

Ask Dr. Rodriguez



Top Ten Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Edition #33 – Week of November 30, 2020

Questions are quoted as I received them directly from our community.

1. With the extension of distance learning, what are you doing to improve instruction and set standards for teachers so the students are being taught in the same way they would be in class, colleges are doing this well?

Distance Learning has been a new process for everyone and with each passing day, we learn new things and continually add and refine our practice. District office coordinators and directors, using guidance from renowned sources, put together condensed standards for teachers to use this year. Additionally, every grade span in English Language Arts and Math has a Google Classroom with resources for engaging lessons that teachers can use when planning their daily instruction. We have continued to provide both professional development and job embedded coaching to teaching staff and administration. Before the second semester starts, professional development for teachers is planned in the areas of maximizing "Independent time," best practices for breakout rooms on Google Meet and technology tools. Instructional coaches will continue to offer drop-in office hours for teachers to utilize if they would like collaboration around their lesson planning. For the second semester, we are looking at the Distance Learning Schedule to add more synchronous time for students who may need additional supports or small group instruction. We will continue to have focused Professional Development during the second semester for all teachers around instructional design and student engagement. If teachers continue to use the resources in the Google Classrooms and the Professional Developments, along with the collaborative help, students will receive the most comparable instruction possible to in-person learning.

2. Closing the campus facilities made sense when shelter in place orders were first imposed. Now my family would appreciate having more places in Aptos where my children can feel safe, be active, and be outside. As we understand more about COVID-19, does it still make sense to keep the public away from campus facilities on weekends, after school hours, or during holiday breaks?

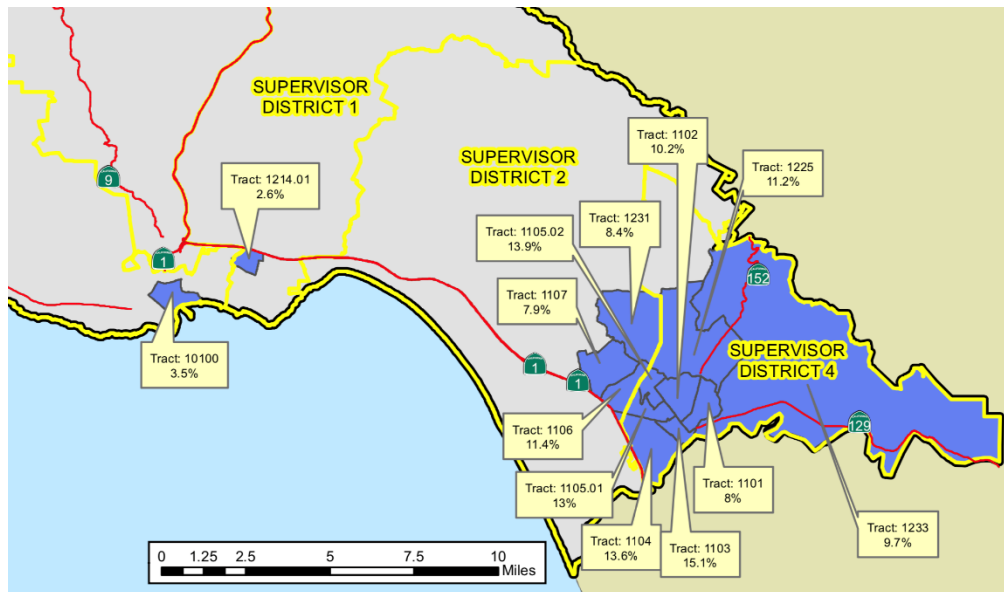
For many months, all public playgrounds and facilities have been required to be closed to help stop the spread of COVID-19. Depending on campus security needs and construction projects, several Aptos campuses have outdoor facilities accessible to the public on weekends and after school hours. However, on December 3, 2020, Governor Newsom issued a [Regional Stay at Home Order](#). As of today, Santa Cruz County is not under such order. However, when we are, playgrounds will once again be required to close. In any region that triggers a Regional Stay Home Order because it drops below 15% ICU capacity, the following sectors must close:

- Indoor and outdoor playgrounds
- Indoor recreational facilities
- Hair salons and barbershops
- Personal care services
- Museums, zoos, and aquariums
- Movie theaters
- Wineries
- Bars, breweries, and distilleries

