

# Nearly 60 public schools are part of surveillance COVID testing program



By Mahealani Richardson

Published: Oct. 20, 2021 at 3:46 PM HST | Updated: Oct. 20, 2021 at 4:47 PM HST

HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) - Nearly 60 public schools have been part of a statewide surveillance COVID testing program aimed at stopping the virus from spreading.

Testing at schools is voluntary and it's administered by the school itself.

With 10 swirls of a swab in each nostril, keiki at Aikahi Elementary make COVID testing look easy.

"It tickles a little bit," said Riku Kikuhara Talvala, who's in first grade.

About 75% of the Aikahi Elementary school students, teachers and staff are taking part in surveillance COVID testing. That's more than 400 people.

"This is to protect us," said Skya Lander, who's in the fourth grade.

"If we get COVID that's really bad," she added.

Twice a month, about 55 people are chosen at random for the test, which is administered by school staff.

Riku described it as "fun" because he could pull down his mask for the test.

For Aikahi, there hasn't been a single positive test from the surveillance testing.

"These kids are incredibly resilient and I'm happy that we have measures to track and make sure we are doing the best we can with safety here," said mother Krista Lander, who's part of the school's safety hui.

Making it through the first quarter of school in the middle of the Delta surge was a challenge.

"I have asthma so sometimes I'm at high risk of getting COVID so if I get COVID it's kind of a big deal so sometimes it's kind of scary," said Isalyn Persaud, who's in fifth grade.

Principal Keoki Fraser says he's thankful to have the tools to keep kids safe so they can focus on school, each other and on having as normal a year as possible.

"It's been crazy. It's been hard and also fun and neat on how to make this all work so that the kids learn and do all the things that they've always done," said Fraser.

"To see the smiles on their faces makes it all worth it," he added.

Copyright 2021 Hawaii News Now. All rights reserved.