



August 13, 2022

## **Superintendent's Message: Free At-Home Weekly Testing Announced**

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff and Students,

For Covid-19 testing this school year, we will be providing free at-home weekly testing kits to all students and staff. The kits will be provided by SMMUSD through your school site or office. This decision was made following: review of the recent parent and staff survey results with nearly 3,500 responses, management and staff's analysis of the logistics and complexities required in implementing the different options proposed, along with discussion at our public Board of Education meeting Thursday night.

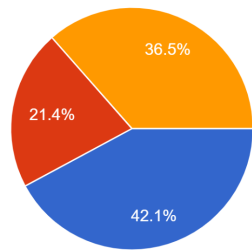
With this decision comes the expectation that parents and staff will be cooperative in weekly antigen testing at home. It is in our collective best interests to maintain in-person instruction without disruptions of class or school closures due to outbreaks. We want everyone to recognize that we are part of a school community that relies on each other to do the right thing, which is to support the health and safety of all students, staff and visitors to our campuses and offices, by taking these weekly tests. Any positive result needs to be reported to your school nurse and minimum five-day isolation instructions followed. (More on that in a follow up email.) As I've stated before, if you or your student is sick, please stay home from school and notify your school.

We are working on a plan for distribution of test kits to each school. We will be receiving more information from the Los Angeles County Office of Education and Heluna Health regarding when these free home tests will be available for the district staff to pick up. Once we have more information, we will keep you posted on the date we will start the weekly home test kit distribution program.

Families have received a test kit to test students and staff the night before or morning of the first day of school on Thursday, Aug. 18. You will learn more from your site regarding additional kits for ongoing weekly testing. Every student and staff member will be provided free kits for weekly testing.

As you can see from our survey results, our results favor weekly at-home testing at 42%, however, we do recognize that 36% of respondents would like to continue PCR testing as was done last school year.

SMMUSD is considering voluntary weekly at-home antigen testing to start the 2022-23 school year. This is how I feel about this practice: | El SMMUSD...22-23. Esta es mi opinión en torno a esta práctica: 3,483 responses



- I support voluntary weekly at-home antigen testing with free at-home test kits provided | Apoyo las pruebas de antígeno voluntarias semanales en la...
- I prefer mandatory weekly at-home testing with free at-home test kits provided | Prefiero pruebas semanales en casa obligatorias con los kits gratui...
- I prefer mandatory PCR testing through testing companies as we did during the 2021-22 school year. (Note that your c...

We have learned quite a bit about Covid over the past two-and-a-half years that has us taking this next step to ease protocols at our schools. We have vaccinations available to everyone six months and older and antivirals for those who need it, greatly reducing hospitalizations and death.

While we are moving to weekly at-home testing, this testing program exceeds what LA County and the state recommend regarding testing. Both agencies are recommending response antigen testing only, which means to test only when someone has symptoms. We are taking a more precautionary step as a transition, considering survey results.

We are trusting of our families and staff to stay home when sick, and to take the weekly tests to best ensure we are protective of student and staff health while on our campuses.

In summary:

- Let's all work together by testing weekly to continue in-person instruction
- Stay home if sick and report to your school
- Report any positive Covid cases to your school nurse
- Masks are strongly recommended
- Vaccinations available for ages six months and up

Our hope is to have 100% cooperation with at-home testing. If we see a rise in cases or outbreaks, we will consider returning to mandatory weekly testing. We would like to not have to take a step back and do that.

We want to start off strong with everyone cooperating and taking these tests to ensure students and staff in attendance do not have the highly contagious Covid-19 virus.

Reminder: We are requesting that all students and staff test prior to the first day of school, either Wednesday evening or Thursday morning. Your school will provide instructions on picking up your kit. Report positive cases to your school nurse. Please stay home if sick, even if you have a negative test.

Together, we are stronger, and healthier! I'm looking forward to a great start to the school year!

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent