

August 16, 2021

Dear NPES Families,

Beginning on Wednesday, September 15, NPES will, like many independent schools in our area, adopt the state-of-Illinois sponsored SHIELD testing program, with all unvaccinated NPES students participating in a once-a-week, non-invasive saliva surveillance protocol. Students will simply step out of their classrooms for a moment to spit into a vial, and the school and parents will receive results of this SARS-CoV-2 PCR test within 24 hours of the sample being delivered to the laboratory.

In addition to the early detection of the virus (which will benefit and help protect all children in the school, as active surveillance makes it very difficult for the virus to spread through a community), we will also be able to test NPES students after they have been exposed inside or outside of school. As long as they are *asymptomatic*, unvaccinated children who have had low-risk exposures (eg. while both individuals were wearing masks) and vaccinated children who have experienced any exposure are eligible to participate in a test-to-stay monitoring program. The “test to stay” component of the SHIELD program will clear students to attend school following exposure, rather than automatically force them to quarantine for an extended period of time. It is imperative to repeat that only asymptomatic children who have been exposed would come to school and be tested, and that for all unvaccinated children, the test to stay program is available to only low-risk exposures to those who have tested positive for the virus. Under no circumstances should a student with any symptoms that may be attributable to COVID-19 come to campus for testing. Those students should be evaluated by their healthcare provider and will be able to return to school following the criteria set forth in our sick policy.

MORE DETAIL, QUARANTINES, AND THE LIMITED SCOPE OF REMOTE LEARNING

More detail will follow on the 23rd, but per SHIELD requirements, all saliva samples will be collected on campus for every unvaccinated child once per week (starting at 8:45 a.m.), plus any children, regardless of vaccination status, whose grade may not be scheduled for testing that day but who were exposed and are testing to stay in school (SHIELD does not recommend testing vaccinated children who have not been exposed to a positive case of the virus). Thus, our regular weekly SHIELD screening will be for all Preschool 3 through 6th Grade students (excluding any vaccinated 6th Graders), along with any remaining unvaccinated 7th and 8th graders. We intend to

test two classes per day, and will share the testing calendar when it's ready. Students who test positive will remain home in quarantine for 10 days, with a remote connection to the classroom beginning the morning of the second day, allowing time for faculty to prepare and send materials, and adapt lessons to include remote learners as fully as possible. Students who are in quarantine and symptomatic should not attend remotely, but rest.

This year, the live remote feed into a classroom will only be available to students who are quarantining due to a positive test, to an entire class quarantining due to an outbreak, and to those awaiting a test from a health care provider for more than two days. Why? Because we believe on-campus in-person schooling is in the best interests of children's intellectual development and social-emotional well-being, and the hybrid model of education, with children on different platforms at the same time, has proven to impact the overall educational experience negatively for the vast majority of children in both spaces.

A HIPAA-COMPLIANT PROGRAM AND OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

SHIELD is a HIPAA-compliant program. Based on advice from local health experts and authorities, the advice of the NPES health and safety committee, and recognizing the latest pandemic-related data and the Delta variant, we recommend strongly that:

1. Your child get vaccinated fully immediately after turning twelve years old
2. All NPES students participate in SHIELD testing, since having full participation makes this the most successful program possible with clear benefits for all, including the reduced risk of community spread and fewer quarantines away from school

You should also know that 100 percent of our employees report being vaccinated, and experts suggest that a key way we can protect unvaccinated children is to surround them with vaccinated adults and peers.

HOW YOU PROCEED

In order for your child/children to participate in SHIELD, no other action is required of you beyond reading this letter. If you do NOT consent for your child/children to be tested at NPES using SHIELD'S COVID-19 test, complete, sign, and return the Opt-Out Form linked below via email to Kerry Maman at maman@npeschool.org no later than Thursday, August 19 at 10 AM. All children at NPES will participate in this new mitigation program unless their parents/guardians have completed the attached Opt-Out Form, per SHIELD recommendations.

More information on sick policies and our updated health/safety guidelines will follow via email on August 23rd. In the meantime, if you have questions, please contact me or Office Manager Kerry Maman. We are entering the third school year of the pandemic, and we remain committed to the safety, health, and well-being of our students and community, and to providing as full and rich an educational experience

for every child as current circumstances and the science will allow. I wish you and your family a healthy and restorative remainder to summer.

Best wishes,
John Novick, Jr.
Head of School

Opt-Out Form (no action needed for your child/children to participate in SHIELD):

[Click Here to Opt Out](#)