The L2R Learning Network is...

• A platform for Washington schools to work together, learn together, and accelerate access to COVID-19 services in their school communities.

• A resource for those leading COVID-19 response programs for school communities.

• All Washington schools are welcome to engage with the Learning Network, not just those enrolled in the L2R program.

• Thank you for your commitment and hard work to keep our students, teachers, and staff safe and healthy during the return to in-person learning!

Visit our website to learn more!
This took kit assumes that your school has:

- A supply of COVID-19 tests
- Staff trained on test administration and registration/data software

If you do not have the above, please reach out to L2R for support at schools@healthcommonsproject.org.
LEARNING SESSION

Presented at the Learning Network event by Rebecca Pizzitola, L2R Program Manager, Health Commons Project
Responding to COVID-19 Outbreaks in Schools

Our North Star is keeping students, teachers, and staff safe during in-person learning.

Are you thinking:
‘I’m overwhelmed. How do I navigate all these policies? Where do I start?’

• **Partner with your L2R Program Manager:**
  - L2R’s team at Health Commons Project provides technical support to quickly develop and scale your testing program through the end of the school year. We are here to help you design COVID-19 services that meet your needs and implement best practices learned from other L2R schools.

• **Partner closely with your Local Health Jurisdiction:**
  - LHJs provide public health guidance on your school’s COVID-19 mitigation strategy and can serve as a point-of-contact for questions and information for the community-at-large.

How do you prepare for an OUTBREAK?

**First of all....what is a COVID-19 outbreak?**
The WA Department of Health (DOH) says, for K-12 schools, an outbreak is when all the following criteria have been met:

- There are 2+ laboratory-positive COVID-19 cases among students or staff.
- The positive cases exhibit symptoms within 14-days of each other.
- The cases are epidemiologically linked.
- The cases do not share a household.
- The cases are not close contacts of each other in another setting during the investigation.

For more, see the *WA DOH Supplemental Considerations to Mitigate COVID-19 Transmission in K-12 Schools* (published on 13 September 2021).
How do you prepare for an OUTBREAK?

Align & Design

• Meet with your LHJ to determine:
  1. The COVID-19 tests you will use during an outbreak (e.g., rapid antigen, PCR, rapid PCR)
  2. The protocols for isolation/quarantine and/or test-to-stay that will be implemented.

• Submit a proposal to implement a test-to-stay strategy to your LHJ for approval unless the LHJ already has a policy they require you to use.

Resources:

Review your implementation checklist

• Do you have COVID-19 test kits?
• Do you have staff who are trained to use those test kits and the registration/data software platform?

Develop your outbreak plan

• Establish roles and responsibilities for your school’s COVID-19 response team to ensure a coordinated response.

• Develop procedures for identifying close contacts from school records.

• Confirm that you have school staff capacity to fill those roles, including administering/observing tests and performing case investigation and contact tracing in your school.

Tip!
Have seating charts for all schools and buses (and, if available, easy access to video recordings on buses to confirm the seating arrangement).
Test-to-stay is a policy that reduces lost learning days – and lost teaching days – for students and staff.

When someone is exposed, they may be able to stay in school if they:

1. Remain asymptomatic
2. Test regularly during the period during which they might otherwise quarantine
3. Wear a mask
4. Do not participate in extracurricular activities

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**OUTBREAK! now what?**

- **Develop your communications plan for outbreaks:**
  - Confirm that you have letters drafted to inform families and staff about COVID-19 cases, outbreaks, and mitigation strategies in multiple languages.
  - Communicate with parents/guardians the importance of notifying the school if their child has COVID-19 or has been exposed.
  - Assign a point-of-contact at the school who can be available for questions from and provide more information for staff/students/families.

- **Notify and continue to partner with your LHJ:**
  - Schools may know about cases and potential cases before the LHJ and can help reduce the extent of an outbreak. Schools can expedite outbreak mitigation by collaborating with their LHJs to:
    - Investigate the outbreak and conduct contact tracing.
    - Establish a COVID-19 testing strategy for all close school contacts and, ideally, their families/households.
• **Conduct immediate contact tracing:**
  - Identify all students and staff members who have been in close contact with the infected student or staff member.
  - Review each individual's path during the day: Did they take a school bus? Where did they eat lunch? Did they participate in extracurricular activities? With whom did they come into contact?

