



January 27, 2022

To: Members of the California State Legislature – Santa Clara County Delegation
Governor Gavin Newsom

Re: COVID-19 Impact on Schools and the Pivot Out of the Pandemic

Thank you for your service to our communities and for your support of public education. We write to share how COVID-19 response has taken over all aspects of public schools and provide recommendations on policies to address these challenges.

This dialogue is urgent as we transition through the latest surge and begin to pivot from pandemic to endemic, to establishing the vision and structure for teaching and learning in that new environment.

The thirty-one school districts in Santa Clara County serve more than 253,000 children in TK-12 schools and thousands of younger children in early childhood programs. We employ thousands of credentialed and classified staff in the largest county in the Bay Area with a diverse population of 1.9 million. Santa Clara County was one of the earliest counties affected by COVID-19 in 2020. Our communities have engaged in heroic efforts in response to the pandemic and the emergency conditions it has created.

As the school year is now more than half-over and schools have been managing a very challenging surge, it has become necessary to provide an update of this impact at the ground level in schools, and, more importantly, on our students and their learning environment. School personnel are attending to the health mitigation practices, strategies, recommendations and requirements. This is usurping time and resources from our focus on education and support services to students. Our students need our support, and this is the time that warrants a focus from schools and school personnel on accelerating learning and recovery from the isolating impact of COVID-19. Yet, school site and district personnel have been swept into a realm of daily and consuming COVID-19 public health responsibilities. Here are two prototypical examples of what this means:

- ✓ A school principal who used to spend 60% of her school day in classrooms working with teachers supporting instruction and learning, now spends 100% of her school day on COVID cases and covering staff absences.
- ✓ A superintendent who used to visit schools daily must now spend that time coordinating the district's public health activities.
- ✓ A student spends critical instructional time standing in line for antigen or PCR testing with their classes.

Schools have been assigned growing responsibility for interpreting and implementing the continually changing guidance from California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (CalOSHA). Schools have become a primary point of healthcare, assuming



responsibility for intense testing regimes and isolation and quarantine requirements that are consuming staffing and logistical resources.

There is a disconnect at the local level. Calls for increased testing by and at schools face a reality of limited test supplies and scarce testing technicians, generating frustration in our communities. School staff are not medical experts, yet are called upon to keep abreast, implement and provide assistance on detailed and complicated COVID-19 isolation and quarantine guidance from the CDPH.

The demands of these safety efforts have been placed upon schools in addition to our primary responsibility for teaching and learning and attending to the pandemic's social-emotional toll on students and stress on employees.

Trying to sustain the testing, isolation and quarantine responsibilities constrains schools from meeting other critical responsibilities.

We fully understand the complexity and intensity of the emergency and as such make the following recommendations as we believe these will contribute to the overall safety, wellbeing and education of our students:

- ✓ Align CDPH and CalOSHA guidance on isolation and quarantine rules or establish CalOSHA exemptions for the education sector to mirror the CDPH guidance that allows staff to return safely while maintaining health and safety precautions.
- ✓ Eliminate, reduce or fully transition responsibility for COVID-19 testing, isolation and quarantine to the healthcare and insurance providers or public health sector as appropriately defined. Schools can provide venues and access, but other persons, agencies, or entities should be responsible for intake, notifications, guidance and tracing. We understand this may require additional capacity such as recruitment efforts to staff these operations or a reimagining of state policy. Expanding access to Over-the-Counter COVID-19 testing kits for individuals and families to access as needed coupled with a policy change would greatly relieve the systems
- ✓ Provide schools and districts with reprieve through extension or modification from some of the traditional compliance mandates and reporting requirements such as the LCAP supplement, the A-G Incentive Grant plan, and the Career Technology Incentive Grant reports.
- ✓ Make the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program more flexible with an extended timeline and allowance of carryover funds so there is not a missed opportunity to provide these supports to our students.
- ✓ Provide a reprieve from chronic absenteeism accountability given the skewed data as a result of COVID-19 impact. Chronic absenteeism data will reflect the days missed due to COVID-19 as well as direction from health agencies for persons to stay home if they are not feeling well, social and emotional needs, and more.
- ✓ Establish dialogue now with school districts about the pivot to living in the coming era of endemic which could begin as early as summer 2022. Build upon relationships forged during the crisis and support schools in their mission of teaching and learning and supporting the needs of students.



Thank you for the opportunity to share our comments. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these observations and our recommendations. We are eager to partner to identify a solution focused path forward.

Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Roxane Fuentes
A62DE1E1B77146C...

Dr. Roxane Fuentes, SCCSA President
Superintendent
Berryessa Union School District

DocuSigned by:
Cheryl Jordan
F8CA2215EC61417...

