

Private schools in Massachusetts to get rapid COVID-19 testing

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Demonstrating the deep class chasm when it comes to the pandemic, the Broad Institute is providing select private schools with concierge testing to facilitate their back to school efforts.

Broad is a nonprofit biomedical research center in Cambridge, Massachusetts and part of the far-flung Broad Foundation. Nationally, the foundation set up by billionaire Eli Broad is best known for its school privatization policies, including the training of school superintendents through the Broad Academy.

In Massachusetts, Broad has partnered with the Cambridge Innovation Center (CIC) and PWNHealth, a clinician network, to providing some private institutions regularly scheduled, bulk COVID-19 testing, guaranteeing test results within 24 hours. Such regular testing and quick responses are inaccessible to tens of millions of Americans.

The partnership, called Assurance Testing Alliance, sends test kits to schools where students, faculty and staff self-administer (or, in the case of young students, are administered) the nasal tests. They also ship the tests back to the Broad Institute's lab and provide training, set up for the collection, a software portal to receive results, and various administrative and logistic coordination.

To qualify for this program, schools must commit to testing at a rate of once or twice a week or daily, with at least 1,000 tests to be administered in the fall. At \$48-60 per test, the cost is \$50,000 and up.

The World Socialist Website has described COVID-19 “a poor man’s virus.” It is also “a poor child’s virus.” Regular testing is one of the crucial factors necessary to contain the spread of COVID-19, but frequent testing of an entire school is only available to the wealthiest private schools in America. The message is clear: send your child to a private school

and they can be as safe as money can buy; meanwhile, public schools will be enormous vectors of death and disease.

That the tests are guaranteed to be returned within 24 hours, while most Americans suffering from the symptoms are left waiting for days and even weeks to get their results, further demonstrates the inhumanity of the ruling class’s response to the pandemic. The technology and resources for reliable access to testing with fast results exist, but with no significant investment given to public testing, only rich can qualify.

Frankly, even with testing, opening private schools amidst a raging pandemic is by no means “safe.” Depending on the type of school, students and/or faculty and staff must commute to school and testing, especially self-administered testing, is imperfect. Anything less than daily testing in such a setting leaves plenty of time for asymptomatic carriers to spread the disease.

As the World Socialist Web Site noted this week, overall testing for COVID-19 continue at depressed levels even as public schools and universities reopen and cases continue to climb. The average number of tests on a given day is currently 14 percent lower than its high on July 29, despite the total number of known cases rising 26 percent—1.2 million infections—over that same period.

Broad is apparently also selling its testing services to colleges and universities in Massachusetts, the Commonwealth and the city of Cambridge for select groups such as those in senior housing and long-term care.

Fully titled the Eli and Edythe L. Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, this is far from the Broad family’s first foray into education. The Eli and Edythe Broad

Foundation has lobbied for, supported and financed for-profit charter schools to the tune of tens of millions of dollars, and even wrote a guide to closing public schools. The Broad Center for the Management of School Systems, which has recently been moved to the Yale School of Management, is a training program that teaches school administrator careerists how to turn education into a profit machine; its graduates have gone on to devastate education in Detroit, Chicago, Oakland and elsewhere.

In effect, Broad, together with a web a similar big business foundations such as Gates, Carnegie, and Walton, have developed a whole organizational infrastructure in education policy, including charter schools, advocacy organization, education consulting and research organizations and countless nonprofits—all aimed at destroying public schools and fully opening the education “market” to Wall Street.

The Cambridge Innovation Center (CIC) is a real estate service, which typically rents office space to tech startups. With more people working from home, the CIC was almost certainly losing out on rent it could typically rely on, giving it a vested interest in engineering ways to convince companies it is safe enough to reopen their offices.

Notably, the CIC was founded by two MIT alumni, Timothy Rowe and Andrew Olmsted. The connection to MIT between the CIC and the Broad Institute, and who is being offered this service, does not come as a surprise. Competitive private schools in Greater Boston often serve as a funnel to elite universities in the Northeast, including MIT and Harvard. Wealthy parents often consider the tuition for these schools, which can run at least as high as \$50,000 a year, an investment that gives their children a greater chance at being admitted to incredibly competitive universities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated all pre-existing inequalities in American life. Whether it be quality of education, access to elite universities, or health and life itself, the ruling class hoards what it can for itself and leaves the working class struggling to survive.



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