



COVID-19 FAQs

Testing FAQs

Will testing be required before school starts on September 8th?

Yes. We are asking that all of our students, faculty, and staff complete a COVID test (either rapid antigen or PCR) within three days of the start date (Wednesday, Sept 8). Results do not need to be shared with the school; however, in the event of a positive result, families can and should communicate directly with the school administration.

Again, tests can be completed anywhere within three days of the start date and we have provided a few local (and on-site at Emerson) options for families to consider:

On-site PCR test provided by RapidBio **Tuesday, Sept. 7 between 1:00-4:00 pm** at Emerson School

[+ Link to sign up](#) (Insurance accepted)

Other locations for RapidBio testing

[+ Link to sign up](#)

LynxDx testing

[+ Link to sign up](#)

How often will testing take place once school starts?

We will begin the school year testing on a weekly basis starting on Thursday, Sept 9 during the school day. We will continue to test weekly, every Thursday until we determine the community health conditions look more favorable. Any changes to our testing frequency will be communicated in a timely manner.

Who will be completing the testing at Emerson?

Sample collection will be overseen and/or administered by Frankie DiCesare, our school medical assistant. She will be assisted by other members of staff. All members will be trained by RapidBio to ensure that testing is completed safely and according to protocol.

Who will be analyzing the information?

Samples will be analyzed at the RapidBio lab located in Plymouth, Michigan. This is a CLIA certified lab capable of doing high throughput PCR viral sequencing for the detection of COVID-19 viral RNA. Samples will be processed through a standard diagnostic process with results analyzed by RapidBio and reported to Emerson.

How much does testing cost?

The School will be covering the cost of the first test of the year (Thurs. Sept. 9) for our families, as we work to confirm the logistics of having individual insurance providers cover the cost of our required weekly testing for the remainder of the school year. We plan to share an announcement about this in the coming week and will be asking families to create an account through RapidBio in order to collect this insurance information for future billing. As of March 2020, federal law requires most insurance plans to cover — at no out-of-pocket cost — diagnostic COVID-19 testing and related services provided by a health care provider. These plans include individual and group health insurance plans offered on and off the Health Insurance Marketplace, employer-based plans, non-federal governmental plans, and

church plans. Related services that are covered at no cost include office visits (both in-person and telehealth), urgent care visits, and emergency department visits that are related to testing for COVID-19.

What type of test is this?

The test we are conducting through RapidBio is considered a PCR-based test that detects nucleic acid from SARS-CoV-2 RNA. It is not a rapid “antigen” based test nor is it a blood-based “antibody” test. PCR-based tests are highly sensitive and specific.

How are samples collected?

The samples are collected via a soft, nasal swab. The swab is inserted just into the anterior part of the nose (nares). The swab is swirled around the lower part of each nostril several times.

How much discomfort is experienced with this sort of testing?

There is minimal discomfort in the collection process as the sample is collected from the lower part of the nostril, below any point of resistance in the nose.

How accurate is the testing?

The test is greater than 99% accurate at detecting the presence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and is the most sensitive method available for testing.

How will I receive test results?

We anticipate receiving results approximately 24 hours after tests are sent to RapidBio. In the event that there is a positive result for a student, we will first contact the family to notify them individually. After contacting the family, we will then communicate with faculty and families as we have in the past regarding a positive case, and we will provide information as to any changes to our instruction required as a result. We will be communicating with individuals only about positive results, rather than non-detect (negative) results. If you wish to receive confirmation of your individual results, please contact Frankie DiCesare at fdicesare@emerson-school.org to make this request.

What is done with the information collected?

RapidBio will report sample results to the school and will send positive result data to the appropriate State of Michigan public health agency for the purposes of contact tracing.

As for the school’s part, we are required to notify county officials of the name of any individual who receives positive test results. We will follow our standard communication format of notifying the general community of any positive case. For a positive student result, we will notify the family of the child directly. For a positive employee result, we will notify the employee directly. Information will not be shared with any other party, including any health insurance agency. We will seek to maintain the individual’s privacy and only notify those with a legitimate need to know for the safety of the school.

Will RapidBio be storing anyone’s DNA?

RapidBio will not be storing anyone’s DNA or doing research on it. They are running a clinical test and that is all.

Who at RapidBio will have access to test data? Will other members of the company be able to use data for research and/or reporting without permission, or will data be limited only to those conducting the test?

Data is limited to those running the tests and approving results. For individuals running the test, the only patient data they see is the barcode and name on the tube when the sample is received in our system. Results data is approved by a lab supervisor based on the barcode, so anonymized, and very few people in the organization have access to patient results.

What privacy protections are in place?

RapidBio is a HIPAA-compliant facility. All protected health information (PHI) is physically obliterated. Patient & sample data are retained in the company's HIPAA compliant database. RapidBio will not use patient or sample data for any purpose other than reporting results to patients & public health agencies.

Do I have to participate in testing?

Participation in our surveillance testing is required for all employees. The same holds true for students; all students.

If my child has recovered from COVID-19, will testing still be required, given that there can be false positives for up to three months after recovery?

Any child or employee who has tested positive for COVID-19 and has since recovered will be exempt for a period of no more than three months from testing at Emerson so long as they do not present symptoms. Proof of positive recovery will be required prior to exemption being granted.

Mitigation FAQs

What is the school's masking policy?

Facial coverings will be required at all times for all those inside the school regardless of vaccination status. To start the year, we are going to ask that everyone remain masked while outdoors at unstructured free time, including recess and curbside. We plan to offer daily structured times when students can remove masks. These include outdoor group lessons, snack breaks, lunchtimes, and any other times when teachers can ensure that their groups will remain distanced while removing their masks.

What types of facial coverings are acceptable?

