

Ohio K-12 Quarantine Alternative Pilot Program

Warren County Test to Stay Pilot

Final Report Summary

October 30, 2021

Program Summary

The Ohio K-12 Quarantine Alternative Pilot Program was designed and implemented by 10 school districts from Warren County, 1 school district from Butler County and 1 school district from Clinton County. The program was supported by the Warren County Combined Health District with ongoing technical and expert assistance and consultation from the Ohio Department of Health.

The main purpose for the program was to learn how to better protect the continuity of academic and social educational experiences for Ohio students. Keeping K-12 students in school, in-person, five days a week, is vital as we continue to learn to live with COVID-19 in our communities. In-person learning has important implications on student academic and social development. When school districts follow layered prevention strategies including vaccination for staff and eligible students, hand washing, masking, social distancing, and other common cleaning and sanitizing mitigation strategies, it helps slow the spread of the virus and allows students to safely stay in school creating stability and continuity for staff, students and families.

The Pilot Program was designed to explore the following questions:

1. How can a Test to Stay protocol assist school districts in identifying healthy students (students who do not have COVID-19) who have met the criteria of a school-based direct contact?
2. How can a Test to Stay program help us learn more about the rate of transmission of COVID-19 in school settings?
3. How does the data compare between school districts who have some level of mask mandate compared to districts that have no mask mandate?
4. When students follow the Test to Stay protocol, will we be able to safely protect in-person learning? The Test to Stay protocol includes COVID-19 testing twice in a seven day period and wearing a surgical style mask while at school during the 7 day quarantine period.
5. How can the Test to Stay program help inform our next steps as we consider the next iteration of quarantine guidelines for the state of Ohio?

The Warren County Test to Stay program used mask wearing and frequent testing to keep healthy students learning in school throughout their quarantine period. Standard quarantine for students directly exposed to COVID-19 is 10 days, with the option to test out of quarantine with a negative test on or after day 5 of exposure.

Students identified for the pilot program were asymptomatic and had direct exposure to a person with COVID-19 in a school setting. Eligible students were unvaccinated, unmasked, within 3 feet of a positive case for more than 15 minutes in a school setting.

Fully vaccinated and masked students were not included in the program. The seven-day quarantine period began on the day following direct contact exposure to a positive case of COVID-19.

Pilot program students were required to wear a multi-layer surgical style mask and test twice during the seven-days following exposure. Students who developed symptoms of COVID-19 at any time during the program became ineligible and were asked to stay home and follow up with their health care provider.

There were two options for testing with the Abbott BinaxNow Rapid tests. The home kit and the professional at school kit. Each Home Test Kit provided one rapid antigen test for COVID-19 to be used at home with a telehealth provider. Families were asked to follow the user guide and use the app in performing the tests at home. The In-school Test Kit was administered on-site by a certified trained nurse.

If both tests were negative and the student followed all guidelines as outlined in the Test to Stay program, the student remained in school with a mask throughout the quarantine. If the student remained symptom free, participation in the program was considered complete on day 8 and they returned to a non-quarantined status.

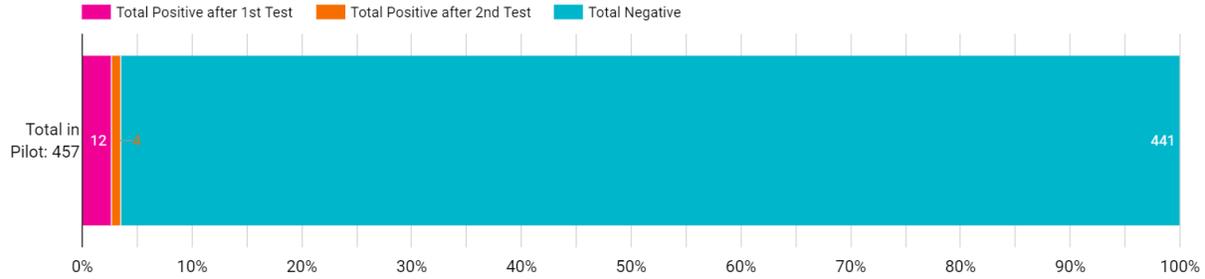
Program Findings

The Test to Stay Pilot Program was implemented in 12 school districts beginning the week of September 27, 2021. Data was collected on Mondays for the preceding weeks. At the time of implementation, 50% of participating school districts had a mask requirement for elementary students and 100% had no mask mandate for grades 7-12.

