



Ask Dr. Rodriguez



Top Ten Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Edition #39 – Week of February 8, 2021

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

1. Is March 1st still an option to return to in person instruction? As parents, we should be informed in advance so we can be prepared.

Our hope and planning efforts in recent months have been to return to in person instruction on March 1st. Unfortunately, data and conditions such as case and vaccinations rates are not at the levels necessary to allow for a phased in return to in person instruction until potentially after Spring Break. Our readiness work continues unabated and a path forward is becoming clearer as we move towards vaccinations for all staff and case rates continue to decrease.

2. Hello Dr. Rodriguez. I had a question as me and many among the community were wondering will student instruction be returning to in person-instruction anytime soon? I'm concerned as this new COVID Variant from South Africa was just detected in California as Governor Newsom addressed the public a few days ago! Are there any plans for reopening soon and will these new COVID Variants be taken into place? I'm concerned for the wellbeing of the youth!

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)): viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. Sometimes new variants emerge and disappear. Other times, new variants emerge and persist. Multiple variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 have been documented in the United States and globally during this pandemic. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a type of coronavirus, a large family of viruses. Coronaviruses are named for the crown-like spikes on their surfaces. Scientists monitor changes in the virus, including changes to the spikes on the surface of the virus. These studies, including genetic analyses of the virus, are helping scientists understand how changes to the virus might affect how it spreads and what happens to people who are infected with it. So far, studies suggest that antibodies generated through vaccination with currently authorized vaccines recognize these variants. This is being closely investigated, more studies are underway and we will share information as soon as it is available.

The case rate for COVID-19 is gradually beginning to decline in both the State and in Santa Cruz County. However, Santa Cruz County continues to be in the widespread purple category and the areas within PVUSD boundaries are currently double the percentage of known cases than in other parts of the County. Due to the significant number of cases in our District boundaries, we have placed substantial emphasis on ensuring that all staff including classified, certificated and management have access to both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine prior to the return to in person instruction. Dignity Health has partnered with PVUSD through the County Office of Education to provide vaccines to PVUSD employees within the next two weeks. That will allow us to be prepared to open up safely along with other mitigation strategies.

3. I have a student in 4th grade and another in kinder. Won't they be sharing virus with two classes of kids and whatever classes all the siblings of their classmates are in?

Students will be in stable cohorts for both instruction and recess/break time while at school sites. The California Department of Public Health established the stable cohort concept in recognition of the fact that students will be engaging with their families when they are not in school.

Stable groups provide a key mitigation layer in schools. A stable group is a group with fixed membership that stays together without mixing with any other groups for any activities while at the school site. Guidance from other agencies, including the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), sometimes refers to them as “cohorts” or “pods.” Implementing stable groups of students and staff reduces the numbers of exposed individuals if COVID-19 is introduced into the group, decreases opportunities for exposure to or transmission of the virus, facilitates more efficient contact tracing in the event of a positive case, and allows for targeted testing and quarantine of a small group instead of potential schoolwide closures in the event of a positive case or cluster of cases. Physical distancing and masking requirements at school sites will also minimize risks to the individual students and the families of each student.

4. Do you anticipate that PVUSD will be back to 100% in-person instruction for the 21-22 school year, or do you anticipate that families will still have the option for remote or hybrid instruction? If remote instruction is an option, will it only be through the Virtual Academy, or will there be synchronous Distance Learning opportunities as well?

Families will have the option to continue with distance learning with the support of a live, synchronous instruction through a PVUSD teacher throughout the 2020-2021 school year. According to [CDPH guidance](#), our elementary schools (which consist of grades TK through 6th) became eligible to resume plans for in-person hybrid instruction once our county’s COVID-19 adjusted rate dropped below 25. At this time, our county’s [adjusted case rate is 18.8](#). Small stable cohorts of our PVUSD highest need elementary and special education students have been participating in small group in-person instruction at select schools since late fall of last year using the Cohorting Guidelines issued through CDPH. Middle Schools and High Schools are not able to implement hybrid instruction until our county’s COVID-19 adjusted rate drops below 7. Therefore, we cannot open secondary schools to in person instruction until the case rate decreases from 18.8 to under 7. We plan to begin with TK-1st grade first after spring break as long as anticipated conditions continue.

5. As a classified employee working on site, I was very pleased to read in your last edition about the plans for vaccinating PVUSD staff. On Tuesday, health and custodial staff at my site were called to the district office to receive vaccines, and I was surprised it was happening so soon. On behalf of myself and other classified staff I have spoken with, I would like to request more detailed information about the plans to vaccinate staff on campus and those who interact with the public. I understand such information might not be appropriate for the weekly community-wide FAQ forum, but would appreciate the information being communicated to employees generally. The lack of this information has created some anxiety and confusion among the people I have spoken to. Staff wonder if they will be included, and when? Should they continue to seek vaccination through their doctor, or will this opportunity come sooner? Behind all of the questions and conversations seem to be issues of equity and feeling valued by our leadership. Thank you for your time.

