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FISCAL REPORT

Newsom Proposes Incentive Grants to Reopen Schools

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Correction Note: The first version of this article erroneously noted how the Safe Schools for All proposal applies to LEAs that have opened, or will open, for in-person instruction prior to the proposal's implementation.

Governor Gavin Newsom unveiled California's Safe Schools for All Plan (Plan) today, December 30, 2020, that would provide financial incentives for local educational agencies (LEAs) to reopen schools beginning in February 2021. The Plan also includes updated guidance and requirements to further ensure health and safety in the classroom, state oversight and assistance to help LEAs with their reopening plans, and transparency for information such as schools' reopening status around the state.

The Newsom Administration proposes a \$2 billion emergency budget appropriation that would establish incentive grants to reopen schools for grades TK–2 and other vulnerable students (such as students with disabilities, English learners, homeless, and other at-risk students) by February 16, 2021. LEAs would be required to offer in-person instruction through grade 6 by March 16. Across the state, LEAs have experienced precipitous enrollment declines in their primary grades, which many believe stems from an aversion to exposing young children to hours of screen time and the inability of working parents to support the online education of their children. LEAs that have already reopened may receive grants if they meet all conditions for funding, including providing in-person instruction for students in grades TK–2 and specialized cohorts of at-risk students in all grade spans by February 16, and expand in-person instruction to students in grades 3–6 by March 16. The reopening grant will provide \$450 per average daily attendance with weighted funding for LEAs that serve low-income, English learner, and foster youth students. Grants will be available for LEAs that reopen after the February 16 and March 16 deadlines, but amounts will be reduced with later reopenings.

In addition to the deadlines for providing in-person instruction, LEAs must adopt a COVID-19 safety plan and have an agreement with their labor partners that is aligned with new guidance for reopening schools in order to receive the grants. The COVID-19 safety plan must include the COVID-19 Protection Plan that is required under Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) emergency regulations and a California Department of Public Health (CDPH) school reopening checklist. The Plan includes a requirement for all staff

and students to wear masks as well as regular COVID-19 testing for staff and students. LEAs in purple and red tier counties would be required to administer COVID-19 tests every two weeks, and LEAs in counties with high rates of transmission would be required to test weekly.

The Plan also establishes a state Safe Schools for All Team, a cross-agency team that would include CDPH and Cal-OSHA staff to assist LEAs with reopening and provide technical assistance. A state dashboard will provide data on schools reopening status and in-school transmissions of COVID-19, and a hotline will be established for school staff and parents to report concerns to the Safe Schools for All Team. Additional information about the plan is available online at CDPH's [website](#).

We will provide additional details about Governor Newsom's proposal, including the impending new guidance for reopening schools when we return from the holidays. The School Services of California Inc. team wishes you a happy, healthy, and safe New Year!