

Written Public Comment
August 24, 2021

Lillian Tseng **August 22, 2021 11:08PM**

Dear President Ordway and members of the Board,

With the schools reopening during a surge of active COVID cases in the community, I am writing to urge SRVUSD Board members to implement a weekly COVID-19 screening testing on each school campus for our unvaccinated students. This recommendation comes from California Department of Public Health COVID-19 Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, published August 2, 2021 (Safety Measures for K-12 Schools, Section 5, Screening Testing Recommendations) and reflects the latest CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 School with regards to screening testing considerations (in Section 1.4 and Appendix 2), published July 9, 2021. With the implementation of on-site screening testing for COVID-19 on each school campus for our unvaccinated students, we can prevent outbreaks in our district. This is important for all of our students at SRVUSD but especially for the students under 12 years old who are not yet eligible for a vaccine. Preventing outbreaks on our school campuses will ensure that schools can stay open for our students to receive in-person education.

Dr. Malloy recently announced increased COVID testing sites for our students and staff, at SRVUSD Education center two afternoons a week. In the same SRVUSD communications email, Dr. Malloy also discussed additional testing offered at Contra Costa County at Bishop Ranch for COVID. These confirmation COVID tests are molecular PCR tests, which is the gold standard for detecting the presence of virus, but it is not the best screening test as it may take up to 48 hours for results to return. There is also limited availability of these tests, thus making it difficult to act as a screening tool.

Screening testing identifies infected individuals who may be asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic (those who have not yet developed symptoms). California Department of Public Health recommends surveillance testing in schools, as one of the prevention methods of COVID-19 spread, when transmission levels in the community is high. This is in response to CDC's estimation that up to 60% of infections are transmitted while individuals are asymptomatic. Screening testing are most valuable in areas with high community transmission levels, and our current Contra Costa County transmission levels is very high at 194 new cases per 100,000 persons in the last 7 days. The best method of screening involves a test with rapid turnaround times, which can be easily administered to a large group of individuals, which is why I propose the schools at SRVUSD consider administration of COVID antigen testing at each campus site.

Antigen tests are affordable and have rapid turnaround time (approximately 15-20 minutes). They can be useful for someone who feels fine but can still be a silent spreader. Routine testing of our unvaccinated students can help identify cases early, minimize outbreaks in our schools, and keep as many students in the classroom as possible. Screening testing can also help facilitate safe participation in sports and other extracurricular activities. Testing can also be extended to those who come on campus who may have close contact with students, such as adult volunteers. Having free testing on site during school hours is also crucial to a successful screening program, as it will eliminate any barriers for those interested in getting tested.

To start a COVID screening testing program at SRVUSD is a heavy lift, but there are resources available. The Rockefeller Foundation playbook and the Chiefs for Change planning workbook can be a useful guide for school districts to navigate through the process. Rapid antigen tests can now be purchased in bulk for as little as \$5 per test. Schools may also consider testing a random sample of at least 10% of students or conduct pooled testing. Pooled testing can decrease testing cost by combining multiple samples for analysis.

While the active cases and transmission rate of COVID is high in our community, I urge the Board to implement an effective screening program to identify early COVID-19 infection and prevent spread in our classrooms. Especially with our youngest students who do not yet have access to an effective vaccine, routine screening is their best defense against illness. Decreasing the risk of an outbreak in schools will also help all students to stay on campus, to receive in-person instruction for as long as possible.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lillian Tseng

Alesia Strauch **August 23, 2021 7:09AM**

I have reached out to the County Health Department, as well.

I would like to receive the specific scientific data that supports masking children under 12 (unvaccinated) while playing outside at school or scientific report that has been used to support the following included in the latest newsletter:

Some of the confusion has to do with quarantine options for unvaccinated students. While masking outdoors is not a requirement, the county tells us that when a student does not wear a mask outdoors and is identified as a close contact, it changes their options for purposes of quarantine. By being unmasked, even though it is outside, students do not qualify for a modified quarantine (can continue to attend school as long as they are asymptomatic, continue to mask, undergo testing and quarantine for 10 days from extracurricular activities). They may qualify for a shortened quarantine (return to school after 7 days instead of 10, with a negative test result). To qualify for a modified quarantine, the student must be masked, even outdoors.