Yes, we will distribute a listing of the prioritization of departments and groupings to employees by early next week. The positive news is that we now have a plan with Dignity Health to ensure that all 2300 PVUSD employees will have access to vaccines within the next two weeks. For the first two groups we were dependent on the prioritization by Dignity Health with their

selection of ECE and kindergarten teachers. We did begin our own prioritization this week with elementary day time custodians, Health Care Assistants, Food Service staff, bus drivers and employees working in Safe Spaces. We selected these employees first because they have the highest level of engagement with either students, staff or the community. We were originally allocated 310 slots this weekend. It was expanded to 500 slots last night which will allow us to provide the vaccine opportunity to also include SELPA staff providing in person support. The next four groups will include our intervention teachers, elementary library media techs, first grade teachers and release teachers.

- 6. For those employees that went on a leave during this time, will we be able to get the Coronavirus vaccine at the same time as everyone else? If not, then how will that work between the time we return to work to getting the vaccine?**

Yes, please contact Brian Saxton in Human Resources and we will include you on our priority list.

- 7. Dr. Rodriguez, I was wondering if there has been consideration to allow the community to walk on WHS track or use their tennis courts? I have young kids and we are constantly looking for places we can go to be active and where we stay away from people to avoid getting COVID.**

The community is welcome to walk on the track and use the tennis courts as long as the public is adhering to COVID/Safety Guidelines at all times, which include physical distancing and the use of a mask. Please note that the track will be closed when construction of the new turf field begins.

- 8. As teachers we are required to submit attendance by 10:30, however we are also required to go back in and change attendance for any student who shows up later in the day and mark them present. Is there any chance of this expectation for us to be passed on to the students? It is very tedious to go back in multiple times a day and cross reference multiple spreadsheets from our Google Meets to verify that every child is marked present even if they miss most of the school day. Could we not have the same requirement of our students? That if they are not in attendance by the time we must submit our attendance (10:30) then they are marked absent for the day? This would make things much simpler for teachers. Thank you.**

In this different year of Distance Learning, we recognize that there have been some unique challenges. In this case, taking attendance can be more challenging due to students coming and going and not being stationary in the classroom. Even during this time, attendance accounting is required to ensure that students meet California compulsory attendance laws and to ensure school district's reporting is accurate for apportionment funding. Due to school funding being based on Average Daily Attendance, this accounting is a high priority at all levels within the educational organization. State law requires the person taking attendance to mark a student absent only if a pupil is not in attendance for the entire time prescribed by law. As such, a student who showed up anytime during the day cannot be marked absent. We will ask site principals to put messages out to the community to clarify the process that is being used right now to ensure accurate attendance accounting.

- 9. When will we know if my interdistrict transfer was approved?**

Currently, we are allowing students to register in their school of attendance. Student Services is processing all intradistrict and interdistrict transfers. Once enrollment numbers stabilize at schools, they will be allowed to accept their intradistrict and interdistrict transfers. You will be notified not later than the end of April 2021. If you have any questions regarding your interdistrict transfers, please contact Rick Ito, Director of Student Services, 786-2390.

10. **When will I be able to register my kindergartener for next school year?**

In an effort to increase access, PVUSD began offering online TK/Kindergarten Registration last year. This year, we will again open up access through our PVUSD website on **Monday, February 1, 2021**. Parents are directed to contact their homeschool if they need support using the online portal. This is the second year in a row where PVUSD has been able to offer an online registration process for our TK/Kindergarten students and families

In addition, following social distancing guidelines, elementary school sites will have paper TK/Kindergarten registration packets available starting on **Tuesday, February 16, 2021**. Registration packets will be available at all sites during their regular office hours following health and safety social distancing guidelines. Parents will be able to return packets to sites during this same time. All sites will be following a consistent protocol for handling the collection of packets. This will help office staff to be able to complete essential work that is needed to prepare and maintain enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year. We are proud to be offering virtual and paper registration opportunities this early in the year. This early window will also facilitate increased access to Healthy Start resources and other needed supports to our families during this challenging time.

Hello School!

Registration Open for 2021-22.
Enroll your child today - we are ready to welcome them to their educational journey!

KINDERGARTEN - Age 5 by Sep. 1
TK - Age 5 between 9/2 y 12/2
EXPANDED TK - Age 5 between 12/3 y 2/2

February 1
Open Online Registration

February 16
Registration Packets available at your school site

Go to:
<https://www.pvUSD.net/enrollment>