

## **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.

### **What guides the district and the board regarding the opening of school?**

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. Here is a link to the state's most recent COVID guidelines for schools: <https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-schools.pdf>

### **Are teachers represented in district decision-making?**

Yes. We are in regular contact with the district and school board members. ITA members also serve on the district Task Force. In addition, staff input has been gathered in 2 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 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](#) are considered along with the [OCDE Guidelines](#). 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 district's 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,. 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](mailto: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.

### **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.

**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.

PLEASE contact the governor if you have suggestions for him about the need for protective face coverings: [contact the governor](#)

**What is the difference between the OC Board of Education and the OC Department of education?**

OCDE and the elected County Superintendent Dr. Al Mijares have worked with local school district leaders to develop “Orange County Together: A guide to safely reopening schools in the COVID-19 era,” which is linked above. It is in alignment with the guidance of California Department of Public Health and stresses the importance of social distancing and face coverings when social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. The five-member OC Board of Education, which has separate responsibilities, has been hosting meetings to discuss a white paper with alternative recommendations.

The board majority’s recommendations are not binding; they have no authority over the 29 local OC districts in this matter. Locally elected school boards and superintendents approve and implement plans specific to their districts based on the needs of their schools and communities using the guidance of the OCDE, the CDC, and the state Department of Public Health. OCDE supports districts in that effort and many others. They remain 100 percent committed to following and sharing the guidance of the California Department of Public Health and the Orange County Health Care Agency. [Statement from OCDE Supt. Al Mijares](#)

### **ITA Survey #1 Results**

“What is your opinion about facial coverings (masks and/or shields) for in-person instruction, when it occurs during the pandemic, given that medical issues and children 2 and younger might need to be exempted?”

9% want masks optional for both

3.3% want them optional for teachers, required for students

2.5% want them required for teachers and optional for students

85.1% want them required for both students and teachers

### **How can I watch the IUSD school board meeting?**

[IUSD.tv](#) is the link for the live broadcast. You can find their meeting schedule at the IUSD website. A video of the meeting is now available online.

### **What is CTA saying about school safety?**

Here's a [letter](#) from CTA President E Toby Boyd to state leaders about schools opening safely. ITA sent a copy of this to all of IUSD's School Board Members as well as Superintendent Walker.

### **What did the IUSD School Board decide regarding the start of school?**

They voted to require face coverings for everyone on a school site at all times with some exceptions for certain individuals, eating lunch, etc.

They heard descriptions of all of the sample models presented by the district leaders. Then they voted for elementary schools to offer "traditional," hybrid, and online models. The secondary schools will offer blended/online and hybrid models.

Keep in mind that during COVID, every decision is tentative. As guidelines from the state and/or county change, so will these plans.

### **Who will be assigned to which models?**

The district's first priority is to place those who are medically in need of the online option to meet the accommodations required by federal law. Those teachers were asked to contact HR over the past month so HR could start that legal process for them.

Both of the surveys the districts conducted of staff and families indicate that roughly the same percentages of people were interested in the various models. So if 1/3 of families want hybrid and 1/3 of teachers want that too, administrators should be able to assign most teachers to the model they want. While there's no legal requirement to accommodate an employee with a vulnerable family member, every effort will be made to give teachers the option they prefer.

The models were chosen only this morning (12:15 a.m.) so you have not yet been asked what you want to do. The parents are now choosing their

preferences. Their deadline is Sunday night, July 19. After they analyze those numbers, administrators will have a clearer picture of their staffing needs and will be reaching out to teachers for their preferences. This is a new process, still in the works. Be patient. You will be asked for your preference.

### **What will the online and hybrid curricula look like?**

For the k-6 Virtual Academy, this is the basic curriculum program: <https://www.flvs.net>, Teachers will be providing support and enrichment, but the basic essential standards will be included in the online component, which is described as quite interactive. Teachers in the hybrid model will be creating their own curriculum both for their in-person and their online instruction.

For the secondary level, the district's Blended Learning program, which has been in place and growing over the past 10 years, there are already at least 33 courses which have been developed, used, and refined by IUSD teachers for blended learning. Some will be modified to be online only, and there are some courses still in progress of development. For a few gaps, there will be purchased curriculum.

### **Will we have training and help?**

The district TOSAs have been working most of the summer (thank you!) to prepare trainings and curriculum to be ready for the opening of school. And there will be training for safety procedures, technology, and more starting the Friday before the start of school (which is optional), online through Compass, during the PD day, and during the site meeting day. And of course more will be coming throughout the year.

