



Lowell Joint SCHOOL DISTRICT

“Home of Scholars and Champions”



Healthy Families and Staff Newsletter – **Families**

Lowell Joint **STRONG**

February 25, 2022

“Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.”
Abraham Lincoln



What a crazy whirlwind our Lowell Joint Family is exceeding in spite of, again. Our LJSD families once again find ourselves in an ever-changing world again with one constant, which continues to be that everything does change every 2-4 days. We cannot thank everyone enough for their patience, grace, mercy, and care; keep breathing and know that we really will get through these challenges/storms. Lowell Joint will continue to weather the storms because our feet are on solid rock. The State, CDPH and CAL/OSHA continue to update and change their orders every 2-4 days. The latest State, CDPH and CAL/OSHA order links are: ([California Department of Public Health Education Health Order](#)) ([CDPH Order](#)).

Some key updates, links and related information:

- We have reopened our campuses to allow school and classroom volunteers. All volunteers must complete the Wellness Survey before coming onto campus.
- We do anticipate the ability to host 6th grade end-of-year parties on campus and volunteers can support these special events. Again, volunteers will need to complete the Wellness Survey before coming onto campus.
- We continue to operate under the California and County Health Department directives and health orders related to school indoor masks. I have spoken with a few parents who were so gracious and respectful as I explained that schools are truly stuck in the middle of the State of California and our community. If LJSD refuses to follow the State Health Order, then our entire district funding could be withheld as well as sanctions from CAL/OSHA. Bottom-line, the entire decision process is at the State level with our elected politicians.
 - Orange County Department of Education news article regarding school indoor masking: <https://newsroom.ocde.us/coronavirus-update/>
 - **Face Covering Guidance:** <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx>
- Because of what some folks have heard from other districts, they have asked of what happens if a student refuses to wear their mask indoors?
 - LJSD **does not** suspend students
 - LJSD **does not** isolate students to some other room, tent, etc.
 - LJSD **does not** keep the student in the office
 - LJSD staff **would never** shame or embarrass a student
 - LJSD **simply provides** a safe place right outside the classroom so that they can still receive their education while complying with the State Health Order mandate.
- Up-to-Date Vaccine Status:
 - Please note that the OCHCA considers individuals “up-to-date” with their vaccination status if they have completed a primary series of COVID-19 vaccine and have either received a booster shot or are not yet recommended to receive a booster dose according to current guidance. For more information, [click here](#).
 - Lowell Joint continues **not** to require any staff or student to be vaccinated in order to attend school and does not anticipate doing so.

- There are a couple of proposed bills at the State level to make COVID-19 vaccination mandatory, but please know that this is topic at the State level and please make sure your elected politicians know how you feel either way.
- I will remind you that the LJSD Board of Trustees firmly believe, and have stated in a Public Board meeting, that they unanimously believe this is personal choice and should not be a legislative decision.
- Please Do Our Part to Help Keep Schools Healthy and Safe:
We know by working together we can limit the spread of COVID-19, and it is going to take a combined effort to continue to keep our schools safe. Here is how you can support our mission to keep students in school:
 - Continue daily home screenings so that you are informed.
 - Keep students home if they are sick, have COVID-19 symptoms, or if they or a member of their household has tested positive or are awaiting COVID-19 test results.
 - Keep students home, if they are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.

Additional resources for COVID-19 information include:

- [California Department of Public Health COVID-19 Resource Page](#)
- [Orange County Health Care Agency COVID-19 Resource Page](#)
- [Lowell Joint Resource Page \(includes most current COVID dashboard report\)](#)

A parent sent this picture and note to me recently:

For a small amount of perspective at this moment, imagine you were born in 1900. When you are 14, World War I starts, and ends on your 18th birthday with 22 million people killed. Later in the year, a Spanish Flu epidemic hits the planet and runs until you are 20. Fifty million people die from it in those two years. Yes, 50 million. When you are 29, the Great Depression begins. Unemployment hits 25%, global GDP drops 27%. That runs until you are 33. The country nearly collapses along with the world economy. When you turn 39, World War II starts. You are not even over the hill yet. When you are 41, the United States is fully pulled into WWII. Between your 39th and 45th birthday, 75 million people perish in the war and the Holocaust kills six million. At 52, the Korean War starts and five million perish. At 64, the Vietnam War begins, and it does not end for many years. Four million people die in that conflict. Approaching your 62nd birthday, you have the Cuban Missile Crisis, a tipping point in the Cold War. Life on our planet, as we know it, could well have ended. Great leaders prevented that from happening. As you turn 75, the Vietnam War finally ends. Think of everyone on the planet born in 1900. How do you survive all of that? A kid in 1985 did not think their 85 year old grandparent understood how hard school was. Yet those grandparents (and now great grandparents) survived through everything listed above. Perspective is an amazing art. Let us try to keep things in perspective. Let us be smart, help each other out and we will get through this. In the history of the world, there has never been a storm that lasted. This too, shall pass.



