



Dear Lompoc Community,

California provides timeline for re-evaluating the school masking mandate

CHHS teases prospect of lifting mandate after Feb. 28 reassessment, but doesn't commit to changes

In a wide-ranging press briefing that glanced back at the historical trends of the pandemic and looked ahead to the future of California's fight against COVID-19, the California Department of Public Health unveiled a timeline for potentially changing the state's school masking requirement. California Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly explained that his staff will continue to evaluate data on the pandemic in society generally, and in schools specifically, and then provide a public assessment of California's masking policy on Feb. 28.

Ghaly did not commit to lifting the school masking requirement on Feb. 28, but his remarks suggested that if current trendlines continue, CDPH would consider softening or eliminating the mandate at a specific date in the future and would likely announce that timetable on Feb. 28. In the meantime, the department will reassess case rates, test positivity, overall hospitalizations, pediatric hospitalizations and vaccination rates to arrive at a decision on when school masking requirements might expire.

"Masking mandates were never put in place to be there forever — it's not a question of 'if,' it's a question of 'when,'" Ghaly said, later adding that, "On Feb. 28 we anticipate being able to share what the next period of time will look like and, with some specificity, give a date when the masking requirement will move to a recommendation."

Ghaly stated that the administration's approach is informed by a desire to:

- Prioritize in-person instruction
- Ensure that there is a low risk of catching COVID-19 in schools
- Retire the masking requirements as conditions improve
- Remain prepared to adjust to changes in the overall COVID-19 environment

The hour-long presentation was followed by a 15-minute Q&A session with media outlets across the state as well as some national journalists. Throughout, Ghaly referred to data reflecting the state's progress against COVID-19, particularly the advances made since mid-January when omicron was marching across the country. From Jan. 14 to Feb. 14, California saw:

- COVID-19 cases plummet 75.4 percent
- Hospitalizations fall 40.6 percent
- Hospital admissions drop 62.7 percent
- Test positivity decline 72.9 percent

Ghaly also noted that despite educating 12 percent of America’s students, California accounted for less than 1 percent of the nation’s school closures in 2022. He used these statistics to describe an improving environment for the mitigation of COVID-19 and the basis — assuming current trends continue — for the conversion of school masking rules from a mandate to a “strong recommendation.” That transition would mirror the change to the masking requirements that the state is making for non-school related indoor spaces on Feb. 15.

The state’s approach to this phase of the pandemic is driven by a desire for “humility, flexibility and evidence.” Specifically, Ghaly said that the state is adopting “smarter” testing policies, including permitting the use of antigen and over-the-counter tests and moving away from certain mitigation strategies like social distancing and individualized contact tracing.

In response to a question about whether removing the school masking mandate at the local level would make life harder for local educational agencies, and school boards in particular, that would then be forced to decide what level of COVID-19 mitigation measures they want to adopt, Ghaly indicated that he thinks the administration has found the right balance between state power and local control.

“Let me just be clear, the state has led and had requirements or application for our mitigation tools in specified ways throughout, not just in schools but all over. California has done this more than perhaps any other state in providing blanket protection across the state,” Ghaly said. “We talked about it not just at the local level, but at the school level — which is different — to provide them with discretion and to help inform those local decisions with the state as a floor. That’s been an important approach, and part of the decision, being announced today is to provide schools a chance to have these conversations, which will look different in different parts of the state, so people will be prepared.”

Celebration Luncheon

This week we celebrated gains on the latest District-wide common assessments with principals from LHS, CHS, La Cañada, and Clarence Ruth. During our celebratory meeting, we asked the principals to reflect on what changed to allow for the growth. All resoundingly said that teachers and students alike are understanding the process and have more buy-in. They said that the improved outlook by teachers transferred to the students who also tried harder during this last round of assessments. At our next Leadership meeting they will share with their colleagues some takeaways. In addition, they are working on identifying how the District Administration can support their sites so they can celebrate with their staff.