Dr. Cheryl Jordan, SCCSA Vice President
Superintendent
Milpitas Unified School District

DocuSigned by:
Stella M. Kemp, Ed.D.
D499A9F03B0941F...

Dr. Stella M. Kemp, SCCSA Secretary
Superintendent
Santa Clara Unified School District

DocuSigned by:
Michael Gallagher
934EED607AD145F...

Dr. Michael Gallagher, SCCSA Co-Treasurer
Superintendent
Sunnyvale School District

DocuSigned by:
Edith Mourtos
26D039EF88CA411...

Edith Mourtos, SCCSA Co-Treasurer
Superintendent
Luther Burbank School District

DocuSigned by:
Hilaria Baur
B1F6540B4CEC434

Dr. Hilaria Baur, Superintendent
Alum Rock Union School District

DocuSigned by:
Kristi Schwiebert
226911DAC7E4401

Kristi Schwiebert, Superintendent
Cambrian School District

DocuSigned by:
Shelly Viramontez
628BDF33EA3411

Dr. Shelly Viramontez, Superintendent
Campbell Union School District

DocuSigned by:
Robert Bravo
D5E2EE20C0C14E3...

Dr. Robert Bravo, Superintendent
Campbell Union High School District

DocuSigned by:
Stacy Yao
F987F85DA5744ED

Stacy Yao, Superintendent
Cupertino Union School District

DocuSigned by:
Glenn Vander Zee
2493888FB74CE

Glenn Vander Zee, Superintendent
East Side Union High School District

DocuSigned by:
Steve Betando
F7F643FC713241B

Steve Betando, Interim Superintendent
Evergreen School District

DocuSigned by:
Juan Cruz
F588338559ED4F3

Juan Cruz, Superintendent
Franklin-McKinley School District



DocuSigned by:
Polly M. Bove
FDD8F7EEEF1744C
Polly Bove, Superintendent
Fremont Union High School District

DocuSigned by:
Deborah Flores
619948F8616048E
Dr. Deborah A. Flores, Superintendent
Gilroy Unified School District

DocuSigned by:
Sean Joyce
A5C7087D261C493
Dr. Sean Joyce, Superintendent
Lakeside Joint School District

DocuSigned by:
Kevin Grier
4F8C075E2524CF
Dr. Kevin Grier, Superintendent
Loma Prieta Joint Union School District

DocuSigned by:
Jeffrey Baier
422F821F10EF40E
Jeffrey Baier, Superintendent
Los Altos School District

DocuSigned by:
Paul Johnson
333FC6E45A84D1
Paul Johnson, Superintendent
Los Gatos Union School District

DocuSigned by:
Michael Grove
5F5858103141E
Dr. Michael Grove, Superintendent
Los Gatos-Saratoga Union HSD

DocuSigned by:
Alyssa Lynch
875FC0146D1481
Alyssa Lynch, Superintendent
Metropolitan Education District

DocuSigned by:
Clover Codd
F4F8E170802456
Dr. Clover Codd, Superintendent
Moreland School District

DocuSigned by:
Carmen Garcia
F7E60245388431
Dr. Carmen Garcia, Superintendent
Morgan Hill Unified School District

DocuSigned by:
Elida MacArthur
F10A27204578E
Dr. Elida MacArthur, Superintendent
Mount Pleasant Elementary School District

DocuSigned by:
Ayinde Rudolph
A28E4706E6B344
Dr. Ayinde Rudolph, Superintendent
Mountain View Whisman School District

DocuSigned by:
Nellie Meyer
E888B03590D428
Dr. Nellie Meyer, Superintendent
Mountain View-Los Altos High SD

DocuSigned by:
José L. Manzo
B522C3CE0B5540D
José L. Manzo, Superintendent
Oak Grove School District

DocuSigned by:
Jeffrey Bowman
D2940A20F37E488
Dr. Jeffrey Bowman, Superintendent
Orchard School District

DocuSigned by:
Don Austin
48E7F760FEB8428
Dr. Donald Austin, Superintendent
Palo Alto Unified School District

DocuSigned by:
Nancy Albarrán
9327192C085C480D
Nancy Albarrán, Superintendent
San Jose Unified School District

DocuSigned by:
Mary Ann Dewan
72889FED41F52483
Dr. Mary Ann Dewan, Superintendent
Santa Clara County Office of Education

DocuSigned by:
K. Geisick
22318D4F15FA498
Dr. Kenneth Geisick, Superintendent
Saratoga Union School District

DocuSigned by:
Carrie Andrews
4B7790DF8C134A1
Dr. Carrie Andrews, Superintendent
Union Elementary School District