

## **Health & Safety Steering Committee Meeting Notes - November 17th, 2021**

Read full meeting agenda and member list [here](#).

Superintendent Booker welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided a brief update on the status of PUSD students receiving the COVID vaccination:

- Today (November 17, 2021) is the deadline for PUSD students ages 12 and older (as of September 22, 2021) to have submitted their proof of COVID vaccination. As of this morning, 22 students have not submitted. Those families have been contacted via certified mail, email and text. Will follow up with phone calls. Students are not being sent home. Will have until January 4th, 2022, to submit or will start the second semester in Independent Study on January 5th. Seven families have requested medical exemptions. They have until January 4th, to submit proper documentation for review.
- After Thanksgiving Break, the District will begin reaching out to families of students age 5-11 with instructions on how to submit their proof of vaccination. Deadline for younger students is January 14th, 2022.
- One family has submitted a uniform complaint against the District regarding its vaccination policy.

### **Discussion Topics:**

#### **Student Vaccinations & Masking -**

- There is momentum in some circles to extend the period in-between vaccinations for younger students. This is not supported by the pediatric community or the CDC. The District's policy gives the Superintendent authority to adjust the deadline based on changing conditions or guidance so PUSD is prepared if that opinion becomes a recommendation.
- The upcoming Holidays are creating some logistical complications for healthcare providers. More staffing is required at a time of year when many workers would normally be on vacation. The District chose the January 14th deadline taking the Holidays into account to provide a larger window of time.
- Superintendent Booker said the District's goal is to lift all outdoor masking restrictions following the January 14th deadline for younger students submitting proof of vaccination, but realizes that may not be realistic. Families of younger students may not be as quick to comply as those of older students and may be taking more of a 'wait-and-see' approach to deciding when to get vaccinated. There is also an educational layer to consider when potentially moving a significant number of elementary school students to Independent Study.
- Healthcare providers are not seeing much vaccine hesitancy with the families coming through their respective practices.

- Many families are expecting their students will no longer be required to wear masks outdoors once vaccinated and also feel PUSD is moving the goalposts as to when restrictions will be lifted. Also questioning why the District does not just follow the mandate of the state and the policies of neighboring districts?  
Superintendent Booker responded that:
  - Changing conditions require adjusting decisions. The District has worked to provide the rationale for every choice it has made.
  - The state set the tone by leaving it to school districts to make some tough choices without clear guidance. Consistency is impossible under those conditions.
  - The District is setting policies, but also building in some flexibility to be able to adjust as conditions change, while maintaining the spirit of the policy.
  - Ultimately, we are making the best decisions we can, but have to be able to adjust as necessary.
- Ongoing and potential strikes at Kaiser are another variable for families having timely access to the COVID vaccine.
- There will be Board discussion before any decisions regarding outdoor masking at elementary schools is made.
- Not tying the decision to lift outdoor masking restrictions to elementary school vaccination rates would make contact tracing difficult for District nurses and health clerks and would lead to an increased number of quarantines based on close contact exposure on playgrounds.
  - Point made that recommendation is to base contact tracing on indoor interactions as there is no data regarding outdoor transmission.
- A lack of mask-free time is having an impact on our younger students.
- PUSD is in line with neighboring school districts and is the first to take masks off outdoors. We are talking about a period of weeks - not years. The students can handle it and it makes clinical sense. There is time to see the numbers and make informed decisions.
- Debate over the masking policies at neighboring school districts. Superintendent Booker will research and present information regarding where other districts stand on outdoor masking and what benchmarks they are looking at to lift restrictions at the Committee's next meeting.

Testing Guidance - The Alameda County Department of Public Health has released [Revised Guidance](#) for COVID-19 Testing. Families will be informed in a letter this week.

- Suggestion to include a list of testing centers in all communication as well as recommendation to check in with their pediatrician as well.

Off-Ramp? - Are there benchmarks for future lifting of restrictions? When can we start treating COVID like the seasonal flu?

- COVID needs to transition from an epidemic to an endemic.
- The pattern of atypical waves of the virus would need to stop. If the expected spike over the Holidays is small, that would be a good sign.
- There is still a significant portion of the population that is unable to be vaccinated (under five years of age).
- Psychological recovery will take longer. We have a warped sense of what's normal. Need to re-learn that it's ok to have an occasional runny nose or cough. There will need to be education about what's COVID and what's just being sick.

**Next meeting - Wednesday, December 8th, 8:30am**