

California Legislature



December 1, 2020

Superintendent Vincent Matthews, Ed.D.
San Francisco Unified School District
555 Franklin Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Superintendent Matthews,

First, we want to thank our local school boards/boards of trustees and school personnel for their tireless efforts in supporting students during the pandemic. We have all participated in education-related meetings, town halls or hearings with educators over the last nine months, and many of us are parents. We know first-hand the hard work in which so many public servants are engaging to provide a quality education, regular meal service and connections with mentors and peers alike.

Many of our students and families are struggling with distance learning, social-emotional challenges and mental health issues including anxiety and depression. Furthermore, as parents and guardians struggle to make ends meet during the worst recession since the Great Depression or are adjusting to working from home, the stress of home schooling children only adds to a nearly impossible situation. Recognizing this, many private schools in both San Francisco and San Mateo Counties as well as some public schools in San Mateo County have returned to in-person education on at least a part-time basis. We urge the public school districts we represent to plan for the same.

We are your partners in this endeavor. The Legislature has done a great deal this year to support our public schools in both the state budget and through legislation. Specifically, we:

- Avoided the 10% LCFF cuts initially proposed by the governor, maintaining funding at \$100 billion in the budget year 2020-21 (\$70.5 billion in Prop 98 funds), \$17,073 per student.
- Provided \$192 million in a combination of General Fund & federal dollars for a \$0.75 per meal reimbursement for school meals served during the summer and campus closures due to COVID for students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals.
- Extended the 2019-20 ADA Hold Harmless provisions to the 2020-21 school year, contingent on student participation reporting and local Continuity of Learning and Attendance elements.
- Maintained instructional day requirements but allowed flexibility for instructional minutes in 2020-21 school year.
- Defined Distance Learning and created 2020-21 Continuity of Learning and Attendance plans, as part of annual Local Control Accountability Plan process.
- Provided two months PPE and cleaning supplies to all schools as well as a centralized contract for districts to purchase necessary protective equipment and materials.
- Reduced minimum instruction required to give teachers more flexibility.

- Authorized nearly \$5.3 billion in funds for school districts that could be used for purchasing technology for distance learning.
- Extended Held Harmless rules for 2020/21 irrespective of enrollment and attendance.
- Required all health plans (including Medi-Cal, on which more than 2/3 of California's public school students rely), to cover COVID-19 testing for essential workers and all those exhibiting a symptom.

Meanwhile, the California Department of Education has:

- Secured agreements with technology providers to make up to 1 million iPads and 500,000 other devices available during a global shortage of Chromebooks and Wi-Fi hotspots.
- Suspended the SBAC test last year and shortened it for Spring 2021.

We hear from our school districts that they want, and we are working with state agencies to require:

- State standards mandating regular testing for school personnel as well as for any students with symptoms.
- Mandated masks and PPE for all people on campus
- Stable cohorts for both the prevention and containment of spread.
- ZIP Code or census tract specific data on positive COVID-19 tests
- Local health departments to provide technical assistance on a regular basis
- Local public health agencies to develop data interfaces and conduct contact training for schools.
- Contact tracing for when school personnel or student tests positive for COVID-19.
- Adequate air circulation.
- Prioritizing vaccines for classroom personnel.

With all this in mind, we urge our school districts to work diligently to return to in-person instruction as soon as possible. We particularly emphasize the need for in-person options for students with IEP's and other students most at risk for learning loss.

Preventing further expansion of the achievement gap, meeting the social-emotional needs of students, supporting family health and allowing parents to work are all paramount reasons why we must all work together to open our schools to students as soon as possible. We thank you for your continued hard work. We look forward to collaborating with you in supporting our communities.

Sincerely,



Scott Wiener
Senator, 11th District



Philip Y. Ting
Assemblymember, 19th District



David S. Chiu
Assemblymember, 17th District

CC: Members, Board of Education