

2022 Graduations Will Be Extra Special for School Staff, Students, and Families



Tim Taylor
Executive Director
Small School Districts' Association

It is hard to believe we are at the end of the 2021-22 school year. I cannot help but think about the journey the class of '22 has endured. The pandemic engulfed the last three years of their high school days, disrupting their experiences. As we prepare to celebrate graduations and promotions in our schools, we should reflect on how students and staff got to this point.

The class of '22 were sophomores when the state closed all schools and businesses on March 13, 2020. All sports, extracurricular activities, school plays, and classroom instruction were taken from students. It was a traumatic and sudden stoppage of our life.

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I think we can all reflect on our own sophomore year in high school. That is the year you get your driver's license; you begin to blossom as a student, and your confidence grows. You look forward to your first job in the summer and begin dreaming of what college or career path you will take.

Unfortunately, the pandemic stopped a lot of the typical high school memories. Instead, students will think back to this era in a different light. Students will be able to tell their children what it was like during the COVID era and what it was like to be in high school during one of our country's most challenging times.

In retrospect, students will have a remarkable story to tell and how it shaped them as adults.

Let us enjoy all 2022 promotions and graduations this year.

It has been a journey well worth celebrating.



The Class of 2022 - Education Beat Podcast by Edsource



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Governor, Legislature Press Pause on Student Vaccine Mandates



Caitlin Jung
Capitol Advisors Group

In mid-April, efforts by both the Administration and Legislature that would have added the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of vaccinations required for school attendance were put on hold, as the state's COVID-19 numbers continued to improve. The proposals, while largely similar, differed in a few key aspects.

Under the Governor's proposal, which he first announced back in October of last year, would have directed the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to, once the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had fully approved the COVID-19 Vaccine for an entire grade span (i.e. 7th – 12th grade, K-6th), adopt regulations to add the COVID-19 Vaccine to the current list of 10 required vaccines. However, because his proposal would have added the vaccine through the regulatory process and not through legislation, current law would have required there be a personal belief exemption for any student that did not want to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

The bill by Senator Richard Pan (D-Sacramento) on the other hand, would have taken a much stricter approach. SB 871 would not only have added the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of vaccinations required for students to be admitted to school but would have done so even if at the time of the bill's implementation the FDA had not fully approve the vaccine for use in children. Additionally, because the change would be done through legislation, his bill would not provide for a personal belief exemption for the COVID-19 vaccine. The bill would have also eliminated the requirement that any vaccine added by regulation would have to allow for a personal belief exemption.

Senator Pan was the first to pull back his proposal, saying in a statement, "COVID vaccination rates, particularly among children, are currently insufficient, and the state needs to focus its effort on increasing access to COVID vaccinations for children through physicians and other health providers who care for children and on education efforts to give families accurate information about the COVID vaccine. Until

children's access to COVID vaccination is greatly improved, I believe that a state-wide policy to require COVID vaccination in schools is not the immediate priority, although it is an appropriate safety policy for many school districts in communities with good vaccine access."

A few hours after Senator Pan announced he would no longer be pursuing his bill, the CDPH announced a new timeline for when they would begin work to add the vaccine to the required list pursuant to the Governor's plan. While not completely shelving the proposal, CDPH did announce that it would not initiate the COVID-19 vaccine regulatory process for the 2022-23 school year, effectively pushing back implementation to no earlier than the 2023-24 school year. According to the CDPH, the delay is necessary "to ensure sufficient time for successful implementation of new vaccine requirements." Despite the delay, CDPH emphasized the continued value of vaccines, writing, "Vaccines are the most powerful weapon against hospitalization and serious illness due to COVID-19. California's response to conditions in schools has adapted to the dynamic challenges of the pandemic, based on science."

What's Next?

With these moves by the Legislature and Governor Newsom, it is unlikely we will see a student vaccine mandate go into place before the 2023-24 school year, or if at all. Senator Pan, who has long been the champion of youth vaccinations in the Legislature, is termed out, meaning this is his last year in the Legislature. It is unclear at this time if another Member will be willing to pick up this cause moving forward, especially given how hot-button the issue of youth vaccination mandates has become in recent years. Because this is the second year of a two-year session, if a Member were to choose to pursue this next year, they would have to introduce an entirely new bill.

The ultimate implementation of the Governor's proposal will likely depend on what the state's COVID-19 situation looks like in 2023. The statement announcing the delay leaves the door open for a potential mandate in the future, with CDPH writing, "Upon full approval by the FDA, CDPH will consider the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Family Physicians prior to implementing a school vaccine requirement."

