



PHILADELPHIA
FEDERATION of TEACHERS

*Report: COVID Safety
Protocols and Necessary
Course Corrections*

*Survey Results and Recommendations
from Member-wide and Nurse-only
Surveys*

September 21, 2021

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Introduction/Executive Summary

In response to numerous concerns reported by school nurses, teachers, and other school staff, the PFT issued two surveys to better understand the concerns.

One survey, which took place from September 14-20, 2021, was a member-wide survey. Members were able to offer feedback on topics including mask compliance, availability of hand sanitizer, and other health and safety protocols.

The second survey, for school nurses only, took place from September 15-20, 2021. The answers from this survey compose the majority of this report, as School Nurses are more familiar with the specific health and safety protocols regarding contact tracing, symptomatic students, testing consent forms, and medical waiting room procedures.

The report is divided into two sections:

1. *School Nurse Survey:* An overview of the COVID-safety protocols as reported directly from School Nurses, including specific commentary and questions regarding contact tracing, quarantine protocols, nurses' workloads and health and safety implementation from the lens of our healthcare professionals.
 - a. The answers are based on the completion of our Nurse-only survey by 97 School Nurses.
2. *Member-wide Survey:* An overview of additional COVID-safety measures that are observable school-wide, such as ventilation/air purifiers, and mask compliance.
 - a. The answers are based on the completion of our member-wide survey by 4,250 PFT Members.

From the results, it is evident that a number of urgent course corrections, including those we have previously recommended, must be implemented. These include, but are not limited to the following:

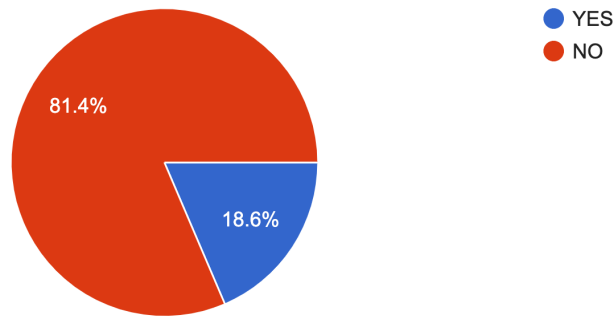
- Implementation of asymptomatic students testing
- Increasing the number of School Nurses
- Providing additional supports for School Nurses, both in terms of support staff and compensation for extra hours worked
- Immediate provision of ample testing supplies delivered directly to School Nurses
- Clarification of symptomatic student protocols
- Better coordination with PDPH on contact tracing
- Clarification, reinforcement, and implementation of mask protocols
- Posting of accurate, timely, and comprehensive data on the District's COVID dashboard
- Improved communication from central office to School Nurses and to the entire school staff
- Improved communication from central office to parents
- Assistance from central office in obtaining student testing consent forms
- Implementation of online student testing consent forms
- Provision of adequate and frequently replenished hand sanitizer in classrooms/work spaces and common areas
- Provision of adequate PPE, including extra masks, and additional PPE for specific situations
- Monitoring of air purifiers for filter replacement needs

Section I: Nurse Specific Questions

A. NURSING ALLOCATION

Did your nurse allocation decrease this year? (For example, perhaps you had a Nurse Assist one day per week previously and no longer have that support)

97 responses

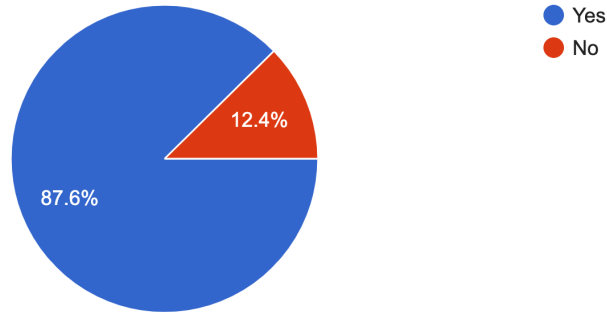


Decrease in Nursing Allocation?	Number (%)
Yes	18 (18.6%)
No	79 (81.4%)

B. PPE AVAILABILITY

Are there extra masks available?

