

CALL TO ACTION:

School Reopening

ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS 

BACKGROUND:

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the landscape of California public education more dramatically than any other phenomenon in our state's history. In response, the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) has convened a "School Reopening Planning Group" to help ensure that pandemic recovery efforts advance student equity. Composed of education leaders throughout the state, the group has been rapidly developing recommendations for effective school reopening with the understanding that the health, safety and wellness of students, families, educators and staff must be a top priority.

URGENT STATE ACTION NEEDED:

The planning group has been focusing on several critical issues and will soon issue a summary report.¹ Recognizing their overarching and critical importance, the group calls out the following recommendations for immediate statewide action:

Public Health/Student and Staff Well-Being

California Department of Public Health must provide explicit safety protocols necessary for the reopening of schools. School districts across the state are relying on the expertise of health professionals to help ensure schools prioritize student and staff health and wellness. The protocols should address all areas of operation, be based on current scientific knowledge and be consistent across all counties.

Teaching and Learning

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the California State Board of Education should support a clear set of expectations for teaching and learning — public education's essential work — to help set the direction for school district and school site planning for the upcoming school year and beyond.

Support Flexibility to Drive Innovation

The legislature should allow for innovation in instructional minutes to fully enable student-focused learning strategies. Additional flexibilities should be provided around use of school and community facilities, integration of expanded learning programs and continued extensions of federal waivers providing maximum flexibility for provision of school meals.

Funding

The governor and legislature should maintain funding, including previous commitments for Special Education revenues, for all school districts for three years, beginning in 20/21 with anticipated COLAs, and begin phase-in to enrollment-based funding. Establish a process for bulk purchase of all health-related cleaning products and personal protective equipment for its public schools. The state should suspend scheduled increases to CalSTRS and CalPERS for two years.

ACSA members appreciate the outstanding leadership currently being provided by the governor, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Board of Education, and the legislature. ACSA would be happy to provide background and additional detailed recommendations related to the above and other priority school reopening issues. For more information, please contact Edgar Zazueta, Senior Director of Policy and Government Relations at ezazueta@acsa.org.

¹The ACSA School Reopening Planning Group has concentrated on five areas: 1) Safe School Reopening; 2) Funding and Flexibility; 3) Teaching and Learning; 4) Whole Child and Educator Health and Wellness; and 5) Leveraging Resources.