

Dear Parents/Guardians,

This message is to let you know about a new testing alternative to quarantine that has been approved by the Snohomish County Health District and the Department of Health. This new option available to Lakewood staff and students is called “Test to Stay” and will be offered along with the “Test to Return” option currently in place. We plan to begin this new program on Monday, October 25th. **We will not be able to provide this option to close contacts identified prior to this date.**

Under this program, close contacts of a confirmed case (on-campus only) have the option to stay in school under a “modified quarantine” for the first seven days after exposure. This means that close contacts may only attend school over those seven days. For the remainder of their day, outside of school, they must be in quarantine. They cannot participate in school-based or community activities outside of school over those seven days. Student attendance at school events will be monitored. Adhering to all masking and social-distancing requirements is critical.

Participants in this program must sign an agreement/contract with the school district, agreeing to all requirements. It is necessary for participants to have a negative antigen (rapid) test in days 2-4 and another negative rapid test in days 5—7 following the initial exposure to the confirmed case. Tests must be administered by a health room staff member in the district. A close contact who tests negative on both testing dates would be released from their modified quarantine after day 7. For situations in which a close contact is identified outside the four-day window provided for the first rapid test (five days or more after the exposure), these individuals must still have one negative test result before the modified quarantine is lifted no sooner than the conclusion of day 7. All Test to Stay participants will monitor for symptoms for a full 14 days after exposure. If they develop any symptoms at any time throughout the 14-day symptom watch, they must isolate at home for 10 days and would be strongly encouraged to test.

An individual with a positive antigen (rapid) test result would be required to enter isolation and contact tracing would commence per district procedure. If they receive a negative PCR test within 48 hours of a positive rapid test, the PCR results would allow the student to return to school and students who had been identified as close contacts would be removed from quarantine. If the PCR is positive or not obtained, the individual must remain in isolation for 10 days.

Only close contacts in the school setting are eligible, as these are the only exposure situations that we can confidently say are lower-risk due to our mitigation measures. Close contacts identified prior to the start of this program will not be eligible.

There are several benefits to this option for close contacts:

1. **Students and staff will remain in school following exposures.** Since the start of the pandemic, with the exception of one unique circumstance, we have not seen onsite transmission. Our mitigation efforts have worked. This program will significantly reduce the instances when staff have to provide homework to students on quarantine. Students will be in school, thus reducing the need for them to complete assignments independently and possibly fall behind.
2. **Testing will be incentivized, making it more likely to identify asymptomatic cases.** We will get more information about cases through testing. The focus will be more fully on identifying cases and reducing the likelihood of exposure for students and staff in instances where students or staff may be asymptomatic.
3. **Staff use of leave days for exposures will be significantly reduced or eliminated.** This will ensure consistency for staff and students in our classrooms and in our departments.

We were required to submit a Memorandum of Agreement outlining our plan to the Snohomish County Health District for approval. Our plan has been approved. We also have added to our health room support staff, ensuring that we have both a nurse and classified health room support in every school to assist with contact tracing and testing. Our health room to staffing ratio is leading Snohomish County. We are confident that this program will be a benefit to students and staff while managing risk.

As always, thank you for your dedication and support to students this year. The Lakewood staff is a remarkable team.

Scott Peacock
Superintendent