

# El Gato

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL

S. Rossi

## LGHS staff receive COVID vaccine

by Sophie Sullivan  
Opinion Editor

Dozens of LGHS faculty members received the first shot of vaccinations against COVID-19 in recent weeks as county rollout guidelines expanded to include workers in education and childcare.

Santa Clara County (SCC) expanded eligibility for the vaccine to teachers and K-12 school employees on Feb. 28. In a Mar. 12 press release, County Health Officer and Director of Public Health Dr. Sara Cody emphasized that “educators and parents can feel confident returning to in-person instruction now,” urging “all schools in the county to resume in-person instruction.”

Biology teacher **Kim Burlinson**, who was active in discussions with the District on returning to school, stated that “vaccinations have been a huge part of our negotiations.”

She admitted the LGHS faculty had hoped to be “further along in the vaccination process” prior to a return to in-person instruction. However, Burlinson affirmed trust in LGSUHSD, pointing out that “the fact that we have rolled out [reopening] slightly slower than the Elementary School District indicates that [LGSUHSD] is taking it pretty safely.”

“They’ve made concessions about teacher vaccinations...and have allowed teachers to come back, partnering with those teachers to create an all-around safety plan.”

Despite SCC’s green light for educators, LGHS teachers residing in Santa Cruz described “a lot of confusion” regarding county vaccination guidelines, according to sophomore English teacher **Blaine Bowman**.



SHOTS! SHOTS! SHOTS!: Messenger receives her vaccine at a local vaccination site.

He explained that “Santa Clara [expanded rollouts to] residents first; Santa Cruz did teachers. Even if you lived outside the county, but were a Santa Cruz teacher, they wanted to make sure you got vaccinated in order to get you back in the class as soon as possible.” Bowman noted that the greater number of Santa Cruz schools returning to in-person instruction as opposed to the smaller number of Santa Clara schools may account for this discrepancy in eligibility.

“It took [Santa Cruz] about three, four weeks longer than Santa Clara to open it up to teachers who are residents but teach outside of Santa Cruz,” he commented. Amidst preparations for a return to school, Bowman felt that “Santa Cruz teachers were the ones panicking the most because A: we felt furthest away, and B: neither county was addressing our concerns.”

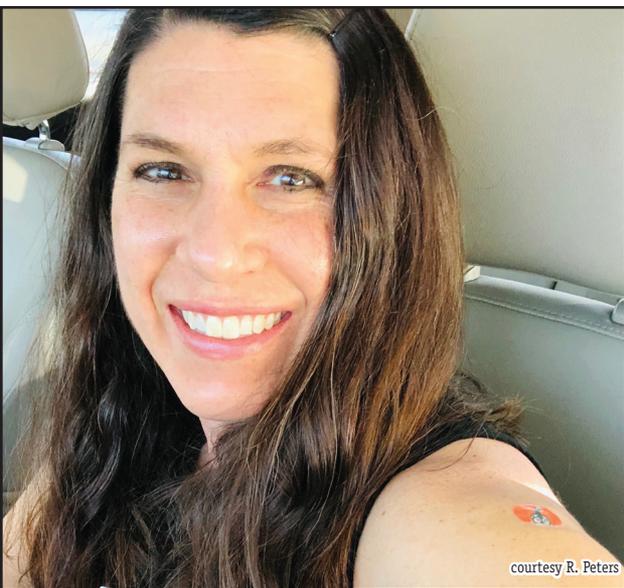
Eventually, however, Santa Cruz-based teachers received the opportunity to get vaccinated.

Now, the vaccine means more than just returning to school with an added layer of protections. Biology teacher and Advanced Science Research (ASR) Advisor **Cathy Messenger** noted that “throughout my life, and as a science person, I’ve always believed in the concept of, ‘those that can get vaccinated...always should.’”

To Messenger, “it’s a societal value to establish a herd immunity and protect our vulnerable [people]... When I was getting treated for cancer, I had to protect myself as a vulnerable person during cold and heavy flu season. When you’re immunocompromised, you can’t protect yourself against those things.” Ultimately, she chose to get the vaccine “for several reasons, not the least of which being: it is the only path I can see forward to any sort of return to normal for all of us.”

“The risk associated with a vaccine that has not been testing on millions of people for years is real, but it’s small compared to the benefit of being able to be vaccinated and doing what I love.”

(Source: Santa Clara County Public Health)



SIGH OF RELIEF: Physics teacher **Rachel Peters** smiles after getting vaccinated.

## Teachers prepare for in-person school

by Esther Sun  
Editor-in-Chief

Now that Santa Clara County has moved into the COVID-19 red tier, teachers have been gearing up to welcome students back into the classroom for optional one-hour periods on Wednesdays. In Phase 3A of reopening, Cohort A, constituting half of the students who choose to return, would attend in-person class in the morning while Cohort B, accounting for the other half, would do so in the afternoon.

Social studies teacher **Christie Pacheco** has brainstormed various ideas regarding ways to spend the in-person period with her students. If she is able to meet with her World History class, she plans to assign students to create COVID-19 time capsules and interview each other about their experiences. On the other hand, if she is able to meet with her AP US Government and Politics students, she is considering holding a Socratic Seminar related to politics, college plans, or how COVID-19 has changed society.

“Basically I just want to get to know kids a little better and have a face to face conversation,” explained Pacheco. “I wish we were going back more days, but I understand that we need to test out all the procedures for a couple days.”

**Andrew Hill**, who directs the LGHS Band and Orchestra, intends to host classes outside. Having managed the extra logistics surrounding the physical aspect of music classes, he plans to use this time to walk students through the process of holding rehearsals outside and moving equipment in and out of the music building each day. Though he anticipates difficulties with facilitating quality learning in this transitional format, he also feels the in-person periods “are going to be beneficial for [adjusting to] some general proceedings around getting on and off campus.”

Though students will not receive significant academic instruction during Wednesday periods, the LGHS administration’s hope is that



DEVOID OF LIFE: An LGHS classroom sits empty of students as reopening nears.

in-person social interactions between students and their teachers can help bolster social-emotional health in preparation for future hybrid learning models such as Phase 3B, in which students would be allowed to attend more classes in-person as part of a cohort. Live instructional time would be accompanied by a simulcast for the students still attending class remotely.

For now, in Phase 3A, AP English Literature and English 12 teacher **Paris De Soto** hopes to lead students in the yoga stretches she starts every Zoom class with and then play a fun word game like Scattergories or Balderdash.

“I think these Wednesdays are a great idea to help all of us transition from online to hybrid,” said De Soto. “I am not a good multi-tasker, so teaching online and in person simultaneously is going to be an enormous challenge, and all I can do is try my best. I’m also a total spazmorelda when it comes to technology, so I’m relying heavily on my students’ patience, help, and good will.”

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