

[5th SOP for school year 2021-2022](#)

The Maine Department of Education (DOE) highlighted changes that are included in the new Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) release on January 11, 2022. This provided further modification of the 4th SOP released in late December, 2021.

The changes that were made in that 4th SOP remain. There are a few key additions around pooled testing programs, including the following:

- The need to conduct close contact tracing is reduced when positive cases are discovered during pooled testing. This means that if we find a positive case in a pool of, for instance, eleven students, in the past we would trace all the close contacts of that student. Now, because the Maine Center for Disease Control (MCDC) sees that some schools are struggling to keep up with all the work, they have allowed that the close contact tracing does not have to happen. Instead, a more general notification can go out alerting families that there was a positive case instead of specifically telling a family that a certain student is a close contact.
- For similar reasons, of concerns for schools keeping up with the work, the MCDC has said that a school doesn't necessarily have to test every person in a positive pool. The way it works now is that if a pool is identified as having a positive then every individual is given a follow-up test so we can identify the person who has COVID. The MCDC says that now, if schools are lacking in resources and staffing, they can select at-risk individuals to conduct follow-up testing on instead of the entire pool of people. In Brewer we plan on continuing to test everyone in a positive pool as in the past as long as we are sent enough BINAX Now tests to replenish the kits we are using up in current testing.

We received clarification that in order to be considered a district that universally masks, all student athletes must be fully masked while engaged in a competition. This goes for our musicians and theater students. As long as it is a school-related activity we have to have students masked.

If a district is practicing universal masking then they do not have to quarantine any close contacts who do not have symptoms. This means hundreds of Brewer students can remain in school. Therefore, based on these additional rules from the MCDC we need to make these adjustments.