During the program, 790 students were deemed eligible to participate in the pilot program – 457 students chose to participate in the Test to Stay program while the other eligible students chose to follow the standard quarantine process at home.

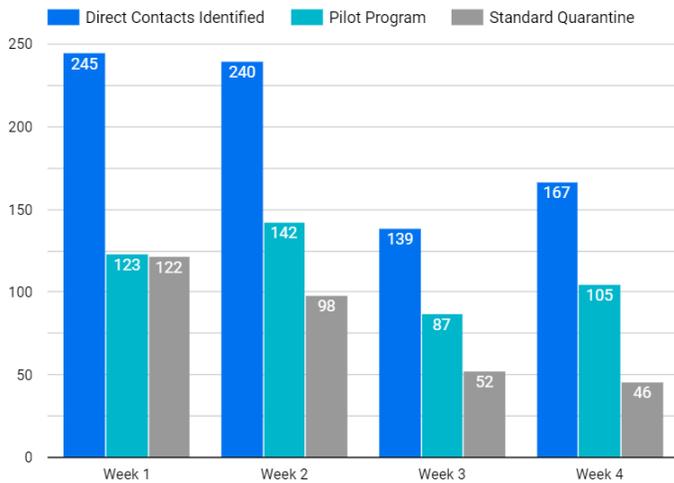
The 457 students in the program represent 57.9% of all identified direct contacts during the 4 week observation. Students opting to participate increased by 13% over the course of the pilot program.

Results of Testing in Program - Cummulative Data



- 457 students participated in the the Warren County Test to Stay program
- 441 students (96.5%) completed the program testing negative during the quarantine period.
- 16 students (3.5%) tested positive for COVID-19 during the pilot program.
 - 12 students (2.6%) tested positive during the first test
 - 4 students (.8%) tested positive during the second test

Program Enrollment



- 50% of the eligible students participated in the Test to Stay program in week 1.
- 59% of the eligible students participated in the Test to Stay program in week 2.
- 63% of the eligible students participated in the Test to Stay program in week 3.
- 63% of the eligible students participated in the Test to Stay program in week 4.

Weekly Totals	Direct Contacts Identified	Standard Quarantine	Pilot Program	Positive after 1st Test	Positive after 2nd Test	Completed Program	Days of In Person Learning Saved	Total Positive	Total Negative
Week 1	245	122	123	5	0	19	190	5	118
Week 2	240	98	142	4	2	115	1160	6	136
Week 3	139	52	87	2	1	112	1125	3	84
Week 4	166	46	105	1	1	89	895	2	103
Program Totals	790	318	457	12	4	335	3370	16	441
Percent of Total		40.25%	57.85%	2.63%	0.88%	73.30%		3.50%	96.50%

- Approximately 3370 in-person school days were saved during the 4 week Test to Stay program.

Program Observations & Lessons

How can a Test to Stay protocol assist school districts in identifying healthy students (students who do not have COVID-19) who have met the criteria of a school based direct contact?

The Test to Stay protocol provided data that school districts could use to make evidence-based decisions to identify whether a direct contact was infected with COVID-19 or healthy and able to safely continue in-person learning.

How can a Test to Stay program help us learn more about the rate of transmission of COVID-19 in school settings?

Of the students who participated in the program, 96.5% tested negative and were able to safely continue in-person learning.

How does the data compare between school districts who have some level of mask mandate compared to districts that have no mask mandate?

There was not an observable difference in positive test rates between districts with mask mandates and those without mask mandates.

When students follow the Test to Stay protocol, will we be able to safely protect in-person learning? The Test to Stay protocol includes COVID-19 testing twice in a seven day period and wearing a surgical style mask while at school during the 7 day quarantine period.

Yes, during the Test to Stay pilot program, there were approximately 3,370 in-person learning days saved.

How can the Test to Stay program help inform our next steps as we consider the next iteration of quarantine guidelines for the state of Ohio?

The Ohio Department of Health reviewed the pilot data weekly. At the end of the four week observation and in concert with other Test to Stay programs around the country, ODH decided to adopt a Mask to Stay and Test to Play options for Ohio schools.

Implications

Based on the low number of students that tested positive for COVID-19 during the quarantine observation period, previous findings were confirmed: There is a low probability of spread of COVID-19 in K-12 school settings among school age children. Out of 457 students who participated in the Test to Stay Pilot Program, 96.5% of students did not test positive for COVID-19. The observations from this program align with the Ohio State University study that was conducted with 9 Ohio K-12 School Districts during the winter of 2020 into the new year 2021. This study was conducted at the peak of the pandemic. You can [CLICK HERE](#) to review the findings from this 2020 Ohio State University evaluation study.

