THE ABC SCIENCE COLLABORATIVE

Summary of findings from Spring 2021: SARS-CoV-2 Screening and Diagnostic Testing for Return to K-12 Schools

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

Researchers and pediatricians with the ABC Science Collaborative are currently working with schools in North Carolina to study the effectiveness of two testing strategies: screening testing and diagnostic testing of close contacts.

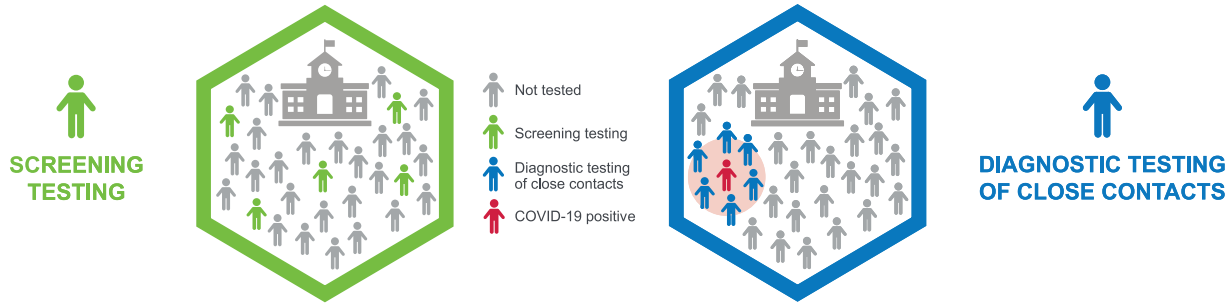
Researchers want to know if these testing strategies increase access to testing for K-12 staff and students, and reduce within-school transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Researchers also want to know whether students and staff feel comfortable in school.

This research study is ongoing and a summary of findings will be available semi-annually, following each school semester, through summer 2022. The report you are reading may not be the most current information. Visit abcsciencecollaborative.org for updates.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCREENING TESTING AND DIAGNOSTIC TESTING OF CLOSE CONTACTS?

Screening testing means that some school students and staff are selected each week for testing to look for asymptomatic COVID-19 cases.

Diagnostic testing of close contacts means that students and staff who were possibly exposed to someone with COVID-19 are tested.



WHO IS PARTICIPATING?

Both students and staff at participating schools are enrolled in the testing program. Students and staff have the choice to participate.

WHO FUNDED THIS RESEARCH?

This study, called "SARS-CoV-2 Screening and Diagnostic Testing for Return to K-12 Schools," is one of eight similar research projects across the United States funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

WHAT HAS THE TEAM LEARNED SO FAR?

With masking and other safety practices in place, schools did an excellent job of preventing spread of COVID-19 with or without screening testing.

When diagnostic testing was offered by the school, testing of close contacts, people who were possibly exposed to someone with COVID-19, increased from 8% prior to the start of the testing program to 37% once the testing program began on April 26, 2021. Although we tested more people, a lower percentage of people had positive test results, indicating that with the program in place, testing access increased for everyone – even those who are not high risk.

When students and staff who have had close contact to someone with COVID-19 get tested and have a negative test, they are able to return to school more quickly.

HOW HAS THE STUDY HELPED RETURN STUDENTS TO THE CLASSROOM?

With increased access to testing and continued safety strategies, such as masking, the number of students in the school district that needed to quarantine for 10 days or more decreased from 78% to 50% of students. This means that after the testing program started, more students were able to safely spend more time attending in-person school even after having contact with another student or staff with COVID-19.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS STUDY?

Study information and results can be found online at https://abcsciencecollaborative.org/covid-19-testing-in-schools/