCSD schools until the state has removed our community's yellow zone designation. At that time, the district will look at the efficacy of the testing and determine to what degree testing would continue.

Q: What if I have additional questions?

A: Please send additional questions to Eric Wilson at COVID19Coordinator@binghamtonschools.org.

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General Re-opening Questions:

Q: My daughter has allergies. Is she going to have an issue if she coughs or sneezes from her allergies is she going to be sent home?

A: Parents who have children with on-going, chronic conditions should obtain a note from their doctor and submit it to the school nurse. In these cases, the school will better understand the cause behind the cough and will not be automatically sent home.

Q: What happens if a student refuses to wear a mask at school?

A: Teachers have been provided training in the ways to address non-compliance with mask wearing, social distancing and hand hygiene. Our faculty will work with the student to understand the reasons behind not wearing the mask and alternatives will be explored. If a student is not capable, even given the alternatives, it may result in the student needing to access instruction remotely.

Q: What if parents want to change to ALL remote for a period of time or the remainder of the school year for their child? Will the mode of remote instruction change?

A: Parents should inform their child's teacher if they wish to keep their child remote. They would then access the same teacher in a similar way as is being done during full remote instruction. The district will be accepting re-opening requests for change to remote or to in-person instruction during the month of January, and those changes will take effect Feb. 1.

Q: When will students be allowed to breathe via a mask break?

A: Mask breaks are being given under the direction of classroom teachers. At the elementary level, a minimum of two breaks per hour, and at the secondary level, a minimum of one break per period of instruction will occur.

Q: Are temperatures still going to be taken first thing in the morning? And will you test those that have a higher temp than normal?

A: Yes. Daily temperature checks, hand sanitizing and social distancing are three main components of our re-opening plan that will continue even with surveillance testing in place.

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