The methodology of the Test to Stay Pilot Program was almost identical to the Ohio Schools COVID-19 Evaluation. The major difference between the two programs was mask requirements. In the 2020 program, 100% of the students were required to wear masks 100% of the time. In the Test to Stay program, 50% of the districts required masking for students in preK-6 and 0% of the districts required masking for grades 7-12. The only students who were required to wear masks were students in the pilot program, who had a school-based close contact.

Monitoring for symptoms and testing remains a vital component to isolating positive cases and decreasing possible transmission of the COVID-19 virus. By incorporating strategic mask wearing and testing for students who are direct contacts, the pilot program allowed healthy students without COVID-19 to remain in school, protecting the continuity of their academic and social learning experience. At the end of the 4 week Warren County Test to Stay Pilot Program and the evaluation of other Test to Stay programs around the country, the Ohio Department of Health determined that the evidence supported the move to adopt a Mask to Stay and Test to Play option for Ohio schools. [CLICK HERE](#) to review the Mask to Stay and Test to Play Guidelines.

Program Participants and Program Partners

Warren County Test to Stay Pilot Program School District Participants

- Carlisle Local School District
- Clinton Massie Local School District
- Franklin City School District
- Kings Local School District
- Lebanon City School District
- Little Miami Local School District
- Mason City School District
- Monroe Local School District

- Springboro Community Schools
- Warren County Career Center
- Warren County ESC
- Wayne Local School District

Critical Program Partners

- Governor's Office - allocated necessary resources and access to the ODH leadership and COVID-19 expert team
- Ohio Department of Health - ongoing expert consultation and leadership provided by Director Dr. Bruce Vanderhoff, Assistant Director Lance Himes, Dr. Kristen Dickerson, Deputy Director Mark Hamlin and the rest of the ODH COVID leadership team
- Warren County Commissioners - provided essential funding for an additional nurse to each of the participating districts
- Warren County Combined Health District - participated in weekly support calls and provided necessary health orders for program implementation

Additional Resources

Ohio Quarantine Alternative Pilot Program Supporting Documents

- [Quarantine Alternative Pilot Program SOP- FINAL 091921.pdf](#)
- [Quarantine Alternative Pilot Program Consent Form - FINAL 091921.pdf](#)

Ohio Department of Health Guidelines

- [K-12 Guidance Change FINAL-102521.pdf](#)
- [Aug. 31 ODH K-12 Quarantine in Ohio](#)
- [ODH Guidelines for Quarantine after exposure in K-12 Settings Flowchart](#)
- [ODH Guidelines for Quarantine After Exposure in K-12 Classroom Settings Document](#)

Ohio Schools COVID-19 Evaluation Final Report - January 29, 2021

- The Ohio State University
- Wright State University
- Ohio University
- The Post-Acute Rapid Response Team
- Dayton Children's Hospital
- Research Triangle Institute, International
- The Ohio Colleges of Medicine Government Resource Center

Additional Supporting Literature

- [IN-PERSON SCHOOLING AND COVID-19 TRANSMISSION: A REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE](#) UNICEF December 10, 2020

- [Prevalence and risk factors for in-school transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in Massachusetts K-12 public schools, 2020-2021](#) MedRxiv September 26, 2021
- [School closures were over-weighted against the mitigation of COVID-19 transmission A literature review on the impact of school closures in the United States](#) Medicine: July 30, 2021 - Volume 100 - Issue 30

Final Report Details

- Final Report Review Team
 - Warren County Schools Superintendents
 - Warren County Combined Department of Health
 - Ohio Department of Health
 - MCS Executive Team
- Final Report Prepared by
 - Mason City Schools COVID-19 Leadership Team
 - Jonathan Cooper - MCS Superintendent | CEO
 - Heather Smith - MCS COVID-19 Lead Specialist
 - In consultation with The Ohio Department of Health

Program Limitations and Future Considerations

The pilot project was not a certified research study. The pilot was a program evaluation for the purpose of increasing our understanding of how to safely keep healthy students at school for in-person learning. School districts and communities could benefit from further research on COVID-19 in school settings including but not limited to: vaccination rates, masking, various mitigation measures, isolation periods, social emotional and academic learning impact, etc.