

# Outlook for the 2021-22 School Year

As of April 14, 2021



# Purpose of this Presentation

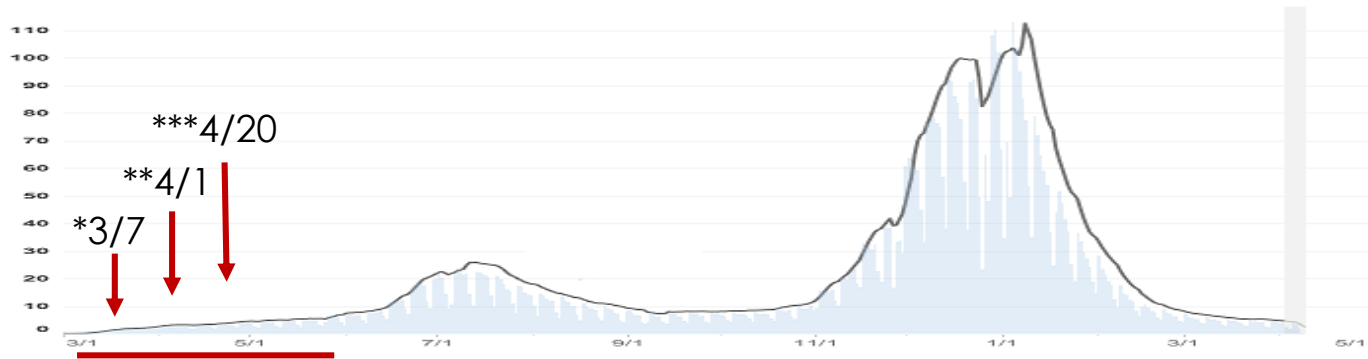
- On April 6, CDPH published [Beyond the Blueprint](#), with the expected outlook across all sectors.
- This presentation is intended to provide a more robust school-specific outlook, in an effort to provide as much transparency and lead-time for planning as possible, including:
  - Historical context 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