The Virtual Academy in particular will be providing equipment, space, and training—whatever is needed—for teachers. Teachers in the hybrid models will also be receiving equipment and training as needed.

**How will expectations of teachers be determined?**

When the State Senate approved amendments to the governor's funding budget for schools, they added provisions in SB 98 that specified particular elements are required during online learning, including both synchronous and asynchronous instruction for minimum periods of time. Other elements of teachers' expectations will be managed within the terms of our contract for working conditions; some parts may need to be bargained. This is still very much a work in progress.

**What if I have questions that ITA cannot answer?**

The district has created an [FAQ page for staff](#) to provides an opportunity to ask questions. The district just sent an email with more information including links to detailed descriptions of the various models.

**ITA's Statement to the Board of Education, before the meeting****7/15/20:**

Dear Members of the IUSD School Board and Superintendent's Cabinet,

On behalf of the 1670 members of the Irvine Teachers Association, I want to thank you first for the time and effort and stress you have endured during the past 5 months to provide support to teachers for the safety and education of our students. With that support, teachers, counselors, nurses, and speech and language pathologists did a phenomenal job of rising to the occasion of emergency distance learning with only 2 days of preparation, when normally we'd have spent a whole year or more preparing for such a drastic change.

We teachers wish we could return to normal school life, seeing our kids every day, enjoying daily interactions and personal learning with them. But today, we are very concerned about our safety, that of our families, and that of our students. We need to be assured that everything possible will be done to supply the training and equipment necessary for in-person instruction to be safe and manageable, realistic and successful. The results of ITA's survey of members indicate that one of those safety precautions needs to be a requirement for all people on site to wear facial



protection. This one relatively simple requirement, already an ordinance for the City of Irvine, has been proven to improve everyone's safety, and we expect that facial protection will be required of all.

Also, like our students' parents, teachers expect to have the opportunity to make the safest choice from the instructional model options for themselves and their own families. We hope that all the numbers will line up for families AND their teachers to choose the model that best suits their needs, and that the administration will find a way provide that best option for every teacher.

Those teachers who will be part of the Virtual Academy also want to remain part of their home school communities. This priority was clear from the Task Force meetings. The sense of school community is more important than ever, so we expect every effort will be made by administrators, colleagues, and families to include the families and staff temporarily participating in the Virtual Academy to remain members of their home schools.

Teachers are planners. We want to know absolutely everything in advance, to have every detail lined up and ready to go. But we are also flexible, responding and shifting constantly in response to individual student needs. We rose to the demands of EDL with stunning speed and miraculous success. We will continue to be the professionals who safely provide the best learning experience possible for all of our students. Please put our safety, our families' safety, and our students' safety first.

### **What are the results of ITA Survey #2?**

Results of ITA Survey #2: We had 927 valid responses to the survey: About a dozen people submitted twice, and 2 submitted 8-10 responses; I deleted the extra responses, but it was a very tedious job doing so.

PLEASE just vote once next time!

Should ITA advocate for online-only?

yes 77.3%

no 14.8%

don't know 7.9%

When Aug 20 arrives, do you prefer to teach

in person 20.4%

online 72.8%

no preference 7.0%

The results have been shared with the district, and they appreciate the input. Soon they will have data from parents about their choice of model, and principals can begin to build their master schedules.

**If I am assigned to the Irvine Virtual Academy, will I still be a member of staff at my home school with rights to return?**

You will be assigned to the IVA and will work with that team and under that administration with support from site administrators for the school year. You will be assigned from your home school and therefore will remain associated with your home school. Once the pandemic is over or in recession and a decision is made to return to what we could consider a normal school year, perhaps in 2021-22, the vast majority of staff should be able to return to the home school. That is the goal. At that point, we would conduct staffing at each school as we would in a regular year by looking at enrollment and the overall composition of a staff at a school.

**Will all teachers have access to the resources of the Virtual Academy? When will those be available to us?**

The district is finalizing the contract with the vendor and will be provisioning and creating Master Canvas Shells in the next month with FLVS and our IT department. The goal is to let staff access the content as soon as possible. They are working on it daily.

**Will there be child care available for staff?**

The district will be sending a survey to all staff on Monday morning 7/27 to ascertain interest in a program that would be housed at a district facility at a cost to the employee.

**Is IUSD applying for the waiver that would allow elementary schools to open now?**

The district has no plan to apply for that waiver; in fact, there isn't even a form or template for any school to use as an application. This waiver is intended for counties where the numbers are low; currently, OC is #2 in the state.

*Check the [IUSD Staff Covid Resource Page](#) for further information about the models, online resources, and more.*