

What is pooled testing?

Pooling samples involves mixing several samples together in a "batch" or pooled sample, then testing the pooled sample. This approach increases the number of individuals that can be tested while reducing resources required for testing.

What is the purpose of pool testing?

Our participation in the Maine PCR Pooled Testing Program is an additional safety measure for our district as we return to full in-person learning this fall. Pooled testing is an essential tool in our efforts to secure a full return to school, to identify asymptomatic students, and to control the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (COVID-19) in our community. Pooled testing allows for testing in a more efficient way to test large groups of students and staff in schools on a weekly basis. This approach provides us with insight into the effectiveness of our mitigation efforts within our schools, and helps us to identify if other measures need to be taken. Pooled testing is highly recommended by Maine CDC, DOE and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

What are the benefits of pooled testing when children 12 years and older are now being vaccinated?

- While children 12 and older are eligible to be vaccinated, there are many families that are hesitant or concerned about vaccinating their child, which will delay any herd immunity among children 12 and older.
- Children under the age of 12 are currently not eligible for COVID-19 vaccine.
- It takes 5 weeks to reach full protection from vaccination, so it will take time before every child is vaccinated and gains full protection.
- While we know vaccines are highly effective, there are cases of "break-through" COVID-19, or cases of COVID-19 in individuals who are fully vaccinated. These cases could impact other people, including unvaccinated or immunocompromised children and adults.
- Regular testing is one way to detect variants before they spread.
- 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.

When will testing begin?

Testing is tentatively scheduled to begin on September 13, 2021.

What grade levels are included in this testing program?

This voluntary testing program is being offered to all students and staff in grades K-12.

Will staff be included in the testing?

Yes, teachers will voluntarily be tested in the same pool as their students.

If I do not give consent for my child, do I have to fill anything out?

No. You do not need to fill anything out if you are choosing to opt out of pooled testing.

Who is managing the list of students who consented versus those that did not?

Can teachers access this list?

The school will retain all of the consent forms for the students. At the beginning of each testing day, teachers will be given a roster of students whose legal guardians have given consent. Only students with completed consent forms will be able to contribute to the pooled test.

Does a second consent form need to be completed for the rapid test?

Consent for pooled testing includes: (a) administer pooled testing; (b) administer follow-up testing, and (c) share individual test results with the Maine CDC via REDCap. All three components of consent are included in the single pooled testing consent form provided by the Service Testing Provider; individuals who do not provide all three components of consent cannot participate in the pooled testing program.

Can I change my consent?

Yes. This can be done at any time. You will need to send an email to your child's school nurse to be removed from pooled testing. Please send an email by Thursday of each week if you would like your child to be removed from pooled testing.

Is there a video that explains the process?

Yes, please [CLICK HERE](#) to see a video.

What does the process of sample collecting entail?

To learn more about what happens on test day and how samples are collected, please click the links below:

[Nasal Swab Self-Collection Instructions](#)

[Sample Collection Overview](#)

What type of swab is used for this test?

This is a gentle, self-collected anterior nasal (AN) swab. For staff and for students in second grade and up, the test can be conducted by self-collection. Younger students may be able to do self-collection with instruction and hand-over-hand training.

Who in the CESD sees the results of testing?

School administrators are notified if there is a positive test result but not the identity of the individual(s). The school nurses and pooled testing coordinator may have

discussions with school staff to help identify close contacts, but the privacy of the individual(s) who test positive is a priority.

How will pools be created?

Groups will be clustered by grade, cohort and proximity.

How does the Concentric program use my child's data?

Per Concentric: Concentric and Ginkgo collect no individuals' information; all information is stored outside of Concentric and Ginkgo's lab systems in our third-party partners' HIPAA compliant systems. These partners only collect the necessary information to provide results back in accordance with CLIA regulation and to report to public health authorities. In all cases, all data will be handled in accordance with HIPAA compliance.

What is the timeline of testing and results?