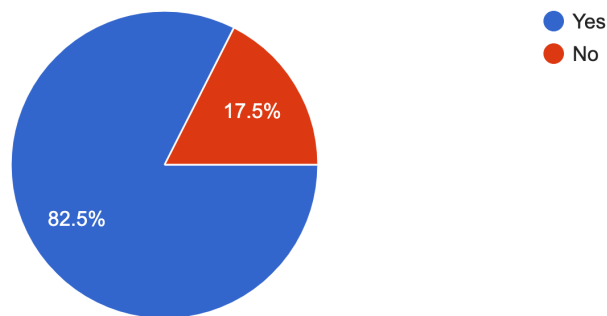
97 responses



Extra Masks Available?	Number (%)
Yes	85 (87.6%)
No	12 (12.4%)

Are there additional PPE supplies available for when needed (gowns, gloves, etc.)?

97 responses

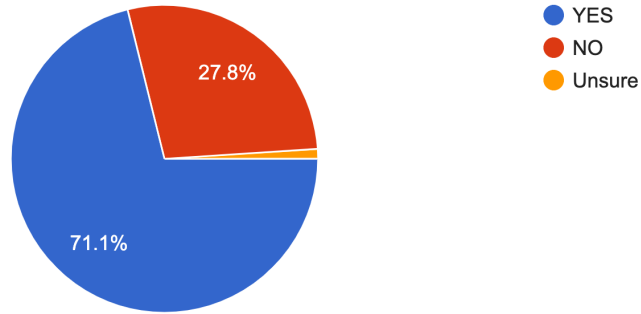


Additional PPE Available?	Number (%)
Yes	80 (82.5%)
No	17 (17.5%)

C. COVID TESTING

Are student testing supplies available?

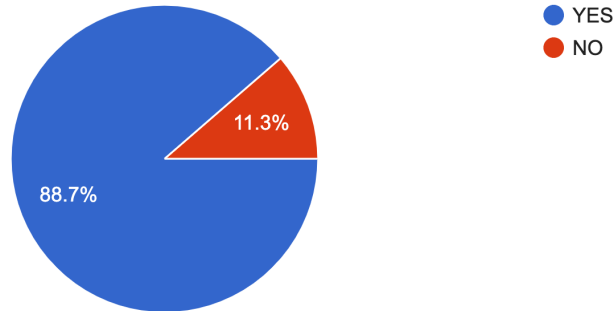
97 responses



Student Testing Supplies?	Number (%)
Yes	69 (71.1%)
No	27 (27.8%)

Is weekly COVID testing taking place for staff?

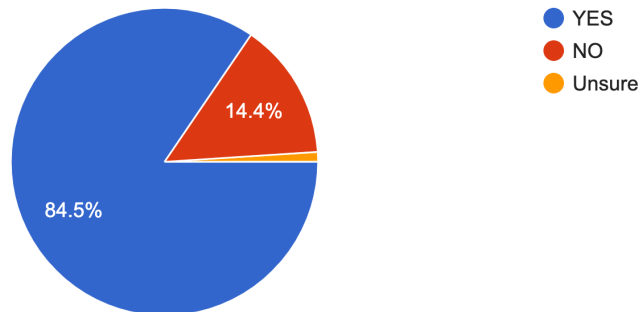
97 responses



Weekly COVID Testing for Staff?	Number (%)
Yes	86 (88.7%)
No	11 (11.3%)

Are *symptomatic* students tested?

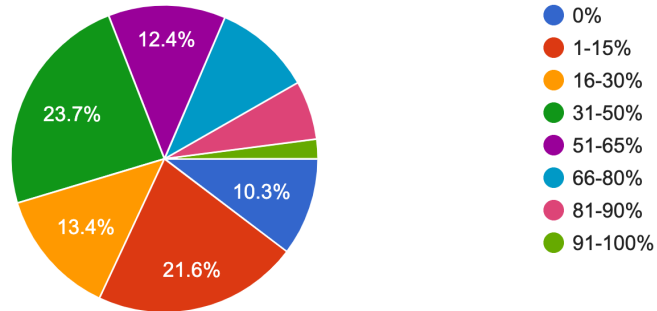
97 responses



Symptomatic Student Testing?	Number (%)
Yes	82 (84.5%)
No	14 (14.4%)

What % of COVID testing consent forms do you have back from students?

