

A CHECKLIST FOR SAFELY REOPENING CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Key checkpoints for the physical reopening of our schools in the time of the coronavirus



California Federation
of Teachers 
AFT, AFL-CIO
A Union of Professionals

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SUMMARY

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and colleges across California were shuttered to prevent further spread of the coronavirus. Staff remaining on campus performed the challenging duties of distance learning support, meal preparation and pick-up, and deep cleaning to maintain educational services during shelter-in-place orders, as well as prepare for the eventual physical reopenings.

The CFT does not encourage the physical reopening of school sites until it is safe to do so. At a minimum, the CFT recommends coordination with state and local public health guidelines on every checklist item in this document to help prevent further spread of the virus.

This document identifies the growing number of issues that should be addressed prior to the physical reopening of a school district through a Memorandum of Understanding, or MOU, between the local union and the district. As such, this is a working document that may evolve with changing science and health guidelines from public health and safety agencies.

This checklist list was compiled through a collaborative process between the educational divisions of the CFT, the CFT standing committees, and the California Department of Education Taskforce on school reopening. AFT local unions should tailor this checklist to their local conditions to best assist in ensuring a safe working environment now and in the near future.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

- The local infection rate has stabilized or decreased for 14 consecutive days.
- County Public Health Officials have declared it safe to lift or modify shelter-in-place orders.
- There is access to local testing operations to appropriately test and track local infection rates.
- There is a plan to know how and when to physically close school sites if infections return. The plan should revisit any MOU put in place for the first closure and the California Department of Education framework of March 2020.
- State funding for education is at a minimum, the same as the 2019 Budget Act to afford the necessary health and safety precautions.
- The district Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (IIIP) has been updated to reflect COVID-19, has been published to employees and parents, addresses the school's role in tracking/tracing infections (in coordination with public health officials), and includes training for students, staff, and parents on transmission prevention.
- The district has a plan to address the digital divide and ensure equipment needed to participate in distance learning is available to all students and teachers, with professional development support for educators.

INFECTION PREVENTION

- ❑ Directive for staff and parents to self-screen each morning for symptoms, including elevated body temperature, and to stay home if symptomatic.
- ❑ Testing available at no-cost for staff.
- ❑ Having no-touch thermal scanning thermometers to check students and staff when entering campus or school transportation vehicles.
- ❑ A plan to isolate students who arrive with (or develop later in the day) symptoms of COVID-19, and an agreement on addressing staff who develop symptoms while at work or who can't come in from having symptoms at home.
- ❑ Having handwashing stations, bathroom soap dispensers, and hand sanitizer with 70 percent (or higher) alcohol content available throughout campus, and being used before entering transportation vehicles.
- ❑ There is a replenishing stockpile of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including masks, gloves, face shields, etc., cleaning equipment (including proper chemicals at the strengths needed to disinfect or kill the COVID-19 virus, hand sanitizer, soap, hand washing stations), and touchless thermometer scanners so that staff are always able to obtain and use this equipment without delay.
- ❑ A plan for assigning proper PPE for each type of work assignment (i.e., if screening persons for symptoms, a face shield and mask, or if using disinfection chemicals consider eye protection and respirator), and parameters of use (i.e., how long a mask may be reused) and training for proper use of masks, gloves, etc. Consult with health officials and EPA regarding PPE recommended and products effective in killing SARS virus. N95 masks are not necessarily required in most circumstances and may be hard to come by as they are directed to medical staff as top priority. The point of masks is to prevent the wearer from expressing droplets that may carry the virus from the mouth and nose on to others. Masks should not be relied on to protect the wearer from contamination, rather that is the point of social distancing.
- ❑ Plans for all persons on campus to wash their hands and sanitize frequently, including building in time in the schedule for hand washing for staff and students, before and after eating, between classes, after having close contact with another person, after using shared equipment or surfaces, after using restrooms, or after sneezing, coughing, blowing nose etc. All persons be trained on proper hand washing techniques and etiquette on coughing, sneezing, and touching.
- ❑ A plan to meet cleanliness standards prior to reopening and maintaining those standards throughout the year, including disinfection of surfaces between uses (tables, chairs, seats on vehicles, keyboards, phones, office machines, etc.) and routine disinfecting of high-touch surfaces such as door knobs, handrails, drinking fountains, and restrooms.
- ❑ Ventilation plans taking weather and air quality into account, in order to maximize fresh air circulation.
- ❑ Visitation to campus from any non-student or staff should be eliminated or severely limited, including Shared Use Agreements, Facility Rentals, and any public access for other reasons.

