

## **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 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.

**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.

### **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 provide an opportunity to ask questions. The district just sent an email with more information including links to detailed descriptions of the various models.

**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.

**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.

**How strict are the schedules currently being shared by principals?**

The graphics that illustrate what a typical week might look like for teachers and for students within each academic model (Virtual Academy/Distance Learning or Hybrid Model) at each level are still drafts. ITA is working with the district in the planning and development stage as new guidance comes out on a weekly, and sometimes daily, basis. Each graphic provides an example of what a typical week and day might look like for teachers. Actual instructional lesson formats, subject areas, and content will certainly vary from teacher to teacher and student to student, so there is flexibility within each model. We were informed a new version was shared with elementary staff members this morning, 8/19/20.

**What does “live meaningful interaction” mean?**

This is a daily requirement from the State Senate, but everyone is waiting for the California Department of Education to provide clarification, which hasn't come yet.

**What are the limits on class sizes?**

To accommodate distancing when we return to in-person instruction, the in-person models should have fewer students than usual. To facilitate that, the online classes may be somewhat larger. If your class sizes exceed the class size limits in the contract, however, notify your administrator. They are still enrolling new students and trying to balance sections, so the numbers may still be adjusted if needed. It might be another week or so before all the numbers are sorted.

**Is there compensation for class sizes that exceed the contract maximum?**

The bargaining team will be discussing compensation for student numbers that are over the contract limits: 33 for K, 32 for 1-3, 35 for 4-6, and 187 for secondary.

**Is there compensation for combo classes?**

Yes. The contract allows 3 release days which can be paid out as 3 days of sub pay instead. Let your principal's administrative assistant know when and how you want to be compensated for teaching a combo class.

**Are we required to attend meetings in person?**

All meetings will have a virtual option for attendance via the internet for anyone who chooses to attend virtually.

**Will meetings be safe?**

For any meeting, the maximum attendance allowed by the governor is 10, and then everyone must be distanced 6 feet and wear masks. The district also requires face masks for everyone on a school site, with the specific health exceptions outlined in the CDPH. Every school or district meeting is required to offer a virtual option for those who need it. All ITA meetings will be held virtually.

**Why did the PD day Monday focus on things other than distance learning (understanding Canvas and the Virtual Academy curriculum, for example)?**

We asked for the PD day's focus to be on skills needed for online education, but we were refused multiple times. We are hoping that part of the day, at least, provided everyone with some of the training that they need to start on day 1.

**How will Sites be choosing their ITA Site Reps now that some are part of the IVA?**

Each site will be receiving instructions about how to elect their site rep virtually. There are a few IVA teachers already on Exec Board, so their voices will be heard at that level. Others can be chosen from the elementary "houses" within the IVA; we are waiting for lists from the district so we can help them elect Site Reps. The secondary teachers remain part of their home site even while teaching in IVA, so they will be able to choose their site reps as usual, except virtually.

**How will ITA hold the Exec Board election that was postponed from last spring?**

We will be using an online company to host that election. Please be sure to participate! More info will be coming about that.

**How can new teachers join ITA?**

Educators can [join CTA online!](#) Once their membership form is completed online, we will be notified and will make sure they get additional printed information specific to ITA.

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