Outlook for the 2021-22 School Year

As of April 14, 2021
Purpose of this Presentation

- On April 6, CDPH published Beyond the Blueprint, with the expected outlook across all sectors.

- This presentation is intended to provide a more robust school-specific outlook, in an effort to provide as much transparency and lead-time for planning as possible, including:
  - Historical context on where we have been
  - What we have learned
  - Expected conditions for the next school year

- This presentation includes no directives, guidance, or other policy.
Where We Have Been + What We Learned
March – May 2020: Schools Close In Response to Uncertainty About COVID-19 Risks; Pivot to Distance Learning

During this Period:

- Assumption that children are vectors for COVID-19 and would exacerbate community transmission.
- Uncertainty about how to protect students and staff.
- Schools pivot as fast as possible to distance learning and supporting families (continued school nutrition, providing computing devices, etc.).
- **March 7:** Student tests positive for COVID-19, prompting the state’s fifth largest school district to announce closure.
- **April 1:** Governor and State Superintendent finalize labor-management framework for distance learning in partnership with school labor and management groups.
- **April 20:** Governor, First Partner, and State Superintendent secure over 70,000 computing devices and 100,000 connected mobile hotspots from businesses and philanthropies, and distribute them to schools across the state.
June – August 2020: Uncertainty Causes Anxious Start to the School Year; Schools Focus on Quality Distance Learning and Planning Re-Opening in Red Tier

During this Period:

- Understanding and emerging consensus that children are not significant vectors.
- Continuing uncertainty about most effective mitigation layers: “all of the above” approach (e.g., emphasis on symptom checks because of a lack of scientific understanding of prevalence of asymptomatic individuals).
- Schools grapple with two big lifts: (1) quality distance learning and (2) preparing for safe re-openings in Red Tier.
- With counties in Purple Tier, most schools begin the school year in distance learning and follow guidance to provide in-person instruction to targeted student groups (e.g., special education) in cohorts.
- **June 5:** California becomes one of the first states to issue comprehensive school reopening guidance, including a mask mandate in schools.
- **June 29:** Legislature and Governor allocate additional $5.3 billion for schools to respond to COVID-19, including reopening safeguards and distance learning (e.g., bridging the student digital divide). 83% of funds are allocated according to equity metrics (% of low-income students, students with disabilities, etc.). Related legislation (SB 98) also sets requirements for distance learning, mental health, student re-engagement, and in-person instruction.
September – November 2020: Safe Re-Opening Plans Delayed by Winter Surge; Schools Contemplate Remaining Closed for the 2020-21 School Year

During this Period:
• Stronger understanding of effective mitigation layers, including evidence that in-school transmission can be near zero with strong implementation of key precautions (e.g., masks).
• Schools continue improvements to distance learning, but grapple with disengagement and the mental health of students and staff.
• Schools continue providing in-person instruction to targeted student groups in cohorts.
• Schools finalize and begin implementing plans to re-open in Red Tier.
• Looming Winter Surge associated with the holidays leads to caution, then implementation delays, then decisions to remain closed for the entire school year.
• **September 1:** Governor’s Office of Emergency Services completes delivery of PPE at no cost to schools throughout the state.
• **October 28:** After Governor announces that the State Valencia Branch Laboratory will prioritize COVID-19 testing for schools, HHS publishes Playbook for schools to set up operations.
• ***November 17:** The state’s seventh largest school district announced it would remain closed for the entire school year. Many school communities contemplate similar decisions.

During this Period:

- California experiences a punishing Winter Surge, prompting strong public health measures to combat transmission. At the height of the Surge, the Governor begins a major push for schools to be the first-priority sector to reopen when cases are anticipated to decline in February.

