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Date: August 12, 2021

To: Families of Santa Cruz County

Re: Vaccination verification for staff, expanded testing system

Dear Families of Santa Cruz County,

A new school year is upon us, and it is with excitement that we welcome students back to classrooms across the schools of Santa Cruz County this and next week. Offering full-time, in-person instruction during the 2021-22 school year is a foundational priority, and our schools are ready to support students in myriad ways, from curriculum, to nutrition, to socio-emotional health.

The requirement for all education staff to be fully vaccinated or tested weekly, announced yesterday by Governor Newsom, is another critical step that aligns with science, and public health recommendations, to create the safest environment possible as we welcome students back to school. The requirement applies to all TK-12 teachers and support staff at both public and private schools, and it must be fully implemented by Oct. 15. We know that in-person instruction is imperative for the well-being of our students. Districts, schools, and educational leaders have spent months planning and working to open our campuses safely, and now it is our priority to keep them open. These extra prevention measures will help us accomplish this.

The [public health order](#) is part of an effort to protect Californians from the more infectious Delta variant circulating at alarming rates within our communities. It is also a reflection of a steadfast commitment to ensuring that all students are able to access full-time, in-person learning. Vaccination is the single most important step that we can take to keep our classrooms and communities safe, particularly when students under age 12 are not yet eligible. Students need not be vaccinated against COVID-19 to attend schools, though we urge those who are eligible to do so. **Upcoming vaccination clinics for students ages 12 and older, in partnership with the Santa Cruz County Public Health Department, are scheduled for Sunday, Aug. 15. Find out more and register at sccoe.link/studentvax.**

Our districts, the County Office of Education, charter schools, private schools and our public health partners are working diligently to expand screening testing for COVID-19. **Through our phased-in plan, we will be able to offer on-site testing for teachers and support staff at most schools in Santa Cruz County.** On August 11, the COE launched a central testing location available to all school staff.

We are continuing to review the details of the new vaccination verification requirement in collaboration with our public health and labor partners, and we will share all pertinent information as it arises. Thank you, once again, for all that you do to keep our classrooms safe and open.

Yours in education and equity,

Eric Gross, Superintendent, Pacific Elementary School District

Mike Heffner, Superintendent, Bonny Doon Union Elementary School District

Tanya Krause, Superintendent, Scotts Valley Unified School District

Daisy Morales, Superintendent, Live Oak School District

Kris Munro, Superintendent, Santa Cruz City Schools

Michelle Rodriguez, Superintendent, Pajaro Valley Unified School District

Faris Sabbah, County Superintendent of Schools

Chris Schiermeyer, Superintendent, San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District

Michelle Stewart, Superintendent, Happy Valley Elementary School District

Megan Tresham, Superintendent, Mountain Elementary School District

Scott Turnbull, Superintendent, Soquel Union Elementary School District