



Superintendent's UPDATE

Thursday, January 27, 2022

COVID-19 School and Vaccination Update

Dear San Mateo County Education and Child Care Community,

With week after week and month after month of COVID-19, it's been hard to get excited about a light at the end of the tunnel, especially when our experience has often presented just another tunnel rather than the much sought after light. But, from my read of the data this week, we might be seeing the glimmer of actual light at the end of the Omicron-fueled surge of COVID-19. According to data on San Mateo County Health's website, it looks like the peak in cases was January 4th, and we are now making our way back down the other side. This seems consistent with what we are hearing from some TK-12 schools and districts – positive cases are still higher than last year, but they are not as high as they were that first week of January. We hope this trend continues and expands further to early learning and other sectors. Meanwhile, schools and childcare providers continue to implement their safety plans, promote vaccinations and boosters, and ask their parent communities to support school safety and health while remaining patient and vigilant.

Vaccinations

Let's start with the number one thing we can all do to promote safety – both our own and our community's – get vaccinated and, when eligible, get boosted. There are many [places to get a vaccination and booster](#) across the county, including SMC Health clinics, pharmacies, healthcare providers, and school-based vaccination clinics.

The tireless band of school nurses returns to College Park Elementary School in San Mateo this week for second dose clinics that will also provide Pfizer boosters to anyone who is eligible. We so appreciate their willingness to perform this much needed task three times a week for multiple weeks! Their work is also making a difference, as vaccination rates among our young students continue rise. This week, 49.6 percent of children ages 5-11 have received two doses of vaccine, and 61.3 percent have received their first dose. These numbers are up 2 percentage points from last week, which is great, but we need to keep pumping those percentages up even more. Booster rates for adults 25-85 years old range from 55-67 percent, so there is still more to do there as well.

Supplies for Schools and Childcare Providers

A giant thank you to San Mateo County Health, the 4Cs, and First 5 San Mateo County for their assistance in getting test kits out to childcare providers serving children from households with limited financial resources. Early care providers have not had the same access to testing as TK-12 schools, so we appreciate our partners working together to support this important segment of our county.

The County Office of Education also distributed more than 350,000 N95 masks last week to public and private TK-12 schools across the county. The State Office of Emergency Services provided county offices of education with the masks. Meanwhile, a shipment of youth-sized masks is now on its way from the State. Once we are sure of our supply, we will again survey our schools and get those out in the next week or two.

Masks

Few topics during this pandemic have spurred correspondence and phone calls to our office like masking policies. Just to be clear, the [State requires](#) students and adults to wear masks while indoors on school campuses. The State also requires [everyone to wear masks](#) in all indoor public settings, regardless of vaccination status. Schools are required to enforce these masking requirements on their campuses.

With the recent move to a five-day isolation and quarantine options, masks are especially important. The [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\) guidance](#) on returning to school after a five-day isolation or quarantine, and even when just exposed, states: *Wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days, especially in indoor settings.* The CDPH has emphasized in their communications that this is the contract – you can return to school settings after five days but you agree to wear the mask and test for 10 days, even for athletes inside their sports season.

I know many schools and childcare providers are still struggling with high case numbers, so we're not out of this surge yet. I so appreciate our San Mateo County community for continuing to work together to keep our students, families, staff, and community safe.



Nancy Magee
San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools

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