We have been advocating for COVID-19 Test Kits for a number of weeks and received 1800 BinaxNOW COVID-19 Ag Cards just last week from the Department of Behavioral and Community Health (DBCH). The BinaxNOW™ COVID-19 Ag Card is a type of test called an “antigen test.” On Tuesday, February 23, 2021, the Board of Education (BOE) approved all Fall II sports to take place including high-risk sports (cheerleading, volleyball, and 8-man football). The BOE also approved mandated COVID-19 testing of all athletes participating in Fall II sports, along with asymptomatic surveillance testing (random testing of students and staff who do not have COVID-19 symptoms).

We join with a few other Dutchess County School Districts who also are engaging in COVID-19 testing. We are thrilled to add this extra layer of mitigation to our current practices which include face coverings, hand hygiene, social distancing, and ongoing sanitizing/disinfecting of high-touch surfaces throughout our buildings. COVID-19 testing will allow us to closely monitor the health and safety of our athletes as well as our overall school community.

At our Board meeting on January 12, 2021, the Board approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Dutchess County. This MOU allows for the administering of this testing here on campus. We will be working under the DBCH’s Limited Service Lab (LSL). Staff members including our nurses have been fully trained and are ready to implement our testing program.

Our COVID-19 Testing Program includes 2 phases. Phase 1 is the mandated testing of all of our Fall II athletes. This will require all families of athletes to consent to testing. A waiver to participate in the high-risk sports during this season will also have to be submitted. Registration for all sports (both high risk and non-high-risk) will be processed through FamilyID. We wish we could have included Winter sports in this testing program, but unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, these test kits were not made available to us until just last week.

All of the tests provided have a shelf life. This first delivery of tests expires on March 22, 2021. We received a second delivery from the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). These tests expire in May. Fortunately, we now have enough to complete our Fall II sports, and all our high-risk sports will be completed in that season. We will advocate for more test kits in an effort to continue our program, but there are no guarantees.

Testing of student-athletes will take place first thing in the morning once per week between 7:45 and 8:15. Student-athletes who are remote learners will be required to come to campus once each week during this time frame to be tested as well. Student-athletes will have the choice to self-administer their test or request the assistance of one of our trained staff members administering the test. Test results take about 15 minutes. If a student tests positive, we will follow the procedures we already have in place which include escorting the student to an Isolation Room (there is one in every building), coordinating parent/guardian pick up, and disinfecting any affected areas. We will also conduct contact tracing, as the situation warrants.

Phase 2 is asymptomatic surveillance testing. This is the random testing of both students and staff. An electronic consent form will be shared with families and staff who would like to participate in the program. Participation is purely voluntary. We will share more details regarding the rollout of this phase after we implement Phase 1.

Carefully developed procedures for testing, data collection, and reporting to the NYSDOH are in place to ensure efficiency, accuracy, and student privacy. NYSDOH Results Sheet will be sent home with each tested student, with a designation of “Detected” or “Not Detected.”
I want to thank our nurses, administrative team, coaches, trainer, and Athletic Director for their commitment to getting our sports program up and running and for developing a testing program that will help us keep our fingers on the pulse of the health and safety of our school community. I also want to thank the County, DBCH, and NYSDOH for providing these test kits and for their ongoing support and guidance during these very challenging times. They have never been more than a phone call away.

If you have questions that pertain to testing, please reach out to our school nurses. If your questions are sports-related, please reach out to Al Hammell, Athletic Director.

Elm Drive Nurse: Ms. Sarah Wertz (sarah.wertz@millbrookcsd.org, x5104)
Alden Place Nurse: Ms. Rosanne Halvorsen (rosanne.halvorsen@millbrookcsd.org, x4104)
Middle School Nurse: Ms. Raina Monahan (raina.monahan@millbrookcsd.org, x3111)
High School Nurse: Ms. Julie Zengen (julie.zengen@millbrookcsd.org, x2311)
Athletic Director: Mr. Al Hammell (alfred.hammell@millbrookcsd.org, x2123)

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Laura,
Your Proud Superintendent of Schools