

FORT EDWARD UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

220 BROADWAY
FORT EDWARD, NEW YORK 12828
(518) 747-4529

Daniel Ward
Superintendent of Schools

John Galarneau
PK-12 Principal

December 21, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The goal of the Fort Edward School District continues to be providing the education that our students need and deserve during this difficult time. We have been met with many obstacles that we feel we have been able to overcome and adapt to by working collaboratively. In the interest of keeping everyone informed of changes that occur at the Fort Edward School District we would like to address the topic of testing our students, faculty, and staff for COVID-19 as directed by the New York State Cluster Action Initiative.

Under the NYS Cluster Action Initiative regional areas of the state could be placed in yellow, orange or red zones. Determination of these zones is dependent on positivity rates, new cases and hospital admissions. If the Fort Edward School District was to be placed in a yellow zone (the least restrictive zone), we could continue to remain open to in-person instruction as long as we follow specific testing procedures. These procedures mandate us to perform random COVID-19 tests on 20% of our in-person population (students, faculty, and staff). This testing must take place over a 2-week period following the designation of a yellow zone. It is possible that if the results of our testing yield lower positivity rates than the yellow zone's current 7-day positivity rate, then we will no longer be required to test as long as we remain in a yellow zone. Should our results show a higher positivity rate than the yellow zone, we will have to continue to test another unique 20% of individuals on a bi weekly basis. This is the minimum standard we must adhere to. If we were to be placed in an orange or a red zone, we would have to test a larger percentage of our population.

No child will be tested without parent/guardian consent, but if we do not receive enough consent to test 20% of the in-person population, then we are required by NYS Law to transition to fully remote instruction. The testing consent form is available on the school's website. If you are unable to access the form online, please let us know and one will be mailed to you. Any students who are currently fully remote do not need to have consent as they will not be tested. No student will be excluded from in-person if they do not have consent.

We are working with an independent agency, Adirondack Health and Wellness, who will be performing the tests should it become necessary. A quick video is available on our website to reference how a test is performed. An informational guide of Frequently Asked Questions is also available on the website. We encourage you to view and discuss these with your child. The goal is to help ease any anxiety that exists concerning the testing.

If you have questions regarding testing, we ask that you reach out to our school nurse.

Sincerely,



Daniel A. Ward
Superintendent of Schools

Testing FAQ Sheet

What does yellow zone mean?

- Yellow is a geographical precautionary area due to increased viral spread
 - Increase in new cases
 - Increase in positivity rates
 - Increase hospital admissions

What happens when a school falls into a yellow zone?

- Schools must test 20% of **in-person** faculty, staff and students over a course of 2 weeks immediately following zone designation to remain open for in person instruction.
- If results of testing show a positivity rate, of the individuals tested, is **LOWER** than yellow zone's current 7 day positivity rate, testing at school is no longer required.
- If results of testing show a positivity rate, of the individuals tested, is **HIGHER** than yellow zone's current 7 day positivity rate, testing at school will continue bi-weekly with a new pool of 20% of students, faculty, and staff.
- School must obtain consent from parents/guardians to test students.

How do parents/guardians give consent to test students?

- The consent form is available online on the school's website. If you need a paper copy, the district will be happy to provide one at your request.
- Links will be available on the school's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages.
- **If the school does not obtain enough consent to test 20% of the population, then the school must shift from in-person instruction to remote learning only for as long as the area remains designated as a Yellow Zone.**

When will testing be conducted?

- Testing will take place during the school day in a private setting.
- Testing may also be conducted after school to accommodate those who wish to be present with their child.

Who performs the testing?

- The Fort Edward School District has partnered with Adirondack Health and Wellness (ADKHW).
- Registered nurses from ADKHW will conduct the testing at the school.
- ADKHW will use BinaxNOW COVID-19 Ag CARDS (rapid test).

How is the testing performed? [Click here to see a short video of the test.](#)

- A cotton tipped nasal swab is inserted into the nostril about less than an inch- it is NOT necessary to insert the swab any further.
- The swab is rotated 5 times against the nasal wall then removed.
- That same swab is then inserted into the other nostril and rotated 5 times against the nasal wall.
- The swab is removed and placed in a prepared BinaxNOW card.
- Results are read after 15 minutes.

Who has access to the results?

- ADKHW staff, the Fort Edward School nurse and administrators, Washington County Public Health, and parents/guardians are the only entities who will have access to results.

What happens if an individual tests positive for COVID-19?

- The individual must be isolated according to the Department of Health guidance and sent home

immediately.

- The school is obligated to notify the local health authority (Washington County Public Health) as well as the parent/guardian if a student should test positive.
- Federal and New York State privacy laws prohibit the school from disclosing or confirming any personal identifying information. The school will not identify individuals who test positive.
- It will be the responsibility of the contact tracers to notify any direct contact of the individual who tested positive.
- The school will notify the community of a positive case, but no other identifying information will be shared.
- The school will work with Washington County Public Health to determine if the school will need to close for a period of time to allow for contact tracing as well as deep cleaning.

Who pays for the test?

- Parents/guardians will NOT be responsible for any cost to test their child.
- Insurance information will NOT need to be provided.

What if my child is fully remote?

- Your child will not need consent because they will not be tested.

What if my child already had a COVID-19 test and it was negative?

- You may submit the results of a previously given test, but the test must have been given **AFTER** the school was placed in a yellow zone.
- The results must be provided to the school within 7 days from the date of specimen collection.

We must reiterate that if the Fort Edward School District cannot obtain enough consent to test 20% of in-person students, faculty, and staff, we will have to resort to all remote instruction per the New York State Department of Health and Governor Cuomo's Executive Order 202.68. This will apply to all grades.