COVID-19 Testing in Bellevue School District

Last updated September 22, 2021, 2:47 p.m.

In the upcoming weeks, Bellevue School District will begin offering COVID-19 screening and diagnostic testing at our schools. Testing will be optional, but highly encouraged as we work to keep our students, staff and BSD community safe. District administration is currently in the process of finalizing the procedures, permission requirements for testing, and other details, which will be shared as they are available.

BSD will implement two types of testing for COVID-19, diagnostic testing and screening testing.

- Diagnostic testing looks for infections in individuals who have symptoms of or have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Screening testing looks for infections when there is no reason to suspect an individual is infected as a proactive approach to minimizing the potential for outbreaks in our schools.

Both types of testing will utilize PCR testing. Samples are collected via a shallow nasal swab through Atlas Genomics. Shallow nasal swabs are not the dreaded “brain tickler” or nasopharyngeal swab. The swab only enters 0.5 inches into each nostril, makes three rotations, and is placed, swab-side down, in the collection tube.

Diagnostic Testing

Staff and students who show any symptoms or have been exposed to COVID-19 will be referred to test at their school site or a central location most often on the day they are referred. If someone tests positive, they will be asked to isolate for at least 10 days and until symptoms have resolved. If someone tests negative, they will be asked to isolate until symptoms have improved, per the guidance from Public Health — Seattle & King County (PDF).

Screening Testing at School Sites

Weekly screening opportunities will be offered to staff and students at their school site or a central district location. This screening is completed through a pooled surveillance process. Pooled surveillance testing is a type of screening test that allows multiple samples to be processed at once. As with the diagnostic testing, samples are collected via a shallow nasal swab through Atlas Genomics. If someone in a pool tests positive, those in that pool will be contacted to be retested through the diagnostic testing process above and remain home in quarantine until the positive individual is identified. That positive person will be asked to isolate for at least 10 days and until symptoms have resolved.

Frequently Asked Questions

In early October 2021, Bellevue School District will implement two types of testing for COVID-19, diagnostic testing and screening testing beyond the testing required for athletics (PDF) by the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association.

- Diagnostic testing looks for infections in individuals who have symptoms of or have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Screening testing looks for infections when there is no reason to suspect an individual is infected as a proactive approach to minimizing the potential for outbreaks in our schools.

Below are answers to frequently asked questions regarding this testing. Bellevue School District uses pooled surveillance testing for screening. Pooled surveillance testing is a type of screening test that allows multiple samples to be processed at once.

Administering Tests

How can I participate in testing?

- BSD staff and students who are symptomatic or have been exposed to COVID-19 will be referred for diagnostic testing. During that referral process, individuals will be given the option to take their diagnostic test in the isolation room or a nearby outdoor location at their school or at ESC West for central district staff.
- To opt in to pooled surveillance testing, staff and students or their parent/guardian will need to complete a consent form, which will be made available before testing with BSD begins. Upon completion of the consent form, staff and students will be able to participate in the next pooled surveillance opportunity scheduled for their school.

How are pools for surveillance testing determined?

Pools for surveillance testing is determined by class. At elementary schools, pools will be determined by classroom teachers. At secondary schools, pools will be determined by the first period class. BSD is looking to identify cases in our population and will have those individuals isolate as soon as possible.

What PPE is needed for testing?

- Diagnostic testing takes place in the isolation room or a nearby outdoor location with individuals who are symptomatic or have been exposed to COVID-19. Individuals will self-administer the nasal swab. During diagnostic testing, staff should wear the PPE typically worn in this location, as guided by Labor and Industry’s Which Mask for Which Task (PDF).
- Pooled surveillance testing takes place in the classroom or work location, with individuals that are not symptomatic or exposed. Individuals will self-administer the nasal swab. During the brief time when the mask is lowered to collect the sample, physical distancing should be increased as much as possible. Typically, no additional PPE is needed. However, if students need assistance with the self administration, adults may need additional PPE as guided by Labor and Industry’s Which Mask for Which Task (PDF).

