



Pandemic Advisory Group End-of-Year Report June 2022

In compiling this end-of-year report for the 2021-2022 school year, the Pandemic Advisory Group (PAG) first wishes to express our deep gratitude to each member of this community for the time, effort, and energy you have invested in making this a safe and successful year at State College Friends School. While each of us may be experiencing the toll of the pandemic in different ways, we have been made profoundly aware of the love and patience that characterizes this community as we have made our way through this time together.

Protocols Guided by Priorities

As noted in the SCFS Pandemic Handbook, our approach to managing the COVID-19 pandemic over the course of the past school year was guided by the three priorities identified by faculty in April 2021:

1. Health and safety of all community members
2. Conducting in-person school
3. Using Quaker progressive pedagogy

Given this charge, we identified protocols that would ensure the lowest in-school transmission possible while minimizing the amount of time that friends needed to be out of school. We published the second edition of the [SCFS Pandemic Handbook](#) in July 2021. This was distributed to SCFS families, faculty, and staff and made public on the school website. As scientific understanding of the COVID-19 virus as well as its multiple variants has evolved, we adapted our mitigation protocols and published four updated versions of the SCFS Pandemic Handbook.

The pandemic management approach developed by the PAG encompassed a range of preventative measures including promotion of and high-uptake of vaccines, improved ventilation and filtration, indoor masking with high-quality masks, daily health screening, and social distancing, as well as responsive measures such as contact tracing combined with rapid testing for those with symptoms or identified as close contacts.

Preventative Measures

Vaccination

Vaccination of the SCFS community has been a primary focus of protection against transmission and severe outcomes.

- All of our faculty and staff are voluntarily vaccinated against COVID-19.
- When vaccines for 5-11 year olds became available, 86.5% of students in this age range elected to receive two doses.
- The PAG hosted an [educational session for school families about pediatric vaccines](#) led by SCFS parent and family physician, Dr. Paul Damaske.

Indoor Air Quality

In June 2021, the Pandemic Advisory Group recruited the input of Bill Bahnfleth, Professor of Architectural Engineering at Pennsylvania State University and fellow of ASHRAE and ASME. With his guidance, we developed a comprehensive indoor air quality management system as a primary focus of protection against transmission.

- Identifying the baseline air flow in all areas of the school, including individual classrooms, administrative offices, and common spaces like the Community Room.
- Increasing clean air flow (clean air delivery rate) for all rooms to meet pandemic recommendations by researching, purchasing, and placing air filtration units, cracking/opening windows, and updating the HVAC system.
- The PAG also hosted an [educational session for school families about indoor air quality](#) led by Bill Bahnfleth.

Masking with High-Quality Masks

In December, when transmission of Omicron started to increase, the PAG made the decision to require students to wear high-quality masks (KF94, KN95 or N95) indoors.

Daily Health Screening

The PAG asked all families to provide health information about their household every morning by completing a Google Form to identify if testing or quarantine might be needed. School health administrators processed this information each day according to the following protocols.

Responsive Measures

Symptom and Case Management: Reporting and Contact Tracing

The PAG developed a protocol to actively manage reports of symptoms and cases in the SCFS community. These protocols were executed by the School Health Administrators and other members of staff. Any symptomatic individual was asked to take a COVID-19 test before attending school. If a case was identified, the School Health Administrators performed contact tracing to identify potential exposures within and outside of the school community. The PAG determined what action needed to be taken and supported the school administration in notifying any affected members of the SCFS community.

Rapid Testing

Through the use of rapid antigen tests, often serial testing over the course of 24 hours, in-school close contacts and individuals with minor symptoms were able to attend school.

Mid-Year Updates to Mitigation Plan

Evolution of subvariants

The PAG responded quickly as the strains of the SARS-CoV-2 virus mutated in late 2021 and early 2022. Omicron and its subvariants are more highly transmissible and break through vaccines at a higher rate than previously-circulating variants. We adjusted our mitigation policies to reflect these changes in transmission, including more serial testing for symptomatic people and all close contacts before entering school.

High vaccination rates

Due to the high vaccine rate amongst students, the PAG updated the mitigation plan again for the remainder of the school year. This update allowed for:

- optional masking outdoors,
- reduced focus on social distancing indoors,
- all-school Meeting for Worship held in the Community Room, and
- off-campus field trips, including an all-school trip to Camp Blue Diamond.

Even as county cases rose, and there were more cases within the SCFS community, in-school transmission of COVID-19 stayed low following these less-restrictive mitigation measures.

Quantitative Report on Pandemic Management at SCFS

These preventative and responsive measures allowed us to navigate in-person school successfully this year, with low instances of in-school transmission.

- 39 total cases amongst students
 - 5 (13%) related to in-school transmission
 - 34 (87%) outside-school transmission
 - 15 (37%) of these cases were in school while potentially infectious (and contact tracing was performed)
 - 26 (63%) of these cases were screened prior to entering school or occurred during school breaks and were not in school while potentially infectious
- 2 cases among faculty and staff
- 425 test kits (850 individual tests) distributed

Vaccination Policy for the 2022-2023 School Year

The Board of Trustees approved the following policy recommended by the Pandemic Advisory Group:

Beginning with the 2022-23 academic year, State College Friends School will require documented proof of vaccination against COVID-19 for any student in an age group that has been approved by the FDA and CDC to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Exemptions for medical reasons will be considered on a case by case basis and must be accompanied by documentation from a medical professional. The HOS will also use discernment around current SCFS families with unvaccinated children on a case-by-case basis. The school will rely on guidance from the CDC for the most updated vaccine recommendations.

Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools Grant

Much of this work was made possible by a grant awarded to SCFS via the Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS) program. We are grateful to Donnan Stoicovy for completing the initial application for this grant, to Annie Boggess and Sunna deForest for expanding the scope of the proposed use of the funds, and to David Kern and Jackie Elliott for managing the distribution of these monies to support SCFS' pandemic management efforts.

Members of the PAG, 2021-2022

Annie Boggess, Director of Development and Alumni Relations

Sunna deForest, Lead Teacher 2/3/4

David Kern, Interim Head of School

Erica Phillips, PhD, Public Health, International Nutrition

Maureen Sentesy Wagner, Registered Nurse