Oakland school closures seen as warning sign for California

The Oakland school district in California will close seven schools, merge two others, and cut grades from two more over the next two years. The decision came after a meeting that stretched for nearly nine hours Tuesday into early Wednesday morning, following a contentious debate that state officials say could be a harbinger of further cuts as California's student enrollment declines. Oakland is being seen as an acute and early example of enrollment declines happening across California that could accelerate in the coming years and strain school district finances. Between the 2014-2015 and 2020-2021 academic years, non-charter public school enrollment in California declined by 378,674 students, or 6.7%, according to state data. The reasons include increasing out-of-state migration, declining birthrates, less affordable housing for families, defections to charter schools and flattening immigration, according to researchers. "If other districts don't heed the lesson learned in Oakland, they're going to find themselves in the same situation, but not overnight," said Michael Fine, chief executive of California's Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, a state agency charged with guiding districts out of financial distress.

Districts fret over how to maintain staff pay hikes

School districts are rushing to raise wages for nonteaching positions like bus drivers, substitute teachers, teacher aides, cafeteria workers, and custodians, teeing up dilemmas for administrators and school business officials as they try to meet workers' needs, and creating concerns about maintaining the price increases beyond this year. Some districts have money in reserves that can fill an emergency need, but adding new long-term costs like higher wages could mean cutting other priorities, like an after-school program or a staff member; raising local taxes, which can be a tough sell in some communities; or lobbying lawmakers for more funds. Acute staffing shortages are driving the increases. Many districts have open positions that need to be filled, and offering more money can lure more candidates. But some districts are fretting over maintaining those salary bumps beyond this year. Competition from other nearby employers with more-flexible budgets is squeezing school budgets and hiring priorities even more than usual.

TSP/Ed Tech Newsletter

Please see this month's TSP/Ed Tech Newsletter: <https://www.smore.com/e1yq4>

In the newsletter are various supports for staff and students alike. We encourage you to take a look.

Here's an article we would like to highlight:

Standards Alignment Project

Bringing Clarity to the Standards Alignment Project

When we embarked on the school year last fall, I'm pretty sure many of us were happy to "return to normal", only to realize that normal seemed to be moving further and further in the rear view mirror. In a climate of constant change, what becomes vital is that quality instruction that is aligned with standards, must remain constant. Coming together in collaboration around best practices and supporting one another in this seemingly endless endurance test, is essential.

Our intention with regard to the Standards Alignment Project is centered around creating a culture of equity with high expectations for all students. By using unit assessments that are aligned with priority standards (ours are currently guided by our equity study partnership with Orenda and assessments are created on the assessment building platform, Illuminate) along with formative assessments, classroom performance and discussion, and MAP growth assessment (NWEA), we are better able to understand where our students are in regard to the standards as well as the effectiveness of our instruction. Using data to drive our instruction and conversations with colleagues helps us prepare students for not only the summative CAASPP assessment, but continuous on track learning throughout their education.

With time provided to regularly discuss data and instructional strategies with colleagues, we become better able to prepare our students for success. We recognize that time is in short supply in this current climate as we work to support students and one another with the daily challenges we face. Allowing Grace in the process and focusing on growth for our students and each other, is key. The hope is that in time, as the challenges of this climate subside and the influence of trauma begins to hopefully lessen, we gain strength in our practice and power in our effectiveness. Our goals are long term and our intention is always to increase student success and well being.

Recruiting International Teachers

As we have shared in previous transmittals, we have been working to identify staff for the coming school year in various ways. One new way for LUSD is looking internationally for teachers who have teaching experience, but want to come to the USA. We have worked with a company that will assist us with the logistics of J1 VISAs. Now that the documents are completed, recruitment has begun for our international teachers. Our partnering organization is working on identifying candidates that meet our criteria. We are excited for this opportunity and the diversity they can bring to our campuses.

Summer Think Tank

LUSD Coordinators from Education Services and Special Education held their second planning meeting in preparation for the 2022 Summer Think Tank. During the 2021 Summer Think Tank, teachers from across all sites collaboratively discussed how to make summer learning engaging for students. We are excited to see a wide range of staff signing up to join the 2022 Summer Think Tank which kicks off the week of February 14. We appreciate all who participated last year and look forward to the collaboration this year.

