

Pooled COVID-19 Testing Program FAQs

What is pooled testing?

This is a test where all participating students in a class place their individual, unidentified swabs into a single tube that is then sent to a lab to perform a single molecular PCR test on the tube. Any positive pool results are communicated to the school within 48 hours so that follow-up antigen tests can be performed to determine the positive individual(s) in that pool.

What kind of tests are used?

Our pool test uses anterior nasal swabs that go just a half inch into the nostril (think: cotton swabs). Each child self-administers their own test. We tell students that taking the test is just like picking their nose! ;-)

What are the basic procedures around the testing with students?

Our staff visits each class and sets up a mobile testing station outside of the classroom. Participating students in the class are called in groups of 3-4 outside where they will be given instructions on how to complete the test. During this time, they remain fully masked and appropriately distanced. To perform the swabbing, students are then called up individually by our health staff and instructed to sanitize their hands, remove the part of their mask covering their nose, and then swab their own nose (5 times in each nostril). Our health staff can provide assistance, if needed. Once the swabbing is complete, students are then instructed to replace their mask over their nose, place the swab in the pooled testing tube, sanitize their hands, and then return back into the classroom.

Who oversees the testing?

Our health staff, which consists of our health assistants at each site, along with outside health professionals contracted through our partnership with [Concentric by Ginkgo](#) will facilitate testing sessions with additional support from other staff as needed.

How often are students tested?

Participating students in each grade level test every other week on Wednesdays. Our current schedule accommodates rotating testing for the following grade levels each week: Week A - Kinder, 1st, 7th, 8th; Week B - 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th.

What happens when there is a positive pool?

Once we are notified of a positive pool, we will reach out to families with students included in the positive pool as well as families with students in the same class* as the positive pool to notify them of next steps in having their child tested. Those who have opted into our pooled testing program will be given the option of onsite antigen testing by our staff in order to clear them for return to the classroom. All others will be required to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test (both antigen and molecular PCR tests accepted) before being allowed back on campus. **NOTE: The whole class is notified and tested out of an abundance of caution and so that modified quarantine protocols can be put in place more expediently.*

What is the chance of a false positive pool?

Molecular tests are typically highly accurate at detecting the virus that causes COVID-19. Validation reports from our testing partner Concentric can be found [here](#). In the case that follow-up tests for the positive pool yield no positives, they will be retested. If no positive results are yielded from subsequent tests, students will return to regular in-person instruction.

What is the process for follow-up testing once a positive pool is identified?

Onsite follow-up antigen testing for those opted into our testing program will be facilitated by our health staff and outside health professionals and occur outdoors as soon as is feasible upon receiving the positive pool results (in most cases, the next morning after receiving the results in the evening). All students testing will be appropriately distanced and follow protocols consistent with the pooled testing. Results for individual antigen tests will be available within 15-20 minutes from swabbing.

Once all individuals contained in the positive pool are tested and the positive case(s) determined, appropriate next steps will be taken to promptly and discreetly isolate them, contact parents/guardians to have them taken home, and then test the remainder of the class so that appropriate quarantine protocols can be implemented for all close contacts.

How will quarantine work with other students in the pool/class?

Consistent with [Public Health guidelines regarding exposure in a school setting](#) where masking and other mitigation steps are in place, most students identified as close contacts (within 6 feet of case for >15 minutes in a 24-hour period) will be able to continue with in-person learning through a modified quarantine scenario. In this scenario, all quarantining students must:

- Remain without symptoms
- Continue to appropriately mask (as required per our protocols)
- Undergo testing at least twice during the quarantine period
- Be removed from all extracurricular activities at school, including sports, and activities within the community setting for the entirety of their quarantine period

Those identified as close contacts who do NOT qualify for modified quarantine (i.e. within 6 feet WITHOUT masks, as in at lunch) will be instructed to quarantine at home, but will also be eligible for a shortened 7-day quarantine, if they test negative on or after day 5 after exposure.

What additional follow-up takes place with the positive case(s)?

Our staff will follow-up with individuals who tested positive and provide them with additional information regarding their 10-day isolation period. Additionally, we will report as required to our insurance provider (CharterSafe) and to the Santa Clara County Public Health Department so that they can reach out to provide any additional information and/or next steps.

We also encourage our families to read [this info sheet on Concentric's pooled testing program](#) and watch this [video](#) from another school using this service to learn more about pooled testing. You can also email our health team at health@bullischarterschool.com.