

THE ADVOCATE

SAN DIEGO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

VACCINES CRITICAL TOWARDS RESTARTING IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION

THE ROLE OF COVID-19 VACCINES FOR OUR SCHOOLS

The recent availability of COVID-19 vaccines has been a game changer in terms of moving the clock on safely reopening our schools. Vaccine availability, along with on-site mitigation and lower community spread, are the keys to safely reopening our schools.

This is the consensus reached by the [Classroom Learning and Safe Schools for Employees and Students \(CLASSES\)](#) coalition. The coalition, made up of labor unions that represent workers in school settings, is for the first time taking a stance on defining what it means to have a safe reopening of schools.

It is important to note that the vaccine alone will not be a silver bullet, the discussion of reopening our schools cannot be divorced from the ongoing rampant spread of COVID-19 in our communities. Although we are currently enjoying a brief downturn in COVID-19 infections in our communities, all indications are that the UK variant's impending dominance within our community [will unfortunately lead to a situation where the case rates will again increase significantly](#).

SDUSD AND LAUSD LEADERSHIP SUPPORT VACCINES AS A PRECONDITION FOR RESTARTING IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION

Governor Newsom, who has been overseeing a discombobulated COVID-19 public health campaign, has recently [come out against vaccines becoming a condition of reopening schools](#). However, SDUSD and LAUSD leadership disagrees with the governor. Locally, SDUSD Board President Richard Barrera has been leading the charge in [advocating for the availability of vaccines for school employees before restarting instruction](#). He is not alone in that effort, as Los Angeles Unified School District's superintendent is also demanding vaccines as a [precondition to returning to in person instruction](#). In Southern California, the critical importance of the COVID-19 vaccine for restarting schools is a view shared by both labor and management.

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Photo by Hakan Nural

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SLOWING COVID SPREAD KEY TO REOPEN

The news is filled with stories that pose the question of when SDUSD should begin its phased return to in-person schooling. As educators, we want nothing more than to be back at our schools and know first-hand there is no equal substitute to regular, in-person learning, especially for our most vulnerable students. There is nothing more important than the educational, health and social-emotional needs of the students we serve, particularly those that have barriers to fully engaging with distance learning.

This is why our bargaining team has met with the District 17 times since the beginning of the school year to collectively develop policies that allow for the safe expansion of on-site learning for students at highest risk of learning loss. We started with Phase 1 appointments that are outdoors whenever practicable and built upon this with our most recent agreement that provides a childcare option for educators and the ability for visiting teachers, classroom teachers and non-classroom educators to supervise learning labs that provide a safe and stable environment for students to participate in online learning.

Despite the narrative of some media outlets, the biggest impediment to a return to safe in-person learning is not union educators who entered this profession because of our dedication to do whatever it takes to help students overcome obstacles and reach their full potential.

Instead, our largest obstacle is the persistent and pervasive community spread of COVID and in particular, the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on SDUSD families in low-income communities and communities of color.

Although cases in our region are decreasing, COVID hospitalization rates are still much higher than they were when the strictest lockdown measures were implemented in our state. And zip codes with historically underserved populations

like 92113 and 92114 (Logan, South San Diego and Southeast San Diego) [continue to experience some of the highest case rates in the county.](#)

It is disgraceful that Governor Newsom has bowed to recall pressure and is playing politics with the lives of educators, students and their families by pushing for a dangerous school reopening. The state's recently updated rules arbitrarily loosened restrictions to allow elementary campuses to reopen when the seven-day average of daily cases is 25 or fewer per 100,000 county residents, which is nearly 4 times the Purple Tier's baseline rate. The guidance issued last summer by the California Department of Public Health indicated that elementary waivers should not be granted if a county was at 14 cases per 100,000. Why does the governor now say that 25 cases per 100,000 is safe?

As COVID-19 continues to [mutate and threaten our communities with new variants that are more contagious and possibly more lethal](#), we remain committed to finding a path, informed by the recommendations of UCSD public health experts, to safely return to in-person instruction. This path must be safe for the entire school community: students, staff, and school families. As [CDC researchers concluded](#), the path back to in person instruction requires an accompanying commitment to reducing community transmission of the virus. How fast those rates fall is directly tied to the measures that elected officials have the political will to implement and to the collective sacrifices that we are all willing to make as a society. Reopening schools when it is safe AND centering the needs of our most vulnerable community members are of utmost importance.

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER!

KISHA BORDEN
SDEA PRESIDENT

KYLE WEINBERG
SDEA VICE PRESIDENT

GRIEVANCE ON NEW GRADING POLICY — BRINGS WORKLOAD RELIEF —

After union members filed a grievance, teachers will see relief from the workload implications of SDUSD's new grading policy.

