

January 27, 2022

Dear Washington Central Community,

This past Monday we conducted surveillance testing for the last time. We had 631 participants, yielding 6 positive results. Overall this week we have had 25 positive cases: 3 at Berlin, 1 at Doty, 3 at East Montpelier, 1 at Rumney, and 17 at U-32.

We have fully transitioned from Test to Stay to Test at Home. As expected, we've encountered some confusion and bumps. Overall, though, our transition has been smooth and we recently received an ample supply of test kits from the state. I hope in the next few paragraphs to provide some more clarity about Test at Home (with thanks to Maria Melekos, our COVID-19 Coordinator, for her feedback!). For more information, visit the Health Department's [What to Do if You are a Close Contact](#) and [What to Do if You Test Positive for COVID-19](#) guidance on their website.

Broadly, the Test at Home protocol reflects a significant paradigm shift in the State's response to COVID-19. The program shifts the primary responsibility for testing and decision-making to families. Under Test at Home, schools take on a testing distribution role, not a testing compliance role. I recognize that this policy shift will be welcomed by some in our community and viewed with trepidation by others. To me, the most important thing is that we continue doing what we've been doing all along—following our mitigation practices, asking good questions, and supporting each other as we continue to navigate the pandemic together.

The way that we are implementing Test at Home is different in the elementary schools than it is at U-32 for a few reasons. First, our elementary schools are smaller than U-32 and they are organized differently than U-32. We can identify and notify what are now known as “presumptive contacts” more easily in our elementary schools because our students are organized in classrooms with limited interactions between them. Second, U-32 has achieved a vaccination rate among students that is above 80%.

At the elementary level, if students or staff members have been exposed at school, they will receive a notification letter. The letter will contain guidance about how and when testing should take place. The school nurses have been keeping track of which parents or caregivers have given consent to send test kits home with their children. We have not asked elementary parents or caregivers to fill out an electronic consent form for this purpose.

At U-32 Maria sends a daily email to staff and families including the case count and student attendance rates. Sending notification letters to presumptive contacts, even if

there are just a few cases each day, is a laborious process that would require hours of work. Instead, per the Agency of Education's guidance, Maria includes the AOE's general template for use in schools that are above the 80% vaccination rate in her daily email. To facilitate the distribution of antigen test kits to U-32 students, we have asked parents and caregivers to complete [this permission form](#). So far 378 have! If you haven't yet completed the permission form, it is not too late, and it only takes a minute or two to complete it.

Again, whether your children attend elementary school or U-32, they may access take home antigen tests. The recommended timing of testing and number of tests they should take will vary depending on vaccination status. Testing is optional and students and staff members who are presumptive contacts do not need to quarantine during their testing periods. Please take a moment to read through the [AOE FAQs](#) regarding the Test at Home program. If you have any questions or concerns about Test at Home, please reach out to Maria at [mmelekos@u32.org](mailto:mmelekos@u32.org) or 802-229-0553 x 1317. She will do her very best to answer your questions about the protocol. If you have specific medical questions about your child, we encourage you to reach out to your child's primary care provider.

In non-COVID news, earlier today Flor Diaz Smith, our school board chair, shared information about the superintendent search process. You are all warmly invited to meet the finalists next Wednesday, February 2 via Zoom. The forums will take place from 3:45-4:30 and 4:45-5:30. We will send Zoom links and post them on our website, [www.wcsu32.org](http://www.wcsu32.org), in the days to come.

As always, please reach out if you have any questions or concerns. I can be reached at [jmillerarsenault@u32.org](mailto:jmillerarsenault@u32.org) or (802) 229-0553.

Warmly,  
Jen Miller-Arsenault  
Interim Superintendent