

## With County in Orange Tier, AUSD Changes Testing Protocols

In a [press release yesterday](#), the Alameda County Public Health Department announced that the county is now in the “Orange Tier” of COVID-19 risk and restrictions. This new designation allows a number of businesses to expand their services.

While the new tier designation does not affect our reopening plans, it will affect one aspect of our operations: COVID testing.

In setting up its COVID-19 testing protocols, AUSD has relied on the California Department of Public Health’s [Guidance for K-12 Schools in California](#) issued January 14, 20. In alignment with that guidance’s recommended testing cadence -which AUSD adopted- school districts do not need to provide asymptomatic surveillance testing once case rates go below four cases per 100,000 county residents (which is one of the metrics for the orange tier).

As such, AUSD will no longer mandate testing for **elementary students** attending in-person instruction on our campuses. We will continue to provide student testing at our sites, however, and we strongly recommend that families continue to take advantage of the testing, both for their own peace of mind and so that we can close cohorts as quickly as possible if we hear of a positive case.

**Secondary students**, who will return to in-person instruction on April 19, also are not mandated to test. We would like to strongly encourage all secondary students to take part in voluntary testing at our sites, however. We especially recommend that secondary students have a **baseline test** before returning to campuses so that we can get a snapshot look at the health of those students.

The schedule and location of AUSD’s test facilities is available on the [Student COVID-19 Testing web page](#). The schedule for testing will remain as it is for this week; next week’s schedule will be posted early Monday morning.

**Employees** will be required to test monthly, as articulated in the MOU signed this spring. The district will arrange to have 25% of all employees tested per week. AUSD’s HR Department will send information about this shortly. The new schedule for employee testing will be posted to the [Employee COVID-19 Testing web page](#) next Monday.

While case rates are falling, both ACPHD and AUSD are emphasizing the need for all community members to continue to follow health protocols carefully.

“Our metrics have improved, but this pandemic is not yet in our rear-view mirror,” Dr. Nicholas Moss, Alameda County Health Officer, said in yesterday’s press release. “Variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 are circulating in our county, case rates are rising in other parts of the country and, while

nearly a quarter of Alameda County residents aged 16 and older have been fully vaccinated, we aren't at the levels required for broad community protection or immunity."

Adds Superintendent Scuderi, "All of us need to continue to follow safety protocols and public health guidance to keep our case rate trends moving downward. What we do today and throughout the spring will have a direct impact on our ability to achieve our goal of a full and comprehensive K-12 opening this August."