Further, please see our COVID-19 Health and Safety website pages to learn about the other mitigating measures currently in place in our schools, including: ventilation, hand washing procedures, cleaning regimens, etc.

For more information on what to do if a child needs assistance with swabbing their nose, please see the information under Tests below.

When and where will testing occur?

- **Diagnostic testing** takes place in the isolation room or a nearby outdoor location on an as-needed basis when students are referred for testing based on symptoms of or exposure to COVID-19.

- **Pooled surveillance testing** takes place in the classroom or work location with individuals that are not symptomatic. This will occur one time per week, using the schedule below. The tests will be administered in the morning, with tests being sent to the lab for processing.

**Monday**: Ardmore, Bellevue, Chinook, Eastgate, Enatai, Woodridge

**Tuesday**: Bennett, Cherry Crest, Highland, Interlake, Sherwood, Tillicum

**Wednesday**: Big Picture, Newport Heights, Newport High School, Puesta del Sol, Somerset, Tyee

**Thursday**: Clyde Hill, Lake Hills, Medina, Odle, Phantom Lake, Sammamish, Spiritridge, Stevenson

**Friday**: Bellevue School District Offices Departments (ESC, MSC, WISC, virtual), International, Jing Mei, Wilburton

*If Monday or Friday is a holiday, screening testing will be shifted to the next school day. (E.g., If Monday is a holiday, screening will occur on Tuesday. If Friday is a holiday, testing will occur on the next school day.)*

**Communication**

How will I know my test results?

- **Diagnostic testing results**, regardless of if they are positive or negative, will be sent to the individual who was tested directly from the lab — usually within 12 hours. These results will also be provided to the District COVID-19 Coordinator and Public Health — Seattle & King County so any necessary contact tracing can occur.

- In pooled surveillance testing, there will only be communication if there is a positive result in the pool. If there are no positive results in a pool, there will be no further communication with the individuals in the pool. If there is a positive result in the pool (which would typically be identified within 12 hours), those individuals or their parent/guardian will be contacted and referred to diagnostic testing to identify the positive individual(s). The people in the pool will need to quarantine until the positive person is identified, usually within 12 hours of the diagnostic test. Contact tracing will then begin with the positive individual.

How will I know the results of the pooled surveillance testing at my school or work location?

Positive test results from both **diagnostic testing** and **pooled surveillance testing** that occur in the Bellevue School District will be shown on the [Bellevue School District COVID Dashboard](https://bsd405.org/services/health/covid-19-health-and-safety/covid-19-testing-in-bellevue-school-district/) upon the completion of contact tracing for each positive case. More information on contact tracing at BSD can be found on our [Responding to Cases and Suspected Cases](https://bsd405.org/services/health/covid-19-health-and-safety/covid-19-testing-in-bellevue-school-district/) webpage.

**Tests**

What test is Bellevue School District using? Why was this test selected?

Both **diagnostic testing** and **pooled surveillance testing** will be completed via a shallow nasal swab through Atlas Genomics. These Atlas tests were selected because they are PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests, providing more accurate test results than rapid antigen testing. Further, the tests are approved for self-administration under a trained observer (does not need to be a health care professional) for people ages 4 and up, allowing for more efficient and expanded access.

What is the test like?

Both **diagnostic testing** and **pooled surveillance testing** will be completed via a shallow nasal swab through Atlas Genomics. Shallow nasal swabs are not the dreaded “brain tickler” or nasopharyngeal swab. The swab only enters half-an-inch into each nostril, makes three to four rotations, and is placed, swab-side down, in the collection tube. The collection tubes are collected by a designated person at the building and picked up by a courier for Atlas. The collection tube is sent to the lab and results are received, usually within 12 hours.

What if my child needs help with testing?

Some students may need assistance when swabbing their nose for testing. For **diagnostic testing** a student’s parent or guardian may assist by swabbing the nose using the same process instead of self-administration.

What is the cost?

**All testing is free**, and there are no out-of-pocket costs or co-pay for students or staff. The Washington State Department of Health covers the cost of both diagnostic and screening testing with funding available through July 2022.