I would like to know the scientific data you are using to recommend that children wear a mask while playing outside in the summer heat. How is it

that a child playing tag outside in 90 degree heat without a mask on = close contact? Holding the "carrot" of modified quarantine to motivate families to force their child to wear a mask while paying outside is unacceptable.

A cloth mask provides 10% greater protection from virus transmission, at best. This seems negligible when it is a few kids running around the playground or playing on swings.

Thank you.
Alesia Strauch

Becky Hill August 23, 2021 4:34PM

Hello,
It's time to end the mask mandates. There is no science to support these mandates and in fact there are studies that show how harmful it is for our kids to be wearing them all day.

Becky Hill

Traci Wyss August 23, 2021 9:06PM

The last two weeks have been a rollercoaster. My child is thrilled to be at in person school and I'm thrilled for him! His teacher is amazing, he already has friends made last year in virtual learning—we love it. But the dark cloud of covid looms overhead and having two children too young to be vaccinated is frightening. We see people fighting to remove masks indoors and increasing the risk to our children. We see numbers climbing in our community and at our schools already—our school in particular seems to be hardest hit. We see the district policy in action that an unvaccinated child who has been a close contact with a positive covid case can continue attending classes until symptoms show up and we wonder how does ignoring CDC guidelines protect our children? Contact tracing AND isolation are what can help stop the spread, as inconvenient as it is. I'm asking parents and the board to please consider what we don't know about this virus—the old narrative that it doesn't hurt kids is falling away as cases rise in children and we see there is long term risk there for our kids. Give them a fighting chance by supporting masking to slow the spread. I'm asking the board to please review policies and consider what can be done to minimize risk for our kids—such as regular testing onsite at the schools and isolating close contacts while allowing them to complete work at home. I hope we can continue to go to school in person but we can only do that if we work together to keep community numbers low and our kids safe.

Thank you,
Traci

Emily Wetmore August 24, 2021 7:22AM

Dear Board Members,

First, I would like to thank you for your service. I know that you give countless hours with little appreciation. I am writing this letter because I have a Senior at San Ramon Valley High School who is in tears from the stress of missing days of school without much support from the teachers or administrators. My daughter, despite doing everything she was told to do, contracted COVID-19 from direct exposure at school.

My daughter is vaccinated and is very diligent about wearing a mask. She is pursuing a career in nursing and follows the guidelines. Also, we have taken this virus very seriously as a family. As an infant she was hospitalized with RSV and has since had issues with asthma. We knew that if she did get COVID, that it could be life threatening. Since contracting the virus, she had to be put on antibiotics and an inhaler due to chest pains and difficulty breathing. This variant is no joke.

At the beginning of school, she complained about kids not properly wearing their masks and gloating about not being vaccinated. One of these kids sits directly behind her in class. After not even a week of school that child was absent and then we received a direct exposure notice from school. Our daughter had been exhibiting some cold symptoms, but until we received the notice, we thought it was due to the smoke. Then she lost her taste and smell, and we knew that it was most likely due to COVID. Trying to be responsible citizens, we got her tested and was told that she was positive. We reported this to the school and our daughter contacted each of her teachers as suggested.

Yet again, it feels like the school was not prepared. She has received little support from her teachers and administrators. Some teachers haven't even responded to her multiple emails asking for help. Our daughter is taking 4 AP classes that move extremely fast. Missing one day, not to mention the 6 that she will miss, sets her up for failure without the proper support. Her first semester grades matter for her college applications and could affect her getting into her college of choice. Why is she being penalized for something she had no control over?

So, I have two requests. First, please require that teachers and staff enforce the rule that masks must be worn inside. The consequences must be strong to send a message to our community that the school is taking this seriously. Had this rule been enforced in her class, I would most likely not be writing this letter. We are allowing a small minority to dictate the containment (or lack thereof) of this virus. Second, there must be a strong support system in place to help the quarantined students. Based on the data regarding the Delta variant, the quick spread of this virus was foreseeable. We must stop playing catch up and start preparing for foreseeable issues, no matter how taxing.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Emily Wetmore

Gregory Close August 24, 2021 9:56AM

All,

I attended "Back to School" night last week at Charlotte Wood.

