Massachusetts is ending its state-wide testing program, so they will not continue it into the next school year. This was recently announced in a memo from State Education Commissioner Jeffery Reilly.

“The end of the 2021-22 school year will mark the end of the state-run, state-coordinated K-12 testing program, although districts and schools will have access to state-provided self-tests to conduct symptomatic testing themselves during summer school,” Riley wrote in the May 24 memo.

The decision comes mainly as a result of declining COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts. State data has shown reduced transmission of the virus in schools as well, to the point where state officials believe the close-tracking from testing is not necessary.

If individual schools, like BISB, want to continue testing next school year, they will have to purchase self-tests through the statewide contract. The state strongly recommends that if schools continue testing, they only test symptomatic students or faculty.

If whole school districts want to continue testing, they’d have to earmark additional funds outside of their existing programming to purchase it from the schools. There are concerns regarding the equity of this since purchasing testing kits would be significantly more difficult in underfunded and less-resourced school districts.

There are, however, people who continue to have concerns about the end of the testing program. One of these people, Dr. Cassandra Pierre, referenced the high number of child cases and deaths during the Omicron surge earlier this year, to show that students can still be at significant risk. She is most frightened about the spread of asymptomatic COVID-19 cases without testing in place. Dr. Pierre elaborated on her concerns.

“One of the concerns I have is the language that we see shifting where you now are hearing that testing is a burden or an imposition that we’re forcing on our children rather than the resource that it is,” Pierre [told GBH](https://www.wgbh.org/news/education/2022/05/31/state-to-drop-funding-for-school-covid-testing). “This disease has kind of highlighted our interconnectedness. So children can transmit to their parents, to their grandparents, to other vulnerable members of the community.”

Others want to see new methods for monitoring the virus. President of the Massachusetts Teachers Association, Mierre Najimy, would like to see schools track COVID presence in wastewater.

“If we’re going to take away rapid testing, it needs to be replaced with some kind of tool that’s still going to help us understand the rates of infection — school by school and town by town,” Najimy said.

BISB will have to make a decision for the next school year about how much, if any, testing they will do.