

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

February 18, 2021

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Opening Schools in Recovery of Education—Update: COVID-19 Mitigation Concerns (10-27-20-01-D-1, -4)

During the *Opening Schools in Recovery of Education—Update* discussion, Board member requested the following information:

Question D-1

Mrs. Smondrowski requested information regarding the following:
Saliva testing for staff and students to return to in-person classes? Costs?

Response

The Saliva Test Kit is available for purchase from Dan Scully at TheSafetyHouse.com, at a cost of \$40 per kit. However, according to HIPPA compliance rules, in order to perform any type of health-related testing, a plea/waiver to provide testing must be in place. The individual administering the test must be licensed in the medical field. The results, then, must be sent to a lab for processing where MCPS has an agreement in place with the lab.

The local health department must authorize this testing, and Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) would need to receive guidance from County health officials. This is the fifth test that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized that uses saliva as a sample for testing. Testing saliva eliminates the need for nasopharyngeal swabs, which also have been prone to shortages, and alleviates patient discomfort associated with these swabs. As the saliva sample is self-collected under the observation of a healthcare professional, it also could potentially lower the risk posed to healthcare workers responsible for sample collection. While the FDA has seen variable performance in tests using saliva, the Yale School of Public Health submitted data with its Emergency Use Authorization request from which the FDA determined that the Yale School of Public Health's test meets the criteria for emergency authorization when used to test saliva samples for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the COVID-19 infection.

Furthermore, the Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory test currently is the only authorized COVID-19 diagnostic test that uses saliva samples to test for SARS-CoV-2. The test remains available by prescription only. The specifics within the Saliva Test Kit contain a test strip, a small funnel, a collection tube, and a specialized filter cap.

The procedure is as follows. Saliva is expectorated through the funnel into the tube. The filter cap is placed on the tube and the tube is squeezed until eight drops have been placed on the end of the strip. The strip then is laid on a non-absorbent surface to develop for approximately 15 to 30 minutes. It is important to recognize that it is the same test strip for both applications. What differs is the nature of the fluid being tested. Unfortunately, the Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory test only can be sold to medical professionals.

Finally, it is important to note that researchers state that *SalivaDirect* can be processed only in designated high-complexity Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments-certified labs, which must meet strict quality standards set by federal agencies. The lab then can return test results to patients.

MCPS is pursuing options for implementing COVID-19 testing as students return to in-person instruction. We are working with neighboring jurisdictions and providers to create a consortium approach, and also are registering for the recently announced state program to support testing for local education agencies.

Question D-4

Portable air filtration systems?

Response

Staff in the Department of Facilities Management tested many air cleaner units to determine the appropriate model for use in a variety of spaces. An important factor in addition to the efficiency and effectiveness is noise level while operating so that instruction is not disrupted. These units are being placed strategically where supplementary equipment is needed in order to meet operational standards for air quality. The Department of Facilities Management [website](#) provides additional details on the conditions and status of work at each school.

Manufacturer/ Model	No. Ordered	No. of Speeds	Air Flow (CFM)	ACH*	Designed for Larger Spaces (Gym, APR, IMC)
Austin Air Healthmate Plus	614	3	75 – 400	1 – 4	No
BlueDri – AS 550	174	Variable	250 – 500	2 – 4	No
Husqvarna A2000	60	2	600 – 1200	5 – 10	Yes
Phoenix Guardian	30	2	900 – 1400	7 – 11	Yes
Price RAP	1,358	Variable	600	2 – 4	No
Xpower AP-2000	60	2	1000 – 2000	8 – 16	Yes
Total	2,296				

*Based on classroom size 25 x 30 x 10 = 7,500 feet³
APR=All Purpose Room; IMC=Instructional Media Center

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Essie McGuire, associate superintendent of operations, Office of Engagement, Innovation, and Operations, via e-mail.

JRS:DGT:EM:bls

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