

SDUSD Mask Mandate Decision

This past July, SDEA members overwhelmingly approved a safety agreement that called for the District to follow state public health directives and implement any changes in a timely fashion.

Effective March 14, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has lifted the masking requirement in schools, but also delegated decision-making authority around masks to local school districts. SDUSD's decision to plan to follow CDC COVID-19 Community Levels as its guide for determining masking in schools is in line with the agreement approved by educators back in July—and the updated state guidance from CDPH. Nevertheless, if cases do increase it's going to be critically important that masks are reincorporated to respond to those potential increases.

Starting on April 4, masks will not be required in SDUSD schools, but will continue to be strongly encouraged for staff, students and other visitors to our school campuses. Additionally, SDEA's agreement with SDUSD continues to require improved ventilation and weekly access to testing.

SDUSD launches new Universal Transitional Kindergarten, but details are murky

Top district leaders recently circulated the news that next year SDUSD will start something called Universal Transitional Kindergarten, or UTK. There's a lot of confusion among teachers (and rightly so!) as to what UTK is, and what the rules are for its operation. Here are two common questions that are coming up right now, including an explanation of why details may remain murky for a while longer.

What is SDUSD's new Universal Transitional Kindergarten?

Short answer: That's not exactly known yet because "Universal Transitional Kindergarten" is not a term found in or defined in the Education Code (state law). Early indications are that SDUSD intends UTK to be a type of TK classroom in which 4-year-olds are enrolled.

Long answer: The Education Code lays out two types of TK classrooms that can exist: (1) the "standard" TK classroom that enrolls 5-year-olds and, (2) a TK classroom that "commingles" both 4-year-old preschoolers and 5-year-olds (SDUSD has previously called this TK4, 4TK, and commingled TK). The Education Code has rules for the operation of each classroom type that cover issues like staffing ratios and enrollment ages by birth date. In addition to what's in the Education Code, for that second classroom type, commingled TK (also called TK4 and 4TK), [SDEA members recently bargained rules](#) that cover issues like staffing, training, workload, and prep time. Those rules also have to be followed. *The problem is that SDUSD's descriptions of UTK so far appear not to line up with either of the two types of TK classrooms allowable under law.* So on Feb. 25, [an SDEA staff person sent SDUSD a letter requesting information](#) (to which the union is legally entitled) on what provision of the Education Code allows SDUSD to implement the UTK classroom they are planning. Once SDUSD provides that information available, SDEA leaders and staff can be sure of what the rules are under both the law and the union contract for a UTK classroom. Until then, the rules remain murky.

Can I be forced into a transitional kindergarten classroom if I do not have the credentials?

You can be compelled to teach transitional kindergarten if you have a multiple subjects credential and meet one of these 3 qualifications under the law:

1. At least 24 units in early childhood education, or childhood development, or both; OR
2. Professional experience comparable to the 24 units of education, which [according to an agreement SDEA members bargaining with SDUSD](#), means:
 - The teacher previously served 75% of an instruction year in a kindergarten classroom and participated in 3 SDUSD professional development days for Tk teachers between July 2015 and August 2020, OR
 - The teacher has 5 or more years of experience in a kindergarten classroom, OR
 - Taught TK in 2015-16 and attended 3 SDUSD professional development days for Tk teachers between July 2015 and August 2020; OR
3. A child development teacher permit issued by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

If you do not meet these qualification criteria, you cannot be lawfully compelled to teach TK. A good point of comparison to help understand this – and this is an extreme example: We all know that if you're an elementary teacher, SDUSD can't compel you to meet all the qualifications of a School Nurse – get the education, credential, and so on – by assigning you to a School Nurse position. Similarly, SDUSD can't compel you to get the qualifications necessary to be a TK Teacher by assigning you to a TK Teacher position.

Early Childhood Education Teachers can be assigned to co-teach with a qualified TK Teacher in a commingled TK classroom (only). ECE Teachers don't have to meet the above qualifications.

Induction Support for SDEA Temp. Contract Members

Educator retention will be a critical component of our collective work (that means all 6,500 of us) as we move through a period of heightened retirements and fewer educators coming into the system. In addition to the work currently being undertaken to convert the contract of temporary contract educators, maintaining our benefits plan, and winning more pay, it'll be critical to support newer educators.

Our contract requires the District to cover the induction costs of probationary or permanent contract educators. However, that benefit did not extend to our temporary contract educators who needed to clear their credential – that is until now.

A new agreement with the District will now cover temporary contract members who fit the following criteria, and need to clear their credential:

- Unit member is employed on a temporary contract status and not employed as a Visiting Teacher.
- The unit member must, in accordance with State requirements, complete their induction requirements in either the 2021-22 or 2022-23 school years.

[You can read the agreement here.](#) If you believe you qualify for the benefit offered by this agreement, e-mail Acacia Thede (athede@sandi.net) for directions on accessing this support.