In October, the [school board approved a new grading policy](#), key elements of which were requiring teachers to accept late assignments from students, and to allow students to resubmit assignments.

A lot of teachers already have policies allowing late work and resubmission of assignments. But with the new policy, teachers worried the particulars of the policies were no longer up to them and could be dictated by the school board or a principal.

Could the work be submitted the day before grades are due, causing a last-minute deluge of grading for the teacher? How many times could the assignments be resubmitted? How many times would a teacher have to grade and regrade the same assignment?

The [grievance settlement agreement](#) between SDUSD and union members resolves those worries.

**UNDER THE AGREEMENT,
EACH TEACHER HAS THE RIGHT TO DETERMINE:**

- 1 THE LENGTH OF THE GRACE PERIOD FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT**
- 2 WHICH ASSIGNMENTS MAY BE SUBMITTED WITHIN THE GRACE PERIOD FOR LATE WORK**
- 3 HOW MANY TIMES AN ASSIGNMENT CAN BE RESUBMITTED**

THAT MEANS THAT EACH TEACHER CAN CREATE POLICIES THAT WORK FOR THEM AND THEIR WORKLOAD.

To read more about workload rights, check out [section 8.5.7 of the union contract](#), and [this flyer on workload rights](#).



Your Special Enrollment Opportunity Is Now Open

SDEA members can now apply for CTA-endorsed Disability and Life insurance from Standard Insurance Company (The Standard) with **no health questions asked**.

Meet with The Standard

Join us for a virtual group meeting on March 11 at 4:00 p.m. or schedule an individual virtual appointment with us.

Learn more, register for the meeting or schedule an individual appointment by scanning this code or visit [standard.com/cta/sdea](https://www.standard.com/cta/sdea)



For costs and further details of the coverage, including exclusions, any reductions or limitations and the terms under which the policy may be continued in force, please contact Standard Insurance Company at 800.522.0406 (TTY). Standard Insurance Company, 1100 SW Sixth Avenue, Portland, OR 97204
GP190-LTD/S399/CTA.1 GP190-LIFE/S399/CTA.3 SI 16804-CTAvol

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SAN DIEGO COUNTY'S PROGRESS ON VACCINES

California is utilizing a county-based approach for giving out vaccines to the state's residents. That means the 58 counties in California are all going about this slightly differently from one another. It's possible that certain counties have been able to get the vaccine to education sector workers while others, [like San Diego County, have not gotten there yet.](#)

Currently San Diego County is concentrating its vaccine rollout to those who are 65 years or older. Education sector workers will be vaccinated by the County next. However, there is no specific anticipated date by when educators in SDEA will become widely eligible for the vaccine.

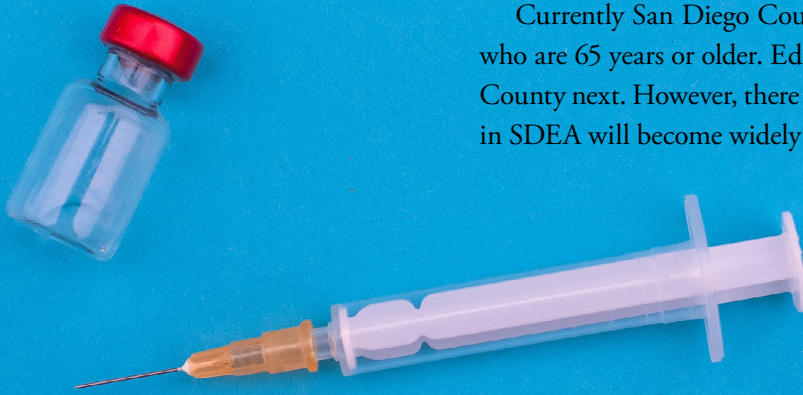


Photo by Markus Spiske



CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS
VEBA

YOU'RE INVITED TO OUR COVID-19 VACCINE WEBINAR

Do you have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine? VEBA and special guest Dr. Susan Little from UCSD will hold an open discussion on the COVID-19 vaccine for VEBA members.



UC San Diego Health

Join us on Zoom Tuesday, February 23, from 4-5 p.m.

Susan Little, M.D., is a Professor of Medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases and Global Public Health, at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). Dr. Little is the Director of the Primary Infection Research Program, Director of the UCSD AIDS Clinical Trials Group Clinical Research Site, and Co-Director of the UCSD Antiviral Research Center. Most recently, she has taken an active role in the COVID-19 Prevention Network, leading Phase III efficacy trials for COVID-19 vaccines.

RSVP today by clicking on this ad.

Stay tuned to the VEBA COVID-19 vaccine web page for the latest local news, as well as updates from VEBA carriers and medical groups.

Visit today by clicking on this ad or going to [VEBAonline.com](https://vebaonline.com) and clicking on "[COVID-19 Vaccination Information.](#)"