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Little Shasta Elementary Embraces Its History



California is a state with a long history. Little Shasta Elementary School District, however, can lay claim to one of the most unique pieces of history in the Golden State, and perhaps even the entire country. Over one hundred and fifty years after it was first built, students in the district still attend classes in the oldest two-room schoolhouse in the state. The building, which was erected in 1858, has weathered the Civil War, both World Wars, and countless natural disasters over the past century and a half.

Now in its one hundred and sixty-fourth year, Little Shasta has merged technology with history to create something new for its sixteen K-8 students. "We have Chromebooks for every student, as well as a large digital screen," Todd Clark, Shasta Elementary's Superintendent and Principal, stated in a phone interview.

The school has also expanded over the decades, adding a nearby multipurpose room that doubles as the cafeteria. In addition to the teachers who each hold class in one of the school's rooms, there is also a paraprofessional who assists the students during recess. Thanks to the school's Parents Club, the money was raised to purchase a van to take the students on field trips around the area. These trips explore the history of Shasta County, including other historical sites in the area, volcanic caves, and the local archeology museum. The school has also utilized

an after-school program for the past fifteen years. "The after-school program combines academic, physical activities and art and music programs for

students to participate in," said Todd Clark. The school also takes a different view of summer school than most: "We do the same with our summer school. Summer school is not remediation for Little Shasta Elementary."

In the storied classrooms of Little Shasta Elementary, the teachers and staff strive to tailor the Common Core curriculum to each individual student, particularly since the school size is below average compared to the rest of California. Like the rest of the education system the school also faced new challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the small size and rural location, the school was unable to switch to remote learning, and so took other measures. "I built each of the plexiglass dividers for the desks myself," Todd Clark said. "We also had a staff member assigned to take temperatures."

For now, Little Shasta Elementary has an eye on the future while continuing to integrate new technology into its celebrated history deep in the heart of California. This combination of old and new merges the traditions of past with the new technology of the modern era to create something truly unique. SSDA is proud to highlight such an inimitable school.

~by Brett Bunge





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SSDA Legislative Committee 2022

Lobbying at a Glance



Iván Carrillo
Capitol Advisors Group

This year's legislative session is well underway. SSDA's Legislative Committee has been hard at work analyzing bills that would have the greatest implications on small and rural

school districts and the students we serve. The Legislative Committee has taken formal positions on several legislative measures, and in doing so has provided advocacy directive to the Capitol Advisors team. The Legislative Committee's work, our lobbying efforts, and your grassroots advocacy have already led to significant changes in proposed policy direction. Our coalition efforts led to language being removed from SB 906 (Portantino) that would have required schools to collect firearm ownership and storage information from families. SSDA members were vocal in opposition to AB 1993 (Wicks), which sought to require employers, including LEAs, to verify full COVID-19 vaccination status for all their employees. SSDA members were also active in expressing concerns with SB 871 (Pan), which sought to add the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of mandatory student vaccinations. In response to strong community input and other health and political factors, both AB 1993 and SB 871 were pulled by their authors and will not receive any legislative consideration. The following is a review of bills SSDA is actively lobbying:

SB 1061 (Laird) - SSDA sponsored bill

Would align recall signature requirements for provisionally appointed positions with the thresholds for locally elected officials, which would safeguard small school districts from funding costly special elections that do not reflect voter sentiment.

AB 1614 (Muratsuchi) - Support

Would increase the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) by \$4.2 billion over the statutory cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in 2022-23, with the intent that the Legislature strive to reach the top ten states in the country in K-12 per-pupil funding.

AB 1667 (Cooper) - Support

Would enact various reforms to protect retirees and school employers from financial penalties tied to CalSTRS audit findings.

AB 1893 (Cunningham) - Support

Would waive the basic skills proficiency requirement for 30-day substitute teaching permits through July 1, 2024.

AB 2337 (Dahle) - Support

Would establish a definition of "Frontier School Districts" in Education Code to ensure that California's smallest, rural school districts receive proper recognition and supports.

AB 2364 (Dahle) - Support

Would create a Rural Education Task Force within the Department of Education to amplify the voice of California's smallest and rural school districts.

AB 2401 (McCarty) - Support

Would increase funding to establish new and expand existing integrated teacher preparation programs, which allow students to earn their bachelor's degree and teaching credentials within four years.

AB 2573 (McCarty) - Oppose

Would expand the classification of permanent status employees by deleting existing exemptions for school districts with less than 250 average daily attendance (ADA), and Adult Ed and Career Technical Education programs.

AB 2584 (Berman) - Support

Would, among other changes, require school board recall elections to be held with the first regularly scheduled state or local election in order to reduce the election costs borne by local educational agencies.

SSDA members can contact Iván Carrillo with Capitol Advisors with any questions at ivan@capitoladvisors.org.



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