

January 14, 2021

Dear Dr. Escott,

We are a group of public education leaders who serve more than 275,000 students across hundreds of campuses in the Austin region. On behalf of our students and educators, we thank you for your leadership in responding to the challenges our community faces during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We write to share recommendations for the allocation and efficient deployment of COVID-19 vaccines for educators and school-based staff. As educators, we share your commitment to protecting our most vulnerable populations and aim to provide recommendations in line with the [principles](#) set forth by the Texas Expert Vaccine Allocation Panel (EVAP).

- 1. Coordinate with providers to offer vaccine sites and appointments specifically for Group 1B-eligible educators, in collaboration with local school districts.** We have heard from many of the thousands of 1B-eligible educators that they are struggling to find available appointments. Currently, the majority of our staff are on campus daily tens of thousands of students in-person. We estimate that approximately 10-15% are eligible for 1B, due to age or preexisting conditions.

At the same time, there are success stories in the education sector. Austin ISD has partnered with Seton to offer vaccines to their 1B-eligible staff, for example. Although some smaller districts do not have the preexisting relationships to facilitate such partnerships, we believe Austin Public Health could play this critical role. We understand that Austin Public Health is not a primary vaccine provider; however, we recommend that Austin Public Health work with one or more of the 350 COVID-19 vaccine providers in the Austin region to vaccinate 1B-eligible educators.

Our schools stand ready to provide campus facilities, school nurses, and logistical support to make this possible for vaccination of 1B-eligible educators at any district. IDEA Public Schools is partnering with Cameron County, for example, to provide logistical support for a Group 1B vaccine drive.

- 2. Join us in urging the Texas Department of Health and Human Services to include all educators and school-based staff, regardless of school setting, in Group 1C.** When we consider COVID's effect on our most vulnerable populations, the short- and long-term economic impacts of school closures stand out. We must prioritize helping all students and educators return to school safely to ensure students do not suffer long-term effects of learning loss.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>According to the [NWEA Research](#), "Preliminary COVID slide estimates suggest students will return in fall 2020 with roughly 70% of the learning gains in reading relative to a typical school year. However, in mathematics, students are likely to show much smaller learning gains, returning with less than 50% of the learning gains and in some grades, nearly a full year behind what we would observe in normal conditions".

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) called for teachers to be included in Phase 1B, alongside frontline workers and senior citizens. Both the RAND Corporation and the National Academies of Sciences, Medicine, and Engineering have echoed this call. But while 32 states have followed these guidelines in their own distribution plans, Texas has not -- yet we still have an opportunity to prioritize teachers for vaccination in Group 1C. As the COVID-19 vaccine is made more widely available, we believe Texas and the Austin region must prioritize teachers for vaccination at the earliest possible date.

- 3. Before vaccination of Groups 1C and 2 begins, coordinate with local districts and providers to plan for an “educator priority week” and offer sites for easy, efficient educator vaccination.** As the Austin region plans for vaccine roll-out for Groups 1C and Group 2 -- with the hope for priority for educators -- we encourage Austin Public Health to consider a mass educator vaccination effort in coordination with education providers.

This effort could entail an educator vaccination week, campus vaccination sites and drive-throughs, collaboration with school nurses who can act as vaccine providers, and coordinated messaging. Our districts stand ready to provide assistance.

We appreciate the work Austin Public Health has done during this difficult time to coordinate with community partners and provide clear and timely communication to the public about vaccine access. If you have any follow-up questions, please reach out to John Armbrust, Founder and CEO of Austin Achieve Public Schools, at 512-887-2709 or via email at [jarmbrust@austinachieve.org](mailto:jarmbrust@austinachieve.org).

Sincerely,  
Austin Achieve Public Schools  
Austin Discovery School  
Austin ISD  
Del Valle ISD  
Eanes ISD  
Elgin ISD  
Georgetown ISD  
Harmony Public Schools  
Hays ISD  
Hutto ISD  
IDEA Public Schools  
Jarrell ISD  
KIPP Texas - Austin  
Lake Travis ISD  
NYOS  
Pflugerville ISD  
Wayside Public Schools