• **Work with your LHJ to design a testing strategy**
  - There are several strategies you can explore with your LHJ to quickly implement outbreak testing. Find the one that is best suited for your context.

| Where will you test? | Pop-up clinic in a school building or district office  
| Walk-up, drive-up, or drive-thru site in a school parking lot (fastest option if testing volumes will be high) |
| Who will help you quickly scale up testing? | Anyone 18+ who has completed the test vendor’s training can be a test administrator/observer  
| Use a train-the-trainer model to rapidly onboard staff who may not have been involved in the diagnostic testing program |
| What do you need? | Confirm which test type you will use and how you will be using each |

• **Start testing!**
  - Review your checklist depending on which type of test you will be using.

**PCR testing checklist:**

| Supplies | Test kits & PPE*  
| Consent forms (printed or electronic, depending on test vendor)  
| Discharge sheets with next steps (e.g., isolation/quarantine) |
| Communications | Information for families who have been exposed about how to get tested  
| Include location & hours of operation for testing site  
| Include vendor link for pre-registration when possible (saves time in line!) |
| Staffing | Trained staff for patient registration/consent and test administration/observation  
| Trained staff for outbreak mitigation (e.g., contact tracing) |
Rapid antigen checklist:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplies</th>
<th>Communications</th>
<th>Staffing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Test kits &amp; PPE*</td>
<td>- Information for families who have been exposed about how to get tested</td>
<td>- Trained staff for patient registration/consent and test administration/observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consent forms (printed or electronic, depending on test vendor)</td>
<td>- Include location &amp; hours of operation for testing site</td>
<td>- Trained staff for outbreak mitigation (e.g., contact tracing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Discharge sheets with next steps (e.g., isolation/quarantine)</td>
<td>- Include SimpleReport link for pre-registration</td>
<td>- Trained staff for resulting: call positives and/or ensure patients opt-in to receive results via text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Timers, space, and flat surfaces for resulting to avoid cross-contamination</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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- **Implement your outbreak plan!**
  - Contact trace
  - Test (isolation/quarantine versus test-to-stay)
  - Communicate
  - Mitigate

- **Share your lessons learned and best practices with your peers through the L2R Learning Network!**

Sources:
CASE STUDY

Presented at the Learning Network event by Kimberly Stoll-French COVID-19 Testing Coordinator Ocosta Elementary School
Responding to COVID-19 Outbreaks in Schools

OCOSTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (~300 students)

• **Outbreak preparation**
  - Roles and responsibilities defined.
  - Close coordination with LHJ established to align on outbreak strategy before start of school year.
  - Clear communication to families about COVID-19 symptoms & what to do if a child is sick.
  - School-based testing through L2R in place.
  - COVID-19 response teams trained to administer/observe tests.
  - Conducted contact tracing, including communications with families about positives, keeping seating charts updated and easily accessible, etc.
  - Prepared draft notification letters to families.

• **Outbreak!**
  - 30 cases total since the start of school year.
  - 7 cases were connected to one specific bus, even though everyone on the bus was masked and all the windows were down.

**Reminder!**

An outbreak is defined as 2 or more positive cases from different households who are not otherwise close contacts of one another.

• **Outbreak response**
  - Immediately notified LHJ about the first case.
  - Worked in close coordination with their LHJ to start contact tracing.
  - Reviewed classroom seating charts and the video from the bus to confirm close contacts.
  - Monitored symptoms of close contacts. Paid close attention to the date of exposure and students who may have had a connection outside of school (i.e., club sports, parents who work together).
  - Online reporting through Curative and SimpleReport. Also maintained a spreadsheet of all the positives and their close contacts in the school and the community, which was shared with LHJ.
  - Used rapid antigen tests from sports screening testing supply with PCR confirmation for a positive or suspicious negative.
  - Offered daily testing at school.
  - Communicated with and offered testing to affected families given no community-based test sites nearby, when staff/supplies were available.
• **On the safe side**
  • It was difficult to ensure that we had identified all the exposures so...
  • With guidance from LHJ, Ocosta decided to shut down two classrooms and a bus.

• **Lesson learned**
  • **Staff Ready & Set:** Ensure that you have the staff ready and able to take on established roles and responsibilities during an outbreak since the workload of testing, contact tracing, and communications (with the LHJ, with affected students and families, and with the broader school community) can add up quickly.
  
  • **Communicate, Communicate, Repeat, Communicate:** Be prepared to reinforce the quarantine guidelines. Policy differences and changes for quarantine length between vaccinated and unvaccinated can be confusing and frustrating for families and staff alike. Make sure your communication around quarantine is clear and consistent – and regularly communicated to affected students and families.

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**For more information**

Contact us at schools@healthcommonsproject.org or visit us at learntoreturn.org