

Health & Safety Committee Meeting Notes - 8-25-21

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

Superintendent Booker provided an overview of the purpose for the Health & Safety Committee - to assist the Superintendent and Board of Education in making District-wide decisions in how to best support the safety of students, staff and the Piedmont community as a whole from the impact of COVID-19.

Superintendent Booker also reviewed the District's protocols regarding positive COVID cases in schools and summarized issues PUSD is facing now such as moving lunch/snack indoors during fire season and rainy days and in-person vs. virtual meetings.

Discussion period began with Superintendent Booker describing the 'Fear vs. Science' tightrope the District is walking while partnering with the community to face COVID challenges together.

District nurses were asked for clarification on the types of testing being done throughout the District for students and staff.

Decisions regarding quarantines are made with the goal of keeping students in school as much as possible.

Recent surge in COVID cases is expected to peak in a few weeks with hospitalizations beginning to decline come mid-September. Can expect another surge later in the fall as people spend more time together indoors. Cases should be reflected more among the elderly than students.

According to current numbers, Piedmont is one of the most vaccinated areas in the United States. Pointed out that not all PUSD students live in Piedmont so the rates in the City won't necessarily reflect the rates in the school district.

Following Culver City School District's announcement that it is pursuing mandatory student vaccinations, the Piedmont USD Board will broach the topic at tonight's meeting. Recent FDA approval of the Pfizer vaccination for everyone 16 and older is expected to help organizations considering this move.

When comparing mandated vaccines to vaccines and testing...testing is only as good as the day it takes place. A lot can happen in between tests. Vaccines may present a false

sense of security. Breakthrough cases have changed the dynamic - vaccine isn't a cure-all. The best scenario is everyone being vaccinated, but breakthrough cases are a reality. Vaccines also have an inherent failure rate of 5-10% - the more vaccinations, the more failures there will be.

The majority of positive cases in Piedmont are due to outdoor congregation - making masks all the more important.

There will inevitably be legal challenges to any vaccine mandate for students - especially while they are still only authorized for emergency use. School Boards must weigh the cost-benefit of any mandate. Challenges could come from outside groups with no stake in the community.

Cases being recorded within the District are coming from exposure to parents and grandparents who are vaccinated.

Majority of unvaccinated students in the District are people of color. Access to vaccines must be considered. Hope the clinic on September 1st will help with that access. Personal connections with these students is as crucial as access.

Breakthrough cases in the community have not required hospitalizations. Symptoms are typically mild and don't last as long. Cases are resulting in great frustration as the assumption of many is once you get the shot, you're out of danger. Missing school without a distance learning option is also causing anxiety.

Question of how/if we will be able to return to a time when students/staff could be out with the flu for days and it was accepted? Will it ever be the same with COVID?

Have not seen transmission within classes. Believe the indoor and outdoor mask requirements were the right decision.

The variant has changed the game over the past year. Positive kids don't just have the sniffles anymore. Now they are getting sick.

What will the District be sharing about transmission? Tracker has been posted on the website and will be updated weekly. There will be no more district-wide communications to protect privacy and minimize speculation of where cases are taking place. This speculation is causing families to hesitate before reporting cases putting more people at risk.

Ask for a re-emphasis on the basics - handwashing, 'gel in, gel out.' Better use of space at lunch. Reminders about masking - District sent a letter home yesterday with that message.

Next meeting - Wednesday, September 8th, 8:30am