

Union Notes – January 5, 2022

As we've returned to work during this Omicron surge, some of our schools are already facing staffing challenges which are likely to get worse as cases continue to grow. The staffing shortages due to COVID cases are unlike any we've seen before or during this pandemic. This is not sustainable, and district leadership must step up with solutions to meet the crisis that is facing our schools.

The educators on the SDEA Board of Directors will be meeting today to discuss potential solutions to the challenges we're struggling with. Members will also be meeting with the interim superintendent, chief of staff and school board members this week to demand solutions to address concerns related to this surge in cases.

Operational Limitations Posed by COVID Related Staff Absences

A question that has come up is whether or not schools can temporarily close down. There is no specific case threshold at which state and local public health recommend a temporary closure of a classroom or school. Guidance from the California Department of Public Health states that "a temporary school closure due to COVID-19 should be a last resort and considered only after all available resources have been exhausted in an attempt to preserve in-person education." State law does not allow for the whole district to just shut down.

Nevertheless, the District must come up with a plan to determine when in-person operations may need to cease at a school with extremely high absences of staff. A one size fits all approach should not be imposed on all schools. However, the District should have a plan in the most extreme circumstances where there just aren't sufficient staff on hand to safely run a school.

CDC Guidance on Quarantining

Although the CDC has recently relaxed guidelines, the state and the county have not updated their guidance to align with the relaxed CDC quarantining guidelines. That means in California, the quarantine window is still 10 days for individuals who test positive for COVID.

Leave Benefit Available to Members Who Have Tested Positive for COVID

If a member tests positive for COVID, they are eligible for special leave that will not be deducted from their leave balances. This COVID leave is something we won as a union and is contained in our agreement to reopen for this school year.

According to our COVID agreement, members are required to submit documentation of a positive COVID test result in order to access paid COVID leave.

If you have tested positive for COVID (rapid antigen or PCR), you should report your results to SDUSD Nursing & Wellness. SDUSD employees should use this [form](#) to report positive COVID test results, symptoms, and close contacts. Once this information is received, you will be contacted with guidance on your individual case.

COVID Testing

In addition to weekly school site testing, SDUSD employees and students are able to obtain a COVID test from the Ed Center Monday-Friday from 7am-7pm and on the weekends from 8am-5pm.

Members can also go to the UCSD Health Drive-Up testing centers. Info on the UCSD testing centers can be found [here](#). Make sure to read the directions carefully to make your reservation. Other testing opportunities can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Members have reported long lines and unavailable testing windows at the district sites and through UCSD respectively. This is a result of the severe need for testing at this time due the surge in COVID cases. Increased testing capacity is an important element of addressing these issues with at least one new testing location coming online next week according to SDUSD Director of Nursing and Wellness.