LUSD and United Boys and Girls Club

LUSD Coordinators from Ed Services and Pupil Support met with United Boys and Girls Club this week to find ways to strengthen the UBGCC After School Program while providing opportunities for our high school students in good standing to find employment. Students who are juniors and seniors in high school often have a difficult time finding a job that works with their school schedule and gives them the valuable soft skills needed for college and career. Through our partnership with the United Boys and Girls Club, our high school youth will have this great stepping-stone opportunity.

LUSD and YMCA

We have continued to work closely with the Lompoc YMCA over the past couple of weeks. Through this, we have been partnering to bring a spring intercession to our youth; primarily those enrolled in ASES. The Spring intercession is planned with literacy, math, art, and physical activity as a way to keep students mentally and physically engaged during the spring break. We will continue to update you on this exciting opportunity.

Vaccine Clinics

We continue to work closely with Santa Barbara County Public Health Department regarding COVID-19 protocols, prevention, and mitigation. In the upcoming weeks, we will be hosting vaccine clinics at Lompoc High School, Hapgood and Fillmore Elementary Schools. **See attached flyer. ATTACHMENT #1**

Lompoc Adult School and Career Center (LASCC)

Lompoc Unified School District (Lompoc Adult School and Career Center) has applied for an American Rescue Plan Act Good Jobs Grant as part of a four-county collaborative called the Central Coast Regional Employment Strategies and Technology (CCREST). The four counties of the CCREST include Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, King and Fresno. The CCREST application of 21,504,531 proposes to launch more than 1,500 participants into livable wage employment, reversing the economic effects of the pandemic, while paving a road for continued collaboration between workforce development boards, colleges, adult schools, and employers to align their united efforts to fill employment gaps.

STARBASE

Planning is underway for STARBASE for all LUSD 5th graders for the 2022-2023 school year. Schools will be scheduled to attend based on their school schedules and needs. STARBASE has expressed gratitude for the LUSD partnership and looks forward to continuing the collaboration for the benefit of our students.

LUSD Arts Committee

Last month, the LUSD Arts Committee met to make recommendations for dedicated arts instruction for this school year, with a primary goal of ensuring all students in the District have equitable access to the arts. We reviewed data collected from each elementary site on current arts instruction, and noted a large discrepancy between sites, and between grade levels. Students in grades 4-6 seem to have the least amount of instructional opportunities, and were determined to be a priority in order to support continued and increased enrollment in secondary programs. Therefore, the recommendation was made to focus funding on grades 4-6 this year in order to ensure all students in the District have at least one 12-lesson unit of arts instruction provided by teaching artists contracted through Children's Creative Project. In addition, sites will be provided with funding to bring in touring artist performances (assemblies) for all elementary grade levels this year.

Beginning this month, meetings will focus on planning for next year and beyond. The committee will be renamed as the LUSD Arts Council. Future agenda items include creating a scope and sequence for elementary arts instruction in the five disciplines (Visual Arts, Media Arts, Theater Arts, Dance, and Music) based on the 2019 California Arts Standards, professional development for teachers on the arts standards, and planning for a teacher dedicated to arts instruction at each elementary site next year, including determining which of the five disciplines should be their focus.

CAASPP Training

On Wednesday, February 9, elementary teachers joined together via Zoom for our Common Minimum Day. The focus of this CMD was on training staff on the summative statewide spring assessments. We had over 225 staff members in attendance. During this time, we dove into testing terms, tips on creating a calm testing environment, how to administer the state tests, and how to provide accommodations for students with IEPs. Teachers had an hour to collaborate with their site grade-level teams on creating an inviting classroom environment, they took math & English language arts practice tests, and they debriefed on their experiences. The District testing window opens March 4-May 21.

ELD

This week we accompanied Dr. Pagán from SBCEO to conduct ELD walkthroughs. California Law requires that all English learner (EL) students receive appropriate instruction and services. We have a dual obligation to provide designated English Development instruction for ELs designed to overcome language barriers while also providing access to the core curriculum. Remember, supplemental programs should not be used as replacements for direct, designated instruction. Thank you to the teachers we saw delivering rich, targeted ELD instruction. Please refer any ELD instruction questions to site ELD reps.