The ventilation situation in the classrooms is not good. Many of the classrooms are portable structures, with only a window heating/cooling unit with no filter. This means filtering of the air is minimal to none in these classrooms. Especially now that the classrooms are full again.

They are keeping the door propped open, but this provides minimal airflow of clean air into the room.

Since Covid spreads primarily through the air, and not via touching surfaces, keeping fresh clean air is vital to keeping our students healthy.

I'd suggest portable HEPA air cleaners, purchased by the parents, as a way to improve the cleanliness of the air in the classrooms. These are about \$150 each. Larger rooms should have two of these.

When I inquired with two teachers at my son's elementary school, I was told this is specifically prohibited.

Can you please look into this and see if we can get this option approved, if parents are willing to donate the HEPA units?

Please note that the air filters must be simple HEPA air filters, and no other technologies, like ionization or UV, is needed or advisable.

I am sure many of our parents would jump at the chance to do something productive to increase the safety of our classrooms.

-Gregory Close

Beverly Kumar August 24, 2021 9:58AM

Dear President Ordway, Trustees and Dr. Malloy,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you.

I'm wondering if I were a student in a classroom and I heard my teacher tell me in class that we do the minimum of expectations- nothing more and nothing less. All you need is a C to pass this class. Don't you even give a second thought about thinking creatively, being innovative and offering solutions to earn that B or A. No, no... in this class, it's no more or less than C. I mean, nothing is wrong with a C, right? It's passing. It's doing what one is instructed to do by following a narrow path.

Congratulations on delivering on your promise; Our schools are open! I hope we are all doing the work we need to do in order for them to be open and safe. I think I can confidently say that we all want that.

We are:

- Open with our individual school sites doing the heavy lifting on contact tracing and reporting- taking away from the time our Principals and office staff need to focus on being present (especially now).
- Open with a new software management program in which the District thinks it is appropriate that parents are trained with webinars in order to troubleshoot and use.
- Open without testing on-site form day one...a service that was provided to staff in the spring.
- Open without any clear and transparent indicator of what positive cases and percents of exposure put us at risk of pivoting to remote by a class or school basis.
- Open without utilizing the skills and tools acquired over the last 18 months to give equal footing to parents and caregivers for events like Back to School Night with options of live streaming or recorded sessions.
- Open with a plan that once a student is quarantined, their education will be interrupted and they will be expected to essentially teach themselves.
- Open with confusion surrounding procedure (with many seeking information from surrounding Districts).
- Open without water available for students on campus.

Yes, we are open and I am so, so very thankful for that. However, on a District level, we are seemingly open with many opportunities to grow and an unnerving feeling that being proactive needs to be considered. Being proactive means that sometimes, we have to do more than less.

Sincerely,
Beverly Kumar

Dorris Lam **August 24, 2021** **10:04AM**

My name is Dorris Chow, mother of a 6th, 3rd and 1st grader. All three of my children are ineligible to get a vaccine. I want to thank you for the indoor mask mandate and the COVID DashBoard that updates all the COVID cases in our school district.

As we look at the numbers of COVID cases on the SRVUSD dashboard, some may view it as alarming while others may view it as expected. Has the Contra Costa Health Service and School District defined an "outbreak" in school? Is it based on the number of cases in a classroom, school, or something else? I'm trying to understand what are the thresholds to adjust safety measures.

The Dashboard is a good start for transparency, but given that I'm not in the medical field, I am unclear whether those number of cases represent a mild, moderate, or severe concern. Similar to the air quality, I recommend the school district add another column on the dashboard to indicate the level of concerns; and another column to indicate whether the cases are coming from student-to-student transmission, or from home. Based on those levels, the school should adjust their safety measures accordingly. This layered prevention strategies is in inline with the CDC guideline for safe school which states,

"Schools will have a mixed population of both people who are fully vaccinated and people who are not fully vaccinated. . . These variations require K-12 administrators to make decisions about the use of COVID-19 prevention strategies in their schools to protect people who are not fully vaccinated. . . Together with local public health officials, school administrators should consider multiple factors when they make decisions about implementing **layered prevention strategies** [emphasis added] against COVID-19." ([July 9, 2021 Guidance](#))

With that said, I strongly recommend that you define an "outbreak" in school and adjust the safety measure accordingly.