97 responses

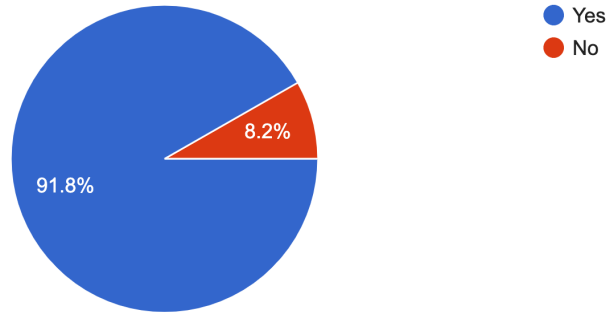


% of COVID Testing Consent Forms	Number (%)
0%	10 (10.3%)
1-15%	21 (21.6%)
16-30%	13 (13.4%)
31-50%	23 (23.7%)
51-65%	12 (12.4%)
66-80%	10 (10.3%)
81-90%	6 (6.2%)
91-100%	2 (2.1%)

D. SYMPTOMATIC STUDENT PROTOCOL/RETURN TO SCHOOL PROTOCOL

Symptomatic Student Protocol: Are these protocols in place?

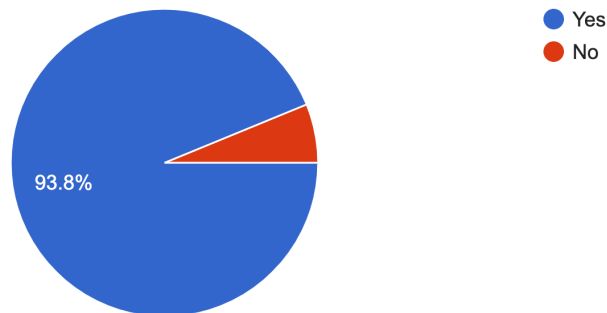
97 responses



Symptomatic Student Protocol?	Number (%)
Yes	89 (91.8%)
No	8 (8.2%)

Return to School Guidelines (Students): Are these protocols in place?

97 responses

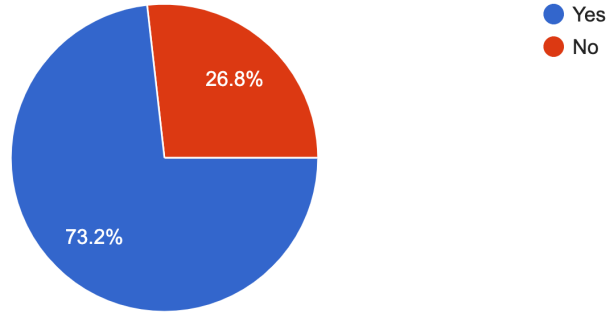


Return to School Guidelines?	Number (%)
Yes	91 (93.8%)
No	6 (6.2%)

E. MEDICAL WAITING ROOM

Does your school have a medical waiting room?

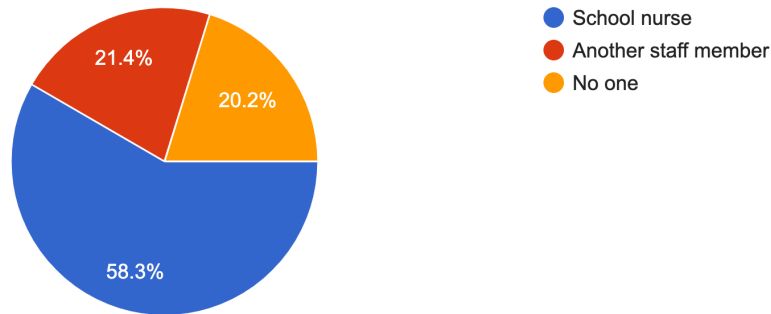
97 responses



Medical Waiting Room?	Number (%)
Yes	71 (73.2%)
No	26 (26.6%)

If you have an operational waiting room, who staffs your medical waiting room when it is occupied?