Facial coverings may be homemade or disposable level-one (basic) grade surgical masks. Further recommendations on suitable masks are provided by the CDC. As per CDC recommendations, facial coverings should cover the nose and mouth, and be secured under the chin. Masks with an exhalation valve or vent are not recommended.

Will the school provide masks for my child?

Every family will need to provide masks for students. While the school will provide a non-medical grade face covering for any individual requiring one to enter the building, we have a limited supply. Fabric designs should be appropriate per the dress code in our Family Handbook. Masks will need to be washed daily, so individuals are advised to have more than one at home to accommodate washing. Disposable masks must be discarded at day's end and may not be reused.

What type of hygiene measures will the school be taking?

Handwashing and/or hand sanitizing will be expected prior to arrival at school, before and after all visits to the playground, and after lavatory visits. The school will provide hand sanitizer for outdoor activities. Families are welcome to send a bottle of sanitizer for personal use by their students if they wish.

Restrooms will be supplied with soap and disposable paper towels. Everyone should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds. Everyone should refrain from touching their eyes or other parts of their face. Individuals should cough or sneeze into their elbows, or cover with a tissue, even if wearing a mask. Used tissues and paper towels should be disposed of in the trash.

Drinking fountains will not be in use. Students and staff should bring a personal labeled water bottle filled from home. For employees and those inside of the building, they may refill their bottles, if needed, from one of the many water coolers stationed throughout the school.

Individuals should not share personal items or supplies, and items should be stored separately from one another.

What level of physical distancing and grouping will the school require?

As often as possible, we will work to ensure that students maintain a minimum of 3 feet of physical distance while at school (both inside and outside).

Students will remain in their grade level groups throughout the majority of their day and have limited opportunities to interact (while distancing) with members of other grade levels (i.e. recess, electives, and during transition times in the hallways).

What measures has the school taken to increase ventilation?

As often as possible, exterior doors and windows will be open to allow rooms to stay well ventilated with outside air. In addition, all school HVAC systems are equipped with MERV-13 filters, the highest grade possible with our current units. Each indoor classroom is also equipped with a portable HEPA filter that will run throughout the day.

Finally, we have increased the mobility of students throughout their day, by allowing them to move from homerooms (in Lower School) and classrooms (in Middle School) to other classrooms in the school. We have ensured that our Specials classrooms, Science Labs, and other shared spaces have all of the same mitigations as our other classrooms. Additionally, we will allow for some period of time between when one group leaves and another group enters a shared space. This additional mobility will allow for homerooms and classrooms to "air out" periodically throughout the day.

What types of cleaning and disinfecting will the school be doing?

Surfaces touched during the course of a given day will undergo cleaning and disinfecting daily.

How will you ensure the safety of students and staff while eating snacks and lunch?

As often as possible, students will be eating outside. Should students need to eat indoors, we have provided plexiglass dividers for each student in each classroom, and we will also work to ensure the greatest spacing possible in the classrooms. Students may use these dividers as needed while eating indoors. Plexiglass will be disinfected daily and prior to any repeated use. Middle school students will travel to the MS Commons area to eat lunch together as a grade level. Once or twice a month, Lower School students will also travel to the MS Commons to eat lunch (separately from the MS students) during their lunch period.

We are anticipating resuming a hot lunch program for our students. This will include daily meal deliveries to the school of pre-ordered, pre-labeled lunches for students in all grades. We also are planning to host bimonthly Pizza Lunches, similar to previous years.

Are vaccinations required for those eligible?

Yes. Our priority this year is to keep our community healthy, both physically and social-emotionally. In order to do so, we are asking that all community members receive their COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they are age-eligible. All individuals will be asked to complete a Vaccination Status form, which will be distributed with the first day packet and must be submitted no later than 6 weeks following the date they become age-eligible. Through this form, you will be asked to either attest to your child's vaccination or request an exemption based on any medical, closely held religious, or conscientious belief.

Illness Response FAQs

What happens if my child (or a student in my child's class) becomes symptomatic during the day?

Anyone who is or becomes symptomatic will be isolated and sent home immediately. Our Medical Assistant will provide an isolated and well-ventilated space adjacent to her office for anyone who is symptomatic. It will be kept distant from other workspaces.

The symptomatic individual will remain out of school until they either meet CDC criteria for safe return or provide written clearance from their doctor or pediatrician.

Quarantine FAQs

Who should quarantine and for how long?

Any individual (vaccinated or unvaccinated) who tests positive for COVID-19 must isolate for 10 days before returning to school, assuming the individual is able to pass the at-home health screening for symptoms related to COVID. Day Zero in this case is the date of the test that determined the positive diagnosis.

Classroom close contacts are determined by the school administration, our Risk Task Force, and the Washtenaw County Health Department. As a result of this guidance, we will make a determination as to the level of quarantine required (individual, full classroom, full grade level, or the school), in order to ensure the safety of our community.

Will my child be able to continue their learning while quarantining?

Yes. We will work with you and your child's teacher(s) to determine the most appropriate structure for them to continue learning while quarantining. This could include Zooming into live lessons, connecting one-on-one with teachers for individual lessons and activities, and/or having assigned asynchronous work. These structures will depend on the age and stage of the child, as well as the instructional design of the grade level and teacher.

Communication FAQs

How will changes or updates regarding health & safety policies and procedures be communicated with families?

We will be providing regular COVID-19 updates each week in our Family Newsletter. For matters more urgent we will send communications as-needed via email communications and/or RenWeb alerts.

Who can I contact with further questions?

Please feel free to contact Head of School, Ed Hollinger at ehollinger@emerson-school.org or our Office & Medical Assistant, Frankie DiCesare at fdicesare@emerson-school.org with any questions you might have. If Mr. Hollinger is not able to answer them, he will direct you to the appropriate person.