

## **Health & Safety Steering Committee Meeting Notes - March 9, 2022**

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

### **PUSD COVID Update:**

- On February 28, the state of CA announced the indoor mask mandate for schools would switch from a requirement to 'strongly recommended' effective 12:00am, March 12.
- Alameda County initially said it would take about a week to announce its opinion on the new guidelines. Gave the early impression it would not go along with the new guideline and would maintain the mandate.
- On March 3, AC announced it would align with the state. PUSD communicated to staff and families that it would follow state and county guidelines effective Monday, March 14. Some apparent confusion on the language used, but what it comes down to is everyone has a choice when it comes to masking.
- Is the new guidance a political or scientific decision? Answer - it's both and government officials admit as such.
- Feeling is that many students and staff will continue masking indoors which is awesome. Want to create an environment where people feel comfortable with their decision. Hopeful that everyone will be respectful.

### **Discussion Topics:**

Indoor Masking - Discussion points and opinions shared included:

- There are still situations under public health guidance from AC where students/staff must wear masks:
  - Individuals who return to campus prior to the end of their 10-day isolation period.
  - If an individual has been exposed - vaccinated or not.
  - If an individual is symptomatic, whether they test positive or not.
- Few student COVID cases are testing negative before 10 days. Our standard advice is to continue masking in all settings until the end of the 10-day period. There are less cases now, but not zero.
  - Now recommending an 8-week period between vaccine doses in response to study that the Pfizer dose for children 5-11 is reportedly less effective than previously thought.
- In-school transmissions are happening during lunch. Is there anything we should be doing differently once the indoor requirement is lifted?
- Transmission is happening at lunch and recess while masks are off. Typical person will infect 6-7 people if no protections are in place. Would expect if a similar exposure from last week happens next week. Unmasked students - and

some of the masked - will be infected. If the goal is to keep students in school, we need to consider masking around exposures - including outside. Don't know if it's possible, but we need to think about how to minimize transmission. Can we separate one class from others?

- Think of what situations would we put the masks back on.
- When kids test positive, they lose access to school. How are they supported? We know for the most part, kids that test positive aren't sick. They want to continue to engage with their teacher and classmates. The reality is the risk of transmission will increase. While the rate in our community is low, there will be a consequence. District must work to engage with these kids as much as possible.
- Must be clear this new masking guidance applies to healthy individuals. Masks are still necessary and may be required in some circumstances.
- Decision when it comes to masking isn't equitable. Decision to wear a mask protects others while decision not to wear a mask potentially puts others at risk.
- Districts can go above and beyond state and local guidelines.
- Believe the majority of the community wants to follow what public health is recommending. Community will be responsive to their peers and colleagues.
- Community wants to protect each other and keep kids in school. Make it clear that this is the way to maximize keeping kids in school and learning. There are situations going forward when kids will need to mask, including classes next week who were exposed this week.
- Belief that there is a huge silent majority that wants to do the right thing.
- Should be blanket acceptance and respect of what families choose regarding masks and leave it at that.

*Recommendation to require masking indoors and out for exposed students/staff, and for students/staff returning to campus for Day 6-10 of their isolation period, as per guidance of Alameda County.*

Open Houses - Discussion points and opinions shared included:

- Schools are very hopeful Open Houses can be held in-person on April 7.
- Are requirements different since these events wouldn't be part of the school day? Can we request family members wear masks?
- Treat it the same as the school day. Different rules will only confuse people. If it's too risky in six weeks, we shouldn't be taking masks off now.
- Encourage and support wearing of masks and staying home if not feeling well.
- Use of the health screener? Used for large events before (graduation). Set the expectations ahead of time.
- Concerns for requiring teachers to be in a classroom with large capacities for long periods of time if masks aren't required.

- Holding Open Houses without masks goes against our goal of keeping kids in school. Concern for risk of exposure to teachers and increased absences during the spring. Wear a mask to protect teachers and the remainder of the school year.
- Would be useful if families were given an update on safety measures in the classroom. Are filters being replaced, windows left open, etc?

**Next meeting - Wednesday, April 27th, 8:30am**