



# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906

Telephone: (781) 338-3000  
TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

Jeffrey C. Riley  
Commissioner

August 26, 2021

Dear Families and Staff,

Thank you for your continued support as we kick off the 2021-2022 school year. At Norwell Public Schools, keeping everyone 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 Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

For the 2021-22 school year, we are offering an extra layer of protection to prevent the spread of COVID-19, our COVID-19 testing program at school. This program has three components: **symptomatic testing** for individuals who show symptoms of COVID-19 at school, **routine COVID safety checks** to prevent the spread of the virus undetected among individuals who are not showing symptoms, and **test and stay** for individuals who may have been exposed while in school but are not showing symptoms. Each of these is a quick, non-invasive nasal swab sample that is collected under the supervision of a school nurse or trained health provider. Unlike COVID-19 tests of the past, these are not uncomfortable and easy for individuals to do themselves.

Students only participate with permission from a parent or guardian. Faculty and staff must also provide consent. It is important to Norwell Public Schools that everyone is fully informed regarding the process and that we can answer any questions that you might have in advance of asking you to complete and sign the digital consent form. Below we describe each of the three parts of our testing program, how they are conducted, and what they are used for.

**Symptomatic testing** is used when an individual is showing symptoms of COVID-19 during school; students and staff should not come to school if they are feeling sick while at home. Some symptoms of the virus look identical to other illnesses like the cold or flu, and this test tells us whether a symptomatic individual has COVID-19 or not. This is a rapid test, and we receive the results of this test within 15 minutes. If an individual has minimal symptoms and tests negative, they can remain in school.

**Routine COVID safety checks** minimize disruption to learning by helping us catch potential spread of the virus before it starts. Safety checks are expected to occur on a weekly basis. Samples are collected at school in groups of 5-10 individuals. The samples are grouped together at school. Once the samples get to the lab, all the samples in the group are tested for COVID-19

together. In almost all cases, it will take less than 24 hours to receive safety check results. Students and staff can continue to come to school while awaiting safety check results; they do not need to quarantine while awaiting results. If a safety check test is positive, the lab will automatically process each individual sample to determine which member(s) in the group produced the positive test.

**Test and stay** allows students and staff who have had close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 **while at school** to stay in school if the individual is not showing symptoms. Instead of needing to quarantine and miss school, these individuals will take a daily rapid test while they remain in school as long as they are not symptomatic. Students and staff participate in test and stay for at least five school days after they may have been exposed.

If an individual tests positive for COVID-19, they must quarantine at home for the DESE/DPH recommended ten days since symptoms appeared or ten days since the positive test before returning to school. The individual must also be without a fever for 24 hours.

Although students and staff who are vaccinated are much less likely to spread or contract the virus, it is important for us to create an inclusive environment for both vaccinated and unvaccinated students.

To participate in the program, you must complete and sign the consent form found [HERE](#) on behalf of your student or yourself. Each individual will need to have consent completed. There is no charge for participating. To learn more about our COVID-19 testing program and protocols, please visit our [website](#). If you have additional questions regarding the program, please contact Suzan Theodorou at [suzan.theodorou@norwellschools.org](mailto:suzan.theodorou@norwellschools.org), 781-659-8800 x 1026 or your school nurse.

It is our hope that these measures will work together to keep our schools safe and everyone in school. Thanks again for your support during this challenging time. We look forward to welcoming everyone back to the classroom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Keegan". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Matthew A. Keegan, Superintendent of Schools