General News/Updates:

- As you are probably already aware, the LJSD Arts for All: Let the Music Play (band) will be receiving one of the only four National MAGNA Awards for 2022. Even more impressive, the program will be receiving a second award as one of only three Grand Prize Award Winners from all school districts in the entire USA (no matter the size of district); THIS IS SO

INCREDIBLE! They will present and be awarded their recognition at the national conference on April 3 in San Diego. I would also take just a minute to note that a key impressive aspect is that this awesome program was launched by Jeremy Fletcher and continued to build on success by Cameron Miller. Most often, when there is a transition of leadership things drop, but not in LJSD! 😊

- You may also recall that El Portal Elementary School was awarded a Disney Musical Grant, which is a collaborative partnership with Disney, The Segerstrom Center, and El Portal. The work of this collaboration will culminate in the performance of “The Lion King” on March 4th and 5th. If you are interested in attending please purchase your tickets at: <https://sites.google.com/ljssd.org/elportaldramaclub>
- We are also excited to announce that LJSD will be launching our own Lowell Joint Youth Theater Program for 2022-2023. It is modeled after the Disney Youth Theater Program and will assure that a youth theater production will be done at each of our five elementary schools each year. We were in the process of launching this winter until the COVID surge placed things on hold. Please look forward to 2022-2023 Lowell Joint Youth Theater (LJYT).

Please remember to BREATHE and know that LJSD will absolutely exceed as we keep cowboying-up and getting done. We still have a number of our colleagues who are going through some rough personal challenges and we simply need to be sensitive and give a little extra grace-patience-kindness, which will help make a world of difference. **Please stay connected with your site principal if you have questions, concerns, needs; truly.**

We continue to stand in faith as we are LOWELL JOINT **STRONG** and we will stand strong against the storms that come our way; you are the beacon/lighthouse of educational excellence; **THANK YOU!**

LOWELL JOINT STRONG TOGETHER!!

Copy of Letter sent from the Orange County Superintendents to the California Governor:

From the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Orange County’s 29 school districts banded together and coordinated closely with the OC Health Care Agency (HCA) to ensure the highest levels of safety for our students, staff and communities. This unified approach allowed us to rapidly share information and best practices as we endured four waves of the virus, multiple variants and a steady stream of new guidance from local, state and national agencies. It also positioned our schools as models for how to safely reopen — and stay open — for in-person instruction. Now, with two years of data points from which to draw, it is time to have a conversation about what comes next.

In Orange County and across the United States, COVID-19 case rates and hospitalizations are falling rapidly in the wake of the recent Omicron spike. Outcomes in other countries that have experienced Omicron suggest the worst of the pandemic is behind us, with many nations lifting restrictions. Even California has announced that it will allow its broad indoor mask mandate to expire after Feb. 15, and numerous experts believe we are now headed toward an endemic stage, in which we live with a diminished version of the virus. Based on these trends, and following discussions with our HCA partners, our coalition of Orange County superintendents is asking Governor Gavin Newsom and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to publicly announce a reasonable timeline for easing school masking requirements and other restrictive protocols, using well-established countywide health metrics as the basis.

As school district leaders, we are legally required to follow public health directives set forth by the governor, the state’s public health department and the OC Health Care Agency. Any actions to the contrary risk school closures. Moreover, we believe that safety protocols such as face coverings, while sometimes polarizing, have proven effective in reducing school-based transmission, which in turn allowed our campuses to remain open. Yet these steps, including the masking rules, were not intended to be permanent adaptations to our environment. These policies were introduced to blunt waves of infections that threatened to overrun our health care systems and close

our schools. Students and staff did their part — to extraordinary degrees. Now, we must acknowledge that changing circumstances and clear data trends warrant a re-examination of our approach to school safety, if not a full exit strategy and a return to more normal school operations.

We believe overall hospitalization rates and ICU capacities represent an accurate picture of the threat this virus poses to schools and communities, but we would defer to the expertise of the HCA and the CDPH to establish reliable benchmarks that can be used as the basis for easing restrictions. We also understand that there always exists the potential for new variants or viruses that may renew calls to flatten the curve.

From the onset of this public health crisis, the superintendents of Orange County have been clear-eyed and united behind the goal of providing safe, welcoming and equitable learning environments for students. Two years later, that remains unchanged, as does our commitment to working with our families, employees, public health partners and community members to move our county forward, together.

No need to tell anyone if you know what this is and certainly, if you actually owned one...



Baseball season is coming, so get ready...