



RSU 23
Old Orchard Beach School Department
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May 5, 2022

Dear RSU 23 Community,

I am writing with important news to share regarding the Maine DOE pooled-testing program that was announced recently by the Mills Administration. Pooled testing for COVID-19 in Maine schools will conclude in May, given its reduced effectiveness in limiting the spread of the highly contagious BA.2 variant and the widespread availability of free and convenient at-home tests. The BA.2 variant is significantly more contagious than previous strains of the virus, lowering the likelihood of detecting, identifying, and isolating an individual with COVID-19 through pooled testing before that individual has spread the virus to others. In this new phase of the pandemic, frequent use of over-the-counter rapid antigen tests has become a more effective way to protect the health of school communities.

The final week for schools to conduct pooled testing will be May 9-13, with the last set of results reported to schools by May 15. During previous stages of the pandemic, when the virus was less transmissible, pooled testing effectively limited the spread of COVID-19 in Maine schools. As the pooled testing program concludes, DHHS encourages school staff and families to request free tests through the [Federal Free COVID Tests Program](#) and [Project Access COVID tests \(ACT\)](#). Through the successful Project ACT pilot, DHHS has made free tests available directly to Maine people by mail order. As of April 12, Maine households have ordered 266,140 tests through Project ACT. For more information, visit [Maine's COVID-19 Testing](#) website.

RSU 23 will partner with DHHS and limit the spread of COVID-19 in schools and Maine communities by expanding access to at-home tests and has placed orders for free at-home test kits for distribution in September of 2022. Any additional questions can be directed to our school nurses by phone or email, Sarah Burnham, 934-4461 Ext. 1503, sburnham@rsu23.org, or Katie Gagnon 934-4848 Ext. 1103, kgagnon@rsu23.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Suttie".

John Suttie, RSU 23 Superintendent of Schools