SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

August 25, 2021
Agenda

1. Summary of the Science
2. Status of the 2021-22 School Year
3. Hot Topics
1. Summary of the Science
Starting Point: Importance of In-Person Instruction

Research validates that we must keep schools open to promote the mental, social-emotional, and academic well-being of students.
CDC: In-Person School Is A Lower-Risk Activity

Compared with children who tested negative for the virus that causes COVID-19, children who tested positive were:

More likely to have...
- Attended gatherings
- Weddings
- Playdates
- Parties
- Funerals

Not more likely to have...
- Attended child care or school in person

*In the 2 weeks before the positive test.
Case control investigation 1:54 case-patients, 2:43 control participants, MS, September-November, 2020

Note: Based on a December 2020 study.
Key Safety Layers: Making Schools the Safest Places in the Community

- All 12+ in School Are Vaccinated
- Sick Stay Home and/or Are Tested
- Outdoors When Possible and Improve Indoor Air Quality
- Wear Masks Indoors and Clean Hands
### How Have Things Changed with the Delta Variant?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Factors</th>
<th>What We Know</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transmissibility</strong></td>
<td>Δ Delta is more than 2x as contagious as previous variants. This is leading to the current surge in infections.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Virulence and Severity of Symptoms</strong></td>
<td>○ Still learning about this. Right now, children continue to develop severe symptoms less often than adults, as with previous variants. Delta’s increased transmissibility means more cases of all types, including cases with severe symptoms. Unvaccinated people are more likely to have severe symptoms.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vaccine Effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>✓ Vaccines are effective against Delta. Less than 1% of vaccinated people experience a “breakthrough infection” (i.e., if you know 100+ people, you are likely to know someone) and less than 0.005% of COVID hospitalizations have been vaccinated people. Unvaccinated are 11x more likely to get COVID. Those with breakthrough infections appear to be infectious for a shorter period of time.</td>
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Case Study: Wood County, WI

The following case study conducted in Fall 2020 demonstrates the low risk associated with schools and the importance of focusing on in-school transmissions.

Note: Dotted Line Barely Visible

COVID in the Community

COVID Associated with Schools

COVID Because of Schools
SAFE SCHOOLS FOR ALL

School-Associated vs. In-School Transmissions

Key Objectives: Minimize in-school transmissions and maximize in-person instruction.

Mitigating Virus in the Community

Schools Can Help:

✓ Educate families about vaccines
✓ Host school-based vaccine clinics

Note: Vaccinated students do not need to quarantine

Preparing the Virus from Getting into School (School-Associated Cases)

Top Priorities:

✓ Educate families about symptoms and staying home
✓ Conduct screening testing
✓ Isolate positive cases
✓ Identify and test exposed students

Minimizing In-School Transmission

Top Priorities:

✓ Enforce universal masking
✓ Maximize vaccinations
✓ Good ventilation
✓ Good hand hygiene
✓ Conduct response testing and contact tracing
## Helping Families Understand the News

With the scientific context in mind, here is a primer for helping families read the headlines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Headline</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Takeaways</th>
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| “LAUSD Reports 3,255 Student Back-to-School COVID Cases”                 | Over 350,000 tests were conducted, representing an overall rate of 0.8%. Cases were identified before they entered the classroom. | • As a testing hub, schools may detect many cases in children, without in-school transmission.  
  • School-associated cases are often a sign that the school is screening out COVID.  
  • Check the denominator. |
| “Is the Delta Variant More Dangerous for Children? A Growing Number of Kids Are Very Sick” | Nationwide surge. COVID patients are generally younger because at-risk adults are vaccinated. Higher pediatric cases in places with low vaccination rates and mask requirements not allowed. | • Delta’s transmissibility means that there are more cases of all types (including cases with acute symptoms).  
  • Delta primarily impacts the unvaccinated, and children make up a greater proportion of the unvaccinated population.  
  • Vaccinations and masks are key and CA policies create safety. |
| “Bay Area Schools Face Coronavirus Cases and Quarantines: ‘Parents Are Overwhelmed’” | Schools are identifying cases, conducting contact tracing, and sending notifications.                             | • Schools are creating safe spaces through layered approaches.  
  • The same cases are being encountered in stores, restaurants, and other public places.  
  • The difference is schools have safety measures in place, including testing and contact tracing. |
2. Status of the 2021-22 School Year
Current Outlook

Over **90%** of new cases in California are the Delta variant.

We are still very far from the Winter Surge and seeing signs that growth is slowing. Nevertheless, schools must plan and prepare for continued elevated rates.

We should learn from the experience of what is happening nationally.
National and State Context

The school year has not started for many students, but here is a preliminary snapshot.

No Delays in California Due to COVID-19. Although some schools in other states have started the year in distance learning or delayed start dates, California schools appear to have started according to schedule. **17 of the 20 largest districts in the state have opened, and the other three are on schedule.**

California School Closures Have Been Minimal. Nationally and in California, schools are struggling to manage the Delta variant. However, although schools in other states are closing for in-person instruction due to outbreaks, closures in California have been minimal to date (see right).

Above: Snapshot of school closures as of 8/23. Note: Schools in the Northwest, Midwest, and Northeast typically start in September.
Wide-Angle Lens: What Patterns Are We Seeing?

