Updated 11-5-2020

Protocol: Student or staff tests positive for COVID-19

The student or staff member must remain at home (except to get medical care), monitor their symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from the local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative. For most people who have relatively mild illness, they will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days and until at least 24 hours have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms.

The student’s parent/caregiver or the staff member informs the proper school official (e.g. a designated person that is the COVID-19 school lead) that the individual has tested positive for COVID-19. The designated COVID-19 school lead in turn notifies others as pre-determined by the school (e.g., school leadership, school nurse or school medical point of contact, building management, maintenance).

Determine whether the student or staff member was on the premises during the time frame that started two days prior to symptom onset (or testing positive if not symptomatic) until the time of isolation.

If so, promptly close off areas visited by the COVID-19 positive individual until such areas can be cleaned and disinfected, if they have not been cleaned and disinfected already.

Promptly clean and disinfect the student’s or staff member’s classroom and any other facilities (e.g., extracurricular facilities) visited by the individual, if that has not been done already.

Promptly clean and disinfect the bus(es) the student or staff member was on, if any, and if not already done.

Communicate with families and staff of close contacts:

The school should identify the student’s or staff member’s possible “close contacts” based on the assigned seating charts and proximity related to class activities. Close contacts will be defined as only those who have been within 6 feet of distance of the individual for at least fifteen minutes, while the person was infectious. This definition is for students, teachers and other staff. The infectious period begins two days before symptom onset (or two days prior to the date of the positive test if asymptomatic) and includes up until the time the student/staff/teacher was isolated. Consider students and staff members who were close contacts in class, other school spaces, on the school bus, or at extracurricular activities.

Send a communication to the staff/teachers and families of students of close contacts that there has been a positive test without naming the individual student or staff member who tested positive.
Communications sent to families/staff should:

Inform them there was a positive test (not the specific individual) in the student’s class/bus or other activity.

Explain that since the student/staff were within 6 feet of the person with a positive test for 15 minutes or more, they are considered a “close contact” and therefore should be tested. Having assigned seating and keeping up-to-date seating charts will help identify who should be instructed to be tested: specifically, those who were sitting next to the student, plus any others who also had close contact with the student.

Instruct close contacts to isolate prior to their test and while waiting for the results. In general, as the highest yield test will be a few days after the exposure, ideally, the test should occur no sooner than day 4 or 5 after the last exposure. (In other words, if an exposure lasted several days, the best time to test is 4 or 5 days after the end of the exposure period.)

Close contacts should be tested for COVID-19 at one of Massachusetts’s test sites.[1] Sites may require pre-screening, a referral, and/or an appointment.

Close contacts are asked to communicate their test results to the school. They should not return to school until they have quarantined for 14 days. This includes close contacts who receive a negative test result or who choose not to be tested.[2]

Remind families and/or staff of the importance of not having contact with higher-risk individuals (e.g., grandparents and those with underlying medical conditions).

Remind families and/or staff of the list of COVID-19 symptoms for which to monitor.
If the school finds out about the original COVID-19 positive test in the middle of a school day:

The school should quickly identify the individuals who may be “close contacts” of the student and notify students and their families.

Make sure the students who could be considered close contacts are wearing masks, including students in pre-kindergarten through first grade. Extra masks as may be needed should be provided by the school. Enforce strict physical distancing. Require students to wash their hands.

Caregivers of close contacts may pick students up prior to the end of the day. Caregivers must wear a mask/face covering when picking up their student. Students who are close contacts and students with any symptoms should not ride the school bus to get home. Caregivers and students, as well as staff, should wash their hands upon arriving at home and change their clothes as a precaution.

Close contacts should not come back to school until they have quarantined for 14 days[3] and are asked to communicate their test results to the school.
As feasible, to assist with contact tracing, make a list including phone number and email of any other close contacts the student or staff member had, beginning two days before the onset of symptoms (or positive test if asymptomatic) until the individual was isolated.

**IF OTHERS IN THE SCHOOL TEST POSITIVE:** Perform all steps under this protocol for that person. **ALSO FOLLOW:** “Protocol: Presence of multiple cases in the school.”

**IF NO OTHERS IN THE SCHOOL TEST POSITIVE:** Close contacts are asked to communicate their test results to the school. They should not return to school until they have quarantined for 14 days. This includes close contacts who receive a negative test result or who choose not to be tested.

*Any area* of the school visited by the COVID-19 positive individual must be closed off and/or cleaned and disinfected. The area can be used 12 hours after cleaning/disinfecting has occurred.

Revised September 14, 2020