



A Parent's Guide

To the Reopening of Santa Clara County K-12 Schools

for the 2020-2021 School Year

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Introduction and Overview

We understand that families may have questions and concerns about the risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools, how schools will support the health and safety of students and their family members, and how students' educational experiences will change. The Santa Clara County Public Health Department issued requirements and recommendations for K-12 schools reopening for in-person instruction in the 2020-2021 school year.¹ That document will help schools plan for and take steps to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools while meeting the needs of all students.

To support parents and other caregivers as they make decisions about students' return to school campuses reopen for in-person instruction and to encourage the family engagement that will be essential as schools adjust their practices, the Santa Clara County Public Health Department and Santa Clara County Office of Education are jointly releasing this summary of COVID-19-related changes to expect when school resumes for in-person instruction.² The social emotional and academic impact of COVID-19 on families and school-aged children is far-reaching, and families are key partners in ensuring a successful transition back to school campuses.

Public health experts' understanding of COVID-19 has evolved since schools were closed last spring. While early school closure decisions across the country were based heavily on experts' knowledge of influenza, a disease for which school-based transmission is a significant factor in community-wide spread, the limited research on COVID-19 suggests that COVID-19 is different from influenza in important ways.

Key findings from available studies play an important role in guiding our recommendations for preventing transmission in schools. Specifically, these findings suggest that COVID-19 transmission in schools is likely to be less widespread than influenza transmission, that adult-to-

¹ Santa Clara County Public Health Department, "COVID-19 PREPARED: Reopening of Santa Clara County K-12 Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year" (September 21, 2020), available at:

<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Documents/ReopeningofSantaClaraCountyK12Schools.pdf>.

² Families' experiences may vary across local educational agencies (LEA), as LEAs may take different approaches to implementing the Public Health Department's recommendations and considerations.

child transmission is greater than child-to-child transmission, and that transmission risks among younger children appear to be lower than older children.

As the scientific research about COVID-19 grows and as conditions evolve in our community, the Public Health Department's requirements and recommendations may change before or during the 2020-2021 school year, and schools will need to adapt their practices accordingly.

When will K-12 schools in Santa Clara County reopen for in-person instruction?

Under the guidance of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), all schools may open in-person instruction when Santa Clara County has been out of Tier 1 (Purple Tier) of the State's "Blueprint" framework for 14 days. Santa Clara County was moved out of Tier 1 on September 8, 2020, and K-12 schools in Santa Clara County will therefore be allowed to resume full in-person instruction on September 23, 2020 if the county remains out of Tier 1 for the prior 14 days.

Until then, schools serving students in grades K-6 may apply to their local health officer for a waiver to fully or partially reopen for in-person instruction, and schools may provide "in-person child supervision and limited instruction, targeted support services, and facilitation of distance learning in small group environments" to student subgroups under the State's [small cohort guidance](#).

How will COVID-19 impact how students get to school next year?

Bus Transportation

- Families must screen students for COVID-19 symptoms (as described in the screening section below) before students board the bus.
- Students must maintain at least six feet of physical distance while waiting for the bus and after being dropped off by the bus.
- Students and bus drivers must wear cloth face coverings.³
- Students will sit as far away from other students as possible, except students from the same household or same classroom may be asked to sit with each other to limit close contact with students from other households or classrooms.
- Students must sit at least six feet away from the bus driver.

³ A cloth face covering is a material that covers the nose and mouth. It can be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower face. It can be made of a variety of materials, such as cotton, silk, or linen. The Public Health Department strongly encourages the use of reusable cloth face coverings. For information on appropriate face coverings, please see the CDC's guidance, "How to Select, Wear, and Clean Your Mask" (updated August 27, 2020), available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>.

- Seats on the bus may be blocked off to facilitate physical distancing.

Student Arrival and Departure

- Schools will implement procedures to limit the contact between students, families, staff, and the broader community during pick-up and drop-off.
- Parents or caregivers dropping off students will generally be asked to remain in their vehicles.
- When it is necessary for a parent or caregiver to accompany a student onto campus, only one parent or caregiver should enter the school with the student. Adults entering campus for pick-up or drop-off must wear a cloth face covering.
- Students will be assigned entry and exit routes.
- Schools will be utilizing as many entrances and exits to campuses as possible to minimize crowding.
- Schools will mark spaces six feet apart for adults waiting outside to drop off or pick up students on foot, by bicycle, or other means of active transportation.

