

Where We Stand on Reopening Schools

April 29, 2020

*On Tuesday, April 29, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced in his daily media briefings, the state **could** look at bringing some students back to school in late July or early August to address any loss of learning concerns. The comments created concern, confusion, and anxiety. At the same time, he talked about following all health factors for reopening the economy. He announced [four phases](#). CTA, along with our [labor and education partners](#) have been meeting together, as well as having discussions with the governor's team and lawmakers to ensure the safety of students, educators and all workers are at the forefront of decisions.*

Where We Stand

There is a lot that still needs to happen before considering opening schools and those indicators were also discussed in the governor's announcement. When students physically return to schools, it needs to be planned and deliberate with public health at the forefront of all decision-making. Educators must be part of conversations that directly impact students, along with how and when schools reopen. Any recommendations issued by the state will provide a framework and guidance for local educators and their unions to negotiate with school districts to ensure the needs of their local students and communities are met.

- The school closures have been hard on our students, educators, families, and communities. When students physically return to school campuses, it needs to be planned and deliberate with public health at the forefront of all decision-making. We want our students to be safe and ready to learn. This must include safety supports for students and educators:
 - Deep cleaning and continuous cleaning of campuses and busses.
 - Physical distancing in classrooms, and other shared spaces.
 - Face coverings; gloves and hand sanitizers.
 - Special considerations to protect students and staff with compromised and underlying medical conditions.
 - School health services, including school nurses for enhanced student, family, and educator safety.
 - Mental health counseling and support for those suffering from the impact of the pandemic.

This is not a wish list of luxury items; this is what will be needed to keep students and schools safe. We must make sure their safety is looked at first. That cannot be compromised.

continued

- As we have conversations and consider plans for reopening schools, we will prioritize partnering with parents to address any learning loss. When we can physically open schools again, teachers will look at what each child needs and work together in determining how best to help each student, especially those who may be struggling. Educators and students can count on being represented in these conversations by CTA President Toby Boyd who is serving on committees appointed by Gov. Newsom and SPI Tony Thurmond tasked, respectively, with developing guidance to address reopening and any loss of learning that may have occurred as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.
- As educators, we are proud of the tremendous work we have all done during the quarantine in continuing to provide student learning through digital and online platforms. We know that equity issues continue to be a problem. We continue to advocate for all students and deal with the digital divide that has become painfully obvious during this crisis. We eagerly await the day we can welcome our students back into the classroom and help get them back up to speed.
- We know the state and country are facing a recession that will severely impact students, public schools, and colleges. This is the perfect storm in which revenues are declining dramatically while expenditures continue to increase as we fight to protect our students and communities. We do not want our students to lose critical programs or see schools face mid-year budget cuts and educator layoffs. It is hard to see any budget solution that does not require additional money from the federal government. While we appreciate the funding to date, we have a long way to go to help our students meet the challenges they face coming out of this worldwide pandemic.
- Educators must continue to be part of conversations that directly impact their students, along with how and when schools will reopen. We work with our students and their families, day in and day out, and are intimately aware of the challenges they face, their life struggles and the areas in which they need attention. Any recommendations issued by the state will provide a framework and guidance for local educators and their unions to negotiate with school districts to ensure the needs of their local students and communities are met.