- ❑ A plan to handle deliveries to campus that includes disinfection of items that are in contact with human hands, including deliveries occurring outside of normal school hours, etc.
- ❑ A plan for student use of masks or other face coverings including locations, durations, and enforcement. Consider scenarios especially where six feet of distance is impracticable (such as entry and exit from vehicles).
- ❑ Requiring six feet of physical distancing (or conforming to other local health official guidance) in classrooms, restrooms, outside spaces (including any PE instruction) and work-spaces. Including plans on how distancing can be achieved using as much district-owned space as possible (cafeterias, auditoriums, outside space, temporary classroom trailers, district offices, etc.), utilizing various strategies for scheduling of students and staff to limit the number on campus, prioritizing certain populations that cannot continue learning through distance models, and enforcing use of masks where distancing is impracticable, using signage and barriers to prevent formation of crowds, and adapt these plans to field trips and larger gatherings as necessary.
- ❑ Transportation plans that maintain safety, including social distancing, use of disinfectants, use of plastic shields, enforcement of seating arrangements and having students sit according to drop off locations to minimize students walking past one another, altering routes, and schedules.
- ❑ A plan to maintain distancing and cleanliness standards for food service programs, including staggering kitchen and cafeteria use, meal delivery options, and expanding the areas of campus that students may use as areas to eat in, with increased custodial capacity for cleaning.

LABOR RELATIONS

- ❑ Execute an MOU prior to physical reopening of campuses, and include a labor-management committee able to provide an ongoing workgroup to catch unforeseen issues as they relate to COVID-19.
- ❑ Healthcare benefits for all staff.
- ❑ Distance learning related needs, such as laptops, internet access reimbursements, etc.
- ❑ Modifications to the academic calendar and daily schedules.
- ❑ Flexibility regarding evaluation of permanent and probationary employees.
- ❑ Appropriate staffing ratios and scheduling to meet cleanliness standards, enforce physical distancing requirements, ensure student learning and health and safety needs.
- ❑ Training on disinfection requirements, chemicals used, physical distancing, symptom screening and recognition including temperature checks, updates to the district's Injury and Illness Prevention Plan, state and local health standards or recommendations including, but not limited to, proper use of PPE, cough and sneeze etiquette, hand washing, and confidentiality of health condition reporting or recording.
- ❑ Reasonable accommodations for staff who are high-risk for infection, which may include assignment to other duties with less human contact.

- ❑ Leave for vulnerable populations and symptomatic employees, holding their existing leave harmless to take care of themselves or a member of their household.
- ❑ Mental and emotional support for staff (and students) that works in collaboration with existing health plans, Employee Assistance Programs, and behavioral health departments for workshops or other support. Notify staff about support options available, available social service programs, and promote an environment of mental wellness.
- ❑ Standards for communication with staff, parents, and students about protocols required for safe physical reopening of schools, training requirements, the plan for conveying information about positive COVID-19 cases on campus, the school's role of tracking and tracing infections, and guidelines or procedures to deal with staff and students who exhibit illness or test positive.

RESOURCES

Find live links to these Resources on the CFT website.

AFT: A Plan to Safely Reopen America's Schools and Communities

California Department of Public Health Guidelines

California Department of Public Health Guidance for Schools

California Recovery Roadmap

CDC Original Guidelines

CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs

CDC School Reopening Decision Tree

CDC Interim Guidance for Child Care Programs [draft, unofficial release]

CDC Guidance on PPE Use

Environmental Protection Agency list of products effective in killing the virus

Governor Newsom's factors to modify stay-at-home orders

Learning Policy Institute: Report on Reopening Schools in the Context of COVID-19, Health and Safety Guidelines
From Other Countries

National Association of Independent Schools: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for Schools

UNICEF, WHO, IFRC: Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools

UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, the World Food Programme: Framework for Reopening Schools

WHO: Considerations for School-Related Public Health Measures in the Context of COVID-19