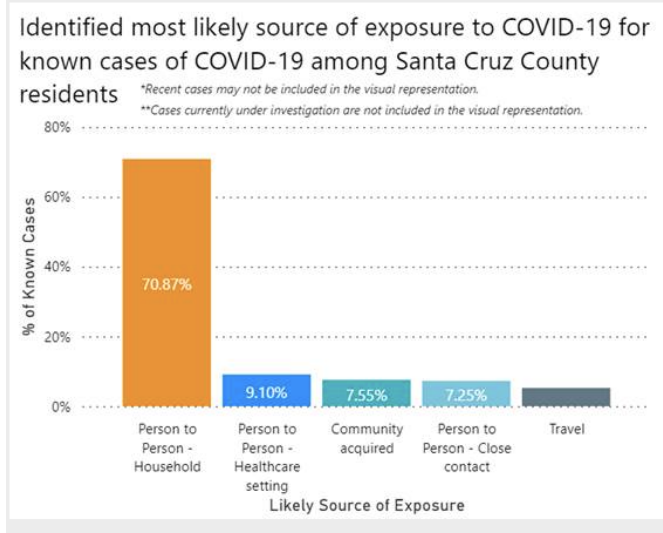
- Family entertainment centers
- Cardrooms and satellite wagering
- Limited services
- Live audience sports
- Amusement parks

3. I understand you are choosing to keep our students home based on projected COVID cases. If those projections prove to be false and our community is able to reopen, will you allow students back in schools sooner than March?

We have committed to remaining in distance learning for all students until March 1, 2021 so students, families and staff can plan. When it is determined, after that date, that the current health conditions will allow us to return back to school, we will increase in person instruction. Unfortunately, the positive case rate data, specifically in areas within the PVUSD boundaries are at the critical level and not improving. Below you will find the case rate by census tract which shows the challenge within our area:



I do want to note that the data is only a point in time/snapshot data set. It is consistent with global, national, state, and local data that indicate that the virus concentration and clusters are due to household, community, close-contact spread, in households that have more people and are multi-generational, among multi-unit housing, in more populous and/or densely populated areas, and especially where households have many close connections to other homes in the area. From today's dashboard, we can see that household spread remains the biggest likely source of exposure, by quite a significant margin:



4. When are high school sports going to start?

The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF), released the following press release on Wednesday, December 2, 2020:

Due to the continued surge in COVID-19 infections, the California Department of Public Health has postponed the issuance of its updated youth sports guidance. The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) does not expect the CDPH will issue any guidance allowing for schools to return to full practice and

competition until after January 1, 2021, at the earliest. Thus, all full practice and competition start dates are officially on hold until updated guidance is issued.

Therefore, to provide the 10 CIF Sections, our 1,605 member schools, and more than 800,000 student-athletes the best opportunity to compete in Season 1 Sports, once allowed by the CDPH and local county offices of public health, the CIF State Office is removing all Regional and State Championship events from the Season 1 Sports calendar. By canceling Regional and State Championship events, more student-athletes will have the opportunity to participate in a longer season, rather than a truncated season with Regional and State post-season play for a limited number of schools.

Additionally, boys volleyball will be moved to Season 2 to avoid the loss of a second full season, and an updated Season 2 calendar to include boys volleyball will be posted in January.

The CIF is confident this decision is a necessary and reasonable action for our member schools, student-athletes, and school communities in light of the current statewide crisis. This revision to the CIF State 2020-21 Season 1 Sports calendar offers our Sections and Leagues the flexibility and needed time to plan for the return to practice and compete once updated guidance is provided by CDPH.

5. Will office staff be allowed to work remotely from home next year as our children continue through distance learning and we don't have childcare?

Office staff will continue to work at sites in order to maintain service for our students, parents and community. PVUSD continues to provide childcare to all staff required to be on site for their elementary age students in recognition of the challenge of having the schools closed. Currently, over 35 students are attending District provided childcare. Childcare is provided by the City of Watsonville Parks and Recreation department as well as the YMCA. If you are a Classified or management employee who is required to work on site and is in need of childcare services, please contact the Extended Learning office at 786-2360 or extended_learning@pvusd.net.

6. With distance learning continuing through next year will a COVID FMLA be extended?

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) provided employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. Currently these provisions will only apply until December 31, 2020. The Human Resources Department is monitoring the information coming from the Department of Labor and any other applicable laws and will communicate any extensions or revisions to staff if/when they are made available.