How might students' experiences on campus change?

Common strategies to reduce the risk of disease transmission in schools and other community settings include: (1) minimizing the number of people who come into contact with each other, (2) maximizing the physical distance between people, (3) reducing the time that people spend in close proximity to others, and (4) adopting measures to minimize dispersion of droplets and aerosols (e.g., using face coverings and covering coughs and sneezes). Because some of these strategies may be more difficult or easier to implement depending on the school setting and students' age (e.g., elementary school students may have more difficulty wearing face coverings), the requirements and recommendations for minimizing disease transmission generally align with the following organizing principles:

Figure 1. Organizing Principles for Preventing COVID-19 Transmission by Age Group

**Organizing Principle:
Stable Cohorts**

**Organizing Principle:
Physical Distancing and
Face Coverings**



Less feasible to limit close contact and wear face coverings

More feasible to maintain stable cohorts

Greater need for in-person and group-based instruction with close contact to support social-emotional and academic development

More feasible to limit close contact and wear face coverings

Less feasible to maintain stable cohorts

Lesser need for in-person or group-based instruction with close contact to support social-emotional and academic development

Elementary Schools

- Physical Distancing
 - Classrooms: Students and staff will remain in a stable cohort for the entire day to avoid mixing with other students or staff, with limited exceptions to allow for students with disabilities and staff providing special education and related services to rotate into stable classroom cohorts (or into a separate student cohort to receive special education services) and for specialist teachers (e.g., music teacher) to provide in-person instruction.
- Face Coverings
 - All students are required to wear cloth face coverings while arriving and departing from school campus, in any area outside of the classroom where they may come into close contact with someone outside of their stable classroom group, and while waiting for or riding on a school bus.⁴
 - Students in 2nd grade and below will be encouraged to wear a cloth face covering within their stable classroom cohort. Students in 3rd grade and above must use face coverings when in the classroom even if they are in a stable classroom cohort.

Middle schools/junior high schools and high schools

- Physical Distancing
 - Classrooms: Students' desks must be at least six feet away from each other. Some schools may decide to separate students with barriers.
 - Schools may also decide to keep students in more stable cohorts, which may impact course offerings and students' class schedules.
- Face Coverings
 - All students are required to wear cloth face coverings while arriving and departing from school campus, in any area outside of the classroom where they may come into close contact with someone outside of their stable classroom group, and while waiting for or riding on a school bus.
 - Middle school/junior high school and high school students must use cloth face coverings when in the classroom even if they are in a stable classroom cohort.

⁴ Students (in transitional kindergarten through 12th grade) who are excluded from all face covering requirements include: (1) anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the covering without assistance and (2) students with special needs who are unable to tolerate a face coverings.

All School Settings

- Physical Distancing
 - Classrooms
 - Teacher's desks will be at least six feet away from students to reduce the risk of adult-to-child transmission.
 - Teachers and students should be trained to maintain six feet of distance from each other as much as possible.
 - Students will be assigned specific, consistent seats to reduce close contacts within classrooms.
 - Schools should take steps to increase the circulation of outdoor air (e.g., opening operable windows, changing ventilation rates of air conditioning systems).
 - Schools may use large non-classroom spaces for instruction or hold classes outside to allow for greater physical distancing.
 - Schools should minimize students' sharing of high-touch materials, such as art supplies and electronic devices, and must clean and disinfect shared items between uses.
 - Student's belongings will be kept separate from other student's belongings.
 - Moving instruction outdoors
 - Schools should move as much instruction and as many activities as possible to outdoor spaces and other larger spaces to allow for greater distancing between students and dispersion of any viral particles.
 - During non-instructional activities
 - Meals: Schools may serve meals in classrooms or outdoors, instead of cafeterias or group dining rooms.
 - Playgrounds and Recess: Students may be assigned playground areas to keep them apart from other stable classroom groups. Recess and playground use may be staggered throughout the day to limit mixing of students from different classrooms. Schools may limit playground use in favor of physical activities that require less contact with surfaces and allow for greater physical distancing.
 - Lockers: Schools may limit locker availability to avoid unnecessary mixing of students in hallways.
- Face Coverings
 - Staff
 - All staff must wear cloth face coverings, unless they are eating or drinking, or it is medically inadvisable for them to do so.
 - Teachers may wear face coverings with clear windows or face shields with an appropriate seal (i.e., cloth covering extending from the bottom edge

of the shield and tucked into the shirt collar) during phonological instruction to allow students to see the teacher's mouth and when wearing a face covering would pose a barrier to communicating with a student who is hearing impaired or a student with a disability.

