

MCS Family Update- September 7, 2021

Dear MCS Families,

This email includes a new protocol option for students and staff identified as "close contacts" of a COVID-positive person. Additionally, I've provided recent MCS data regarding total number of positive cases and quarantines.

MCS COVID Data

I understand and respect the dissenting opinions that exist in our community regarding the temporary mask mandate. I also feel compelled to share the trending data we are seeing regarding positive cases and quarantines for students and staff. We continue to follow the recommendations of health and medical experts who believe that the temporary mask mandate is appropriate given the MCS school-based and community transmission.

** Temporary mask mandate in effect*

New Close Contact Protocol

Regardless of the decrease in student and staff quarantines, I continue to be concerned about the impact of lost instructional time that occurs as a result of each quarantine. To that end, I have been collaborating with health and medical experts from around the country to better understand how we can leverage science to find the right balance between health protocols, school safety, and student learning. The State of Massachusetts recently developed a [model](#), which is endorsed by their Department of Public Health and their Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (which parallels the Georgia Department of Education). The protocol allows students and staff who were identified as school-based close contacts and subsequently quarantined to return to school by receiving a daily negative rapid antigen test during their 7-day quarantine period. To be eligible, the student/staff member must remain asymptomatic and be identified as a close contact from school (those identified from a positive case outside of school are not eligible).

I shared the Massachusetts's model with experts from the Georgia Department of Public Health and Cobb & Douglas Public Health. While this approach is not officially endorsed in Georgia or Cobb County, it holds incredible promise to reduce the impact of lost instructional time for students and staff who are identified as school-based close contacts.

MCS New "Test and Stay" Protocol

Beginning Monday, September 13, 2021, this new option, called "test and stay", will allow asymptomatic students and staff identified as close contacts to attend school each day that they receive a negative rapid antigen test administered by MCS. The name is exactly what it states: each person must "test" negative in order to "stay" in school for that specific day.

MCS has partnered with MAKO Medical, a COVID test provider recommended by the Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH), to provide daily rapid antigen tests (with results available in 15-30 minutes). The rapid antigen test will be administered by licensed medical professionals at one designated MCS site each weekday (Monday-Friday) morning between 6:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m., and advance registration is required. If a student or staff member is identified as a school-based close contact, they will receive written information regarding how to register for the daily rapid antigen test. This new testing program is only available to eligible MCS students and staff; our PCR testing site at Lemon Street is open for all other MCS students, staff, and families seeking a COVID test. Additional requirements for the "test and stay" protocol include:

- Only school-based close contacts are eligible for "test and stay"; due to increased risk for transmission, students and staff who are identified as close contacts of a COVID-positive family member or person in the community are not eligible for "test and stay".
- The eligible student or staff member will be required to have an MCS-administered rapid antigen test on each school day of their 7-day quarantine. Upon receipt of a negative test result, the school will be immediately notified the student/staff member can attend school for that specific day.
- No student may ride the bus or enter the school building until the negative test is received for that specific day of quarantine; similarly, no staff member will be allowed to enter the building until cleared to do such.
- Each day's negative test result will allow the student to attend school and participate in MCS athletics and after-school activities on that specific day.
- Each eligible student and staff member will receive details about the "test and stay" option once they are identified as a close contact. If they choose to participate, the close contact will be expected to register and select a preferred 30-minute window (between 6:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.) to take the test the next morning.
- The close contact will remain in their car while getting the rapid antigen test (drive-thru format).

- At-home rapid antigen tests will not qualify for “test and stay”; the rapid antigen test must be administered through the MCS-MAKO Medical partnership.

Please note: if your MCS student is currently in quarantine as a school-based close contact and the quarantine will last beyond Sunday, September 12, you will be contacted by Friday, September 10 at 5:00 p.m. with information regarding registration for an MCS rapid antigen test (should you choose for your child to participate in the “test and stay” option). The rapid test program begins on Monday, September 13, 2021.

I recognize that not every family of a close contact can get their child each morning to a designated test site in Marietta (which will be located near our central office on 250 Howard Street). At this point, we do not have the staffing to expand this option to multiple sites; however, in the spirit of equity and access, we will expand to other locations around Marietta as soon as we are confident we can sustain this approach.

*Note: Students who have had COVID-19 within 90 days of a new exposure are exempt from quarantine and will not be required to participate in the district’s new “test and stay program” as they are considered still within their immunity window. See excerpt below from <https://dph.georgia.gov/contact>

A person who has clinically recovered from COVID-19 and then is identified as a contact of a new case within 3 months of symptom onset or first positive test of their most recent illness does not need to be quarantined as discussed in this document. However, if a person is identified as a contact of a new case 3 months or more after symptom onset or first positive test, they should follow quarantine recommendations for contacts.

We will not discourage parents from having their student tested, but please know it will not be required. If you have additional questions, please don’t hesitate to contact us at COVID19results@marietta-city.org.

MCS Family Town Hall

As I have regularly done throughout the pandemic, I am hosting a virtual town hall for families who may have questions about this new “test and stay” protocol. The town hall also will be recorded and posted to our website the following day for those who are unable to attend the live session.

MCS Family Town Hall – “Test and Stay” Protocol

Thursday, September 9, 2021 8:30 p.m.

Please click the following link to join the

webinar: <https://zoom.us/j/96759438977?pwd=MTVEUIIxWII5bEIBOXZXNkZ5SVlvdz09>

Additional Close Contact Quarantine Options

For families who prefer the 7-day (with a negative test) or 10-day (no negative test required) quarantine option, your student may follow either of these GPDH-approved protocols. For a summary of protocol options, please refer to the [MCS Close Contact Protocol Options](#). Please note – any student or staff member who tests positive will still be required to follow the [DPH 10-day isolation protocol](#). As a reminder, any person who is fully vaccinated and remains asymptomatic is exempt from all quarantine protocols.

MCS PCR Testing – Lemon Street

In partnership with DC Pulmonary Medicine, MCS will continue to offer free PCR COVID testing at Lemon Street each day (Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.) for all MCS students, staff, and families. Please refer to our [website](#) for more detailed information.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership.

If you have any questions, or need to report a positive COVID case, please email COVID19results@marietta-city.org or call 678-695-7213.

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