

November 20, 2020



## **School-Based Testing Pilot Coming Soon**

Dear Peninsula School District Community,

We are pleased to be able to share information about our participation in the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department's (TPCHD) COVID-19 school-based testing pilot. This program will operate in the Peninsula School District between Nov. 30 and Dec. 18, with a kickoff mobile testing event on Sunday, Nov. 29.

As of this week, we bring about 1,949 staff and students into our buildings, including kindergarten and 1st grade students, special education students, and other small groups of students. We have had COVID-19 cases, as would be expected due to the activity levels in Pierce County, but these have not resulted in subsequent outbreaks. See our current case counts on the [PSD COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#).

Our data is consistent with information from across the country, which continues to support the conclusion that in-person learning under specific health department guidelines can be accomplished safely.

This pilot program model is supported by the work done by the Institute of Disease Modeling (IDM) which has produced a [recent report](#) that says, combined with low community transmission and school-based countermeasures (masks, physical distancing, hygiene, daily wellness checks), routine diagnostic screening of asymptomatic people can have an impact on reducing transmission. In other words, we keep doing what we are already doing, plus adding diagnostic screening for COVID-19, and we are looking at a safe way to continue in-person learning.

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department is purchasing the tests and providing the staff to administer the tests. There are no costs to the Peninsula School District for participating in the pilot.

Below are program kick off events:

### **Live Discussion with Dr. Chen, Tuesday Nov. 24 at 4pm**

Peninsula School District will host a live discussion with TPCHD Health Director Dr. Anthony Chen via Zoom on Tuesday, Nov. 24 at 4pm where he will share information about the testing program. Parents and staff are encouraged to watch live, and a recording will also be available afterward.

Please check the [TPCHD website](#) for details and frequently asked questions about the testing program.

If you would like to submit a question for Dr. Chen, please complete [this Google form](#) by Tuesday, Nov. 24 at noon. We will compile all submitted questions and provide them to Dr. Chen ahead of time.

[Use this link to watch the live discussion.](#)

### **Mobile Testing Kickoff Sunday, Nov. 29**

Mobile testing units will be at Key Peninsula Middle School and Gig Harbor High School from 10am to 3pm on Sunday, Nov. 29. All PSD students, staff, families, and the general community are welcome to stop by to take a PCR test using a mid turbinate nasal swab, which basically means that they are just swabbing inside the nose, not far back into the nose. People with positive tests are usually notified sooner (usually within 48 hours) than those with negative results (5-7 days).

- Gig Harbor HS- 5101 Rosedale St NW, Gig Harbor, WA 98335
- Key Peninsula Middle School- 5510 Key Peninsula Highway KPN, Lakebay, WA 98349-9622

### **Weekly Antigen Testing for Students and Staff**

Voluntary rapid antigen testing will take place once a week at each elementary school, Key Peninsula Middle School, Peninsula and Gig Harbor High School, beginning the week of Nov. 30 for students and staff only. We'll test once a week until Winter Break. The rapid antigen test we will use is a mid turbinate nasal swab. Results are available in about 15 minutes and it is 97.1% accurate on positive results and 98.5% accurate on negative results.

Any positive test would require a second test to confirm the positive, which would be a PCR test, but also a mid turbinate nasal swab. The follow up PCR test would occur free of charge at

the school location following any positive rapid antigen test. People with positive tests are usually notified sooner (usually within 48 hours) than those with negative results (5-7 days).

### **Questions and Answers**

Below are a few questions and answers about the testing pilot. You can find more information at the [TPCHD website](#). More questions will be addressed during the live discussion with Dr. Chen on Tuesday, Nov. 24 at 4pm.

#### **When will students and staff be tested?**

Students and staff will be tested weekly starting the week of Nov. 30. A test date will be set up at each building and testing will happen throughout about a six-hour block during the day. Small groups of students will be brought to the testing area and then returned to class.

A signed [permission form](#) will be necessary for each student being tested ([adults, too](#)). The permission form only needs to be signed once and will be in place for the duration of the testing pilot.

#### **What are the dates of the testing pilot?**

The pilot will run Nov. 30-Dec 18.

#### **Who will perform the test?**

A registered nurse or other certified medical staff member performs the test.

#### **What locations will be testing sites?**

Testing sites include all elementary schools, Gig Harbor High School, Key Peninsula Middle School and Peninsula High School. A schedule will be published next week noting what day/time the testing will take place at each site.

#### **What if my child is in remote learning and/or attends a school not listed as a testing site?**

Any student or staff member who attends/works at a location that is not a testing site can get tested at any site during the last hour of testing at this location.

#### **Can I be present when my child gets the rapid antigen test?**

No. We do not allow visitors at our school facilities so we can limit the spread of the virus. Unfortunately, we can't allow parents to come into the buildings for testing either.

#### **What if I don't want my child to get the test?**

Each family can choose what's right for them. You will need to complete a permission form for

your child to be tested. We are hoping for 100% participation, or close to it, of the students and staff who are in the building. If participation rates are too low we will not be allowed to continue in the pilot.

### **What's the difference between a PCR test and an antigen test?**

A PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests look for the genetic material of the virus. People with positive tests are usually notified sooner (usually within 48 hours) than those with negative results (5-7 days).

Antigen tests look for proteins that are part of the surface of the virus. Antigen tests can produce results in 15 minutes.

PCR and antigen tests in the school-based testing pilot use a small cotton swab that collects matter at the entrance of the nose.

### **How is this funded?**

Pierce County was able to use CARES funding to purchase tests and PPE. They are providing us logistical support and manpower. No money is coming through the district.

This is an amazing opportunity for our school community. This important work will help us ensure safe learning for each and every student and employee during these difficult times. We are grateful for our local health professionals who have partnered with us this year.

Sincerely,  
PSD Leadership



**#WEarePSD**

**Peninsula School District 401**

14015 - 62nd Avenue NW; Gig Harbor, WA 98332

(253) 530-1000

psd401.net