- Teachers and staff who are exempt from the face covering requirement cannot be assigned to duties in which they will have close contact with students.
- General Safety Precautions
 - Handwashing: Schools should develop routines to ensure students wash their hands or use hand sanitizer upon arrival to campus; after using the restroom; after playing outside and returning to the classroom; before and after eating; and after coughing or sneezing.
 - Cleaning and disinfection: On a daily or more frequent basis, schools must clean and disinfect frequently touched hard surfaces pursuant to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance.
- Limiting Visitors
 - Only necessary visitors and volunteers will be allowed on campus, and schools must limit visitors' contact with students and staff.

Electives and Extracurricular Activities

- Schools will only allow elective classes and extracurricular activities in which physical distancing (at least six feet) and face covering use can be maintained at all times.
- Students will not be allowed to participate in in-person activities that produce high levels of aerosols, including in-person choir, band, and vocal cheerleading activities (cheers and chants) due to increased risk of disease transmission. Choir and band classes and cheerleading activities may be held if they do not include aerosol-generating activities such as singing, playing of wind or brass instruments, cheering, or chanting. In-person class time can be used for non-aerosol generating activities, such as rhythm study, music theory, music history, composition, analysis, and more.

Athletics

- School athletics may only occur in compliance with the California Public Health Department's [Youth Sports Questions and Answers Memorandum](#) issued on August 3, 2020.

What will be the procedures for screening and testing students and staff?

Screening for COVID-19 Symptoms

- All students and staff must be screened before school or upon arriving.
 - Staff screening: Schools must check staff for COVID-19 symptoms when they arrive at school and/or ask staff to check for COVID-19 symptoms prior to arrival.
 - Student screening: Schools may check for COVID-19 symptoms when students arrive at school and/or ask families to check students for COVID-19 symptoms prior to arrival. Families checking for symptoms at home can reference the following Public Health Department's sample screening template:

1. Within the last 10 days have you been diagnosed with COVID-19 or had a test confirming you have the virus?

Yes – STAY HOME and seek medical care.

2. Within the past 14 days, have you had close contact with someone who has been in isolation for COVID-19 or had a test confirming they have the virus? Close contact is less than 6 feet for 15 minutes or more.

Yes – STAY HOME and seek medical care and testing.

3. a. Have you had any one or more of these symptoms today or within the past 3 days?

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Loss of taste or smell
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

Yes – STAY HOME and seek medical care and testing.

b. Have you had any one or more of these symptoms today or within the past 3 days that are new or not explained by another reason?

- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

Yes – STAY HOME and seek medical care and testing.

- Temperature screening of students and staff is optional. As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recognized, temperature and symptom screening are relatively ineffective in identifying all infected individuals, because (1) not all infected individuals have symptoms and (2) fever may not be the first symptom to appear. In addition, there are potential drawbacks and risks to temperature screening (e.g.,

inaccurate temperature readings, risk of transmission to screener and individual screened, and risk of transmission while individuals wait to be screened). If schools perform temperature screenings, they will use contactless thermometers.

COVID-19 Testing

Schools will require students and staff to get tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible after they develop one or more COVID-19 symptoms or one of their household members or non-household close contacts tests positive for COVID-19.

- Positive test results:
 - Parents/guardians and staff must notify school administration immediately if a student or staff tests positive for COVID-19 or one of their household members or non-household close contacts tests positive for COVID-19.
- Negative test results:
 - Students or staff with COVID-19 symptoms who test negative for COVID-19 should remain home until at least 24 hours after resolution of fever (if any) and improvement in other symptoms.
 - Students or staff who have contacts to a confirmed case but don't have symptoms should remain at home for 14 days from the date of last exposure even if they test negative. If the confirmed case is a household member, the quarantine period would start when the positive household member completes their isolation.
 - Students and staff who have COVID-19 symptoms or who are close contacts of a COVID-19 case must provide school administration with documentation of a negative test result before returning to school.
 - In the place of documentation of a negative test result, a symptomatic student or staff member may return to school after providing a medical note that provides an alternative explanation for symptoms and reasons for not ordering COVID-19 testing.
- Information regarding testing sites is available at www.sccfreetest.org.
- Schools will encourage staff to get routine COVID-19 testing on a monthly basis.

