



# Pooled Testing Initiative for K-12 Schools

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# Today's presentation

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# Rationale and Overview

# Rationale

- Schools and districts across the state are working to implement the health and safety requirements for in-person or hybrid schooling models.
  - COVID-19 testing in K-12 schools is an additional mitigation strategy
    - Mobile Testing Unit *for outbreak response*
    - Abbott BinaxNOW Rapid Antigen Tests *for symptomatic students/staff*
    - Pooled Testing *for surveillance/screening*
- The use of these tools and resources will increase districts' capacity and resiliency to maintain safety for students, faculty and staff by keeping transmission in schools low.

# Pooled Testing Launch

- During an initial 6-week period, participating districts and schools will receive the test kits, support from a testing services provider and the testing software at no cost.
- Following the initial 6-week launch, districts and schools may continue using pooled testing by purchasing the tests and any other accompanying testing materials and software from a statewide contract using their federal stimulus dollars.
- Districts and schools not participating in the 6-week launch can use statewide contract for purchasing these services once available.

# Pooled Testing Participants

- Districts and schools are invited to participate if:
  - They are providing any form of in-person learning (full in person, hybrid, high needs only, etc.)
  - They are in a remote model but plan to move to in-person learning
- Public schools and districts are invited to participate in the early launch
  - Local education agencies (districts, charter schools)
  - Education collaboratives
  - Approved special education schools
- Private and parochial schools are not able to participate in the early launch, but they are able to purchase tests, materials, and software directly from testing services providers.
- Students, teachers, and all school staff are eligible to be tested through this pooled testing initiative.

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## Overview of Pooled Testing in Schools



# Pooled Testing Overview

- Pooled testing involves mixing roughly 10-25 samples, or swabs, together in a “batch” or “pool” then testing the pooled sample with a PCR test.
- The test is performed once per week on an anterior nasal swab ("short swab") and results are delivered in approximately 24-48 hours.
- The samples can be administered by any trained school staff.
- Students in certain age groups can take their own samples under supervision.

# Pooled Testing Protocol

- 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 are retested individually, called “reflex testing”
  - The Abbott BinaxNOW rapid point-of-care antigen test will be the primary source for this individual follow-up testing.
  - In the rare event that a positive pool yields all negative individual BinaxNOW tests, all individuals from that positive pool may be required to take an additional individual PCR test.

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## Statewide Contract for Pooled Testing Services

# Statewide Contract & Included Services

## Testing Service Provider

- Onboarding and continuing training
- Lab processing
- Secure tech system
- Customer Support

## Schools & Districts

- Coordination and direct administration of program
- Overseeing ongoing operations
- Conducting "follow up" tests on positive pools

# Statewide Contract & Included Services

- A statewide contract for Pooled Testing Service Providers is currently in development.
  - Approximate cost: \$5.00/swab minimum
- Testing Service Providers will manage the following:
  - Operations and logistics
    - Delivery of tests to schools
    - Testing hardware (tubes, labels, etc.)
    - Coordination/communication with the testing laboratory
  - Technology software associated with pooled testing
  - Training for school and district personnel
  - Customer service/support for school and district personnel

# Additional Services for Pooled Testing

- In most cases, districts and schools will rely on their own, in-district personnel or contracted providers to complete the following services:
  - Manage all testing logistics, including overseeing test administration, data entry, software management (i.e., testing coordinator/manager)
  - Administer the specimen collection to students and staff
  - Administer any necessary follow-up testing with Abbott BinaxNOW (including reporting of results)
  - Transport tests to laboratory for processing (likely 1x/day)

# Optional Services for Purchase

- If a district or school lacks the internal capacity or personnel to administer and transport the tests to the laboratory, they may be able to purchase the following services from the statewide contract:
  - Onsite testing coordinator/manager
    - The Testing Service Provider will provide an individual to support the onsite management of the test administration
    - Onsite test administrators/specimen collectors
    - The Testing Service Provider will provide the health professionals to administer the test to students and staff through, for example, a subcontract with an EMT service provider.
  - Transportation of tests from the school to the laboratory
    - The Testing Service Provider will develop a contract with a daily courier service or other shipping service to deliver tests to the laboratory.

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## Required Preconditions



# Overview of Required Preconditions

- Prior to implementation of Pooled Testing, the following preconditions must be in place:
  - Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
  - Proper authorization and consent from staff and students
  - A system to offer reflex testing for individual students in positive pools (i.e., BinaxNOW)
- Once the preconditions are met, DESE will confirm that a district or school is permitted to begin Pooled Testing.

# Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Pooled Testing

- For healthcare personnel collecting specimens the following PPE is required:
  - Fitted N95 mask or higher-level respirator (a surgical mask can be used if a N95 is not available)
  - Eye protection
  - Gloves
  - Gown
- For staff observing collection in students the following PPE is required (6ft distance must be maintained):
  - Surgical mask

# Proper authorization and consent from staff and students

- Districts and schools must obtain parent/guardian and staff consent for administration of Pooled Testing in school, including:
  - Consent to participate in pooled tests
  - Consent to transmit student information via tech platform
  - Consent for any necessary follow up tests, including administering the Abbott BinaxNOW tests and reporting their results.
- A sample authorization and consent form will be provided to districts and schools participating.

# Follow Up Testing for Positive Pools

- Districts and schools must have a process to individually test students in positive pools.
  - Follow up testing must be established prior to administration of pooled testing.
- The Abbott BinaxNOW rapid point-of-care antigen test will be the primary source of this individual follow-up testing.
  - The overview of the required preconditions can be found on the Abbott BinaxNOW page of the DESE website: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/BinaxNOW/>.
- Districts & schools should consider where follow up testing occurs.
  - Centralized school location away from classrooms/students (e.g., auditorium)
  - Outside (Consider temperature restrictions for Abbott BinaxNOW tests.)

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## Lessons from Salem, Medford and Watertown

# Case Studies

- Steve Zrike, Salem Public Schools
- Marice Edouard-Vincent and David Murphy, Medford Public Schools
- Dede Galdston, Watertown Public Schools

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## Next Steps Questions and Answers

## Next Steps

- By January 15, indicate initial interest in participation: <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/6123054/Pooled-Testing-Interest-Survey>
- Assess in-district resources to determine which services will be purchased from the statewide contract.
- DESE will send final approval to those who confirm participation.
- Support for prerequisites begins immediately.
- Questions may be sent to [K12COVIDtesting@mass.gov](mailto:K12COVIDtesting@mass.gov)



# THANK YOU

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