

# REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT 26

**ASA C. ADAMS SCHOOL - ORONO MIDDLE SCHOOL - ORONO HIGH SCHOOL**

**10 Goodridge Drive, Orono, Maine 04473 - (207) 866-7110**

RSU 26 Families,

In RSU 26, we seek to maintain a safe environment for employees, students, families, and the community. To support those goals, the State of Maine has partnered with [Concentric by Ginkgo](#) to provide an optional and **FREE POOLED TESTING PROGRAM** for all Maine schools. RSU 26 has joined this program beginning this fall.

**GOAL of Pooled Testing:** Keeping children in school full-time, safely and successfully in the fall of 2021 requires that we know about and respond to the potential spread of COVID-19 in our schools. While vaccines are the best protection, these are not yet available to all children and variants make COVID 19 unpredictable. Pooled testing offers the most efficient way to know about and limit COVID-19 in our schools.

We are encouraging each family to participate in this program to help safeguard the wellbeing of our entire school community. **Please sign the consent request linked below...an overview of pooled testing follows on next page to hopefully answer questions you may have about this program.**

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To get started, fill out the consent form with your permission to perform a COVID-19 pooled test for your student. This process should take no more than 5 min. to complete using a computer or a smartphone.

1. First, [click here \(https://testcenter.concentricbyginkgo.com/minor-consent\)](https://testcenter.concentricbyginkgo.com/minor-consent).
2. Then, enter the access code for your child's school as shown below
  - a. Asa Adams: 38TT51
  - b. OMS: Y0J8F8
  - c. OHS: F3JQ2H
3. Finally, enter your child's information, and you're done!

Note: If you need to provide consent for more than one child, please complete the process once for each child.

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You know the old saying: "knowledge is power." Tools like pooled testing empower us to make informed decisions. Without knowing the specific prevalence of COVID-19 in our school, it's tough for us to make informed decisions about safeguarding our school community, returning to school, or continuing in-person learning. Testing empowers us to make these informed decisions about in-person learning and allows students, teachers, and staff to come to school with peace of mind.

Only those individuals with completed consent forms are able to participate in testing. If you do not want your student(s) to participate, your student(s) will not be included in the testing program. Though, we hope you do!

To learn more about pooled testing, watch this [video \(https://www.concentricbyginkgo.com/#salem\)](https://www.concentricbyginkgo.com/#salem) from another school using this service. For more information, visit Concentric by Ginkgo's [website \(https://www.concentricbyginkgo.com/\)](https://www.concentricbyginkgo.com/) or reach out to our school nurse, Karen Martin ([kmartin@rsu26.org](mailto:kmartin@rsu26.org)).

Thank you,  
Meredith Higgins  
RSU 26 Superintendent

*Cultivating a community of responsible, respectful, and passionate learners.*

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## **POOLED TESTING OVERVIEW**

### **What is pooled testing?**

Pooled testing is a form of surveillance testing that combines a whole group's tests (5-25 individuals) into one 'pool' instead of testing everyone individually. Weekly, all students enrolled in pooled testing in a class, pod, or cohort swab their own noses and place their samples in a single tube (that's the pooling step). Testing an entire classroom takes around 10 minutes, but is faster once students are accustomed to how it works. Because pool participants get tested for COVID 19 weekly, they **do not need to quarantine from school even if they are considered the close contact** of another, school-related COVID-positive case.

If all individuals in the pool are negative, the pooled PCR test will come back negative and nothing further is required. If an individual in the pool is positive, the pool test result will be positive and pool members will be tested with Binax NOW Antigen tests to follow up. Meanwhile, **pool members do not need to isolate unless their individual tests return positive or they are symptomatic**. On average, about 1% of the pools require follow up because of a positive result.

(If students have trouble performing the swabbing, schools can provide a nurse or other trained staff member to help. However, the test is so easy that kindergarteners typically can do it with no issues. See video here showing a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader demonstrating:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJML8xBEKGk>)

### **Why pooled testing? Why should my student participate?**

- Participants in pooled testing are exempt from quarantine in all school and/or school-related programs and activities.
- Unlike other COVID-19 tests, pooled testing offers less disruption for in-person learning and on-site work. (Non-participating students still have to quarantine when exposed to COVID-19.)
- It's free & efficient – pooled testing is the most efficient way to identify and limit COVID-related risks in school
- It reduces the likelihood of school transmission by supporting prompt isolation of any positive individuals
- It maintains the confidentiality of participating students (pooled samples are not labeled with student names)
- Having testing in place ahead of potential COVID-19 surges will help a school cope more effectively with community transmission

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