



August 17, 2021

Dear Dr. Hutchings, Chair Alderton & Alexandria City School Board Members,

To ensure the protection of the health and safety of our students and staff upon the return to full-time, in-person school while COVID cases in the City of Alexandria are on the rise, the Executive Board of the Alexandria PTA Council (PTAC) urges ACPS to fully adhere to [CDC's Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#).

We are heartened by the Board's recent vote to follow the CDC's recommendation of universal indoor masking and understand that another important COVID mitigation tool, a vaccination/testing policy for ACPS employees, will be considered during the Special Called meeting on Thursday, August 19. We are also encouraged by the vaccination clinics at Hammond Middle School & Tucker Elementary on August 21 and 22. Promoting and facilitating access to vaccines for families by ACPS--with the collaboration of the Alexandria Health Department--is a crucial public health prevention strategy to end the pandemic.

However, we would like to call your attention to one key CDC recommendation with which ACPS is currently not in adherence: screening testing. The CDC Guidance states, "When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet..it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, **such as screening testing**." The CDC also notes that screening testing is of most value in areas with substantial or high community transmission levels, which is currently the status of the City of Alexandria. The [ACPS 21-22 Health & Safety Guidance](#) describes symptomatic and asymptomatic testing as "pending." It is inadequate to not have a testing plan currently in place since Tucker ES students (who are all unvaccinated) and all ACPS staff have now returned to school buildings. Additionally, ACHS fall athletic teams and the marching band have all resumed practices without surveillance testing in place, which is again not compliant with Table 1 of the CDC Guidance.

We also urge ACPS to ensure that our families feel well-informed and comfortable with school health & safety protocols. Multilingual materials describing health protocols with infographics should be made available in both written and online formats. We also encourage ACPS to hold a multilingual webinar for our families to highlight this information and provide an opportunity for students and parents to ask questions in their native language.

We would also like the School Board to be aware of the following important questions from our member units that have not yet been addressed by ACPS:

1. Since mask wearing is mandated, how will ACPS ensure that all students receive an adequate number of well-fitting, high-quality masks? Since buildings and classrooms will be at near or full capacity, it is imperative that students have good quality masks to reduce disease spread.
2. How will students who need to quarantine at home receive instruction? Since quarantine requirements are tied to vaccination status, will vaccine attestation be required of students age 12+?
3. Under what circumstances will ACPS return to a hybrid or fully virtual model?
4. Will teachers be required to maintain seating charts in classrooms and eating spaces for contact tracing purposes? How will this be enforced at the secondary level?
5. Will schools have any kind of social distancing or reduced capacities in effect for lunch if eaten in the cafeteria?
6. How will PE & music classes (especially band & chorus) be safely provided?
7. How will submission of the daily symptom questionnaire be enforced?
8. If a student receives a positive result from a home COVID test, will contact tracing be implemented based upon this result?

For the continued safety and well-being of our students and staff--and by extension our community--we deeply appreciate any assistance you can provide in ensuring ACPS addresses these issues.

Thank you so much,

PTAC Executive Board