August 15, 2022

SUBJECT: 2022-23 School Year COVID-19 Safety Update

Dear San Diego Unified Family;

We are excited to welcome you back to campus for the 2022-23 school year, which begins Monday, August 29. As the start of the new school year approaches, we want to update you on our COVID-19 mitigation strategies and safety protocols.

We know that COVID-19 is here to stay. We have entered into a new phase of this virus. And thanks to our entire San Diego Unified community and our collective efforts throughout the pandemic, we have accessible at-home testing, districtwide mitigation strategies, vaccinations for COVID-19, and therapeutics available for treatment. Because of this, San Diego Unified is able to adjust to changing conditions.

Due to this new phase, we do not anticipate districtwide masking as we enter the new school year. This means that we will not require districtwide masking if San Diego County enters the high tier in the CDC COVID-19 community level. Instead, we will utilize our school site metrics and county data to determine whether masking is needed at each school.

In the event that we need to consider districtwide masking, we will examine multiple measures that are reflective of school-based transmission, such as number of schools meeting individual site masking metrics, absences, and peer-reviewed studies. We will continue to make decisions in collaboration with our medical and science advisors. The health and safety of our students, staff, families and communities remain a top priority and we will enter the 2022-23 school year with excitement, optimism and a joy for learning for each and every student and staff member.

In preparation for the new school year, San Diego Unified is committed to implementing the following safety procedures:

**Masking**

- As our county moved into the medium CDC COVID-19 community level on Thursday, August 11, we are moving forward with the following masking guidelines:
- Effective Monday, August 15, masks are strongly recommended (not required) for district employees, students and visitors.
- As we start the 2022-23 school year, indoor masking will be strongly recommended at all schools and workplaces. Masks will be available for those who desire to use them at every district site. It is strongly recommended that staff
and students wear surgical masks or higher-level respirators (e.g., N95s, KN95s, KF94s).

- During the school year, the district will follow a focused approach and decisions to require indoor masking at individual schools will be based on the following:
  - Within the past 14 days, at least three outbreaks have occurred in the school, AND more than 5% of the school population (students and staff) is infected. Individual schools will resume required masking indoors for a minimum of a 14-day period when this metric is reached.
- As a school community, it is important to keep in mind the unique feelings and circumstances of each individual in their choice to continue wearing a mask or not. We fully support the decision of all students, families, and staff. Harassment or bullying of anyone based on this personal choice will not be tolerated.
- San Diego Unified encourages each of our families to have a conversation with their student about respecting differences in others, including the difference of opinion, and our ability as humans to be kind and respect each other in spite of those differences.
- Below are some great resources for staff and families to help students understand and ease fears and anxiety they may be experiencing:
  - [Coping with Anxiety as Mask Mandates Lift](http://Michigan Health)
  - [How to Deal With Bullying Over Face Masks in School](http://Boston Children’s Hospital)

**Testing**

- The California Department of Public Health recommends that “antigen tests be considered the primary option for detecting COVID-19 in schools, compared to PCR tests.” The antigen test provides rapid results for individuals who have virus levels that are high enough to transmit the virus. The PCR test has a high level of sensitivity and can pick up low levels of the virus both before and after infection. This may cause students to unnecessarily miss school with low levels of the virus despite being asymptomatic and not being a risk to transmit to others. Therefore, using antigen tests will help to ensure that every child has access to in-person learning while maintaining a safe school environment.
- Weekly asymptomatic COVID-19 testing will continue to be provided on a voluntary basis for students and staff at each school site. Student testing requires parental consent. Unvaccinated staff and volunteers will require weekly asymptomatic testing.
- Under current Cal OSHA regulations, district staff who have been in close contact with a person who has tested positive or who have experienced COVID-19 symptoms must test to return to work.
- Students who become symptomatic or ill while at school are required to wear a mask while being treated at the health office and waiting to be picked up by a parent/guardian. Students will have the opportunity to either get tested at school or can be provided with a rapid antigen test kit to take home. Students with symptoms must test to return to school.
- To sign up for weekly testing, please click [here](http://)
• For more COVID-19 testing locations, please check the district’s [COVID-19 testing website](#).

**Back-to-School Testing**

• At-home rapid antigen tests will be available to all students and staff and should be used within 48 hours prior to entering campus for the first day of school.
• If an individual tests positive on a rapid antigen test, please notify your school and do not come to work/school.
• If your student has symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, cough, congestion, sore throat, vomiting or diarrhea, please keep them at home. Individuals experiencing symptoms must take an at-home rapid test or test at one of our central sites and can return to school if two tests taken at least 12 hours apart are both negative, when symptoms have improved and your child is fever-free without fever-reducing medication for 24 hours.
• There will be plenty of at home tests available the first week of school should any student or employee need an at home test.

**Vaccination**

• Our employees are already vaccinated. We encourage all eligible students to be vaccinated as well, and all members of the school community to receive any boosters for which they are eligible.
• The district will continue to offer COVID-19 vaccines at various sites. Please see our [COVID-19 vaccine page](#) for more information.

**Positive Cases**

• San Diego Unified will continue to work with our team of contact tracers for the 2022-23 school year. We will continue to follow the guidelines set forth by the [County COVID-19 decision tree](#). Please note this decision tree is updated on a regular basis.
• Currently per California state law, employees eligible for shortened isolation must continue to wear a highly protective mask at all times in the workplace around others, except when eating or drinking, for 10 days after the date of the positive test.
• If parents have questions regarding contact tracing, they can call their school site or the District Contact Tracing team at 760-334-7878.

**COVID-19 Dashboards**

• The [COVID-19 dashboard](#) will continue in the 2022-23 school year. Rapid antigen tests will be the primary method for response testing and will be reflected on the dashboards.

**Meals**

• San Diego Unified will maximize use of outdoor spaces for meals when possible.
• In schools where breakfast in the classroom is offered for students, outdoor eating will be implemented if possible. In the event a school site is required to wear masks indoors, other breakfast location arrangements will be made.

**Ventilation**

• We will continue to provide a safe and healthy learning environment at every school by maintaining our other mitigation strategies of cleaning, handwashing, and optimal ventilation on school campuses.
• San Diego Unified classrooms and office spaces have higher levels of filtration in our HVAC systems and room air purifiers with HEPA filters that remove potentially harmful particles from the air.
• San Diego Unified has particle sensors and carbon dioxide monitors that help us gauge the quality of the air, so that any aberrations can be quickly corrected.

For more information on our safety protocols, please visit our district COVID-19 FAQ page.

Keeping our schools safe is a top priority. Thank you for your continued collaboration, support, and partnership.

We look forward to seeing you all back on Monday, August 29.

Sincerely,
San Diego Unified School District