



Superintendent's UPDATE

Thursday, December 1, 2022

COVID-19 and School Health Update

Dear San Mateo County Education and Child Care Community,

Well, here we are! Today we mark the first of December 2022 with much to be thankful for and a bright horizon ahead. Although we know this flu and cold season may be challenging, our school leaders continue to make health and safety a top priority. Families can expect to receive additional at-home antigen COVID-19 tests over the next few weeks in preparation for the January return to school, and flu and Covid vaccine clinics continue to be available at select schools and community locations. Check the vaccine clinic schedule [here](#).

Today I shift the focus of this message to our collective and individual emotional well-being. As we are now between major holidays, it's a good time to remember that while the holidays bring much joy and celebration, they can also cause stress and trigger complicated emotions and feelings. Many families have lost loved ones or experienced disruptions to routines and social connections over the course of the pandemic. For some, the holidays may surface feelings of grief and loneliness. Adding holiday stress on top of existing mental health concerns can feel overwhelming to many, both young and old.

One silver lining of the tough times we've all navigated is the unprecedented level of resources the State of California has provided for schools. Just this year, new programs and funding are helping to increase the number of counselors, mental health professionals, and other caring adults on campus to support our students and school staff. These efforts are making a difference, but there is still much to do.

Some of these to-dos are simple ones, things we can each do on a daily basis. While moments of mindfulness during the day can help students and staff maintain emotional balance, such wellness activities, both at school and at home, can benefit the entire community or family. Please read further to find simple actions that can yield great benefit to our collective mental health and help make this holiday season a time of healing and health.

Promote Emotional Wellness Over the Holidays

To help promote emotional wellness over the holidays, please take a mindful moment to consider the following recommendations and reminders from mental health providers:

- Practice mindfulness by staying focused on the present moment. Simply taking a long, deep breath can help one stay grounded in the present.
- Stick to health routines and, if able, take a daily walk outside.

- Ask for help when you need it. Reach out to a trusted friend, neighbor, or colleague. People are often eager to listen and offer support.
- Create a safe space by inviting others to your home who bring you joy and comfort.
- Honor, identify, and hold space for sadness or grief from any experience of loss. Try not to block the sadness — feeling is healing and helps one regain control of those emotions.
- Prioritize personal needs amid the holiday bustle. We do not need to do it all; it's ok to let some traditions go.
- Learn to say no. Saying yes when one should say no can create resentment and a feeling of being overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if we can't participate in every project or activity.
- Practice kindness towards ourselves. Try to recognize triggers to be better prepared for stressful situations. With awareness, we can take steps to avoid or manage stress.
- Write a gratitude list and/or offer thanks easily and often. Gratitude has been shown to improve mental health, and as we near the end of the year, it's a good time to reflect on what we are grateful for. Focus on thanking those who may have provided support during the year.
- Set aside time for oneself and prioritize self-care. Schedule time for activities that create positive feelings. It's okay to seek time alone when we need to recharge.
- Get plenty of sleep. Lack of sleep can lower our frustration tolerance and inhibit our ability to regulate emotions.
- Remember that the only person we can control is ourselves. We cannot control what others do, only how we react.

I am grateful to be part of such a caring and generous community as San Mateo County and could not be more proud of our students, our staff, and our schools. Enjoy the holiday season ahead. May we help fill our halls, classrooms, and homes with peace and love.



Nancy Magee
San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools

Please note: A copy of this letter in Spanish will be [posted here](#) shortly.