



Team members,

Schools across the state have worked hard to safely re-open their doors for in-person learning for Missouri students. Once open, schools must work equally as hard to keep their doors open. All of this is done while continuing to protect the health and safety of students and staff members. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) partnered with the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) and the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) to support their local efforts. This was done by providing an additional resource: the newly-available rapid antigen tests.

The federal government recently prioritized public and private K-12 institutions to receive the Abbott BinaxNOW rapid antigen test kits to test symptomatic school personnel and students for COVID-19. This nasal swab test must be administered by a health professional (e.g. a school nurse). It yields results in just 15 minutes. While DESE continues to urge families and school staff members to stay home when they aren't feeling well, we recognize how valuable these tests can be, especially during cold and flu season. This is because it helps quickly identify if an individual's mild symptoms are COVID-19 or some other illness.

State officials began shipping thousands of antigen test kits to participating public and private schools across the state last week. Nearly 330 districts/schools applied to participate. They requested approximately 589,000 test kits for use with symptomatic students and school personnel. Many districts/schools will perform these rapid tests onsite. This comes after receiving the appropriate consent from the staff member or the student's parent or guardian. Some K-12 institutions have partnered with their local health department or another medical provider in their community to assist in giving these tests. Positive and negative test results will be reported electronically to DHSS within 24 hours. Read more in DESE's October 26 news release here: [Missouri Sends Initial Shipment of Antigen Tests to Schools Statewide](#).

You can also click here to view the new [K-12 Antigen Testing Program visualization](#). It shows participating districts/schools, how many tests each institution requested, and the status of the statewide shipments. The original application window closed on October 21, 2020. But it is likely DESE will be able to open the application window again in the coming weeks for other districts/schools that wish to participate.

Like our colleagues across state government, our DESE team continues to stand ready to do all we can to provide our customers meaningful, effective service during the ongoing challenges presented by this pandemic.

Thank you,

Commissioner Margie Vandeven
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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