Pattern #1: School-associated cases caused by non-school social events.
   Example: A suburban high school experienced high levels of cases due to a back-to-school party held the week before school.
   Example: Multiple rural high schools in the same community experienced high levels of cases due to attendance at a local fair.

Pattern #2: Cases caused by symptomatic individuals who went to school while sick.
   Example: Two outbreaks associated with individuals (adults and children) coming to school with symptoms, leading to some in-school transmission.

Pattern #3: Staffing shortages caused by low rates of vaccination among staff.
   Example: Multiple schools report staffing shortages due to vaccination rates estimated below 70% among staff.

Pattern #4: Difficulty ramping up testing capacity at sufficient speed.
   Example: Multiple school districts with a desire to ramp up testing immediately, but unable to because of a sudden national surge in testing demand.
COVID-19 Testing

The state offers multiple no-cost testing options to all schools – traditional, charter, and private – and many have signed up.

Overview:

• Options including PCR, antigen, and pooled-testing programs
• 684 school districts (of 1,037) onboarded
• 444 school districts (of 1,037) receiving personnel grants on an equity basis
• Over 1,000,000 PCR test kits shipped
• Over 2,000,000 antigen test kits shipped

CDPH K-12 School-Based COVID-19 Testing Strategies and Interest Form available at: https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/school-testing/
Vaccines

Vaccines substantially reduce the need for quarantines, especially in middle and high schools.

Outreach and Engagement. Assets are available to help promote vaccines (see Google Drive link in references):
- Sample back-to-school **flyers**
- Model content for newsletters and school marqueses
- Social media posts and recorded testimonials

School-Located Clinics. Resources are available to:
- Request mobile or pop-up clinics
- Request a pharmacy to come to your school
- Request volunteers
- Become a vaccine provider and receive a grant of up to $55,000

• Authorization for ages 5-11 expected by mid-winter.
• **86.3%** of counties report establishing school-located clinics for the 2021-22 school year.
Vaccines (cont.)

If you want help setting up a school-located clinic, please visit:

https://www.shotsforschool.org/k-12/clinics/
State Supports + Rapid Response

In addition to no-cost testing, the state has multiple supports available for schools.

- **636** LEAs serving **4,754,519** pupils have been provided technical assistance for returning to in-person instruction.
- **407** LEAs have been provided technical assistance on outbreak mitigation.
- **73** LEAs have been provided onsite consultation.

**Strike teams with testing and vaccine resources** have been and are being deployed to schools with the most acute challenges. Please note: strike team capacity is limited.

**Pictured to the right:** an on-site testing clinic that was stood up the next school day after a surge in cases, which included 15-minute rapid testing and free take-home test kits.
3. Hot Topics
Quarantines

**General Rule:** Throughout the pandemic, quarantine was recommended for anyone who had been within 6 feet of a positive case for 15 minutes or more.

**Modified Rule:** CDPH recommends a targeted approach in the context of masking, as does the CDC. Under ‘Modified Quarantine’, a student may remain in class after a possible exposure if:
1. Both students were wearing a mask;
2. The exposed student remains asymptomatic;
3. The exposed student undergoes twice weekly testing; and
4. The exposed student refrains from extracurricular activities.

**Rationale:** Apply what we have learned about COVID to maximize instructional time, recognizing that masking and testing create additional safety layers.

**Tips:**
1. Expand testing capacity to meet the testing recommendation.
2. If you have not yet, establish seating charts to help track exposures.
3. Where possible, create stable groups to limit the number of students exposed.
4. Adhere to the recommendation as closely as possible, consistent with the rationale.
Act Now. School communities across the nation were hoping for less need for COVID precautions this school year. Delta’s arrival has created a need for more testing capacity in many schools.

- **Onboarding and Scaling Take Time.** It can take weeks to establish the testing capacity you need. Be prepared.
- **Heightened Demand.** With Delta, testing demand has spiked (see right), so you will be competing with others.
- **National Supply Chain Challenges.** Some major manufacturers ramped down their production capacity shortly before the surge.

Let the State Help. The state can help at **no cost** – the earlier, the better. Please visit [https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/](https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/get-started/).
Staffing

One of the key challenges facing schools is when cases and quarantines cause staffing shortages that, in turn, disrupt the ability to stay open for in-person instruction.

Key Measures to Consider:

1. **Ensure Staff Are Vaccinated or Tested Weekly.** Consistent with the August 11 public health order, encourage and ensure all staff are vaccinated or tested weekly.

2. **Employ the Guidance for Vaccinated People.** According to the May 12 public health order, fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine if asymptomatic.

3. **Recruit Retired Staff and Others to Meet Short-Term Needs.** The Governor issued an executive order on August 16 that makes it easier for schools to bring back recently retired K-12 teachers and staff.
Additional Resources for Strategic Prevention

Additional “How to” Materials to Support:

- Mask requirements
- Safety during recess, meals, music, art, and PE
- Awareness of symptoms
- Limiting exposures
- Safety on buses and other transportation
- Vaccine education for families

U.S. ED COVID-19 Strategies for Safely Reopening Schools

CCEE Health and Safety Guidebook

LPI Resources for Reopening Schools

American Academy of Pediatrics: Guidance for Safe Schools
If You Have Questions, Please Ask

If you need help or advice, please reach out at the Safe Schools Hub:
schools.covid19.ca.gov
THANK YOU