

CASE STUDY

Regular testing allows Baltimore City Public School System to make informed public health decisions for kids and families

Program snapshot

40,000+

students and staff tested weekly

125

locations given access to PCR pooled testing

Rapid antigen individual testing for positive pools

On-site staffing assistance on test days

Notable outcomes:

>70%

participation among students

Gave the district the confidence to relax social distancing and drop rotating schedules

Enabled the district to restore free meal, health care, and emotional support services

"Instead of just having to make blanket district-wide decisions, we actually have live-time data."

Cleo Hirsch
BCPSS Executive Director,
COVID Response

A new toolkit for the return to in-person learning

In January 2021, Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) was one of the first districts to reopen in Maryland. To maintain in-person learning, BCPSS leaders needed a consistent flow of public health data to guide strategic decisions.

Equipping every school for proactive decisions

Testing 40,000 K-8 students across 125 schools called for a sizable team. BCPSS hired a full-time health and safety coordinator at each school and Concentric provided test-day staffing support to ensure prompt results. Consistent data gave the schools flexibility to adjust plans for masking, social distancing, field trips, and extracurriculars to prevent outbreaks.

Family outreach communications built parents' confidence in pooled testing. Guides, such as a handy "if, then" chart for positive cases, empowered families to make informed choices at home and play a positive role in broader community health.

Building confidence throughout Baltimore City Public School System

Armed with testing data, BCPSS decided to bring kids back to the in-person learning, extracurriculars, and social aspects sorely missed during the shutdown. Parents felt better about letting kids enjoy activities outside of school knowing a test was around the corner. Open schools also meant restoring extended services like free meals, health care services, and emotional support resources.

Since launching, the program has become a focal point of BCPSS families' relationship with COVID. Consistent access to testing for students and staff instills peace of mind that the community has eyes on potential cases.