LCAP Mid-Year Update & Supplement

On Tuesday, February 8, LUSD Coordinators gave a thorough update of how LUSD is currently measuring up to the 2021-2022 LCAP goals. Included in this mid-year update was a one-time supplement outlining how LUSD has engaged its community partners on the plan and use of the one-time state and federal monies received in an effort to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Safety Meeting

LUSD held our monthly safety meeting this week with agenda items as listed below:

1. Presentation by Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley discussed:
 - a) TUPE Tier 2 program for grades 6-8
 - b) Fresh Air Tobacco Free Club for the high school level
 - c) NOT Program (No on Tobacco)
2. Reminders for procedures to search students
3. Emergency Drill status for sites
4. Safe School Conference July 13-15 sign-ups
5. CWS Report reminders
6. Raptor Visitor Management System use
7. Lompoc Police Department report
8. CSEA/LFT report
9. Site specific questions/concerns

Homeless/Foster Youth

Our site liaisons and outreach consultants participated in the first session of a 40-hour training in order to support them in community interpretations. We all look forward to learning additional ways to support all of our families. The training is being presented by Lena Moran Acereto from Bridging Voices.

CTE

On February 9, 2022, the California Department of Education (CDE) released its preliminary allocations for the first round of the 2021-22 Career Technical Education Incentive Grant (CTEIG). Per Assembly Bill (AB) 130 (Committee on Budget, Statutes of 2021), the CDE is required to release their proposed allocations 30 days before the State Board of Education (SBE) approves them. The plan is for the SBE to approve the allocations at their March 9-10 meeting. You can find the CDE's proposed allocations [here](#).

As a reminder, this is the first year since the CTEIG became an ongoing program in the State Budget that the funding available is \$300 million. Prior to AB 130 being signed into law by Governor Gavin Newsom last year, the annual CTEIG allocation was set at \$150 million.

The CDE is proposing to award more than \$238 million of the \$300 million available for the grant during this first round of allocations. The remaining \$62 million will be made available to applicants in a second round of funding.

LUSD's **preliminary** allocation is \$500,000, which will be used toward our students enrolled in our CTE pathways at three of our high schools as well as a percentage of staffing at some of the sites.

Surplus Items: Sell/Auction

Purchasing just posted the first live auction with GovDeals. The District is auctioning the old Chromebooks recently declared surplus and anticipates a greater return than having these recycled at 6¢/lb. The auction ends on Feb. 18 at 3PM. Here is the link for the auction: <https://www.govdeals.com/index.cfm?fa=Main.Item&itemid=3&acctid=20212>



Kindergarten Classroom Project

The Requests for Qualifications/Proposals for the following services for the kindergarten classroom construction projects were released and were due to the District on Friday, February 11th:

- Architectural and Engineering Services
- Land Surveying Services
- Geotechnical Engineering Services
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Compliance Services
- Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) Compliance and Hazardous Materials (HazMat) Testing Services

A selection committee will review and evaluate the proposals. The tentative date for interviews is February 23.

Metal Picnic Tables for Elementary Schools and El Camino Campus

The new heavy duty total coating picnic tables purchased for the elementary schools and El Camino campus were ordered in August and the first shipments started to arrive. These include 193 picnic tables (standard 8' and ADA compliant). The picnic tables will provide additional seating for students during lunch for years to come. The Purchasing, Warehouse, Maintenance and Grounds teams are working together to coordinate and prepare the assembly, delivery and installation of the picnic tables.

Transportation Services Update

- New bus purchased has been inspected by CHP and is on a route. The old bus that it was replaced with, went to the Sheriff Department in Buellton this week for them to practice hostage training. They use rubber bullets for this type of training.
- Interviewed an STA driver that we hope to be hiring very soon! Fingers crossed.
- CHP is doing written testing on a new driver and renewal testing on a current driver.

Your partner in education,

Trevor McDonald
Superintendent of Schools