COVID-19 TESTING FAQS

Why is Gateway starting regular testing of students now?

Once Gateway determined it would be moving to 5 days in the building for the second semester, the school began actively exploring testing options in search of a partner who would be able to deliver on our requirements of reliability, efficiency, and affordability. We are ready to roll out pooled testing for employees and students beginning Monday, February 8th. Testing will allow us to better identify, isolate, and contact trace asymptomatic positive COVID-19 cases in our school community. Combined with behavioral protocols, pooled testing will enable us to minimize the presence of the COVID-19 virus on campus.

Who will be tested?

Gateway will begin weekly testing for employees and students who are on campus, with the exception of those who have had COVID-19 in the last 90 days. Participation in testing is required for in-person learning.

What is pooled testing?

Rather than test each employee or student, samples can be combined—or pooled—to cut down on the number of tests. Mirimus technology tests 24 samples at once; if one sample within a pool tests positive, the entire pool is flagged for further testing as described below.

How will testing be conducted?

STEP 1. Employees and students will receive a clean, individual testing kit containing a barcoded sample collection tube and additional supplies (e.g., alcohol wipes for sanitizing after sample collection) every Monday that they are in school.

STEP 2. Students will bring the kits home where they will self-collect saliva samples under the supervision of a parent or guardian. In addition to the guidance provided to you here, the nurse will train students in Homeroom on how to safely self-collect saliva samples. Employees will bring the kits home or self-administer the test on premises. Please review the sample collection instructions attached (written and video). Do not use mouthwash for at least 2 hours before providing your sample. Do not eat, drink, chew gum, or brush your teeth at least 30 minutes before providing your sample. This is critical to the viability of the sample collected.

STEP 3. Students will return their barcoded collection tubes to the school nurse when they arrive at school the following day (Tuesday). All in-person students must provide a
test sample to remain on campus. Employees will return their barcoded collection tubes to the school nurse on Monday or Tuesday morning.

**STEP 4.** The same day (Tuesday), the collected samples will be couriered to the lab for testing. The lab will then test the samples using “pooled testing,” meaning the lab will group individual samples into batches of approximately 24. A small amount of each sample in the batch will be mixed to create a combined pooled sample.

- If COVID-19 is not detected in the combined pooled sample, no further action is required.
- If COVID-19 is detected in the combined pooled sample, the lab will conduct additional testing to narrow down which sample(s) were positive. Due to current regulation regarding observed sample collection for individual diagnostics, the specificity with which Mirimus is allowed to report is limited to a pair of samples (i.e., a sample containing a mix of two saliva samples). The barcodes associated with that pair of saliva samples will be reported to the School.
- Submitted saliva samples are only used for COVID-19 testing, and all saliva samples are destroyed by the lab after one week.

**STEP 5.** A Gateway staff member trained in contact tracing, most often the school nurse, will reach out to the individuals associated with COVID-19 detected pairs. Both individuals in the pair are considered potentially positive for COVID-19. In an abundance of caution, both will be required to isolate and participate in contact tracing protocols. Any additional individuals identified as having had meaningful close contact with the potentially positive COVID-19 cases will be required to quarantine until further investigation. During this quarantine, students will be permitted to participate in their in-person classes remotely, via Zoom.

Individuals who are considered potentially positive for COVID-19 as a result of the pooled testing should proceed independently with additional PCR testing to confirm and identify the person testing positive for COVID-19. For employees, they can arrange for testing through their One Medical membership. Any individuals experiencing difficulty accessing additional COVID-19 testing should refer to this list of testing sites in the NYC test sites or contact Nurse Lucy Khong.

**When and how will we hear about the results of testing?**

Individuals who are identified as potentially positive for COVID-19 by Gateway’s testing will be immediately contacted. Any additional individuals identified through the contact tracing process will also be contacted. Any changes required to campus operations will be communicated promptly.
How reliable is the test?

The saliva test’s accuracy is virtually identical to that of individual PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests, which are the most accurate types of COVID-19 tests currently available. Mirimus has conducted experiments comparing results from pooled and individual tests of the same individuals from a very close point in time and found a 97 percent match. Retesting the same samples with the corresponding individual test yielded a 100 percent match.

Is there a potential for false positives?

The test cannot be guaranteed to be 100% accurate. False positives are possible but rare. The test utilized by Mirimus Labs detects three different unique viral RNA templates. For a positive result, at least two RNA templates must be detected. The protocols used substantially decrease the likelihood of false positives by detecting dead viral particles.

What are the costs associated with this testing?

The Gateway School is covering the cost of the non-invasive, saliva-based pooled test from Mirimus. However, families are responsible for the cost of any other COVID-19 tests, including potential follow-up resulting from Gateway’s test. Families can refer to this list of [free test sites](#). Please note that many medical insurance plans cover 100% of the cost of COVID-19 tests.