

Notes from [Governor's Press Conference](#) on COVID-19 – July 17, 2020, 12:00 pm

**** Information transcribed and truncated for audience;
notes may not fully capture all information provided ****

Governor Newsom

- California's bottom line:
 - Learning is non-negotiable;
 - Schools must provide meaningful instruction during the pandemic whether they are physically open or closed;
 - Students, teachers, staff, and parents prefer in-classroom instruction, but **only** if that can be done safely;
 - Safety is determined by local health data;
- California pandemic plan for schools:
 - Safe in-person school based on local health data:
 - Using health data, schools can physically open when its county has been off the Monitoring List for 14 consecutive days;
 - Schools that don't meet this requirement must begin the year distance learning;
 - Mask requirements:
 - All school staff and students in 3rd grade and above **must** wear masks;
 - Students in 2nd grade and below are encouraged to wear masks or face shields;
 - Physical distancing and other adaptations:
 - Staff must maintain six feet between each other and with students;
 - Symptom checks;
 - Hand washing stations;
 - Sanitation and disinfection;
 - Quarantine protocols;
 - Testing and contact tracing:
 - Requirement to test staff regularly;
 - State contact tracing workforce will prioritize schools;
 - Rigorous distance learning:
 - New statewide requirements:
 - Access to devices and connectivity for all kids;
 - Daily live interaction with teachers and other students;
 - Challenging assignments equivalent to in-person classes;
 - Adapted lessons for English language learners and special education students;
 - Ensuring quality instruction this school year:
 - State has invested \$5.3 billion in additional funding with priority on equity;
- When should in-person learning close?
 - Schools should consult with a public health officer first;
 - A classroom cohort goes home when there is a confirmed case;

- A school goes home when multiple cohorts have cases or more than 5% of the school is positive;
- A district goes home if 25% of their schools are closed within a 14-day period;
- Learning is non-negotiable, and neither is safety;
- COVID-19 case numbers:
 - 9,986 cases as of July 16, and 8,838 on a seven day average;
 - Total tests vs. positivity rate:
 - 124,052 seven day average of daily tests, the highest reporting of testing to date;
 - 7.4% positivity rate over a 14-day period;
 - 6,808 COVID-19 hospitalizations, about 9.2% of hospital bed capacity;
 - 1,941 individuals admitted to into ICUs, which is about 16.6% of total ICU capacity;
 - 10,332 ventilators available;
- Monitoring List:
 - 32 counties on the Monitoring List, expect one or two additional counties soon;
 - No part of our state is immune from the transmission of this virus;
- Reminder: Your actions can save lives:
 - Wear a mask;
 - Have provided millions of masks to the school system (over two months of personal protective equipment);
 - Physically distance;
 - Wash your hands;
 - Minimize mixing;
- Visit [COVID-19.ca.gov](https://www.covid-19.ca.gov) to learn more about Local Continuity Attendance Plans; and
 - These will be posted online so that parents can have access to that information.

Question and Answer

- Q: There seems to be skepticism over the quality of distance learning. How much live instruction should be offered, and what recourses are available?
- A: We have allocated \$5.3 billion to ensure connectivity. We are also working with philanthropy in this space. The California Public Utilities Commission has been doing targeted mapping of connectivity statewide in a renewed effort to prepare for the fall academic season. We are also working to cut the costs of connectivity devices. It is incumbent on these school districts to purchase devices to generate connectivity. For example, the City of Sacramento introduced mobile hotspots, these are innovate solutions. Daily live interaction is critical. We want everyone back in the classroom as soon as possible. This is how we will start the school year, but we hope this is not how we end it.
- Q: Is this an order or recommendation? Will today's policy impact private schools? What about universities?

- A: We are working very closely with the UC, CSU, and community college system, and will release guidelines shortly. Our plan also includes private schools. This is a mandate in our public education system.
- Q: How can the state ensure testing capacity for educators?
- A: Earlier this week, Dr. Ghaly detailed a new testing plan and strategy. Today we are reinforcing those priorities. There is an expectation that health plans will begin to pick up the costs of testing. There is also employer responsibility. We need to increase testing. We must do more, and that is the purpose of reinvigorating our Testing Task Force. We are also connecting contact tracers to the education system, to better understand spread.
- Q: Some schools are starting in the middle of August. Do you think there is enough time to implement these rules in a meaningful way? What about extracurriculars?
- A: This plan should not come as a surprise. We have been at this for months now. The concept of distanced learning has been socialized over the course of many months. Some of our state's largest school districts are already moving to distanced learning, and many other districts followed suit.
- Q: Is the decrease in positivity rate due to recent modifications in the statewide stay at home order?
- A: **Dr. Mark Ghaly, California Health & Human Services Agency Secretary:** Of course, the positivity rate decrease is encouraging, but we will see. We are doing more testing. We know we are seeing more transmission. We are taking these changes in context, there are challenges in getting results back. Overall, yes, this decrease in positivity rate is encouraging, and we will watch it closely. We continue to push out testing, as we see numbers stabilize, we can begin to credit those changes to the dimmer switch. **Governor Newsom:** The positivity rate on the seven-day average was about 7.7% last week, today it is 7.1%. However, be cautious that those numbers fluctuate significantly.
- Q: Parents who have children with special needs are expressing issues related to learning loss. Realistically, what additional services will be provided for students with special needs?
- A: **Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, President, State Board of Education:** All districts are aware that they need to have the capacity for distance learning, and have begun to adapt for students with special needs. There will be guidance, but meanwhile, many districts are creating additional resources and plans for how teachers can do one on one teaching and small group instruction. We will see a lot more capacity this school year than last school year to respond to the needs of particular students.
- Q: The Trump Administration has made it clear that re-opening goes hand and hand with re-open schools. What kind of pushback do you expect from the President on this?

- A: We have been in contact directly with the task force. Want to reiterate California's bottom line that students, teachers, staff, and parents prefer in-classroom instruction, but only if it can be done safely. This is the question we are responsible for answering, how can we do this safely.