



Specimen Collection Best Practices:

Focus on young learners & students with disabilities

School COVID-19 Testing

Collecting specimens from very young students

- Logistics: Many districts find the solution is to bring a cart to the classroom for the youngest students. Other districts choose to bring students by the class to the testing site. It's recommended that pre-k students do not self-swab.
- Performing the test: Test administrators may want to try a few different tactics for performing the test on younger students.
 - Nasal Swab:
 - For some children, it may be helpful to gently hold the child's forehead to keep their head still during the swab.
 - Coaching the child to take some deep belly breaths from their mouth during the swab may help them stay relaxed.
 - You can try counting to five together to keep their attention on something other than the swab and help them understand when it will be finished.
 - You can suggest the child close their eyes as well.
 - Saliva
 - It helps to ask the child to think about their favorite food
- Talking about Testing: Here are some tips for explaining to young students about what to expect during a test:
 - Video: [Science for Kids - Nasal Swab](#)

Collecting specimens from students with disabilities

- To ensure reasonable accommodations are met, we encourage you to review [DESE's COVID-19 Information & Resources for Special Educators](#). This guidance includes:
 - Acknowledging that students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or otherwise rely on visual and facial cues to communicate may need to wear transparent masks; also, districts may also have to plan for the presence of an interpreter.
 - Use of transparent masks
- Tips for preparing students prior to the test:
 - Share a social story about the testing process (see below for an example)
 - Show a video of the process to watch in advance
 - Use neutral language to describe the process
 - Allow students to ask questions and share what their fears or concerns may be. Validate the concerns while giving factual information
 - If possible offer the actual items (like the swab) for students to touch/see to help demystify the process



- If possible, provide practice opportunities or opportunities for role play (this could even be with a stuffed toy or doll)
- Allow students to create a plan (what they will do, when, how)
- Tips for engaging students during the test:
 - Give students choice as possible (sit, stand or lie down; sit on hands or squeeze a ball; sing a song or count to 10; eyes open or closed etc.)
 - If helpful, maybe a teacher, para or student "buddy" could join the student
 - Provide instructions for what students can do/give them an active role in the process (something to hold, counting, etc.)
 - Explain what is going to happen and when
 - Tell students when/how you will touch them
- Additional Resources:
 - [Improving COVID-19 Testing for People with Disabilities and Unique Health Needs](#)
 - Social Story: [What if I need to be tested for COVID-19?](#) Developed by Community Autism Resources, this is a visual explanation of the swabbing process.