

# Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

FEBRUARY 2021

## California schools will receive billions to address learning loss

California schools will receive billions of dollars in state funding to address the learning loss that many California students have experienced during the pandemic.

In his [proposed budget](#) for 2021-22, Governor Gavin Newsom allocates \$4.6 billion in one-time funding that school districts can use to extend the school year, offer summer school, or provide other programs to help students catch up.

Newsom is asking state lawmakers to take early action to “provide districts with time to design targeted interventions that focus on students from low-income families, English language learners, youth in foster care, and homeless youth.” (The state budget is normally approved by the legislature in June.) It has been evident that students in these categories are at higher risk of falling behind in their education.

Newsom is also asking lawmakers to quickly approve \$2 billion to help school districts reopen classrooms for pre-kindergarten to grade 6. These funds could be used for any purpose that supports in-person instruction, including:

- Enhancing and expanding COVID-19 testing.
- Purchasing personal protective equipment.
- Improving ventilation and the safety of indoor or outdoor learning spaces.
- Teacher or classified staff salaries for those providing and supporting in-person instruction.
- Social and mental health support services provided in conjunction with in-person instruction.

Schools will also receive an estimated \$6.7 billion in federal funding from the COVID aid package passed by Congress in December. See the January issue of the [Advocacy Communicator](#) for more information.

The Governor’s budget asks for \$85.8 billion in Prop. 98 funding for K-12 schools and community colleges, a \$15 billion increase over last year and the highest level of K-14 funding to date. K-12 per-pupil spending would increase from \$12,354 this year to \$12,648 next year.

In the current year’s budget, school districts were given \$12.5 billion in deferrals – essentially IOUs that allowed school districts to maintain their funding levels by dipping into their reserves or borrowing money. The Governor’s proposed budget would reimburse \$8.4 billion of those deferrals.

Although this year’s tax revenues have come in at higher than expected levels, the state’s future economic outlook is uncertain. Gov. Newsom’s budget includes a

\$3 billion deposit into the Prop. 98 reserve fund.

Other expenditures in the proposed budget include:

- \$500 million for teacher development programs.
- \$700 million in funding for programs that help students cope with anxiety, depression, stress and other disorders.
- An additional \$300 million for special education.
- \$44 million toward providing 4,500 more child care vouchers for low-income families.
- \$820 million toward the retirement system.
- \$500 million to support the expansion of transitional Kindergarten programs.

In May, the Governor will issue a “May revise” budget based on updated tax revenue information. State lawmakers will develop their own budget proposals and there will be continuing discussions between legislators and the Governor. The State Constitution requires the legislators to pass the budget by June 15 and the Governor must sign it by June 30.

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## Report on the Conditions of Children in Orange County

In order to be an effective advocate for children, it’s important to be well informed. An excellent resource to learn about the children in our part of the state is the [Annual Report on the Conditions of Children in Orange County](#), published each year by the Orange County Health Care Department.

The report covers the areas of health, economic well-being, education, and safe homes and communities. This year’s report has a special section on how Orange County is addressing the impacts of COVID-19. All of the statistics are broken down by city.

The report has both good and bad news. For example, in the area of health, there are fewer uninsured children, fewer infant deaths and fewer teen births than in previous years. Third grade scores in English language arts and math were up and high school dropout rates were down in 2018-19

On the other hand, the percentage of children who qualify for free and reduced price lunch, an indicator of poverty, increased to 48.8 percent during the last school year. In 2018-19, almost 30,000 Orange County students did not have secure housing.

## State Superintendent Thurmond talks about reopening schools

By Vivien Moreno, Fourth District PTA Advocacy Committee member

State Superintendent of Schools Tony Thurmond talked about school reopening plans, statewide testing and other concerns at a virtual Breakfast Club meeting hosted by Assembly Member Sharon Quirk-Silva in January.

The top priority of California Department of Education is to safely reopen schools for in-person education, Thurmond said. Accomplishing this goal will depend on making schools as safe as possible by getting the vaccine out to teachers and support staff, coupled with ongoing testing and maintaining personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies at all districts.

Thurmond strongly urged school districts to spend all of the federal and state money designated for the mitigation of learning loss that they receive. This funding should be used for technological devices and internet connectivity, safety equipment needed to reopen in-person education, and family engagement services to reconnect with students who are not participating in distance learning for reasons including homelessness, food insecurity, and physical/mental health issues.

The Governor's recently released plan to reopen schools as soon as February is not a mandate, Thurmond said. School districts will still decide for themselves when it is safe to reopen. The plan, which must be approved by the legislature, is intended to support districts as they reopen safely when their schools are prepared to do so.

State lawmakers are considering several bills regarding when and how schools re-open. Thurmond said he does not support state-mandated school opening because districts face a variety of local issues. Mandates could place an undue burden on some districts as an unintended consequence. His office is calculating how much additional per student revenue will be available to each district to mitigate safety expenses if the governor's plan passes the legislature and school districts take advantage of the program.

Thurmond announced that the state will again request a waiver from the federal government to cancel this year's statewide testing under California Assessment of Student Performance Progress (CAASPP). Approval of the waiver must wait for Senate confirmation of President Biden's nominee for Secretary of Education, Dr. Miguel Cardona.

The superintendent said that options to assess student learning progress include a shortened Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) test and utilizing teacher's benchmarks and longitudinal assessments that would show student educational growth and areas of learning loss. Thurmond maintained that statewide testing this year provides little relevant learning loss data. He added

that current circumstances provide an opportunity to explore innovative and less stressful ways to assess students.

### PTA Virtual Advocacy Events

#### Cancelled:

February 3 CAPTA Advocacy Webinar

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#### California State PTA Legislation Conference

"A Path to Equity"

February 8 and 9

Cost: \$50. More information and registration [here](#).

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#### Fourth District PTA Sacramento Safari

Registration open until February 17

#### Sneak Peek

February 5, 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

#### Safari Days

February 22, 9:30 a.m. to noon

February 23, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Free and open to all PTA members.

Registration open now at [fourthdistrictpta.org](#)

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#### National PTA Legislative Conference

March 9-11

\$50 registration fee must be paid by February 4 to attend Virtual Hill Day

More information and registration at [pta.org](#)

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#### Fourth District PTA Advocacy Forum

March 19

9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Details to follow.