

Pooled Testing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

More information for families can be found here,
<https://www.concentricbyginkgo.com/families/>

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF POOLED TESTING?

- Children participating are less likely to need to be quarantined
- The pooled test is a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, which is considered the “gold standard” of COVID-19 testing. It can detect the virus at incredibly low levels, catching COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals before they become symptomatic or infectious.
- Pooled PCR testing is another tool, along with masking, handwashing, and isolating symptomatic individuals, to keep communities safe, reduce transmission, and build confidence that it’s safe to go to school.
- Pooled testing provides additional information to school buildings and the district about the prevalence of the virus in our school community.

CAN STAFF AND STUDENTS BE REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE IN POOLED TESTING?

No. Pooled testing is a voluntary program. Parents must sign a consent form in order for their child to participate. However, students who do not participate and who are identified as close contacts will need to quarantine and be out of school for that period of time.

WHICH STAFF MEMBERS ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN POOLED TESTING?

Staff can participate if they are available to provide a sample for a classroom pool.

HOW OFTEN WILL MY CHILD BE TESTED?

One day per week, each student who is enrolled in the program will be given a nasal swab. Each student will put the swab just inside each nostril, and then all the swabs will be placed in one testing tube.

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HOW LONG DOES POOLED TESTING TAKE?

Testing an entire classroom or cohort usually takes about 10-15 minutes and speeds up after the first day. Each pool will consist of samples from 10 to 20 people.

HOW LONG ARE THE SWABS?

They are short nasal swabs that go just half an inch into the nostril – they are similar to cotton swabs. If students have trouble performing the swabbing, the school nurse or other trained staff member can help. However, the test is so easy that kindergarteners typically can do it. The company we are partnering with in our pooled testing program, [Concentric](#), likes to say: “If you can pick your nose, you can take this test!” To quote a sixth-grader, “The test is not bad at all. It just tickles.”

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE SWABS ARE PLACED IN ONE TEST TUBE?

The tube will be sent to a lab. In about 48 hours, the school nurse will see the results of the test.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE POOLED TEST IS NEGATIVE?

If the tube, or “pool,” is negative, nothing needs to be done. The class will continue to be tested on a regular weekly basis.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE POOLED TEST IS POSITIVE?

If a tube is positive, each person in that group must have another test. The school nurse will do a rapid BinaxNOW test at school for each individual.

- Each student that has a negative BinaxNOW test can return to class.
- Any student who has a positive BinaxNOW test result must stay in the isolation area of the nurse’s office and their parent/guardian will be notified. The parent/guardian must come to school to pick up their child. A student who is positive for COVID cannot stay in school and cannot ride the bus home. Please have

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a plan to pick up your child from school during school hours in the event your child becomes ill. Be sure the school has your most up-to-date contact information.

DO STUDENTS AND STAFF NEED TO QUARANTINE IF THEY ARE CLOSE CONTACTS OF SOMEONE IN THEIR POOL WHO TESTS POSITIVE?

- Any student who is a close contact and IS part of pooled testing, can continue to come to school as long as they do not have symptoms of COVID. Students who are part of pooled testing may continue to come to school because they are being tested weekly for COVID.
- Anyone who is a close contact of a positive case and is NOT part of pooled testing will need to quarantine for 10 days. A COVID test is recommended 5-7 days from exposure.
- Note: Any student who has symptoms of COVID – regardless if they are part of pooled testing or not – must stay home until symptoms have resolved and/or they have been cleared by their physician.

CAN A PARENT OF A CHILD NOT PARTICIPATING IN THE TESTING PROGRAM HAVE THEIR CHILD TESTED TO GET OUT OF QUARANTINE AND RETURN TO SCHOOL?

Our schools will not accept a one-time test to get out of quarantine. Testing options vary and some are not as sensitive as a PCR test in detecting COVID-19. Additionally, the student placed in quarantine was not tested at the time the positive case was identified, nor will they be tested each week moving forward; thus, a one-time test is not helpful in monitoring the student.

HOW WILL POOL TESTING BE FUNDED?

The pooled testing program is funded by the Maine Department of Education and is free to students and staff who participate.