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Date: October 15, 2021

To: Families of Santa Cruz County

Re: Cautious optimism, anticipated vaccination eligibility, surveillance testing

Dear Families of Santa Cruz County,

Our cautious optimism continues to build. COVID-19 case rates in schools are trending downward, as reflected on the [countywide COVID-19 testing dashboard](#). The same downward trend is in evidence across our county and state.

More than 70% of our county's 12-17 year olds are now fully vaccinated against COVID-19, markedly higher than the state and nationwide vaccination rates for the same age group. While our school districts, charter schools, and the County Office of Education (COE) have worked hard to share accurate information and support vaccination, this comparatively high vaccination rate is a credit to the proactive and responsible decisions made by you, our students and parents.

We are continuing to prepare for the anticipated expansion of COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to 5-11 year olds, and anticipate offering clinics at schools and other convenient locations in November. These plans will be put into action once emergency use authorization from the FDA, and further updates will be shared as available. **Vaccination is encouraged, but not required, for all eligible students.** Earlier this month, Governor Newsom announced plans to eventually add COVID-19 to the list of required vaccines to attend in-person schools. It is important to note that a number of conditions would first need to be met, including full FDA approval of the vaccine for each respective age group, as well as additional review by the California Department of Public Health and other agencies.

In partnership with Inspire Diagnostics, we have conducted more than 38,000 PCR surveillance tests across our schools and school community testing sites. We are pleased to report the school community testing sites have been very well received, with many participants citing the

rapid turnaround times for results compared to alternatives. We have received several questions seeking clarity about cost for those with and without medical insurance. **Our school community surveillance testing has no out-of-pocket cost to you, regardless of insurance status.** Under [direction from the state government](#), insurance companies **may not** pass along any costs related to COVID-19 surveillance testing to patients. Testing is also free for those without insurance. For further information on school community testing, and how to participate, see covid19test.santacruzcoe.org.

Yours in education and equity,

Eric Gross, Superintendent, Pacific Elementary School District

Mike Heffner, Superintendent, Bonny Doon Union Elementary School District

Tanya Krause, Superintendent, Scotts Valley Unified School District

Daisy Morales, Superintendent, Live Oak School District

Kris Munro, Superintendent, Santa Cruz City Schools

Michelle Rodriguez, Superintendent, Pajaro Valley Unified School District

Faris Sabbah, County Superintendent of Schools

Chris Schiermeyer, Superintendent, San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District

Michelle Stewart, Superintendent, Happy Valley Elementary School District

Megan Tresham, Superintendent, Mountain Elementary School District

Scott Turnbull, Superintendent, Soquel Union Elementary School District