Orange County Educators Call for Immediate School Staff Vaccine Access

A Healthy Staff is Critical to Reopening to Full Day and Sustained Return to School

Orange County Educators, parents, and school district leaders representing over twenty Orange County Districts (including seven Orange County districts currently open) want a universal return to in-person instruction as soon as it is safe to do so. However, until Orange County grants vaccine access to educators and support professionals, school reopenings and full day returns will be unnecessarily prolonged and schools currently in distance learning will continue to experience the yo-yo effect of opening and closing due to repeated school staff quarantines.

CDC guidelines support schools currently in hybrid to stay in hybrid while community viral rates remain high. Once reopenings and returns begin in earnest, Orange County association leaders believe immediate vaccine access for all teachers and education support professionals is required in order for schools to reopen and stay open safely.

Educators, parents and district leaders are joining together to call on Orange County to immediately open vaccine access to school staff as part of a comprehensive plan to see our schools open safely and stay open.

Career educators have been frustrated by the impact of the pandemic on student learning; including difficulties in hybrid learning and the length of separation from school sites. We look forward to reconnecting with our students and their families and returning to safe school environments. Educators also recognize that schools being in hybrid or physically closed for distance learning prolongs a return to normalcy. Educators are optimistic for a return to school campus and schedules, and want to do so safely.

Parents have also been frustrated by the slow pace of school re-openings in areas where infection rates still remain high. This reinforces the importance of “getting it right” as virus rates drop and safe in-person instruction becomes a reality. With shortages of substitute teachers throughout the state, keeping educators and support professionals in those re-opened classrooms will be a priority.

Orange County has recognized that other essential workers must have early vaccine access so that they may safely carry out their work in supporting our broader community. Orange County still plans to grant vaccine access to educators in Tier 1B, after residents 65 and older and the first tier of essential workers.

Variant SARS CoV-2 strains must be considered in all district reopening plans. The medical professionals warn “it is unwise to develop broader reopening plans to open full-time before the trajectory of these variant strains and their impact in our local communities are better understood.”

While our county cannot control supply issues stemming from the state level, they have full jurisdiction over when to grant educators vaccine access, and many counties in our state have done so already. We call on our county leaders to return to their original plan, and open up vaccine access to school staff immediately.

The only way to maximize a safe and sustainable reopening plan is to vaccinate all site staff. By doing so, Orange County will help more students, educators and schools return to in-person instruction safely and sustainably. Most importantly it will prevent large-scale reclosures and disruptions to curriculum delivery that occur when quarantining is required.

In Support,

Faith Daverin, President - Anaheim Elementary Education Association  
Grant Schuster, President - Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association  
Linda Manion, President - Association of Placentia-Linda Educators  
Glenda Bartell, President - Brea Olinda Teachers Association