Sincerely,
Dorris Chow

Richard Laguna **August 24, 2021** **11:09AM**

Good evening SRVUSD madam president of the board Ordway, vice president of the board Mintz, board members Hurd, Bratt and Clark.

I want to begin by thanking our active men and women who are currently serving and those who have served in our military for taking the oath to support and defend the constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. I want to thank all law enforcement personnel taking an oath to protect and serve our communities and thank all our first responders for the tough job they do everyday serving our community. They are all heroes when living up to their given oaths. However, there are individual actions within the ranks of our military, law enforcement and first responders that occur every single day that we do not hear about in the media that are truly heroic.

I want to state that we have been in a war that reached the shores of our country in January 2020. This is a very different kind of war. Our common enemy of our people is the SARS-CoV-2 virus that leads to COVID-19. This enemy is elusive and has no 'rules of engagement' or cares about human laws or our petty political differences. This enemy plays only by the rule of a virus-life and the unwavering will to survive. It looks for opportunities to mutate within the infected individuals to create variants to remain elusive and survive. This enemy has denied our very freedom that our heroes provide. It is not the political opposition nor are the federal, state, or local mandates or recommendations stripping us from our freedoms. It is this common enemy with its past, current, and future variants that have denied almost 4.5 million people worldwide, 630 thousand U.S. citizens, over 65 thousand Californians and over 850 people in Contra Costa their right to life.

As a community in one of the wealthiest nations and in a state where the economy is so big that if it were a country, it would be the 5th largest economy in the world, it is our duty to use all available resources to fight this war against this enemy. If you cannot see the enemy, you cannot fight it. Any risk mitigation efforts, although also very important weapons in this fight, whether it be vaccinations, masks, or distancing will not provide enough levels of protections to kill off this enemy. We need to see the enemy through rapid PCR or Molecular testing within our staff, faculty and of our most vulnerable citizens, our student kiddos.

In Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) as the second largest school district in the nation conducted 'baseline' COVID testing where 81% of faculty and student completed testing and identifying over 3,255 (0.8% positivity-rate) and 399 district employees (0.6% positivity-rate) COVID positive cases. This is evidence that we can see the enemy and that the enemy can be contained. Just imagine if they had not mandated testing. Over 3,600 infected individuals' symptomatic or asymptomatic would have a high likelihood of shedding the virus and infecting others in their school community and the community itself.

This 'baseline' testing is an important proxy for SRVUSD. As of 8/24, our district has reported 83 cases representing 0.26% positivity-rate of faculty and students. We can all hope that this positivity-rate does not increase. As a leader, I never rely on hope as a strategy. Having a clear and concise COVID-19 Containment, Response and Control Plan is a strategy. It only when a comprehensive plan is being executed that we can feel confident that the COVID positivity-rate is contained, and we can return it to 0%.

Be heroic by implementing and mandating rapid PCR or Molecular testing at school sites of staff, faculty, and students. Know that the nasal swab sample collection is much more kiddo-friendly than the initial mid-turbinate sample collection from early PCR testing. This is no longer an excuse

for the opposition. Continue vaccination, masking requirements, and require safe distancing. The California Department of Public Health has partnered with Valencia Branch Laboratory for free testing and provided a workflow for districts to get started with testing. Use all our resources available for our community. We cannot do the minimum to beat this enemy. Go above and beyond your call of duty. Be heroic.

There is no doubt that this is going to take a heroic effort on your part to make this happen. As leaders of our school community, you are empowered to drive change and you are accountable for the safety of your staff, faculty, and our students. It is this heroic effort that I will pray that we can come together as a community, and as a nation to fight the common enemy and not each other. The sooner we do this, the sooner we will celebrate our victory and restore our freedom. We all can be heroic.