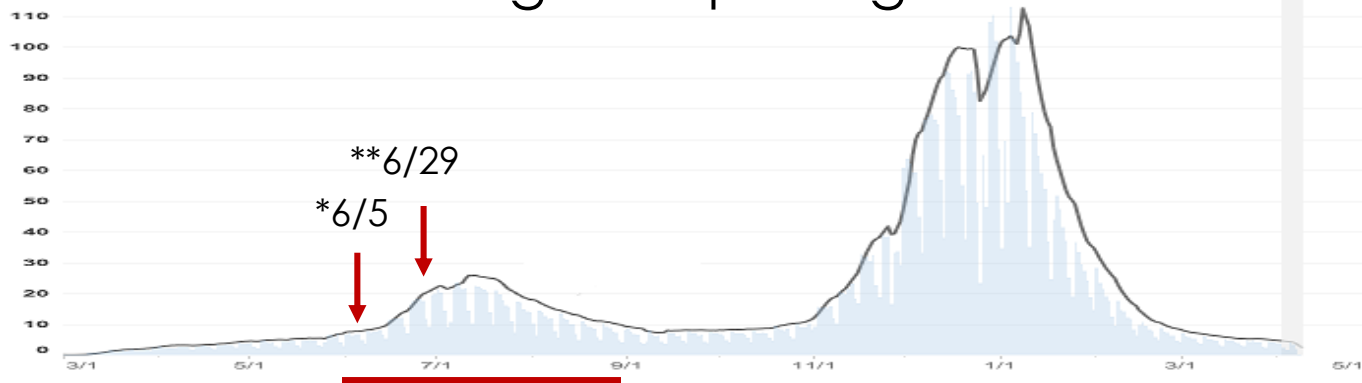


## During this Period:

- 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

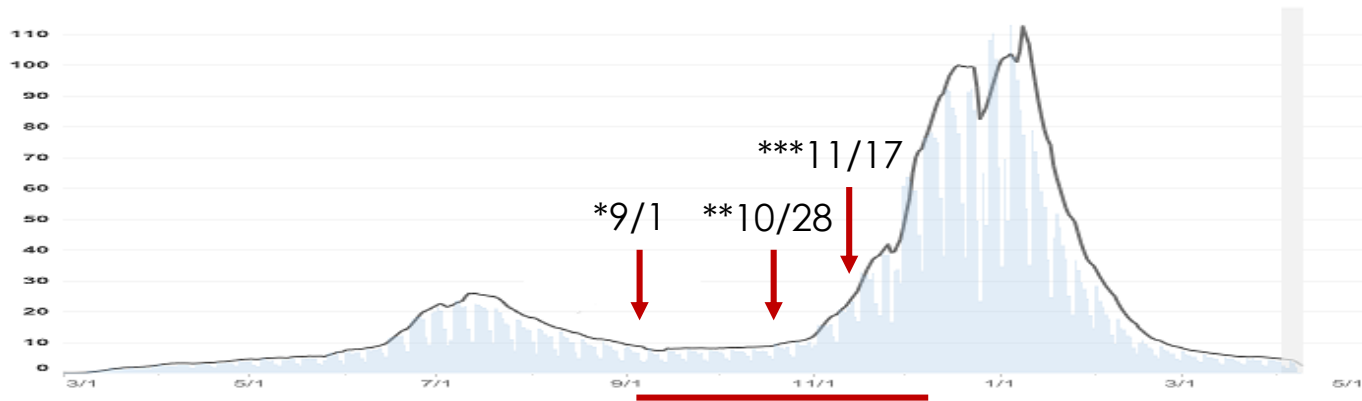


## During this Period:

- 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.



# December 2020 – March 2021: Strong Public Health Measures to Combat the Surge, Combined with Intensified School Supports, Turns Momentum Back to Reopening



## 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 re-openings 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

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



## 2. Oversight & Assistance

August 2020	Now	By August 2021
<p>No data on school reopening status or cases reported in schools</p> <p>Reliance on local health departments</p> <p>State and local health departments stretched to limits, focused on slowing transmission and minimizing deaths</p>	<p>Data on reopening status and transmissions, among other elements, available school by school</p> <p>Cross-agency State Safe Schools Team providing direct oversight and assistance to hundreds of school districts</p> <p>Contact tracing supplemented by routine training of school liaisons and the School Portal for Outbreak Tracking</p>	<p>More refined and granular reporting and transparency</p> <p>Expanded State Team, including regional members covering every county</p> <p>As adult vaccination increases and other sectors pose less risk, schools become primary focus</p>



# 3. Comprehensive Testing Program

August 2020	Now	By August 2021
<p data-bbox="121 454 571 758">Substantial barriers to access, including limited supply chains</p> <p data-bbox="166 833 527 1015">School-based testing not an option</p>	<p data-bbox="633 358 1219 662">Nation's most robust school-based testing program, including both PCR and antigen options</p> <p data-bbox="633 738 1219 1105">Nation's leading financial supports, including state and federal funding for testing for low-income students</p>	<p data-bbox="1280 454 1808 696">Between federal and state supports, potential for no-cost testing for schools</p> <p data-bbox="1280 772 1808 1011">Expanded capacity to support safe in-person instruction at schools</p>



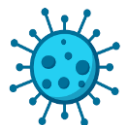
# 4. Vaccines

August 2020	Now	By August 2021
<p>Vaccines seemed like a distant hope</p>	<p>School staff were offered vaccines throughout the state by early March</p> <p>40% of Californians have received at least one dose</p> <p>On April 15, all Californians ages 16+ will be eligible for vaccines</p>	<p>With greater supply, accelerated rise in vaccination rates in the four months until August, including all high-risk school community members and households</p> <p>Likely vaccine eligibility of children ages 12-15</p>



# 5. Community Transmission Rates

August 2020	Now	By August 2021
<p>Many of the most populous counties are in the Purple Tier</p> <p>Expectation of a surge associated with forthcoming holidays</p> <p>Schools focus on having high quality distance learning programs</p>	<p>Nation's lowest positivity rates</p> <p>Lowest positivity rates to date</p> <p>Among nation's lowest case rates</p>	<p>Immunity through past exposure and vaccination will further mitigate community transmission</p>



# 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.

