

November 9, 2021

Governor Gavin Newsom
California Governor's Office
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Sent Via Electronic Mail

Dear Governor Newsom,

As County Superintendent of Schools and Superintendents of the 15 school districts in El Dorado County, we have served our communities through each challenging stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are pleased to have been among the schools who were first in the State to return students to full time, in-person instruction while implementing the mandates of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). With the support of El Dorado County Public Health Officer Dr. Nancy Williams, we have been relentless in our focus on the safety of students and staff and, during this time, we have observed overall minimal in-school transmission.

On October 1, 2021, your office issued a press release indicating that you are directing CDPH to require a COVID-19 vaccination for all K-12 students once the vaccine is fully approved by the Federal Food & Drug Administration (FDA). At this time, we are aware that this mandate may go into effect as early as July 2022. Currently, there are allowances for families to decline vaccination utilizing medical, religious, and personal exemptions.

It is important to understand the challenges these mandates are creating for our school community. As you are likely aware, many in our community have significant concerns regarding the continuance of mask mandates. The introduction of the vaccination mandate has created additional concerns. In listening to our community, we anticipate the implementation of a vaccination mandate, without an exemption for personal beliefs, will deeply impact schools as families leave for independent study programs or other alternatives to classroom-based instruction.

From the very beginning of the response to this pandemic, State regulations have been mandated, placing much of the burden for communication, implementation, and enforcement entirely on principals, teachers, staff, administrators, and school boards. With the responsibility to implement these mandates, school boards and administrators are left to manage the real frustrations of large portions of our public, taking time and focus away from our critical mission of serving students and supporting teachers and staff. The resulting divisions within some communities are eroding the trust and partnerships that are essential in public schools.

We presume that it is the State's intention to create a supportive structure for public schools, thus we are requesting that more be done during this very difficult time to support our work educating children and youth with the following:

1. It is critical to engage the public in a transparent and coherent manner by clearly reinforcing that the authority over these mandates lies with the State, and by clearly informing the public as to how they can engage with the correct decision-makers in these matters.

2. In addition, we request that the State identify what benchmarks must be met to end universal masking in classrooms.
3. Furthermore, the creation and implementation of COVID-19 safety guidelines, including guidelines for masks, quarantines, and the establishment of normal classroom instruction, must be tailored to local conditions and County Public Health Directors should be provided the authority to adjust all CDPH guidance and mandates to fit local conditions.
4. Finally, it is vital that the State of California maintains the medical, religious, and personal exemptions with regard to the COVID-19 vaccination requirement. It is essential that we honor the voices of our parents.

In El Dorado County, we believe in the importance of safe, in-person instruction for our students. We are asking for your support, to allow us to return to the business of educating our students in the safest and most normal way. Our students, our educators, and our communities need your support.

Respectfully,

Dr. Ed Manansala, El Dorado County Superintendent of Schools
Jeremy Meyers, Superintendent, Black Oak Mine Unified School District
Dr. David Roth, Superintendent, Buckeye Union School District
Matthew Smith, Superintendent, Camino Union School District
Dr. Ron Carruth, Superintendent, El Dorado Union High School District
Meg Enns, Superintendent, Gold Oak Union School District
Keri Phillips, Superintendent, Gold Trail Union School District
Grant Coffin, Superintendent, Indian Diggings School District
Dr. Todd Cutler, Superintendent, Lake Tahoe Unified School District
Dave Scroggins, Superintendent, Latrobe School District
Curtis Wilson, Superintendent, Mother Lode Union School District
Annette Lane, Superintendent, Pioneer Union School District
Eric Bonniksen, Superintendent, Placerville Union School District
Pat Atkins, Superintendent, Pollock Pines Elementary and Silver Fork School Districts
Jim Shoemake, Superintendent, Rescue Union School District

CC: Toni Atkins, Senate President Pro Tempore, California State Senate
Frank Bigelow, California State Assembly Member
Brian Dahle, California State Senator
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
Nick Hardeman, Chief of Staff, California State Assembly
Kevin Kiley, California State Assembly Member
Dr. Richard Pan, California State Senator
Anthony Rendon, Speaker, California State Assembly
Dr. Sohil Sud, California Department of Public Health
Dr. Nancy Williams, Public Health Officer, El Dorado County