

Health & Safety Steering Committee Meeting Notes - May 18, 2022

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

PUSD COVID Update:

- PUSD is definitely experiencing a surge of COVID cases over the past few weeks.
- Having difficulty filling all staff positions due to absences.
- District sent a letter to staff and families May 7, urging everyone to wear a mask for 10 days following an exposure, regardless of where the exposure took place, but stopped short of mandating..
- Cases have continued to rise. In an effort to protect staff and end-of-year activities, District is considering bringing back the indoor mask requirement through the end of the school year. Would like feedback from the Health & Safety Committee.

Discussion Topics:

Return to Indoor Masking/End of Year - Discussion points and opinions shared included:

- We are largely past the 'terror' of COVID. Frame it more now that if students/staff are still catching it, it could eventually shut down the schools. Families might hear it better that way and understand the decision to reinstate indoor masking.
- Would have a short leash with secondary schools in order to protect end-of-year activities.
- Getting boosters won't help over the rest of the school year, but should still be encouraged.
- Reinstate indoor masking requirement to start. Can expand to outdoor masking if cases continue to rise.
- Many families are operating with the perspective of COVID not being a threat anymore. Only keeping kids home if they are sick/symptomatic.
- Reminder that schools will have to operate as before - if a student won't wear a mask, they are sent home.
- Vast majority of COVID cases today are mild. The mental health consequences of isolation are more damaging at this point. There is no easy path out of this but we can't stay on the current path.
- Don't believe indoor masking will stop the current trajectory of cases, but it could work to protect staff.
- Would say half the students in high school classes are masking. Some who do are wearing them improperly. Believe many of them know what's at stake and are continuing to wear them at school and at home to protect end-of-the-year activities.

- Is there a plan in place for Finals Week if students and/or staff can't come to school?
- Can positive/symptomatic students be separated during graduation ceremonies? Not ideal, but better than not being able to attend.
- The burden of isolation policies are falling on the schools. Public health departments need to decide if we're still in a pandemic and make adjustments. Schools are not set up to be health agencies.
- Students in isolation need better methods of engagement while at home. A study packet isn't enough.
- Isolation is causing more damage than COVID and is causing strain on schools. Don't believe there will be any changes before August. What can the District control other than masking?
- Would be nice if COVID vaccine is approved for children under five, but we can't count on it.
- Can 'mask' and 'mask optional' sections be used at events similar to smoking and non-smoking? Can give folks an option if it makes them feel safer.
- Everyone needs to understand that recovery from COVID doesn't mean you're now safe from it.
- Don't know what the conditions will be in August. We have been lucky with the variants, but a more dangerous one is always a possibility.
- District nurses are willing to meet over the summer to prepare for next school year.
- District will send a letter today (May 18, 2022) informing them the indoor mask requirement will be reinstated effective May 19, through the end of the school year. Will also encourage booster shots and explain that precautions will be taken at end-of-year events to help ensure everyone is included.