



Superintendent's UPDATE

Thursday, February 10, 2022

COVID-19 School and Vaccination Update

Dear San Mateo County Education and Child Care Community,

This week has brought significantly better news on the Omicron front, especially in light of the unprecedented numbers of COVID-19 cases in our schools, childcare centers, and communities in January. As we anticipate the lifting of the indoor mask mandate for the general public by Governor Newsom, I can also confirm that many of our schools and early learning spaces continue to be impacted daily by positive cases. As the State moves into its “endemic strategy,” for the general public, I urge patience from our San Mateo County community. Our school leaders and education workforce need YOUR help in making quality teaching and learning the top priority.

Masks

So what does this have to do with masks? It's clear the lifting of the indoor masking requirement for vaccinated individuals does not apply to schools. Masks are still required indoors in California schools. However, we also know the Governor has recently stated that a revised approach to school mask requirements would arrive no later than Monday, February 14th, after his team concludes conversations with school officials and teachers.

While we are not sure what the new masking guidance for schools will look like, schools will follow public health guidance and, where there is flexibility in the guidance, make local decisions that support our educators and their ability to serve students. Schools in San Mateo County have done this successfully throughout the pandemic and will continue to do so. This is the right and best time to keep our focus on our number one priority – teaching and learning.

And finally on the topic of masks, I want to share what the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) included in its February 7th [guidance addressing the lifting of the indoor mask mandate](#), which highlights how incredibly important masks have been to making our schools safe places for students to learn and staff to work:

The masking requirement in California schools has allowed us to keep schools open when compared to other parts of the country. California accounts for roughly 12% of all U.S. students, but accounted for only 1% of COVID-19 related school closures during the Omicron surge. Nationally during the Delta surge in July and August 2021, jurisdictions without mask requirements in schools experienced larger increases in pediatric case rates, and school outbreaks were 3.5 times more likely in areas without school mask requirements.

Partnership between San Mateo County Schools and Public Health

In his statements this week, the Governor also mentioned the important role of county health officers in assessing local conditions and adjusting health guidance as needed. As more decision-making may be transferred to counties, I am pleased that San Mateo County schools and San Mateo County Health have a strong working relationship and look forward to continuing in that same spirit.

Vaccinations

A key to success in the next phase of COVID-19 response is vaccinations. We need to continue to move our vaccination and booster rates up higher and higher, not just countywide, but in all our communities and neighborhoods. Approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of emergency use authorization of the Pfizer vaccine in children six months to four years of age would be an important step forward in our vaccination efforts.

As the County Office of Education wraps up its series of school-based clinics this week, we want to thank San Mateo County Health, our school district hosts, and the mighty team of school nurses who worked at the clinics administering the vaccine and winning over even the most reticent children. We heard repeatedly that participation in the clinics was high as they were convenient and families felt comfortable in the school setting. The County Office of Education will explore with its partners how we might build on the success of that work and reach more students, staff, and families.

Pediatric Vaccination Update

As of this week, 55.7 percent of children ages 5-11 have received two doses of vaccine, up from 53.5 percent last week, while 63.6 percent have received one dose of vaccine, up from 62.6 percent last week. The vaccination rate for youth ages 12-15 nudged up slightly from 81.2 percent to 81.4 percent this week. We saw an increase of 4.2 percentage points in the booster rate for this age group, which is now 32.2 percent.

Update on Supplies for Schools

The County Office of Education received a shipment of child-size KN95 masks and home test kits from the California Office of Emergency Services and is arranging for the distribution of these products to schools. Unfortunately, demand for home test kits outstripped the supply we received, so the County Office of Education employed its Equity Index to help ensure the kits go to schools serving the largest numbers of students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

As always, thank you all for your work to support our students and schools.



Nancy Magee
San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools

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