  - **December 3:** Governor institutes Regional Stay-at-Home Order.
  - **December 24:** California becomes first state to apply for Medicaid reimbursement for school COVID-19 testing, approved by the Biden administration on March 3, 2021.
  - ***December 30:** Governor outlines Safe Schools for All Plan, including vaccine prioritization for K-12 staff, State Safe Schools Team for oversight and assistance, comprehensive testing, PPE, and transparency.
  - +January 14:** Safe Schools for All Hub is launched as a one-stop shop, providing direct technical assistance to schools and transparency measures for parents.
  - ++February 19:** Governor accelerates vaccines for K-12 school staff, leading to most receiving access by early March.
  - +++March 5:** Legislature and Governor allocate additional $6.6 billion to accelerate reopenings and expand mental health and academic supports.
Expected Conditions for the 2021-22 School Year
Major Differences Between Last and Next School Years

Key Factors:

1. Research & Understanding
2. Oversight & Assistance
3. Comprehensive Testing Program
4. Vaccines
5. Community Transmission
## 1. Research & Understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>August 2020</th>
<th>Now</th>
<th>By August 2021</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited understanding of role of children in COVID-19 transmission</td>
<td>Understanding and consensus that children are not major vectors</td>
<td>Better tailored and targeted precautions</td>
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<td>Tentative understanding of effective precautions</td>
<td>Understanding and consensus that in-school transmission can be minimal with key precautions</td>
<td>Growing evidence of vaccine effectiveness</td>
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<td>Skepticism that children can wear masks</td>
<td>Strong understanding that masks are very effective and experience that children can wear them</td>
<td>Continued mask-wearing across all ages</td>
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<td>Aggressive monitoring of variants</td>
<td>Robust testing and contact tracing</td>
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<td>Further heightened focus on variants</td>
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## 2. Oversight & Assistance

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<tr>
<td>No data on school reopening status or cases reported in schools</td>
<td>Data on reopening status and transmissions, among other elements, available school by school</td>
<td>More refined and granular reporting and transparency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reliance on local health departments</td>
<td>Cross-agency State Safe Schools Team providing direct oversight and assistance to hundreds of school districts</td>
<td>Expanded State Team, including regional members covering every county</td>
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<tr>
<td>State and local health departments stretched to limits, focused on slowing transmission and minimizing deaths</td>
<td>Contact tracing supplemented by routine training of school liaisons and the School Portal for Outbreak Tracking</td>
<td>As adult vaccination increases and other sectors pose less risk, schools become primary focus</td>
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### 3. Comprehensive Testing Program

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<td>Substantial barriers to access, including limited supply chains</td>
<td>Nation’s most robust school-based testing program, including both PCR and antigen options</td>
<td>Between federal and state supports, potential for no-cost testing for schools</td>
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<td>School-based testing not an option</td>
<td>Nation’s leading financial supports, including state and federal funding for testing for low-income students</td>
<td>Expanded capacity to support safe in-person instruction at schools</td>
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## 4. Vaccines

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| Vaccines seemed like a distant hope | School staff were offered vaccines throughout the state by early March  
   40% of Californians have received at least one dose  
   On April 15, all Californians ages 16+ will be eligible for vaccines | With greater supply, accelerated rise in vaccination rates in the four months until August, including all high-risk school community members and households  
   Likely vaccine eligibility of children ages 12-15 |
## 5. Community Transmission Rates

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<tr>
<td>Many of the most populous counties are in the Purple Tier</td>
<td>Nation’s lowest positivity rates</td>
<td>Immunity through past exposure and vaccination will further mitigate community transmission</td>
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<td>Expectation of a surge associated with forthcoming holidays</td>
<td>Lowest positivity rates to date</td>
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<td>Schools focus on having high quality distance learning programs</td>
<td>Among nation’s lowest case rates</td>
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Expected Conditions and Next Steps

- If current trends and best practices continue, the next school year can begin with offering full in-person instruction to all students (full days, five days per week). Some staff, students, and families may continue to require accommodations.

- State health regulations and guidance will remain operative, but will be revised to reflect changing conditions – including any adjustments to respond to variants – and in consultation with federal, state, and local partners.

- Policy decisions about funding, requirements, authorizations, etc. will be enacted by the Legislature and Governor, in consultation with K-12 stakeholders.
Planning for the Future

- Schools can leverage an historic level of state and federal funds, including $4.6 billion to expand learning opportunities, made available through early action in March.

- The following should be considered as priorities:
  - Summer programming, including in partnership with service providers who can help supplement school staff recovering from the stress of this school year.
  - Planning to offer full in-person instruction to all students to start the next school year.
  - Communicating with and educating families who may be reluctant to return to in-person instruction.
  - Maximizing the amount of instructional time, through an extended school year and/or before/after school.
  - Maximizing the value of instructional time, through expanded mental health services and high-dose academic interventions, such as tutoring.