

School-Based Pooled Testing:

Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Department of Education (DOE) have implemented a pooled PCR testing program, available to public and private schools (private Pre-K only programs are not eligible to apply). Pooled testing involves mixing several test samples together in a “batch” or “pool” and then testing the pooled sample with a PCR test for detection of SARS-CoV-2. The number of students in a pool are determined by school county color: 25 per pool if green and 10 per pool if yellow. Pooled testing will be administered at school either by trained school staff, including school nurses, or onsite test specimen collectors.

If a pooled test result is negative, then all individuals within that pool are presumed negative and may remain in school. If a pooled test result is positive, then all individuals in the pool must be retested individually. The Abbott BinaxNOW rapid point-of-care antigen test will be the primary source of this individual follow-up testing. SAUs that are not already enrolled in the Abbott BinaxNOW initiative are invited to complete that process.

Example of Weekly Overview for Pooled PCR Testing Program

Day*	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Test Type	Pooled PCR samples are collected	Results from pooled PCR testing returns in 24-48 hours		BinaxNOW antigen testing	Second round of BinaxNOW antigen testing
Action	Pooled samples are delivered to lab for processing.	If a positive PCR test returns from a pool, then BinaxNOW is performed on those who were in the pool the same or next day.		If a positive case is identified using the BinaxNOW, then the case leaves school and isolates.	This will only occur if the first round of BinaxNOW testing did not detect a positive case. All students will remain in school if the second round does not identify a positive case and no further testing will occur until the next designated pooled PCR testing day.

*Schools will have a designated day to perform pooled testing, but not every schools pooled testing day will be Monday.

Schools that choose to participate in the Pooled PCR Testing program are not required to adhere to 3-foot spacing recommendations in school, except during meals, where 6-feet of distancing still applies. Moving below the 3-foot distancing recommendation applies only to schools where 30% of the students/staff

participate in the Pooled PCR Testing program. If a school is in an outbreak status, then spacing requirements may return. For further guidance on pooled testing protocol and guidance, please review the materials provided in Maine Pooled PCR Testing Guidance for K-12 Schools and Maine’s K-12 Pooled PCR Testing Program Frequently Asked Questions including required steps to participate, preconditions for pooled testing, vendor information, and logistics.