How will schools respond to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases and close contacts?

Response to Suspected or Confirmed Cases and Close Contacts

The Public Health Department provided detailed guidance to schools regarding steps to take in response to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases and close contacts with someone who

tested positive for COVID-19 in the below tables. Families should closely monitor school communications related to COVID-19, prepare for the possibility that students may need to isolate or quarantine for specified periods of time, and plan to provide evidence of a negative test result before returning to school. If students or staff are identified as having COVID-19 or as close contacts of a COVID-19 case, the affected staff and families will be contacted about any necessary testing and isolation or quarantine.

Table 1. Steps to Take in Response to Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 Cases and Close Contacts

Scenario	Immediate Actions	Communication
<p><u>Scenario 1:</u> A student or staff member either exhibits COVID-19 symptoms or has a temperature of 100.00 or above.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student/staff sent home • School administration notified • Student/staff instructed to get tested • Classroom remains open 	<p>No action is needed</p>
<p><u>Scenario 2:</u> A family member or someone in close contact with a student or staff member (outside the school community) tests positive for COVID-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student/staff sent home • School administration notified • Student/staff instructed to get tested around day 7 after exposure to case • Student/staff instructed to quarantine, even if they test negative, for a full 14 days after date of last exposure to COVID-19 case • Classroom remains open • If student/staff tests positive during quarantine, see Scenario 3 below 	<p><i>Template Letters:</i></p> <p>Letter to Student/Staff Member who is a Close Contact of a COVID-19 Case</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Letter to Cohort Members (in Cohort Settings)</p>
<p><u>Scenario 3:</u> A student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student/staff sent home if not already quarantined • School administration notified • Public Health Department notified • Student/staff instructed to isolate for at least 10 days after symptom onset AND at least 24 hours after resolution of fever AND improvement in symptoms (If never symptomatic, isolate for 10 days after date of positive test.) • School-based close contacts identified and instructed to test & quarantine for 14 days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In stable classroom cohorts: entire cohort. ○ In other settings: use seating chart, consult with teacher/staff • In cohort settings, classroom closes. 	<p><i>Template Letters:</i></p> <p><u>For Cohort Settings</u> Letter to the Student/Staff Member Who is a COVID-19 Case</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Letter to Cohort Members</p> <p><u>For Non-Cohort Settings</u> Letter to the Student/Staff Member Who is a COVID-19 Case</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Letter to Close Contacts</p>

		AND
		Letter to All Other Community Members

Table 2. Steps to Take in Response to NEGATIVE Test Result and Return to In-Person School/Work

Scenario	Immediate Actions	Communication
A student or staff member tests negative for COVID-19 after Scenario 1 (symptomatic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student/staff may return to school 24 hours after resolution of fever and improvement in other symptoms 	Student family/staff to bring evidence of negative COVID-19 test or medical note if testing not performed
A student or staff member tests negative after Scenario 2 (close contact)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student/staff must remain in quarantine for a full 14 days after date of last exposure to COVID-19 case If a close contact continues to be exposed to a case during their isolation (e.g. household member), quarantine ends 14 days after the case’s isolation period ends. 	No action is needed
A student or staff member tests negative after routine screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can return to school/work immediately 	No action is needed

How will schools determine whether an individual student should be offered distance or remote learning due to COVID-19?

Distance/Remote Learning for High-Risk Students and Students with High-Risk Household Members

Schools will consider distance or remote learning for (1) students who are medically fragile or would be put at risk by in-person instruction, or who are isolating or quarantining because of exposure to COVID-19 or (2) students who live in a household with anybody who is medically fragile.

Under the California Department of Public Health guidance, schools must offer distance learning based on the unique circumstances of each student who would be put at risk by

in-person instruction. The California Department of Public Health provides the following examples of when distance learning should be offered to a student: students with a health condition, students with family members with a health condition, students who live with or regularly interact with high-risk individuals, and students who are otherwise identified as “at-risk” by a parent or guardian. According to the California Department of Education, schools are not required to ask for documentation from families to verify that a request to participate in distance learning meets a specific standard.