

10 Things California State PTA Recommends for the Safe Reopening of Schools

California State PTA is writing on behalf of the children and families of California who want to see their children return to school as soon as it is safe to do so. It has been almost a year since California closed its school campuses and our children are falling behind academically and their mental health is suffering.

We ask the Legislature and the Governor to work together on a coordinated plan that incorporates our recommendations for a safe reopening.

Ten Recommendations

We urge the legislature and the Governor to adopt 10 recommendations for the timely and safe reopening of schools.

- 1. Coordinate Efforts** The legislature and the Governor must agree on a coordinated approach to reopening schools as quickly as safely possible.
- 2. Equitable Sufficient Funding** There must be sufficient funding to cover the additional costs related to opening schools in person. And it must be equitable. All students should generate the same base funding grant with an LCFF adjustment that recognizes the impacts of the pandemic on disadvantaged students. Opening schools will require social emotional support for students and staff, and services to meet students' and families' needs including safe transportation for students.
- 3. Extra Funding for Health-Related Costs** Funding to pay for testing, vaccines, contact tracing, and other COVID-related health costs should not be from Proposition 98 funds. Every Proposition 98 dollar spent on non-instructional costs is one less dollar to educate our children.
- 4. Protect the Health and Wellbeing of Students, Staff and Families** The Governor, the legislature and local governments must prioritize vaccinations for school staff, early childhood educators and childcare staff, especially those who are already working in-person.
- 5. Parent Communication and Input** School districts must provide opportunities for robust input and feedback as they prepare and execute reopening plans. They must ensure parents representing the diversity of the community are included in decision-making.

6. In-Person Attendance Parents and families should be able to choose whether a child returns to school in-person depending on the health of the child and their family situation.

7. Mental Health Matters Support the mental health and wellbeing of our students and staff by providing adequate resources to support their individual needs. To protect student health and well-being, middle schools should not start before 8:00 am and high schools before 8:30 am.

8. Expanded Learning and Learning Loss Afterschool, summer school and childcare programs need to be available, fully funded and coordinated with the school day. All schools should develop programs to address learning loss and meet the needs of the whole child.

9. Follow Health Guidelines Schools should not open in person unless it is safe for students and staff. School districts should adhere to the requirements set forth by the California Department of Public Health and county health departments regarding the reopening of schools.

10. Realistic Timeline Any timeline for the reopening of schools should consider the needs of parents and teachers and respect the most accurate health guidelines. This includes making sure the school facility is safe for re-opening.

Schools need to open as soon as practically possible while protecting the health and well-being of students, staff and families. California's students are counting on the legislature and the governor to come up with a realistic school reopening plan that meets the needs of all our school communities.