84 responses

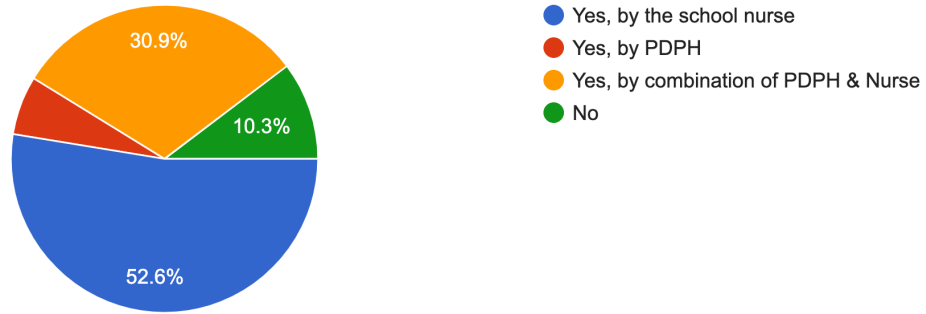


Who Staffs Med Waiting Room?	Number (%)
Nurse	49 (58.3%)
Another Staff Member	18 (21.4%)
No One	17 (20.2%)

F. CONTACT TRACING

Contact Tracing: Is contact tracing taking place?

97 responses



Is Contact Tracing Taking Place?	Number (%)
Yes, by School Nurse	51 (52.6%)
Yes, by PDPH	6 (6.2%)
Yes, by PDPH and School Nurse	30 (30.9%)
No	10 (10.3%)

G. COMMENTS FROM SCHOOL NURSES

- The school district of Philadelphia is putting my nursing license at risk every day I go to work.
- I need help. The current working conditions are unsafe and are not sustainable.
- I've never been more stressed than I have this year. I feel like I'm drowning without a boat, life preserver, or paddle.
- We need tests!! I only have three left! I am so upset about it! The parents are trusting me to test their kids, because this is what the SDP said would happen. And now we don't have tests! It's a disgrace!
- District needs to do online consent like last year.
- Some parents still think last year's consent is still valid.
- I can't see students and scan everything in. They took our online forms away from us. It was so simple, 2 clicks and it was done.
- I have no test kits, no consent forms, and I am the only nurse for 1200 students. I see and send home at least 10 students a day.
- We could use some assistance from the school district to get this information to the parents.
- Honestly I am not even sure how I could keep track and manage all of this with everything else going on and the mounds of paperwork, medication administration, screenings, immunization management, and the daily influx of students coming for bleeding, panic attacks, asthma, fights, falls, etc.
- We work with SHS as needed to secure back to school dates and send this out to families and staff as soon as we are notified as to dates to return. Our staff is very aware and helpful when reaching families as needed.

- We need more resources - human and capital. I have not yet been able to get or order supplies but hopefully there will not be a problem getting PPE. I am beginning to run low on some supplies.
- I am the 1 full-time nurse at my school and have no help. I am a new school nurse and new to the district so I am drowning here with lots of responsibilities.
- Overall time to combat and extinguish Covid issues/concerns is overwhelming and does not allow for "regularly scheduled programming."
- It is truly overwhelming to try to maintain a normal health room and a medical waiting room at the same time. We are doing our best to issue, collect back and organize the Covid consents. There is no time to upload all of the consent and see students, help calm staff, take care of our diabetics, and help kids who might get hurt.
- We're struggling to keep afloat and drowning in paperwork.
- We need more tests! I can't stress this enough!! It will ruin our credibility with parents! And make our schools completely unsafe. It's a major problem.
- One of the problems I have is that a nurse alone cannot address all of the needs of the students in my school and the addition of the Contact Tracing and testing adds an additional burden for me as the sole nurse. There were students that I could not see because my office was too busy. I spend hours documenting and contact tracing at home after work. ... I have not had lunch or a break since the students returned to school. Working under these conditions is not sustainable. I don't want to leave my school without a nurse but I do have to take care of my health as diligently as I strive to do for our school community. The return to school guidelines are in place but we don't have the resources to enforce the policy.

