

CUSD Opens Covid Command Center



September 1, 2021 - Coronado Unified School District has been an industry leader among California public schools as it relates to Covid response. In addition to being among the first unified public school districts to open for in-person learning in 2020, last January CUSD was selected as one of only two districts in the state to participate in a pilot program created in partnership with the California and San Diego County Departments of Public Health. The program provided free weekly on-site rapid antigen testing for district staff and students.

The district's proactive and innovative response continues with the opening of the **Covid Command Center** for the 2021-22 school year. The Center, which serves the entire district, is located on the Coronado High School campus in the Black Box Theater.

Supporting the Covid Command Center, CUSD has its own Covid Team under the direction of District Nurse Joellen Semo. The five-person team is made up of a pool of substitute nurses who triage, test, trace, and provide information to the entire district from one location.

The Command Center is open Monday-Friday with four staff members answering phones, sending emails, communicating with parents, attendance clerks, and staff members. The team also provides rapid antigen tests for students and staff who are eligible to stay in school under a modified quarantine.

"We handle any sick call from any of the school sites. We assess, follow-up with families according to our decision tree, clear students for return (after they have a lab-based PCR test), and inform the sites of student status," explained Semo. The team coordinates all communication with the family, teachers, site administration, the front office, health office, and athletic department.

Last year Covid response and protocols were handled by staff at each school site with the support of the health team. Centralizing all Covid responses for the entire district in one area under one health team takes the burden off individual school sites and ensures consistent application of protocols.

“Over the summer we realized that with schools open for full in-person learning we would be doubling our population from last year. It would be impossible for individual school site staff to handle twice the amount of work while still being responsible for everything else going on at the school,” said Semo. She added she knows of only one other district with a centralized operation.

Superintendent Mueller added, “The constantly changing health guidelines and complexity of systems required for a school district to remain open is daunting. We are very fortunate to have our Covid Team managing these expectations so that our educators can focus on teaching, learning and our students.”

Members of the CUSD Covid Team: Joellen Semo, Hilori Wastila, Nancy Ruttenberg, Amy Schiaffino, and Rhonda Gearhart.