

Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

MARCH 2021

California lawmakers approve a \$6.6 billion bill to help reopen schools

AB/SB 86, or “Safe Schools for All,” passed with overwhelming bipartisan votes in the Senate and Assembly and was quickly signed into law by Gov. Newsom.

Here are some of the key provisions of the measure:

- The bill allocates \$2 billion to encourage school districts to return to in-person instruction by April 1. The funding will be distributed through the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and can be used immediately through August 31, 2022.
- To qualify for the funding, a school district must offer in-person instruction for students in transitional kindergarten through second grade when there are less than 25 COVID cases per 100,000 residents in that county. Schools in counties with lower COVID case rates would have to offer in-person instruction to all elementary students as well as one middle or high school grade.
- Districts will lose some of the special funding if they do not open by April 1 or all of the funding if they do not reopen by May 15.
- Schools that have already reopened are grandfathered in and will receive funding.
- The state will reserve at least 10 percent of available vaccines in each county for education workers.
- The bill includes \$4.6 billion to provide supplemental instruction and support to students through strategies such as an extended school year, summer school, tutoring, and social-emotional services. This funding will be provided through the LCFF, with an additional \$1,000 for every homeless student.
- 85 percent of extended learning and academic intervention funding must be devoted to in-person instruction. The remaining 15 percent can be used to support distance learning, if desired.
- 10 percent of the 85 percent in extended learning funding is set aside for the hiring of paraprofessionals to provide supplemental instruction, with priority given to services for English learners and pupils with exceptional needs.
- Every school that offers in-person instruction must post a COVID-19 school safety plan on its website.

More information about the bill is available in a [Quick Guide](#) at EdSource.org

California State PTA takes positions on proposed legislation

Twenty-two proposed laws were considered when the California State PTA Legislative Action Committee (LAC) met in February. Here are some of the bills that the LAC voted to support:

- **AB 14 (Aguiar-Curry)** and **SB 4 (Gonzalez)** These two bills call for the extension of broadband infrastructure into unserved rural and urban communities.
- **AB 27 (Rivas)** Requires each school to identify the homeless children enrolled at the school. School dis-

tricts, charter schools and county departments of education would be required to post contact information for homeless liaisons on the internet.

- **AB 48 (Gonzalez)** Prohibits the use of projectiles and chemicals such as tear gas by police in situations such as demonstrations.
- **AB 101 (Medina)** Requires a one-semester course in ethnic studies for high school graduation.
- **AB 104 (Gonzalez)** Establishes a program of supplemental instruction and support for students impacted by the pandemic. High school students could petition to change letter grades to pass/no pass and could add a fifth year to their high school education. Parents could request that their children repeat a grade.
- **AB 309 (Gabriel)** Requires the State Department of Education to develop model referral protocols for addressing pupil mental health concerns.
- **SB 70 (Rubio)** Kindergarten attendance would be mandatory, beginning with the 2022-23 school year.
- **SB 237 (Portantino)** Would require pupils in Kindergarten through second grade to be tested for dyslexia. (CAPTA supports this bill if amended.)

Fourth District PTA
**Virtual Advocacy Forum:
Follow-up to Sacramento Safari**

Friday, March 19 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

This will be an opportunity to discuss what we learned during our virtual safari to the state Capitol and in our meetings with state legislators.

All PTA members are welcome!

Recordings of the conference are at sacsafari.org

Fourth District PTA's key messages to our state legislators

More than 130 PTA members participated in this year's virtual Sacramento Safari, where they heard from education policy experts, state lawmakers, and California State PTA leaders. Participants then met in small groups with Senators and Assembly Members who represent Orange County legislative districts. Here are the key messages we brought to our California lawmakers:

Return to In-Person Learning

PTA recognizes that children learn best in an in-person education setting. PTA supports returning to in-person school settings when it is safe for students, teachers, support staff, and families.

As outlined by California State PTA President Celia Jaffe, safe in-person learning must involve:

- following California Department of Public Health guidelines
- continuous two-way communication between parents and school districts to address long-term learning loss and mental health issues, and
- giving parents the option of maintaining distance learning during the pandemic.

We continue to support an 8:30 a.m. or later start time for regular classes for grades 9 to 12 and after-school childcare programs for elementary school students.

Education Funding

The pandemic created new crises for California children and exposed existing inequities in many communities. Children living in poverty, English language learners, and children with disabilities have been disproportionately affected and have lost learning opportunities. Inequities include lack of access to high speed internet and computers or tablets among families, and a shortage of technology infrastructure and support in school districts.

The need for ongoing personal protective equipment purchases, updated ventilation systems, health screening and testing, additional substitute teachers, and social services like food distribution and mental health care, are soaking up all the state and federal supplemental funding that school districts receive.

- Additional funding will be needed to cover costs for summer school, tutoring services, and mental health services to mitigate pandemic truancy, learning loss and psychological issues uncovered or made worse

by the long isolation children have experienced.

- COVID response funding from the state should be provided through the Local Control Funding Formula, allowing each school district to address the unique issues in that community.

Mental Health Support Services

The pandemic continues to highlight the ongoing tragedy of mental health issues among children and youth. In September 2020, the Center for Disease Control issued a National Vital Statistics report on suicide rates of children and youth, ages 10 to 24. Between 2000 and 2007, suicide rates for 10 to 24-year-olds stabilized at about 6.8 per 100,000 youths. The rate rose steadily to 10.7 per 100,000 youths by 2018. The study found that the rates of identified psychological distress and deep depression in youth jumped in the last 10 years and suicide rates have increased over 38 percent.

In Orange County, even before COVID-19, the rate of hospitalization for serious mental illness among children younger than 18 increased 76 percent from 2009 to 2018.* The pandemic has exacerbated this situation by exposing many families to food and housing insecurity, increased incidences of domestic violence, eating disorders, and greater anxiety about higher education or career options.

- Addressing these issues will be a long-term effort that will require

additional funding to hire more school site psychologists and counselors, and ongoing education and training for teachers and school staff.

*Hospitalizations increased from 14 in 10,000 children in 2009 to 24.6 per 10,000 children in 2018. Source: The 26th Annual Report on the Conditions of Children in Orange County, Orange County Health Department.

CAPTA on school reopening

The outstanding education question of our day—how our children will be educated during the pandemic—has been an ever-changing and growing challenge, said Celia Jaffe, California State PTA President. As the state deals with this issue, PTA has been a voice in Sacramento, representing the voices of children and families as decisions are being made.

California State PTA does not support or oppose the reopening of schools, Celia said. The question, rather, is what can be done in the local school districts to make sure our children get a good education in a safe environment.

In February, the CAPTA Board of Managers adopted ten recommendations for the safe reopening of schools. In response to advocacy by local PTA members, the recommendations were amended. The new version is [here](#).

State PTA will continue to be actively involved in discussions with the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, legislators, and other organizations as the state responds to the needs of our children.

Registration is still open

**National PTA
Virtual Legislative Conference
March 9-11**

More information at pta.org