- The district did not provide an appropriate plan for high school contact tracing. The school nurse is unable to complete contact tracing for 8 classes for every positive covid case, while also doing our actual jobs. The district did not provide a plan to support nurses in this role. All school staff are stretched this year. There is nobody to help with this in our buildings. My duties as a school nurse (medication orders, vaccine records, 504 plans) are not being completed due to the time that is required for symptomatic testing and contact tracing. We are seeing every sniffle and cough in order to mitigate the spread of Covid.
- High school means multiple classes of students to identify. After they are identified we then have to determine vaccine status because that drives quarantine guidelines. Then we are calling unvaccinated students first to let them know they have to quarantine before letting vaccinated students know they were a close contact so should monitor for symptoms. It takes 2 nurses about 4 hours to do this.
- Contract tracing needs to be a collaborative effort between the SDP and PDPH, the PDPH relies on information we provide. The provision of this information, contact cannot be delegated to another individual, it is simply too complex. It also cannot be handled by non-credentialed experienced or trained staff. Nurses, including those who serve non-pubs should be comped for this additional work.
- The PDPH has not done any of the contact tracing. We are told to not send them seating charts as it is the schools responsibility to decide who needs to be quarantined. This ends up falling on the nurse which can take hours to conduct.
- I haven't had to do any contact tracing yet but my principal, and assistant principal are fully on board to do their part and help.
- It is truly impossible to manage a regular health room, a medical waiting room, answer staff and parent phone calls and just overall balance the

school day. We are used to being the only medical professional in the building but the amount of work being requested of one nurse at this time is not feasible.

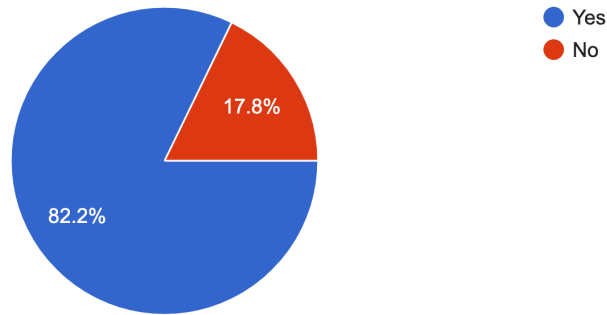
- We (nurses) still have so many questions regarding the Covid protocol that we need someone to answer. We email student health services but rarely get a reply or a vague reply. For example, what tests are acceptable to test out of quarantine early (rapid antigen, PCR, home tests). I emailed my superiors at SHS on Monday, no reply yet and the other nurses don't know either. We need help asap and clear realistic protocols.
- More personnel is needed to make sure the protocols are being adhered to. The nurse cannot stop everything when a symptomatic student comes in. He or she still has daily meds, which may include insulin, to give out, the other sick or injured students, staff that may become ill while in school, online registrations to take care, immunization compliance and many other duties. It is impossible to do this job effectively and safely without additional help in our buildings.
- It is not realistic and/or possible for one person on any given day to do what is being asked, we need assistance to even come close to what is needed. I do my best everyday to prioritize and critically think and make difficult decisions. I work at home at night and on weekends, I come in early and stay late. I try to utilize all my resources but they are so slim.
- We need solutions and additional help expeditiously as the health of our students are at jeopardy.

Part II: General Survey Responses

A. MASK PROTOCOLS

Mask Wearing: Are student mask protocols in place and enforced?

