



## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **CONTRA COSTA COUNTY’S SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS AND DEPUTY HEALTH OFFICER URGE SCHOOLS TO REMAIN OPEN DURING OMICRON SURGE**

PLEASANT HILL, CA –Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey and Contra Costa County Deputy Health Officer Dr. Ori Tzvieli today reaffirmed the importance of keeping students in full-time, in-person learning environments during the latest COVID-19 surge.

Students learn best when they have access to school resources and can physically interact with their peers, evidence from the pandemic has shown.

“We have seen that students are better off in school than in distance learning,” County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey said. “The county office of education continues to work with the health department and our school districts to maintain in-person learning and do it safely. The safety of students, staff, and families remains our top priority during this pandemic.”

Unlike earlier in the pandemic, public schools in California may no longer offer remote or virtual learning in lieu of in-person instruction. Schools in the county are working with CCCOE and CCHS to implement the latest California Department of Public Health school guidance and are practicing the best risk mitigation strategies.

“We have learned a lot of hard lessons over the last two years as we have worked through this pandemic,” said Dr. Tzvieli. “For many students, remote learning does not support student mental health, emotional health, and academic well-being the way that in-person learning does. There are very few instances where closing schools is the best option from a public health perspective.”

Contra Costa County, the state and the nation are seeing a record number of new COVID-19 cases due to the omicron variant. While the omicron variant is highly contagious, it seems to cause milder symptoms than earlier strains of the virus, Dr. Tzvieli said. He added that children are less likely to be infected in supervised settings such as schools with masking and testing requirements.

Both Superintendent Mackey and Dr. Tzvieli acknowledge that each individual school and community is different, and the response to an outbreak depends on a number of factors, including vaccination rates, and access to health resources.



“We stand ready to support local school board members and superintendents with the information and resources they need to take the steps necessary to keep students in school safely,” Superintendent Mackey said.

Ultimately, the key to safety is a multi-pronged approach, Dr. Tzvieli said.

“The best way to keep people healthy during this latest surge is to continue all the proven layers of protection: vaccinations and booster shots for eligible people, masking, testing, hand washing and remaining home when sick,” Dr. Tzvieli said.

For more information regarding COVID-19 testing, vaccines and boosters please visit [www.cchealth.org](http://www.cchealth.org).

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