COVID-19 update: Newsom, legislature announce $6.6B package to reopen schools

On March 1, Gov. Gavin Newsom and legislative leaders announced a $6.6 billion budget package that provides a path to reopening schools while retaining local discretion over the return of in-person instruction. The bill is not perfect but addresses many concerns CSBA has raised in discussion with the Administration and the Legislature and reflects the collective advocacy of CSBA and the state’s education management organizations. Key amendments include allowing for the expenditure of funds prior to resuming on-campus instruction so schools can more effectively prepare, and it is now explicit that new requirements will not impact existing agreements in local educational agencies that have already resumed in-person
In order to incentivize the resumption of on-campus instruction by April 1, the agreement amends Assembly Bill 86/Senate Bill 86 in regard to the $2 billion allocation for reopening schools. To receive their full allocation of the funding, LEAs must resume on-campus instruction or have an approved plan to do so by April 1. LEAs will lose 1 percent of their funding allocation for each day after April 1 in which they are not providing in-person instruction; recipients must start in-person instruction by May 15 at the latest or forfeit all funding. The new deal does not require LEAs to resume in-person instruction or override existing collective bargaining agreements. The revised bill is expected to get the Governor’s signature by the end of the week. Learn more »

Read CSBA CEO & Executive Director Vernon M. Billy’s statement on the reopening plan »

In other COVID-19 developments:

- The Governor’s office announced today the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has approved a grant application to partner with the state to cover the cost of COVID-19 testing for students covered by Medi-Cal, which represents approximately half of all California students. To aid in defraying the costs associated with testing students not covered by Medi-Cal, the state announced separately that the Valencia Branch Lab will offer schools tests at $21 per test (previous cost was $55). The Medi-Cal coverage is retroactive to Feb. 1, 2021 and will continue for 60 days after the end of the federal public health emergency. In addition, the Department of Health Care Services received approval to deliver COVID-19 testing and reimburse the testing exclusively through the Medi-Cal fee-for-service delivery system, carving it out from all Medi-Cal managed care contracts when testing occurs in schools. This will standardize how the tests are delivered to Medi-Cal children in schools and will ensure a consistent reimbursement rate across delivery systems. The California Department of Public Health has released a fact sheet with testing-related frequently asked questions and answers. Learn more on the state’s school testing website »

- Vaccine priority for K-12 school staff continues to be established. As of March 1, at least 10 percent of California’s vaccine supply was to be dedicated to education workers. The Governor’s office has clarified that education workers include teachers, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, administrators and child care workers, among others — a key point of CSBA advocacy. Single-use codes are being used for education staff to make appointments online via the state’s vaccination site, MyTurn. Monday’s proposed bill codifies education workers’ spot in Tier 1b and the reservation of a minimum of 10 percent of available vaccines in each county for education workers. Learn more »

- Last week, the State Board of Education voted to seek flexibilities related to standardized testing requirements. It also asked staff to explore options for assessing student learning in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. While blanket waivers allowing states to opt out of testing were given by the U.S. Department of Education last year, the same exemptions will not be allowed this year. If granted, the state’s flexibility request would decouple state assessments
from federal accountability requirements, waive administration of the state’s
test, waive federal penalties for testing participation rates less than
95 percent and extend the testing window for the California Assessment of
Student Performance and Progress and the English Language Assessments for
California. Learn more »

Legislative Action Week is just around the corner

Time is running out to sign up for the legislative advocacy event of the year — now, in a virtual
format! This year, CSBA is doing things a little differently to accommodate for the restrictions
caused by the pandemic. From Monday, March 15 through Friday, March 19, CSBA will
schedule virtual advocacy meetings between
school governance leaders and members of the California Legislature and their
staff. CSBA staff will provide talking points and advocacy tips — all you have to do is log
on from your home or office. Learn more and register »

School boards in action: A CSBA blog series about you

We want to recognize you! Throughout the
pandemic, local educational agency boards
have continued working to support programs
and initiatives that offer students the
academic and social-emotional opportunities
they need — no matter which mode of instruction
they are in. Each week, CSBA will feature a
roundup of LEAs’ successes on our blog. We have also launched a new series called
5 questions where board members have a chance to share the accomplishments of their
LEAs and their experiences during this challenging time in their own words. Check for
new posts every Tuesday and Friday. Want to share what your board has
accomplished in our 5 questions series? Email editor@csba.org. Read more on the
CSBA blog »

FPPC Form 700 due April 1, 2021
The deadline for submitting the 2020 Annual Form 700 for most school district and county office of education board members is April 1, 2021. New board members who assumed office between Oct. 1, 2020, and Dec. 31, 2020, and filed an assuming office statement, are not required to file an annual statement until April 1, 2022. To assist members in completing their Form 700, CSBA has updated its “Guide to Reporting Gifts, Honoraria and Travel Payments” to help members identify and report potential gifts. The guidance also contains links to helpful information from the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) to accurately fill out each schedule of the Form 700. Read the CSBA guide | Access Form 700 »

CCBE announces new county board governance training

New this year, CCBE is offering a two-track virtual professional development training for both newly elected/first-term and veteran county board members. This county board governance training will help you hit the ground running and provide new county-focused learning opportunities in governance, equity in education, special education, county board appellate role, charter schools, legislative advocacy and more. Veteran board members will gain knowledge and a greater understanding of the impact of social media, virtual meetings, charter oversight and the pitfalls to avoid. The training will be held virtually every Tuesday beginning March 9 through March 30 from 8:30 to 11 a.m. plus one session from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Live sessions will be recorded and available for registered attendees only to view asynchronously. Each session will be two and a half hours long. Register for the training »

CSBA President Suzanne Kitchens featured in PPIC webinar on opening California schools

Reopening California’s schools will be the topic of discussion at Public Policy Institute of California’s latest Speaker Series on California’s Future. CSBA President Suzanne Kitchens will participate in a panel discussion with other statewide education leaders on how and when to reopen K-12 public schools, as well as how to address concerns about equity, learning loss, and the physical and mental health of students and school staff. The online event takes place on Thursday, March 4, from 11 a.m. to noon. Register for the webinar »
Latest California School News newsletter available online

Miss the February issue of California School News? It included information on a slew of new bills introduced in 2021–22 legislative session and pondered the possibility of COVID-19 vaccines for students. CSBA's Masters in Governance team offered practical tips and resources on conducting virtual board meetings and policy experts examined training needed to effectively implement Next Generation Science Standards. The issue also looked at how districts are engaging with African American families. Read the newsletter »

Districts can diversify investments with OPEB Solutions Program

The OPEB Solutions Program is a full-service GASB-compliant, IRS-approved trust program designed to help you safely and securely set aside funds to address and lower your Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) liability. This program gives districts local control of assets, providing you with the flexibility to make contributions as deemed appropriate and the ability to access and withdraw funds to pay for OPEB expenses at any time. Learn more »

COVID-19 resources

Stay up to date with the latest news and resources related to COVID-19 on CSBA's dedicated webpage and with articles frequently posted on the newly redesigned CSBA blog.

Virtual events

2021 CCBE County Board Governance Workshop
March 9-30 | Register here

Governance with an Equity Lens: A Systemic Approach to Closing Equity
Gaps in Public Education
March 27 | Register here

MIG Course 4: Human Resources/Collective Bargaining
May 21-22 | Register here

View complete calendar