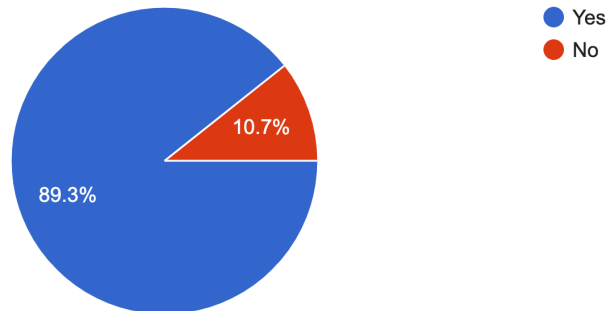
4,250 responses



Student Mask Protocols?	Number (%)
Yes	3,494 (82.2%)
No	756 (17.8%)

Mask Wearing: Are staff mask protocols in place and enforced?

4,250 responses

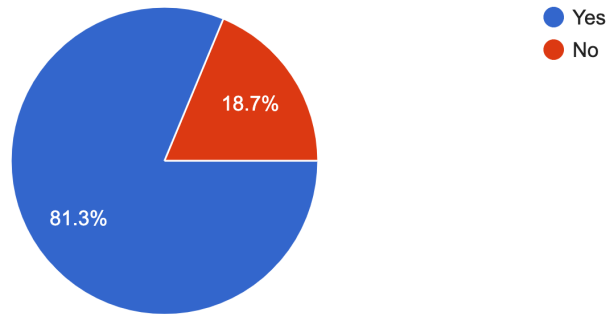


Staff Mask Protocols?	Number (%)
Yes	3,797 (89.3%)
No	453 (10.7%)

B. SEATING CHARTS

Social Distancing: Are seating charts in place?

4,250 responses

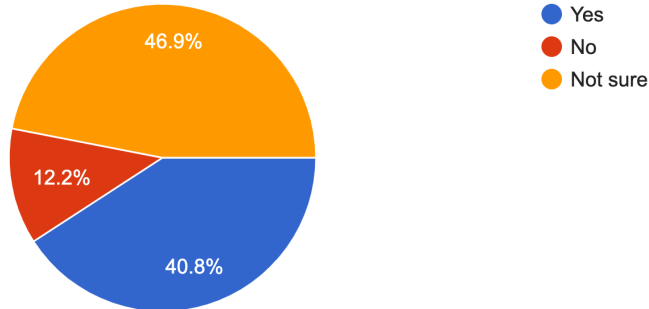


Seating Charts in Place?	Number (Percent)
Yes	3,454 (81.3%)
No	796 (18.7%)

C. VENTILATION

Are the above standards in place in your building?

4,250 responses

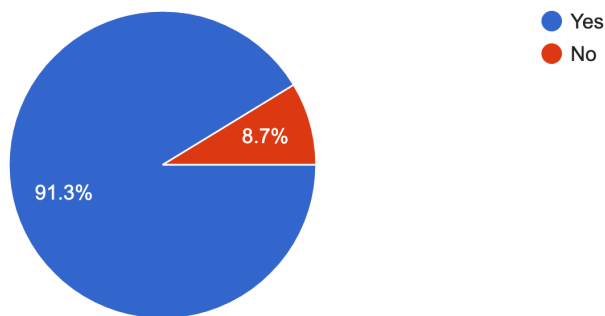


**standards outlined in SDP ventilation protocols*

Ventilation Standards?	Number (%)
Yes	1,736 (40.8%)
No	519 (12.2%)
Unsure	1,995 (46.9%)

Does your classroom/work space have an operational air purifier?

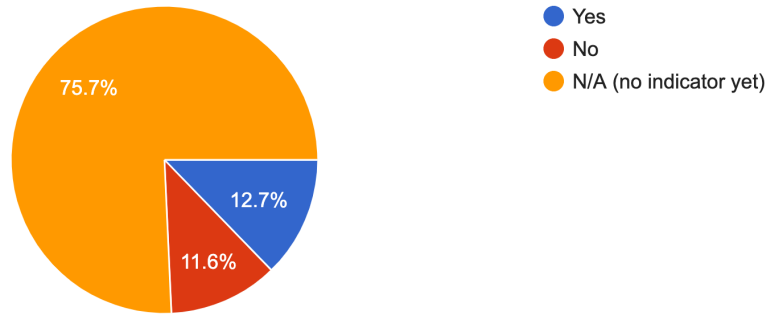
4,250 responses



Operational Air Purifier?	Number (%)
Yes	3,880 (91.3%)
No	370 (8.7%)

