WPS Viral Testing Update

School Committee
December 22, 2020

Wellesley Public Schools
Learning • Caring • Innovating
Goals of Surveillance Testing

- Outbreak prevention
- Maximization of in-person learning
- Reduction of fear and anxiety
- Reassurance that safety precautions and mitigation efforts are effective

Priorities:
- Symptomatic testing
- Asymptomatic surveillance testing of staff
- Asymptomatic surveillance testing of students
WPS COVID Testing Approach

● **Baseline Individual Diagnostic PCR Testing (Sept 24-28)**
  ○ PreK - 12th Students - EMT collected Anterior Nares Swab (Eurofins/Boston Heart, $68 per person)
  ○ Staff - Saliva (Ginkgo/Immune Observatory, donation)
  ○ 90% + participation, 4500 tests performed

● **Weekly Optional Pooled PCR Surveillance Testing (Oct 19-Dec 22)**
  ○ All staff at all schools and 6th - 12th students take home saliva collection (Mirimus, discounted rate from Mobilizing Foundation of $8 per individual), ability to reflex test to individual diagnostic level with existing sample
  ○ Approximately 80% participation, 18,704 tests performed
COVID Testing Outcomes

- **WPS has had 60 total cases since September** (22 staff / 38 students / 73% of which were Middle/High School)
  - 19 of these cases have been identified through surveillance testing
  - 41 of these cases have been identified through outside testing

- **Cluster of in-school transmission identified in main office of high school**
  - Studied airflow, density and traffic pattern to identify mitigation
  - Other schools were able to remain open while problem was understood and addressed
Community spread was potentially avoided

wk of Nov 2: 1 Case Identified

wk of Nov 9: 6 Cases Identified

wk of Nov 16: 3 Cases Identified

wk of Nov 23: 2 Cases Identified

wk of Dec 1: 2 Cases Identified

wk of Dec 7: 3 Cases Identified

wk of Dec 14: 2 Cases Identified
Reflections on Pilot - What Worked Well

- Focus on prioritizing in-person learning in as safe a manner as possible
- Testing helped to make discussions more data-driven
- Support from Superintendent, Nursing Staff, School Committee, Teachers Union, Scientific Advisory Committee, and Wellesley Education Foundation critical
- Communications, e.g., webinars - helped ease concerns
- Key factors: Scientifically defensible, operationally feasible and financially affordable lead to selection of Mirimus model.
  - Ability to drill down to individual diagnostic testing on same sample;
  - Ease of program critical - take-home, testing off-site, no need for “intelligent pooling”; able to avoid quarantining entire school or entire classroom
  - Buy-in of staff and parents and community - staff helps group kits for homeroom; volunteering by parents
  - Scheduling before / after weekend for distribution and collection - good cadence
- Being able to put technology in place as needed - Google Form with data verification; barcode searching
Reflections on Pilot - What Could Be Improved

● First public school district to implement testing involved overcoming challenges

● Inconsistencies in data reporting, multiple spreadsheets, initial delays to MAVEN
  ○ New portal to be released in January to improve administrative & user experience

● Kit Assembly is time consuming
  ○ Mirimus will be providing “kitted” test supplies in January/February

● Education of the community on process and testing expectations
  ○ e.g., registration, ½ full saliva, don’t eat or drink, don’t participate if you have been positive, etc.

● Elementary staff and parents would feel more comfortable with PreK-5 students getting tested; however, challenge would be getting them to collect saliva (even some secondary students have trouble)

● Transparency - how to strike balance between confidentiality and how much detail to share with community

● Difficulty of obtaining symptomatic tests
Survey Results from Staff and Parents

● Reduction of fear and anxiety among staff and parents was a key goal of the pilot program

● WEF recently distributed a survey to staff and parents to understand:
  ○ How the program has impacted perceptions of school safety
  ○ Perceived benefits and detriments of the program

● 1,149 participants responded to the survey
  ○ 491 Staff Members (51% WHS/WMS, 49% PreK-5)
  ○ 658 Parents
    ■ 78% with students enrolled at either WHS or WMS
    ■ 22% with students only enrolled in PreK-5
Only 12% of staff felt mostly or very comfortable with returning to school without baseline testing.
Staff Level of Reassurance After Results of Baseline Testing

82% of staff were reassured in the safety of returning to school following the results of baseline testing.
Parent Level of Comfort in Return to School Without Baseline Testing

Only 39% of parents felt mostly or very comfortable with sending their children to school without baseline testing.
87% of parents were reassured in the safety of returning to school following the results of baseline testing.

98% of parents indicated that their students participated in baseline testing.
WMS/WHS Staff Level of Comfort in School Safety w/ Weekly Testing

Staff feel safer with weekly assurance testing and much more safe with the addition of assurance testing for students.

100% of staff surveyed have been participating in weekly testing.
PreK-5 Staff Level of Comfort in School Safety w/ Weekly Testing

Staff feel safer with weekly assurance testing, but would feel much more safe with the addition of assurance testing for students.

100% of staff surveyed have been participating in weekly testing.
Parents feel that schools are much safer with weekly testing for staff and feel significantly more comfortable now that students are being tested.

99% of parents surveyed have students participating in weekly testing.
Parents feel much safer with staff being tested, but have expressed that they would feel much more safe if students were also tested.
The majority of parents felt that weekly testing allowed for prevention of outbreaks, increased the chances for maintaining in-person education, and made school safer for teachers, students, and their families. Close to 50% of parents also felt that testing served as a reminder to follow safety protocols.
Nearly 50% of parents felt that weekly assurance testing had no detriments, and approximately a third of parents identified cost and the provision of a false sense of security as potential detriments.
General Observations

● Both staff and parents have found testing to be very helpful in providing reassurance in the safety of our schools

● 98% of staff surveyed said they are very likely to continue participating in weekly assurance testing; 2% said they are somewhat likely to continue participating

● 94% of parents surveyed said they are very likely to continue having their students participate in weekly testing; Another 3% said they are somewhat likely to have their students continue participating

● The amount of testing performed is positively correlated with the degree of assurance in school safety
General Observations (cont.)

- Concerns have been expressed about participation and the need to ensure that we achieve maximum levels of participation from both staff and students.
- Continued interest in testing for elementary students from both staff and parents.
- Staff and parents have expressed concern about adherence to safety protocols during winter break.
- Testing underscores the need to continue emphasizing the importance of following safety protocols.
# Funding Projections

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**Assumptions:**
- ‡ Assumes $8.00 per test (with support from Mobilizing Foundation)
- †† Assumes $12.50 per test; If $10.50 per test is an achievable price, cost will be reduced by 20%
  - All projections assume 80% participation of total testing population (2,664/3,330 staff and students)
  - All projections also incorporate costs for reflex testing and shipping & handling of samples
Next Steps

● Work to make continued improvements in our testing process

● Continue with surveillance testing in January, prepare to pivot to town dollars
  ○ Weekly participation continues to be strongly encouraged

● Consider expanding WPS Dashboard by adding measures specific to school community that leverage case tracking & surveillance testing data