

FRANCIS W. PARKER CHARTER ESSENTIAL SCHOOL
& THEODORE R. SIZER TEACHERS CENTER

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Dear Parker Families,

Thank you for your continued support as we plan for the start of the 2021-2022 school year! This letter is the most recent in COVID-related communication and outlines the main elements of our approach: required masking while indoors; symptomatic testing for individuals; routine COVID safety checks for students and staff; “test and stay” for close contacts not showing symptoms. We have learned a great deal over this past year and our current guidance and procedures are informed by the most updated recommendations from the CDC and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Masking required indoors. In keeping with a state-wide mandate in effect until at least October 1, 2021, students, staff, and visitors—regardless of vaccination status—will be required to wear masks while indoors. Individuals may remove masks while eating.

Vaccinations Help. Public health experts believe that getting a COVID-19 vaccination reduces the risk of contracting the virus and can help reduce the severity of illness even if one does contract the virus. Individuals age 12 and older are eligible to be vaccinated against COVID-19. [To find a vaccine site near you, use this link.](#) Although students who are vaccinated are much less likely to spread or contract the virus, it is important for us to create an inclusive environment for both vaccinated and unvaccinated students. Parker is trying to arrange for COVID-19 and flu vaccines clinic on campus this fall; stay tuned for more information about these options.

Testing Program. Our testing program at school offers an extra layer of protection to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This program has three components: **symptomatic testing** for students who show symptoms of COVID-19 at school, **routine COVID safety checks** to prevent the spread of the virus undetected among students who are not showing symptoms, and **test and stay** for students who may have been exposed while in school but are not showing symptoms. Each of these is a quick, non-invasive nasal swab that is collected under the supervision of a school nurse or trained individual. Unlike COVID-19 tests of the past, these are not uncomfortable, and they are easy for students to do themselves.

Students can participate in the testing program only with permission from a parent or guardian. Before asking families to sign a consent form, we want to provide some additional information about all three parts of our testing program, how the tests are conducted, and how the test results will be used.

Symptomatic testing is used when a student is showing symptoms of COVID-19 during school; students should not come to school if they are feeling sick while at home. Some symptoms of the virus look identical to other illnesses like the cold or flu, and this test tells us whether a symptomatic student has COVID-19 or not. This is a rapid test, and we receive the results of this test within 15 minutes. If a student has minimal symptoms and tests negative, they can remain in school.

Routine COVID safety checks minimize disruption to learning by helping us catch positive cases and preventing potential spread of the virus. Each student administers the safety check on a weekly basis. Samples are collected at school in groups of 5-10 individuals. The samples are grouped together at school. Once the samples get to the lab, all the samples in the group are tested for COVID-19 together. In almost all cases, it will take less than 24 hours to receive safety check results. Students can continue to come to school while awaiting safety check results; they do not need to quarantine while awaiting results. If a safety check test is positive, the students in the group will take individual tests to determine which student(s) in the group produced the positive test.

Test and stay allows students who have had close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 while at school to stay in school if the student is not showing symptoms. Instead of needing to quarantine and miss school, these students will take a daily rapid test for at least five days while they remain in school as long as they are not symptomatic.

If a student tests positive for COVID-19, the student must quarantine at home for the CDC-recommended ten days since symptoms appeared or ten days since the positive test before returning to school. The student must also be without a fever for 24 hours before returning to school. Teachers and advisors will support learning for quarantined students asynchronously on an individual basis.

Consent Form. To participate in the testing program described above, you must give consent (only one form for all three tests) by clicking the link [HERE](#) on behalf of your student(s). **Click on the CONSENT NOW button and enter Francis W. Parker Charter Essential as the school district.** There is no charge for participating. If you have additional questions regarding the testing program, please contact school nurse, Lisa Zick, at (lzick@theparkerschool.org or 978.772.3293 X135).

It is our hope that these mitigation measures will work in concert to keep our community safe, minimize disruptions to the learning environment, and maximize student attendance at school. Thanks again for your support during this challenging time! We look forward to welcoming your students back to campus!

--Todd and Lisa