Is the filter changed when needed (indicator light on the purifier)

4,250 responses

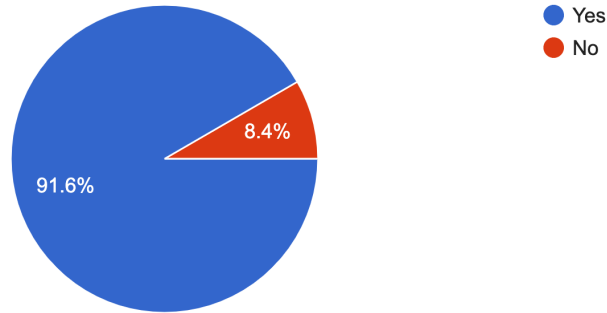


Filter Changed?	Number (%)
Yes	541 (12.7%)
No	491 (11.6%)
N/A	3,218 (75.7%)

D. SANITIZER AVAILABILITY

Are there hand sanitizer stations in common areas?

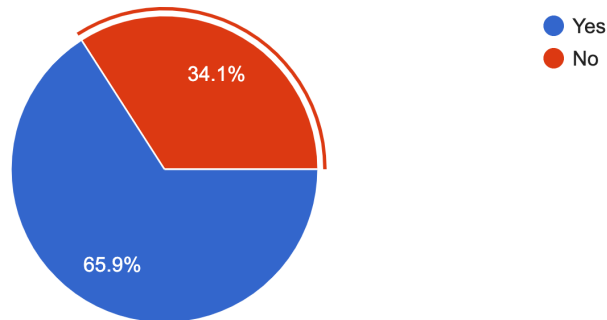
4,250 responses



Sanitizer Stations?	Number (%)
Yes	3,895 (91.6%)
No	355 (8.4%)

Are hand sanitizers operational and filled consistently?

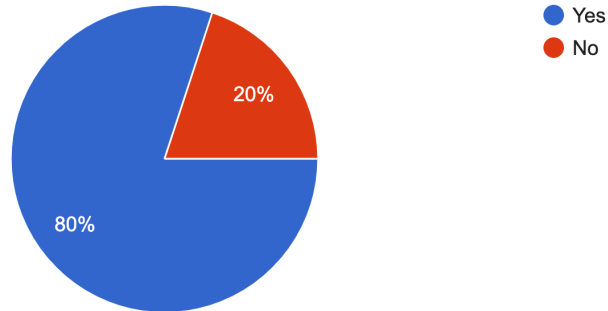
4,250 responses



Sanitizer Stations Operational & Filled?	Number (%)
Yes	2,801 (65.9%)
No	1,449 (34.1%)

Do you have school supplied sanitizer in your classroom/workspace?

4,250 responses



Sanitizer in Classroom?	Number (%)
Yes	3,420 (80%)
No	848 (20%)

Conclusion/Recommendations

The recommendations outlined in the Executive Summary are not exhaustive, and it is imperative that the School District act swiftly to implement the urgently needed course corrections to ensure that school buildings can remain open and that students and staff are safe. We cannot jeopardize the health and safety of our students, and layered mitigation measures simply must be firmly in place. **Our summary of responses from School Nurses and the PFT membership at large are indicative of the urgency of those measures.**

The recommendations include but are not limited to the following:

- Implementation of asymptomatic students testing
- Increasing the number of School Nurses
- Providing additional supports for School Nurses, both in terms of support staff and compensation for extra hours worked
- Immediate provision of ample testing supplies delivered directly to School Nurses
- Clarification of symptomatic student protocols
- Better coordination with PDPH on contact tracing
- Clarification, reinforcement, and implementation of mask protocols
- Posting of accurate, timely, and comprehensive data on the District's COVID dashboard
- Improved communication from central office to School Nurses and to the entire school staff
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- Provision of adequate PPE, including extra masks, and additional PPE for specific situations
- Monitoring of air purifiers for filter replacement needs.