

School Health Advisory Board 3/9/2022 Meeting Minutes

Present: Rebecca Abernathy, Lori Balaban, Gemilia Bouer, Gayle Burt, Erin Callas, Kristen Carty, Kristy Davis, Brenda Doremus-Daniel, Eileen Gomez, Leanne Knox, Mark Niehaus, Christina Pitsenberger, Melissa Sabol, Chris Siebert, Kevin Kirst

Guest: Rosalyn Schmitt

The board welcomed two new appointees: Brenda Doremus-Daniel (Rio) and Melissa Sabol (Jack Jouett).

Eileen explained the purpose of the meeting as a request from the superintendent's cabinet for the School Health Advisory Board's input on the plan to sequentially ease the COVID mitigation strategies before they present it to the school board on March 10.

Rosalyn presented the draft of the SB presentation titled **COVID-19 Spring 2022 Plan: Progression for Easing COVID-19 Mitigation Strategies**.

The overarching goals of the plan include:

1. Maintain a safe environment for students and staff
2. Align with current public health guidance to the greatest extent practical
3. Ensure changes are transparent, well communicated and easy to understand
4. Transition to an endemic state with sustainable infection control practices.

The changes are broken down by month and category.

- **March**

1. 3/1: Masks optional for students per state code
2. 3/14: Modification of isolation and quarantine
 - a. **Isolation for students:** will remain at 10 days since the 5-day abbreviated isolation is contingent on strict masking, which cannot be enforced, and distancing on days 6 through 10
 - b. **Isolation for staff:** staff will be permitted to end isolation after 5 days with a negative antigen test
 - c. **Quarantine for both students and staff:** can end after 5 days with a negative PCR or antigen test

- **April**

1. Eliminate contact tracing except in suspected outbreak or sustained transmission in a school
2. Modify negative test/doctor's note requirement for individuals with displaying symptoms at school

- **No Change/ Remain in Place Until End of SY:**

1. Maximizing social distancing to the extent possible
2. Assigned and consistent seating charts in classrooms and buses
3. Encourage eating outdoors when possible
4. Hand washing
5. Improved ventilation (HEPA filters)

6. Maintain ACPS COVID dashboard
 7. Maintain testing sites for staff
 8. Continue to make masks available to students and staff
- **Board Action**
 1. Mask requirement for staff and visitors
 2. Weekly testing for unvaccinated staff

Points in the ensuing discussion:

- There is a spectrum of comfort levels with the easing of mitigation strategies among staff, parents and students.
- SHAB members acknowledge that there are many paths forward.
- Pediatricians find it challenging to evaluate students with symptoms because allergy symptoms can also be COVID, and individuals can have both allergy symptoms and COVID.
- General consensus that changes in mitigation strategies be tied to the level of community transmission as identified by the [CDC](#) and [VDH](#) (which will be posted in a different model beginning soon).
- ACPS should clearly communicate that practices will be tied to prevalence. For example, perhaps test-to-return can be allowed in green (low), but not yellow (moderate) or red (high).
- ACPS uses the [American Academy of Pediatrics School Exclusion Guidance](#) during non-COVID times. Perhaps COVID exclusion criteria can be added.
- Community case data will look different when schools no longer require testing for return-to-school.
- Suggestion: list isolation first on the slide about changes to isolation and quarantine.
- Either PCR or antigen tests will be accepted for students and staff to end quarantine after 5 days.
- Test to abbreviate quarantine will only be necessary until April when schools discontinue contact tracing except in household exposures or outbreak situations.
- Consider modifying contact tracing to let parents know about potential exposures so they can monitor and test.
- Test-to-return makes more sense in the current climate of test availability including the proctored antigen tests the division possesses
- Leave policies should allow sick people to stay home
- Rebecca reported [an article by the AAP](#) that found transmission in schools diminished by 72% due to universal masking in schools.

Masks for Staff and Visitors

- Mandate created in response to county emergency executive order. Once lifted, perhaps mask requirement can be tied to community transmission levels.
- Continuing to have masks available and encouraging use can help normalize the wearing of masks when individuals feel ill or have been exposed.
- Immunocompromised individuals should continue to mask irrespective of mandates.
- Does it make sense to have masks optional for students and mandated for staff?
- Since substitutes are scarce, perhaps the mask mandate may reduce sub demand.
- Staff masking sets an example for students.
- Employees in other public-facing settings continue to wear masks.

- When outside groups use school buildings during off hours, mask requirements only make sense if the activities involve students or staff.
- The board is in favor of setting a standard and timeframe for when masks can be optional for staff.

Vaccinate or Weekly Test Mandate for Staff: This was similarly created by county executive emergency order. Perhaps lifting of this mandate can also be tied to community transmission rates.

Other: Leanne announced that she will be leaving ACPS to work as the emergency coordinator at the health department. Board members thanked her for her years of excellent service.

Next Meeting:

May 17