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Parents Supporting Teachers Responds to LAUSD Revised Spring COVID-19 Protocols

Parents Supporting Teachers (PST), the largest parent advocacy group supporting Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) teachers and families, supports the majority of LAUSD's revised Covid-19 protocols to be implemented in January 2022. Positivity rates have generally been declining since the start of the school year and safety measures, including vaccination, testing, and masking, have resulted in low case numbers and minimal school spread. The relaxed protocols are based on LACDPH recommendations, and with the understanding that they can change if cases increase, PST endorses most of the changes.

"From the beginning we have said we'd follow the science, and the data clearly shows that incidents of school transmission have been low. From mid-August to the end of October, only 0.02% of campuses had incidents of in-school transmission. Through mid-October close contact transmission rates were also 0.02%. These numbers, combined with ongoing safety mitigation measures like indoor masking, tell us that it is time to ease some protocols. Even with these changes, LAUSD still has the highest levels of safety standards compared to any other district in the nation," explained co-founder Jenna Schwartz.

"Understandably, many families are reluctant to embrace the changes due to the trauma everyone has experienced over the past year and a half. With 100% of teachers vaccinated, the vaccine requirement for students ages 12 and older, indoor masking, and regular testing of close contacts and unvaccinated students, we all can resume some sense of normalcy knowing that everyone is protected and safe. As we shift to a recovery stage of the pandemic, a renewed focus needs to be placed on the social, emotional, and physical health of students, teachers, staff, and community members. Everyone's well-being needs to be prioritized as we collectively recover together," emphasized co-founder Nicolle Fefferman.

While PST supports the Spring safety protocols, one area in which the group is advocating change is baseline testing for all students regardless of vaccination status the first week back.

"The district is saying they will test all unvaccinated students the first week back from Winter Break, but that's not enough to reassure staff and families. Give us the opportunity to return to school knowing where we stand with Covid by testing all students and staff regardless of vaccination. We follow the science, which means we know breakthrough cases happen, and our vaccinated students and staff may have unvaccinated family at home. The goal is to get all kids back in school, so let's help them feel as safe as possible," Schwartz and Fefferman said.

A recent PST poll surveying member sentiment on some of the changes showed that many families support indoor masking, outdoor masking for schools with below 85% vaccination rates, and continued testing, including randomized testing for unvaccinated students. A strong preference for baseline testing for all was also indicated.

"Given that both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals can still catch and spread the virus, I would feel more comfortable with vaccinated students being tested as well, even if just a sizable sample," stated parent member and moderator Rachel Wagner.

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