

PIEDMONT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Board of Education
FROM: Randall Booker, Superintendent
DATE: January 26, 2022
RE: **COVID Update**

I. **SUPPORT INFORMATION**

Outdoor Mask Policy

On January 26th, the District conferred with the Health and Safety Steering Committee to discuss the current outdoor mask policy.

The Health and Safety Steering Committee unanimously recommended that the outdoor mask policy NOT be rescinded at this time, as COVID case rates are still extremely high.

Taking the input from the Health and Safety Steering Committee and input I've received from the community to date, I am recommending the following:

Outdoor masking will remain in effect through February 4th, 2022, with the following modification:

- Outdoor masking will become optional beginning January 27th for all Physical Education classes (during outdoor activity) at all grade levels.

The District experienced **228** confirmed cases of COVID amongst students and staff during the period of December 17, 2021 to January 10, 2022. This number reduced to **33** additional cases during the period of January 11th, 2022 to January 14th, 2022. This number then fell again to **27** student cases during the period of January 15th, 2022 to January 21, 2022.

On February 4th, 2022, the District will review PUSD case rates for the week of January 24th - February 4th. If case rates continue to show a rapid decline within the PUSD community, I will rescind the outdoor mask policy for all students and staff, beginning on February 7th, 2022.

I believe that both our current outdoor mask policy should be nuanced to address existing experiences (such as outdoor PE classes when we can better ensure appropriate social distancing among students), and it should also be connected to PUSD data points to determine its application.

Online COVID Case-Rate Tracker

The District has resumed updating its COVID-19 case dashboard.

- As reported on January 10, the District was notified of roughly 228 COVID-19 cases within the school community between December 17, 2021 and January 10, 2022.
- Picking up from there, there were 33 additional positive cases within the school community from January 11 through January 14.
- There were 27 additional positive cases from January 15 through January 21.

The case numbers may change as the District continues to receive and verify information.

New FAQs for Families Coming Soon

New public health guidance changes many of the rules concerning:

- isolation,
- shortening the isolation period from 10 days to 5 days,
- quarantine,
- shortening the quarantine period from 10 days to 5 days, and
- what is means to be up to date on vaccinations, among other issues.

The District expects to have revised FAQs for families posted on the website next week.

Clearance Testing - New Hours

The District is continuing to offer on-site Rapid Antigen testing to clear *symptomatic* and *post-symptomatic* students and staff to return to school. It is encouraging news that demand for this testing is beginning to decline, so testing hours have been adjusted accordingly. Clearance testing is now offered each school day:

- ❖ 7:00 am - 8:00 am (M-F);
- ❖ 2:15 pm - 3:15 pm (W only); and
- ❖ 4:30 pm - 5:15 pm (M, T, Th).

These times may be subject to change due to staffing.

Student testing is by appointment only and scheduled by the site Health Clerks only.

Screening Testing - On Pause

In my last COVID update I shared that the District would soon pilot a program to offer weekly PCR testing to all students and staff, and the program was planned to start this week at Wildwood. Screening testing of *asymptomatic* individuals (which is sometimes referred to as “surveillance testing”) can be helpful for early detection and reducing transmission of COVID-19.

Since my last report, the District decided to pause this pilot program for two reasons:

- **Delay in Processing and Reporting Results.** Valencia Lab, the lab that processes the District’s PCR tests, is experiencing long delays in reporting results. This is due to the surge in testing and labor shortages at the lab. Some results are now reported 4-5 days after the sample was collected, and this delay in obtaining results means that the District cannot effectively use the results to isolate positive cases to reduce transmission.
- **Concerns Over Capturing Healthy Individuals.** PCR tests can detect COVID-19 for up to 90 days after an infection. This means that someone who is healthy now but who had an infection in the last three months will test positive. This is an issue because, with the highly transmissible but sometimes mild Omicron variant, there may be many students and staff who were infected in the last 90 days but asymptomatic and unaware that they had COVID. In other words, the concern is that healthy students and staff will test positive and be subject to isolation.

For these reasons, at this point in the pandemic weekly PCR testing doesn’t meet the District objectives of protecting the health and safety of the school environment and keeping students and staff in school, so these testing plans are on hold for now. The District will continue to study it’s options and continue to report on this at future meetings.

Collecting Staff Booster Information

Under new public health guidance, adults (not minors) are considered “up to date” on vaccinations against COVID-19 only when in receipt of all boosters for which they are eligible.

The reason for this change is that immunity against COVID-19 wanes over time. As “essential workers,” many in the District were among the first in Northern California to get vaccinated against COVID-19, so they are among the first to need a booster to maintain protective levels of immunity.

Following an exposure to COVID-19 at school, quarantine may be required for adults who are not up to date on boosters as well as the primary vaccinations for COVID-19.

To protect the health of the school community and avoid unnecessary absences by staff, the District will soon track staff booster status in the same manner it currently tracks vaccination status.

How the Community Can Help

Here’s how you can help us keep the schools open:

- Get your students vaccinated and boosted. This is the most effective way to protect students and the entire school community from COVID-19.
- Complete the Daily Health Screener every school day.
- If your student has symptoms consistent with or tests positive for COVID-19, report this through the Daily Health Screener.
- Make sure your student has a well-fitting, high-filtration mask (KN95 or N95) and wears it appropriately when masking is required or recommended.
- Participate in screening testing at school. This helps keep the entire school community safe by detecting asymptomatic cases of COVID-19, and reduces the need to quarantine following an on-site exposure.
- If you are willing to be a substitute teacher or substitute aide, please contact Kim Randlett at krandlett@piedmont.k12.ca.us. If you have ever thought about doing this, now is the time. Governor Newsom has just made the substitute hiring process simpler, and we can use your help!

II. **RECOMMENDATION: INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION**

No action required by the Board. For Information and Discussion purposes only.