



Ask Dr. Rodriguez



Top Ten Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Edition #45 – Week of March 22, 2021

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

1. When will the district announce if school will be in person full day for 21/22 year?

On Wednesday, March 24, 2021, I released a letter to the community stating our commitment to providing full day in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year. All parents should have received it by email and by text. The letter can be found on our website at <https://pps-pajaro-ca.schoolloop.com/file/1516177972153/1303568743253/8997619232308317428.pdf>.

2. I am a parent at Rio Del Mar Elementary. I am looking forward to the fall and trying to determine what will be best for my student. When will you come out with a tentative plan for the fall? I understand that things are fluid and can change, but I would like to see a commitment from the School District that they are actively working and committed to getting back to full in person school in the fall.

The commitment is to return back to a regular five day instructional week for all students. We are addressing additional staffing and transportation needs to ensure that we can provide the full-day schedule and adhere to current physical distancing requirements of three feet for the upcoming school year with all students returning to in-person learning.

3. With the new state/CDC guidelines on social distancing in classrooms when will our schools open up?

The corresponding change with the California Department of Public Health to align with the CDC was an important change which allows more PVUSD students to participate in in-person instruction and increases our bus capacity. We are implementing this new three-foot physical distancing guideline immediately and therefore the majority of our students have the opportunity to attend in-person instruction four days a week, Tuesday through Friday this spring. Students can receive an additional 6 hours of instruction per week with this new schedule.

4. I am so glad that students will continue online in the mornings and then families have the option to send kids or not in the afternoons. If our county goes into a less restrictive tier, will children be forced to be in person before the end of this year?

No. PVUSD is committed to allowing families to choose to remain in distance learning for the last nine weeks of the 2020-2021 school year.

5. If I don't choose to go to school in person this spring do I have to attend class online during those hours?

No. We added on additional in-person time in the afternoon to increase the instructional time.

6. Do you have your required COVID Prevention Plan done yet?

The COVID-19 Prevention Program is already complete and on our District website. You can find both the executive summary and complete program at our website in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

7. I am a staff member. I am currently not working because I just had a baby. I wish not to get the vaccine right now but I was wondering if we could still get the vaccine before school opens up in the Fall? If so, who do I contact to get this information?

Santa Cruz County has moved to issuing vaccines for people in 1B which includes educators. You can schedule a vaccine with your doctor when you are ready. The Human Resources Department is still coordinating vaccines through the County Office of Education and Kaiser. If you still need support with getting either your first or second dose of the vaccine, please contact Brian Saxton brian_saxton@pvusd.net in the Human Resources Department.

8. According to the Keenan Safe Schools training that teachers are completing for re-opening, there is a notice about the "Covid-19 Emergency Sick Leave MOU" ending on March 31, 2021. Why would the district choose to stop the safety net of emergency covid sick leave right before we are all about to be returning to campuses with students and may actually be needing it? Now if we do get sick, we have to use our own sick days and have no more protections from the district? How does this make any sense? Also this would have maybe been important to know PRIOR to opting in for many teachers... feeling a bit duped by PVUSD.

The Emergency COVID sick leave MOU was established in January of 2021, well before the plans to return to in-person in April. The purpose of the MOU was to create a stop-gap between the Federal law ending December 31, 2020 and a new law being introduced. If there was no Federal or State provided leave, the District was ready to re-evaluate the MOU before its expiration. However, the District was aware of a new Senate Bill coming through legislation that would address the emergency sick leave provided through the MOU we have with both CSEA and PVFT. Aside from the MOU's the District also put protocols into place to support employees receiving the vaccine. These protocols are also in alignment with the new Senate Bill 95 (SB 95). We have provided a summary of the new SB 95 below. If you have further questions regarding SB 95, please contact the Human Resources department.

On March 19, 2021, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill (SB) 95 into law. SB 95 provides COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave (COVID-19 SPSL) to covered employees until September 30, 2021.

SB 95 is a response to the continued impacts of COVID-19 on the workforce subsequent to the federal paid sick leave provided under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which expired on December 31, 2020. This new COVID-19 SPSL is expressly retroactive to January 1, 2021, in order to protect covered employees who took leave for COVID-19 reasons on or after that date. (For more information on FFCRA please see our [2020 Client News Brief Number 17.](#))

The bill goes into effect on March 29, 2021, as Labor Code section 248.2, and will be enforced by the Labor Commissioner.

A covered employee is an who is unable to work due to the following:

- subject to a quarantine or isolation period related to COVID-19;
- advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19;
- attending an appointment to receive a vaccine for protection against contracting COVID-19;
- experiencing symptoms related to a COVID-19 vaccine that prevent the employee from being able to work or telework;
- experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and seeking a medical diagnosis;
- caring for a family member who is subject to an order or guidelines or who has been advised to self-quarantine; or
- caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed or otherwise unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19 on the premises.

Previously, under FFCRA, employees were not granted paid sick leave to attend vaccine appointments or when experiencing symptoms due to a COVID-19 vaccine. Additionally, FFCRA did not expressly state that employees were permitted to use COVID-19 SPSL for caring for a child whose school is closed or otherwise unavailable due to COVID-19.

Applying COVID-19 SPSL and Retroactive Status

As stated above, the COVID-19 SPSL is retroactive to January 1, 2021. Employers are prohibited from requiring an employee to use other paid leave before using COVID-19 SPSL. However, if an employee is excluded from the workplace due to COVID-19 exposure as provided under the Cal-OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards, then an employer may require an employee to first exhaust COVID-19 SPSL before any other paid leave is used.

Employers must ensure COVID-19 SPSL is separate from paid sick days. Employers must also provide employees with notices, pursuant to Labor Code section 246, subdivision (i), that includes the amount of COVID-19 SPSL an employee has available on the next full pay period following March 29, 2021.

Additionally, if an employee used another supplemental benefit for leave under a federal or local law on or after January 1, 2021 for any reason permitted to use COVID-19 SPSL, then the employer may count the hours of other paid benefit or leave towards the total number of hours of COVID-19 SPSL that the employer is required to provide. If COVID-19 SPSL is applied retroactively and the rate of compensation does not meet the calculation requirements discussed above, then an employee may request orally or in writing for the difference from the employer.

Notice Requirements to Employees

Employers are required to post notice of COVID-19 SPSL at the workplace. If employees do not frequent a workplace, then the employer may disseminate notice through electronic means, such as E-mail.

9. At my site, I have been told we only have 10 desk shields for each classroom... how will that be an effective mitigation strategy for covid when some classrooms have 30-40 students and the majority of them are opting in?

You are able to receive the number of desk shields that you need to provide each student in your class with a desk shield. You should ask your site administrator for extra desk shields if you need them or if the site needs an additional shipment. We have a supply at the District Office. At this time, you will not be able to have 30-40 students in a class at once as we still must maintain three feet of physical distancing. Your class size will likely be a maximum of about 24 students for this spring. Your site administrator will know the number of students in your class.

10. I heard that high school students who attend in person school beginning in April will be attending virtual learning in the morning but then allowed into campus where they can earn an extra 20 credits from April to June for attending 1.5 hours a day for 4 days?

As we offer return to in-person instruction, Seniors are a focus group in order to ensure graduation requirements are met. This means that students opting in for increased instructional support in the afternoons are likely to learn more and therefore earn grades in alignment with passing their courses. The district has convened a team of Site Administration, Counselors, and District Administration to review Senior student data, established Board Policies, and the State graduation requirements. This team will be providing a recommendation to the School Board during the April 28, 2021 Board Meeting in order to support Seniors.