One day each week (days to be determined), students and staff will self-administer their own sample collection. Samples are then sent via FedEx. Within 24-48 hours of receiving the priority package, results are delivered electronically through a confidential database to the building administration. At this time, we will review the results and contact appropriate families. This process will begin again the following week.

How often will testing occur?

Testing will take place once a week.

How quickly will results be returned?

Samples will be sent out the same day that they are taken. Results will be released approximately 24-48 hours after the lab receives them. If a pool tests positive, families and staff within that pool will be notified.

Will contact tracing occur with this process?

Yes. Students in a positive pool will be given the rapid antigen test (BinaxNow) to determine the positive student. If your child was in close contact with the positive student, you will be notified and required to follow the quarantine guidance.

What if my child or staff member has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past?

Will they still be tested?

Individuals who have recently tested positive for COVID-19 will not be included in pooled testing for at least 3 months post recovery, as they may still produce a positive test result.

What happens if my child's pool test comes back negative?

Families participating in pooled testing will only be notified if their child was part of a positive pool. Positive students and close contacts will be directly contacted by the school nurse. If a pool results negative, children continue to attend school without incident and will be tested again the following week.

What happens if my child's pool test comes back positive?

Positive test results will be communicated to you directly by your child's school.

Students and staff in the positive pool will then take individual diagnostic antigen tests (BinaxNow) at school. Those students and/or staff identified as positive will then be contacted to follow current quarantine procedures as specified in the Maine CDC/DOE Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

Unvaccinated students and staff participating in the testing program who have been identified as a close contact of a confirmed case, regardless of whether they were a member of the identified positive pool, do not need to quarantine so long as they are enrolled in the testing program. These individuals should remain in school and continue to participate in the weekly pooled PCR testing program.

However, any unvaccinated student or staff member who is not participating in Maine's Pooled PCR Testing Program and/or is unwilling to get follow-up BinaxNOW testing as part of a positive pool and is identified as a close contact of a confirmed case will need to quarantine for 10 days.

What if a student is absent?

If a student is absent on the day that the test is administered, they will not be included in that day's pool test results. If the pool test result is positive, you will be given the option to take the individual for a diagnostic antigen test.

If my student is absent or opts out of testing, will I still be notified if their class pool results are positive?

If a student is absent from school the day of testing, or did not consent to testing, parents will receive an email that indicates an event has occurred in their school, as we would do for any positive case. They would also be notified if they are considered a close contact to the individual who tests positive.

If I've opted out of testing, will my child still have to take the diagnostic antigen test if the class pool has a positive result?

No. If you have opted your child out of the pool testing, your child will not be tested in school with a rapid antigen test if his/her class pool tests positive. It will be recommended that your child is tested at a [community test site](#) or by a medical provider within 5-7 days from last known exposure to the individual who tested positive. If your child is not vaccinated and is identified as a close contact to the individual who tests

positive, your child will need to quarantine for 10 days from last known exposure to the individual who tested positive.

If I've opted out of both pool and individual testing, will my child have to quarantine if they are deemed a close contact of a positive classmate?

Yes. Current safety guidelines will continue to apply to all students and staff. The quarantine guidelines will be different for individuals who are vaccinated.

If my child is participating in the pooled testing program and is in a positive pool, but can produce a negative test result, can he/she return to participation in athletics?

Yes. If a student tests negative in a rapid test, they can return to athletics.

If my child is in a positive pool, but can produce a negative test result, can he/she attend day programs (i.e. Community Services)?

The decision to allow students to attend day programs is to be decided by each individual organization. You are encouraged to contact them directly.

I have multiple students in different schools and classes. What happens when one of them tests positive?

If a pool tests positive, individuals within that pool are not considered positive until they have taken an individual test. Family members are not affected until a student tests positive on an individual test.

Does participation in pool testing prevent quarantine if someone is identified as a close contact from a community related exposure?

The exemption from quarantine through participation in the pool testing program applies **only** to school related exposures. If an unvaccinated individual is identified as a close contact from a community/family exposure, the CDC will require quarantine.