

09/08/2021

Dear Families,

Thank you for your continued support as we kick off the 2021-2022 school year. At WCUUSD, keeping your students 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 [Vermont Department of Health](#).

For the 2021-22 school year, we are offering an extra layer of protection to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our schools — our COVID-19 testing program. This program is free for students and staff, and participation in the program is highly encouraged, regardless of vaccination status. Although students who are vaccinated are less likely to spread or contract the virus, unvaccinated individuals are still at risk of exposure, and it is important for us to create an inclusive environment for both vaccinated and unvaccinated students.

Vermont schools will be conducting weekly testing by way of a quick, non-invasive nasal swab, collected under the supervision of a school nurse, or other trained staff. Our testing will begin on Monday 9/13/21, and we are hopeful that we will have a large percentage of our student population taking advantage of this opportunity. Unlike many COVID-19 tests of the past, these are easy for students 5 years and older to perform themselves under supervision.

Through weekly testing, our schools will be better equipped to:

- Prevent the spread of the virus, especially among those individuals who are asymptomatic.
- Make evidence-based decisions. By deploying a school testing program, WCUUSD will be able to make well-informed decisions with regard to our prevention strategies.
- Prepare our community for future curveballs in the pandemic. In preparation for the possibility of new, more virulent strains, having a comprehensive testing program in place in schools will help inform our community of new strains and viral patterns.

Students may only participate in the program with permission from a parent or guardian. To participate in the program, you must sign this [consent form](#) on behalf of your student. The consent form takes less than 3 minutes and is good for the entire school year. There is no charge for participating. Any student aged 5 years or older is eligible to participate. You can choose to sign up at any time during the school year.

In advance of signing the [consent form](#), it is important to WCUUSD that you are fully informed regarding the process and that we answer any questions you might have. To learn more about our COVID-19 testing program, please visit the Agency of Education's [Covid-19 Surveillance Testing Program Overview](#). Please watch <https://vimeo.com/570011391> with your students for an overview of the testing process.

With this testing program in place, we can keep our schools safe and all students in school. Thank you again for your support during this challenging time. Please contact Maria Melekos, our Covid-19 Coordinator, with any questions or concerns at mmelekos@u32.org or 802-229-0553 x 1317.

Sincerely,

Jen Miller - Arsenault