Thanks

Richard

References:

LAUSD Containment, Response and Control Plan –

[https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/ModuleInstance/45663/LAUSD Containment Plan 8-11-21.pdf](https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/ModuleInstance/45663/LAUSD%20Containment%20Plan%208-11-21.pdf)

COVID-19 Testing Task Force School Testing page - <https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/school-testing/>

CDPH Valencia Branch Laboratory - <https://vimeo.com/colorgenomics/review/504229687/53dd8bea68>

Colleen McClure August 24, 2021 11:13AM

I have always been proud that SRVUSD strives to be a leader in education. Which is why I've been so disappointed in the approach to COVID this school year taken by the district. I've heard several staff members repeat that the district will follow the county health guidelines and "do nothing more". Why wouldn't we want to do more? Why, in this one area, would we not want to be a leader and be content with doing the bare minimum? We wouldn't be happy with that in any academic area or topics such as inclusion so I'm baffled why as parents we should settle for it now. It would be refreshing to hear that our district is going to be a leader in keeping our kids safe and doing whatever it takes to do that. Offering both in-person back-to-school nights and being inclusive and offering other options for parents who are immunocompromised or didn't feel safe in large indoor gathering spaces with others that may not be vaccinated while case numbers are rising. Screening tests done prior to school start so there was faith that everyone walking in, whether vaccinated or not, had a baseline negative test. I'm sure there are all sorts of ways we could innovate to try to keep our children in school this year with minimum interruption. Doing the bare minimum seems like a cop out.

Colleen McClure

Laurinda Ochoa August 24, 2021 1:06PM

As a parent and grandparent of young unvaccinated school children, our family supports the School Board in requiring everyone, including all students, to wear masks in our district schools.

We also urge the district to require all adult employees to be fully vaccinated.

Farrokh August 24, 2021 1:10PM

I have 3 questions regarding status of Covid infections at our schools.

1) On your covid dashboard, why is the total case infection count for each site an aggregate?

To me there's no value in mixing the two figures for both students & school employees in one total count, and I believe other parents too would prefer knowing how many of said total for the school were for employees/teachers and separately what was the infection count of students.

Was this a school board decision to aggregate the figures into one number rather than to report them separately?

2) What is the infection threshold that triggers a school closure?

3) Lastly, now that vaccination of all onsite school employees & contractors has been mandated by the state, and a fully FDA approved vaccine is available, what is the date upon which ALL your district employees will be fully vaccinated?

Respectfully,

Parent of M.V.High

-F.KH-

Tim Adams August 24, 2021 1:34PM

I support mask choice.

Duy Dang August 24, 2021 1:38PM

Please know that a few folks are going to show up to support the board's decision. We believe that you are in the best position to educate and care for our children while they are in schools. Personally I will be photographing the events for any disruptive behaviors by anyone.

Please stay safe.

Duy Dang

Heidi Phillips **August 24, 2021** **2:27PM**

Hello:

Hopefully at this point, regardless of the anti-maskers, it is accepted that masks will be worn in school. Anything that you, the Board, can do to encourage teachers to promote proper mask wearing would be helpful. Unfortunately there are many reports of kids wearing masks below their noses or holding them away from their faces when they talk in class. Even more unfortunate is that these same issues seem to plague the teachers themselves. Not only are they not enforcing proper use but they are not modeling it, either.

As you know TK-6th are unable to be vaccinated at this time (and no other preventative measures are being encouraged), so masks are the ONLY line of defense these kids have. Allowing them or the teachers to not wear them correctly is a major disservice and ultimately does nothing to protect. For your own preservation I would think you would want to do whatever you can to not have numbers increase or even risk closure.

When we decided to send our kids back Delta was not dominant and I never imagined I would have to send an email pleading for teachers to make sure kids are following the one and only thing in place to keep them safe! Beyond frustrating and disappointing.

Thank you,
HP

Jill Kellogg **August 24, 2021** **4:29PM**

I support mask choice.

Lacey Lowe **August 24, 2021** **4:32PM**

Good Evening,

Please continue to support vaccination choice! I am a teacher who is not vaccinated, and I do not plan on being vaccinated. I am content to test for covid as needed. I'm grateful I currently have a choice. The idea of losing my job for not being vaccinated like in other states seems unreasonable. Please please support people who can not vaccinate or choose not to.

Sincerely,

Lacey Lowe

Mita Ganatra **August 24, 2021** **7:02PM**

Hello Board members,

Please open virtual learning options for kids who are at high risk. It is not fair to close down virtual learning before school starts. We need chance to figure out what is right for our kids.

Please consider at least poll for virtual option for students, I am sure many parents will sign up.

Stay Safe,
Mita