

# Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

MAY 2020

## Swift action is needed now to ensure all children are educated

When will schools reopen and what will they look like when they do? That is a question that is certainly on the mind of every parent and educator in the state.

Governor Gavin Newsom has said that schools might reopen in the fall, but social distancing would still be required. This could mean staggered schedules, with some students coming in the morning and others in the afternoon. Group activities such as lunch time, assemblies, P.E. and recess would have to be redesigned.

Ideally, the children who are now staying home are still getting an education through various distance-learning tactics. But after missing months of school, how can we assure that every child is back on track when things go back to a new normal?

“Unless decisive actions are taken promptly the harm will last for years. You know which kids will be hurt most — the ones already behind,” writes former California State PTA President Carol Kocivar in a [blog](#) at Ed100.org.

Kocivar suggests five policies that should be passed immediately.

- 1. Plan for the summer. Don't wait.** With a swift commitment of federal funds, schools could continue to provide education by extending the school year or offering creative online summer programs.
- 2. Provide sufficient emergency federal funding to sustain schools in the coming year.** The federal CARES Act provides only about \$1.6 billion for all of California K-12 education, far too little to sustain schools in a pandemic. California's Constitution does not allow deficit spending by the state so additional funding needs to come from the federal government.
- 3. Fully fund IDEA.** The federal Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) obligates public schools to provide special education services to all students who need them. If the federal government paid 40 percent of the costs to provide these services, as promised in the original legislation, it would help districts provide services to all students.

- 4. Provide more and better food for kids.** Food insecurity is a major issue made significantly worse in the pandemic. Additional federal funding is needed to ensure that every family with children has access to ample, nutritious food.

### National PTA calls for action

There are numerous critical needs children, families, educators and schools face are facing during the COVID-19 crisis. While Congress has provided some relief to our nation's children, families and the educational system in previous legislative packages, there are additional needs that must be met during this pandemic. National PTA is asking Congress to address four key areas in the next COVID-19 relief package, referred to as “C-4” or the “fourth relief bill,” – 1) family engagement, 2) remote learning, 3) support of students with disabilities and 4) child nutrition.

Our association knows there will continue to be emerging needs and long-term impacts from COVID-19 that will need to be addressed through congressional action. National PTA is committed to gathering more information on these needs and will have additional requests for Congress.

In the interim, we ask that you please contact your Senators and Representative today and ask them to provide federal resources for family engagement, remote learning, special education and child nutrition programs in the next relief bill.

Send a message to our two Senators and your Representative with one click [here](#).

- 5. Fix the digital divide.** In order to provide all children with access to education during a shelter-in-place order, each child needs a decent personal computing device and effective access to the internet where they live.

### What to do next

“In order for the right things to happen, some swift and purposeful conversations need to happen right now between congressional leaders, state legislative leaders, municipal leaders and school system leaders,” Kocivar writes. “PTAs and other community leaders can play a powerful role as conveners and advocates. If you feel frustrated and helpless, there are actually concrete things you can do to help. Education organizations are starting to [band together](#) to call for federal support. Legislators need to hear [from constituents like you](#) about the need to sustain education in this critical time. Phone calls and messages matter.”

### For more information, go to:

**When California schools reopen, Gov. Newsom envisions major changes in how they are run,** by Louis Freedberg, [EdSource.org](#)

**Addressing California students' loss of learning shapes plan to reopen schools,** by John Fensterwald, [EdSource.org](#)

**Quick Guide: How has the pandemic altered California's school accountability reforms?** [EdSource.org](#)

Sign up for email updates from the Orange County Department of Education at <https://newsroom.ocde.us/>

## Without federal help the pandemic will be a disaster for schools

The damage to California's education budget due to the pandemic will be severe, unless the federal government provides new and significant support, according to a [blog](#) by Jeff Camp at Ed100.org.

California students faced huge disadvantages even before the pandemic, due to high rates of poverty and homelessness and chronic underfunding of schools. Even in good economic times, the state commits significantly less of its wealth to public education than other states do. Since the passage of Prop. 13 in 1978, schools have had to rely on volatile income taxes for funding. A drop in the stock market means less tax revenues and less funding for schools. It also means losses for California's teacher retirement system, which already has \$107 billion in unfunded liabilities and is drawing increasing amounts of funding away from education programs.

## LCAP postponed, academic assessments and P.E. waived

School districts will not have to turn in their Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) by July 1 this year, following an executive order issued by Governor Gavin Newsom on April 23.

In place of the normal 3-year plan, each district will be required to report on the local impacts of Covid-19 and develop a one-year LCAP to address those impacts, including mitigation measures that will be in place when students return. Districts must submit the reports to their county department of education by December 15.

School districts will be asked to publish written reports explaining the steps they're taking to deliver high-quality distance learning opportunities, provide school meals in non-congregate settings, and arrange for supervision of students during school hours. They will also be required to explain the steps they've taken to meet the needs of low-income students, English learners and foster youth. State officials say these reports will help ensure transparency and accountability.

Newsom's executive order also waives required physical education minutes and annual physical fitness tests that require on-site instruction. Academic assessments were previously waived under a separate order.

The State Department of Education will ask the Legislature to cancel the 2019-20 California School Dashboard, the color-coded accountability system that rates schools and districts on multiple performance measures. School closures and the cancellations of standardized tests because of the coronavirus have rendered this year's Dashboard, which would have been published in the fall, incomplete and invalid.

"On present course and speed, Covid-19 will be a disaster for public schools, and a disaster for children," Camp writes. "Only the federal government has the capacity to prevent this. It's a matter of money. Legislators need to hear [from constituents](#) about the need for the federal government to sustain public education in this critical time. Phone calls and messages matter. With funding, some of the harm to children can be prevented. Children are worth investing in, especially when times are hard."

## Schools & Communities First petitions submitted to the state

More than 1.7 million signatures were submitted to the state in April to qualify the California Schools and Local Communities Funding Act for the November 2020 ballot. It was the most signatures ever submitted in California for a ballot initiative.

If approved by voters, this initiative would require commercial and industrial real property to be taxed based on the current market value rather than the purchase price. This would raise up to \$12 billion in additional funding, with 40 percent going to schools and 60 percent going to other local governments.

The initiative would not change how residential property, including rental property, is taxed and would also exempt small businesses and agricultural land.

California State PTA supports this initiative.

"Our schools have been desperately underfunded for years, and we need this measure to ensure our children have the resources they need in order to learn," said State PTA President Celia Jaffe. "We urge parents and families across the state to support this act to give classrooms – and our children – the funding they need."

For more information, go to the California State PTA [website](#).

## CAPTA Advocacy Webinars

Join California State PTA Director of Legislation Shereen Walter and members of the Legislation Team during monthly Advocacy Webinars to discuss all the latest information.

The last webinar of the school year will take place from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, May 6.

**Webinar registration link:**

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/1383569761862691852>

**Webinar ID:** 436-971-571

For more information go to [capta.org/focus-areas/advocacy/](http://capta.org/focus-areas/advocacy/)