



## **PARENTS URGE GOVERNOR NEWSOM, LOCAL LEADERS TO REOPEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR ALL STUDENTS**

*The effects of school closures impact students of ALL grade levels*

OAKLAND, CA - February 10, 2021 - Today, Open Schools California, an advocacy group that includes parents from more than 75 California school districts, is calling on Governor Gavin Newsom, Superintendent Tony Thurmond, and state and local leaders to take immediate steps to get ALL kids from transitional kindergarten (TK) through 12th grade back into their classrooms. Just yesterday, 36 counties in California met the California Department of Public Health guidelines to reopen TK-6 grades but a lack of political will at both the state and local level have kept kids across California learning remotely for 11 months. Pediatricians and public health officials have been consistent for weeks: schools across California, at all grade levels, can and should be safely reopened with proper mitigation measures in place.

The consensus among [public health experts](#), including Dr. Fauci, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the American Academy of Pediatrics, is that schools do not contribute significantly to community spread and they can be reopened safely with ample PPE, hand-washing, and ventilation.

“Our leaders need to demonstrate real commitment to getting all kids back in the classroom this school year, not small incremental change that will leave millions of older students behind,” said Ross Novie, a member of Open Schools California. “Locking older children out of the classroom ignores the science and data that shows school closures are impacting kids of every age. Schools are an essential public service and should be treated as such - the last institutions to close when cases spike and the first to reopen”

Last week, CDC Director Rochelle Walensky [stated](#), “There is increasing data to suggest that schools can safely reopen and that safe reopening does not suggest that teachers need to be vaccinated.” There is a growing [chorus of teachers](#) who want to return to the classroom.

“Some teachers are doing more work in distance learning, but it is far less effective than in-person teaching. Every family deserves to have a choice to send their child to school in-person, not just families who can afford private school or tutors,” said Bonnie Forbes Wittenstein, a Kindergarten teacher in the Oakland Unified School District. “ We should be looking to the science and data, which show the risk is very low for students and teachers to reopen classroom doors with safety protocols in place. There are teachers like me who are ready to return now, but our voices are not being heard.”

Countless [public health experts](#) and [physicians](#) have argued that keeping schools closed poses a much bigger risk to kids' health and well-being than reopening them. Public school students

will face irreplaceable learning loss if they are not allowed to resume in person instruction—particularly as private school students have been back in class since the fall. Additionally, the toll school closures have taken on childrens’ mental health [is staggering](#), from increases in mental health emergency visits, anxiety and depression, and suicidal ideation.

**Open Schools California**

*Open Schools California is a group of parents from across California who are committed to public education and believe their children should have access to safe, in-person education. Open Schools California believes in following the science—and the consensus by public health experts and medical and mental health professionals—which all tell us schools can be safely reopened with measures in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.*

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