

COVID-related FAQs for ITA Members

Some opening remarks:

This is a challenging time. Everyone is asked to be patient and flexible, to assume best intentions, to avoid reading negative intentions into others' words. ITA is working alongside the district officials to represent teachers every step of the way, literally every day. The upcoming year will be one of the hardest in our careers, but if we remain flexible and focused on the safety and well-being of ourselves, our families, and our students, we will get through this — even though none of us will enjoy these sacrifices. At the end of this pandemic, and we hope it will be sooner rather than later, we will come out stronger and happier than ever to return to “real” school.

Will school begin on July 13 (year-round) and August 17 (traditional) as scheduled?

The district and Task Force are working with the latest information from the state and the health care agencies. The variables and options are changing constantly, but no change has been made at this time. Stay tuned. Here is a link to the state's most recent COVID guidelines for schools:

<https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-schools.pdf>

When will we know what fall will look like?

Everyone is following directives from the governor's office, the OC Department of Health, the California Department of Public Health, the CDC, and/or the California Department of Education. ITA is working with the district Task Force to implement whatever directives we receive. The goal is to have options in place for the Board to approve before July 6, but as the details and guidelines from the state and county change, the district plans will have to change as well.

Are teachers represented in district decision-making?

Yes. We are in regular contact with the district and school board members. ITA members also are part of the district Task Force. In addition, staff input

has been and will continue to be sought in district-wide surveys. The bargaining team is meeting regularly throughout the summer as well.

Can we get reimbursed for our added costs for distance learning?

This is an issue for the bargaining team to address. If you need any equipment, please let your principal know as soon as possible. The district will take inventory of what will be needed if distance learning continues. You can also contact the IT “help” desk for equipment.

Will there be lay-offs or furlough days in our future?

The state budget has been severely impacted, but the state legislature had made some changes to the governor’s budget which will make the impacts less severe. The district is not planning certificated lay-offs for 2020-21. Any changes to our contract regarding salary, working conditions, or benefits have to be bargained. The ITA and IUSD bargaining teams have several sessions scheduled over the summer.

If school sites open, how will those who are health-compromised be accommodated?

One of the first concerns from the CDC is to address the needs of staff and students who have compromised health considerations. Any year-round member who has health-related needs to teach online only, should contact HR as soon as possible because the district is trying to make staffing plans.

Will our pensions be affected by this crisis?

CalSTRS regarding Covid

What is CTA’s stance on school safety in the age of COVID?

CTA regarding COVID

What information is the district using to make its decisions?

The guidelines from the CDPH <https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-schools.pdf> are considered along with the OCDE Guidelines: <https://ocde.instructure.com/courses/669>. But the guidelines do not tell

schools how to implement the guidelines. Therefore, the district has surveyed staff and families to determine what general plans they might prefer and/or need. Also, the Task Force is brainstorming questions and details that will have to be considered to ensure everyone's safety is assured and learning can continue in the best safest way possible. This is an evolving process, but we have sketched out the options beyond the online-only option; you will see those outlines in the district survey. As of this date, the staff survey data is still being compiled, but preliminary results indicate that the percentages of preferences are very closely aligned with those from the parents.

What will distance learning look like?

Kris Linville has been appointed to head up the "virtual academy." The plan for online-only learning is for k-6 curriculum to be consistent throughout the district by use of a pre-made program, yet to be chosen. At the secondary level, teachers will use a combination of IUSD-developed and "pre-made" programs that align with CA standards and best practices.

What if I or someone in my family becomes ill for an extended time?

The federal government has allocated an additional 10 days of paid leave for anyone who has to miss work for a COVID-related situation. There are a number of leaves as well. If you need to be absent for an extended period of time, call or email HR HR@iusd.org and they will help you figure out the best way for you to stay home safely with as little financial impact as possible. All of the leave information is posted on the district website: <https://intranet.iusd.org/covid-19-staff-resource-page>

What if students become sick while at school?

Parents will be given thorough training about screening their children every day before taking them to school. A nurse or health clerk will wear special protective gear to monitor a child while waiting for a parent to take the child home. After that, disinfecting and notification protocols will be followed. The state and OC guidelines have more details about these procedures.

How are schools preparing for our return?

The district is in acquisition mode for PPE, technology, and more—all in preparation for the re-opening of school. Maintenance and Operations has created a system to ensure the warehouse is up-to-date with orders for gloves, soap, cleaning supplies, etc. along with a master list of vendors to keep supplies in stock. They have 12,000 face shields and 12,000 cloth masks for staff, along with professional grade PPE for nurses and students who are vulnerable. We will be encouraged to use our own PPE and not share.

What about high school sports?

CIF rules are created based on district decisions, and most districts are still in the process of creating their plans. There's a goal for athletic camps to begin on July 6, but any coaches who are creating safety protocol need to share their plans first with Dr. Stephen Bayne, Director of Risk Management for IUSD, to ensure the plans are adequate and up to date.

What will classrooms look like?

Guidelines include separating students from each other as much as possible, keeping cohort groups together, monitoring for symptoms, providing training in safety, providing hand-washing stations and opportunities, and more. Staff members are to remain at least 6 feet away from students. Times for arrivals, lunch, recess, and dismissal will be staggered to minimize contact with students outside the cohort group. There may be transparent panels around student desks to create study carrels. All of this is still being planned, so these details could change.

If I have to be an online teacher only because of my health, will I be able to return to my home school when the pandemic ends?

Although the online teachers will have a new cohort of colleagues and support for their role, they will remain as well part of their home site's staff. The sense of community is more important than ever during this time of

forced separation, so every effort will be made to maintain connections with site colleagues. Each situation will depend on when online teachers return and what is happening at each site. The district values stability and returning to normal as much as possible when the time is right. Returning staff to their home schools will be a priority.

What are the models of return being discussed?

The Task Force has determined that there will be both online and onsite instruction models, but that could change at any time, even after the school year starts, with one or more sites depending on what might be needed. The Task Force has not yet decided what the onsite models will fully look like or even whether both or only one of them, “traditional” and “hybrid,” will be available. Before teachers have to decide what they need or prefer, there will be more details about the options. Please see the district survey that went out Thursday 6/25 for more details.

Will everyone get to choose what “model” in which they prefer to teach?

For the most part, online only will be taught by teachers who need to remain away from the public. When we know what the onsite model or models look like, teachers will be asked to indicate their preferences. There’s no guarantee that every teacher will be assigned to the onsite model he or she prefers. And there can be no guarantee that the grade level(s) or course(s) will be the teacher’s first choice either.

Will protective face coverings be required?

At this time, the district is following guidelines from the CDPH and the OC Department of Health which do not mandate but recommend protective face coverings. The district is aware of our concern about staff and student safety when so many people will be in closed classrooms without safety facial protections. Guidelines keep changing, so procedures will undoubtedly keep changing as well. If a teacher should not be in a room with people without facial protection, choose the “online” instruction option

6/26/20

until/unless the guidelines change. Here is a link to the CDPH guidelines:
<https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-schools.pdf> PLEASE contact the
governor if you have suggestions for him about the need for protective face
coverings: <https://govapps.gov.ca.gov/gov40mail/>

Here is a link to the IUSD Covid FAQ page for further information:
<https://iusd.org/covid-19-resource-page>

If there are other questions that should be addressed in this document,
please email Teri at president@irvineta.org.