

San Diego, California school districts plan reopenings based on dangerous new state guidelines

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Under new California state guidelines for school reopenings, part of the fraudulent “Blueprint for a Safer Economy,” multiple TK-12 public school districts throughout San Diego County, California, are resuming in-person instruction this month. The move will place tens of thousands of students, educators and their families at risk of infection, and will quickly exacerbate the spread of COVID-19 throughout the region.

The reopening of schools is aligned with the state's new four-tier, color-coded metric standards unveiled last week. These guidelines are dangerous and haphazard, and accept community spread and death by categorizing the risk in varying degrees. The fact that San Diego's rate of positive cases fell below 100 per 100,000 residents for 14 days prompted California Governor Gavin Newsom to give the go-ahead last Tuesday for all TK-12 schools in the county to reopen for in-person instruction if their leadership chooses to do so.

According to Newsom's plan, counties in the state with more than seven new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people per day and a coronavirus test positivity rate of more than 8 percent are considered to have widespread transmission and cannot open schools. Any county with a test positivity rate below 8 percent can reopen schools for in-person instruction.

San Diego County falls under the Tier 2 category, or substantial transmission, and is thus allowed to offer limited in-person instruction on school campuses. San Diego has a current test positivity rate of 3.7 percent and 5.8 reported cases per 100,000 residents. Since the start of the pandemic, San Diego county has reported 39,186 cases and 695 deaths.

The new color-coded plan presents immense dangers for the population. The time period at which the positivity rate is determined has nearly tripled from an eight-day period to a 21-day period, which means that cases can be increasing and even spiking, but because the period has increased, those numbers can be negligible in affecting the overall positivity rate. This also assumes that there continues to be mass

testing, and that there is a continually up-to-date, transparent reporting of daily case rates throughout the county and within school districts.

According to the plan, when a school site hits a total case rate of five percent, the school must be shut down. If a quarter of the schools in a district are shut down within a two-week period, then the entire district will have to close. However, because many students and staff can be asymptomatic or are not able to get access to a COVID-19 test, the case rate of a school can actually be much higher than five percent.

In a public relations stunt to buy time before fully reopening, the three largest school districts in San Diego county have all opted to begin the school year under a fully virtual model but will offer in-person instruction for certain populations of students in the coming weeks. These districts—San Diego Unified School District, Sweetwater Union High School District, and Poway Unified School District—will finalize a date for in-person reopening plans for their student populations by the end of September.

San Diego Unified School District, the largest district in the county and second largest in California, will be offering voluntary one-on-one as well as small group in-person instruction to the district's 60,000 TK-5th grade students starting September 8, while offering in-person sessions to its 12,000 students with special needs as soon as late September.

Chula Vista Elementary School District, the fourth-largest district in San Diego County, will offer free in-person enrichment programs for 1,500 students, and will also offer fee-based spots for another 500 children. The district said priority for enrichment programs will go to the children of Chula Vista teachers, deemed essential workers, as well as foster and homeless youth.

Poway Unified expects to open in phases as early as the end of this month, due to the updated state guidelines. Superintendent Marian Kim Phelps stated in a recent update

that during the upcoming September 10 board meeting, “staff will present an updated reopening plan that recommends elementary schools open first as well as small groups at the secondary levels.”

The various local teachers unions are working with the California Teachers Association (CTA), the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) to facilitate the full reopening of schools. At a meeting last Tuesday with the heads of many local unions, CTA board member Roberto Rodriguez promoted the new state guidelines as “more nuanced.”

All those at last week’s meeting promoted the fraud that schools could be reopened “safely” with some cosmetic safety measures. Lucy Ugarte, a teacher and organizing chair for the Sweetwater Education Association, declared, “When we do go back, (we need) to be sure that we have enough supplies consistently and ongoing, to make sure that we are not running out of that equipment, that we do have ways to protect ourselves and our students.”

Smaller districts such as Vista Unified School District are planning in-person instruction for small groups of at-risk students and those requiring special services. “It’s entirely possible that we will have very small groups of kids on campus for short amounts of time,” said Vista Superintendent Matt Doyle, “because those interventions are almost impossible to provide online.”

Districts are using the most vulnerable students to set a precedent that face-to-face learning can be done “safely.” This has nothing to do with serving students with high needs during a pandemic, but rather aims to create a wedge for reopening schools to the rest of the student population.

The promotion of in-person instruction will be directed primarily against working-class families who have been forced back into workplaces. For the millions of frontline workers and the working poor who have been unable to afford to stop working, they face the double burden of risking contracting the virus at work while their children risk contracting it at school.

Many of these workers live in multigenerational homes, and healthcare was and remains out of their reach. These families, which compose the majority of the population, face the false choice between work and their lives. While the wealthy can afford to have their children enroll in a fully online school setting, hire private tutors, or implement self-contained and safe learning pods, the children from poor families will be forced back into crowded classrooms and in schools with totally inadequate safety measures.

With the help of the new state guidelines, many other public school districts throughout the Southern California region have announced plans to open schools to in-person instruction this month. Del Mar Union School District and

Encinitas Union School District will open their doors for the entire student population on September 8 under the equally unsafe A/B hybrid model of alternating days of in-person and online learning. The reopenings will impact about 10,000 students, over 450 teachers and their families. Cajon Valley Union School District, an elementary school district with over 18,000 students, will open to in-person instruction September 9.

On September 14, Cardiff School District and Coronado Unified School District will also open to in-person instruction under a hybrid model, while Alpine Union School District will do the same on September 21. Carlsbad Unified School District will open classrooms to elementary school students starting September 21, and Fallbrook Union Elementary and High School Districts will open October 5.

These districts’ reopening plans are reckless and will endanger the lives of millions across the region. Children will be herded into crowded classrooms with outdated ventilation systems and lacking professional PPE.

Throughout the US, K-12 schools and colleges that have reopened to in-person instruction have seen an eruption of cases and spread throughout their communities. Governor Newsom has peddled the same lie as all the other Democrats, including Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden and New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, that schools can reopen safely amid a raging pandemic.

The reopening plans slated for numerous school districts in San Diego and throughout California over the coming weeks expose the criminal role of the Democratic Party in implementing the homicidal policies of the ruling class, whose sole concern is to get students back into the classrooms in order to force their parents back into workplaces.

The unions’ collaboration in this process underscores the urgent need for educators, parents, and students to organize independent, rank-and-file safety committees across all San Diego school districts, to establish the framework to resist the drive to resume in-person instruction that will quickly accelerate in the coming weeks. We urge all those who support this perspective to sign up to build a committee and contact us today.



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