7. You stated "As an added layer of protection, on December 3, 2020, we will begin surveillance testing for staff working on site." Who is this protecting since we've been made to report to work over the last several months without students. We are now back in the purple tier and we are still being required to be at work. If students aren't returning to the sites until March, why are we being made to get tested in Dec. and why is only the site employees being tested?

On August 3, 2020, the California Department of Public Health Schools Guidance stated that school staff should be tested for COVID, including teachers, paraprofessionals, cafeteria workers, janitors, bus drivers, or any other school employee that may have contact with students or other staff. The recommended frequency was for all staff to be tested over 2 months on a repeating and continuous schedule. PVUSD has worked with the Santa Cruz Office of Education, Stanford Medical Laboratories, and Stanford Health Care to set up a quality surveillance testing program for the 2500 PVUSD employees. Surveillance testing of non-symptomatic employees over an 8-week period helps to estimate the prevalence of COVID cases within the district. This information will guide decision making and safety procedures. The tests can diagnose COVID, but the main purpose is to determine the percentage of employees who may have COVID-19. Currently, the surveillance testing is for any employee who is not working – those who are either physically at a school site or working within a department.

8. **Hello, as I am to understand COVID testing for PVUSD employees will begin early December. The testing will begin with admin. Many of us at the school sites, especially those that offer the safe spaces program are confused as to why you would not start with their staff instead of school administrators. Maybe start with the crew that hands out homework to 100's of parents every Monday, to food services employees that are handing our food Monday through Friday, our bus drivers who are in a bus enclosed with students getting them to and from safe spaces every day, our onsite sped teachers and staff, our office staff that are helping parents and students on a daily bases with their Chromebook, hot spots, helping them log on, troubleshoot technical issues, help them with paperwork, our HCA's screening students on campus daily and giving them first aide when needed, the list is endless of essential / front line workers. Please explain how you came up with the strategy of testing and who goes first?**

There are many departments and personnel working to set up and run the testing site with many details that are being refined over the first three weeks. Some of the systems being refined are: the delivery of patient labels for the test tubes from the Stanford lab, the pick -up of test materials 4 days a week by couriers, the development of the appointment on-line system, the employee registration process with Stanford, the screening of employees for symptoms and contacts before they can be tested, the use of specialized equipment and the confidential communication of results to all staff.

Given the complexity of testing and the desire to have the tests be as accurate as possible, the decision was made to begin the process with one group to help iron out any wrinkles prior to asking all other staff to engage in the process. The three weeks of working days in December will provide time for the process to be fine-tuned. After the winter break, more departments and personnel will be added to the surveillance testing schedule. Staff can be confident that the procedure will be safe, accurate, and quick.

9. **Our sites received air purifiers but only for classrooms. They are currently being installed. But there is no use for them. We only have 3 teachers on site and not daily. The office staff works all day every day and are exposed to staff and families. Could we get them installed in the main office?**

The Facilities and Operations Director has been communicating with the designated COVID nurse regarding COVID issues. An engineer was hired, MADI Architects assessed the need for ventilation within school spaces and contractors were hired and are currently completing the HVAC repairs to be completed by January 12, 2021. PVUSD purchased almost 1,200 HEPA filters to be prepared for the return of students. All school sites received enough HEPA filters for all classrooms as well as a 10% additional supply to provide to other areas on campus. The HEPA filters were intended for areas in which large groups will gather in small areas. If a site has distributed all of their HEPA filters and feel that they still have a need, the site administrator may contact Rich Arellano, our Director of Purchasing.

10. **Since the Health Care Assistants are moving into a bigger space "classroom", and you also mention we will be having HEPA air filters to ensure proper air quality. My question is who is provided that air filter for the "health/isolation room? Is it the school site or SELPA? I'm being told two different things, I just want clarification. Apparently per admin they have been distributed already to classroom and "non-classroom" (reading intervention small rooms), so now I'm left out.**

At a minimum, health offices will have at least one portable HEPA air filter and a properly working HVAC system to ensure proper air quality. If the Health Care Assistant does not have a HEPA filter, they should request one from their site administrator. If a site has distributed all of their HEPA filters, the site administrator may contact Rich Arellano, our Director of Purchasing.