

COVID-19 and Schools FAQ

April 9, 2021

Updates in italics

1. Are schools or districts required to apply for the Safe Schools for All Funding?

No. Only public schools are eligible to apply for this funding and it is not a requirement.

2. What new resources are available for schools?

The [State of California Safe Schools for All Hub](#) is available for technical assistance, reporting concerns and the latest news on reopening schools for in-person instruction.

3. What is the process for submitting the new COVID Safety Plan?

Public schools will submit their COVID Safety Plan to VCOE. After VCOE has reviewed the plan, the school will submit it to VCPH through COVIDSchools@ventura.org. Private schools will submit their COVID Safety Plan directly to VCPH.

4. Can schools that opened when the County was in the Red Tier remain open?

Yes. These schools must post their COVID Safety Plan on their website, making it publicly available, by February 1, 2021.

5. When can schools open if they weren't previously open?

As of March 17, 2021, Ventura County is officially in the red tier and all K-12 schools are eligible to reopen. Schools that have not done so should submit their COVID Safety Plan to VCPH (COVIDSchools@ventura.org) and post it to their website. Please see the [COVID-19 and Reopening In-Person Instruction Framework and Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California](#) for additional instructions.

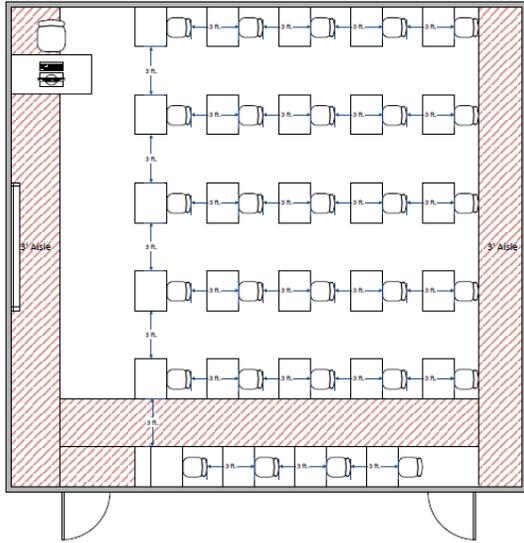
6. What are the new testing requirements?

Any school currently open is subject to the minimum testing requirement standards established by [Cal/OSHA](#). Schools that are currently open for in-person instruction with minimal or no

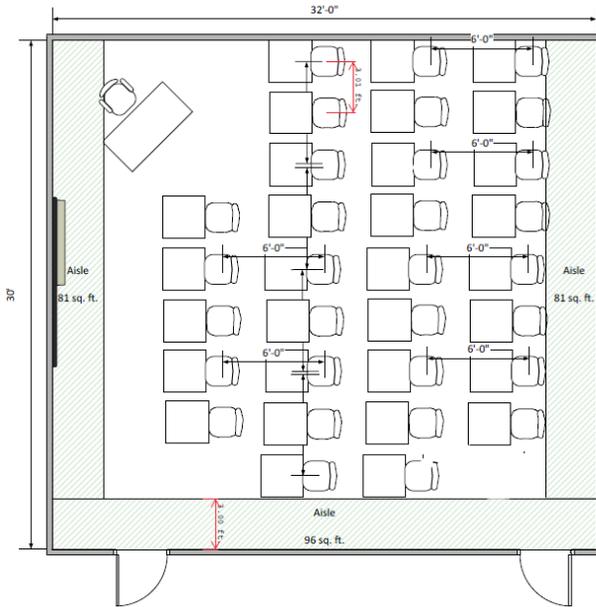
disease transmission on-site may consider increasing testing per CDPH supported testing [framework](#). School districts and schools should ensure that staff are tested periodically (every 2 months) by their primary care provider or by referring school staff to a community testing site. Schools receiving Safe Schools for All funding will not be required to maintain asymptomatic testing for staff and students consistent with the state-supported cadences set forth in the COVID-19 industry sector guidance for schools while the county is in the red, orange, or yellow tiers. Find more information on testing cadences [here](#). Routine testing is still required for vaccinated individuals at this time.

7. What are the social distancing requirements with the new plan?

As of March 20, 2021, CDPH released new [guidance](#). Schools should maximize space between seating and desks. Distance between teacher and other staff desks at least 6 feet away from student and other staff desks. Maintaining a minimum of 3 feet between student chairs is strongly recommended. A range of physical distancing recommendations have been made nationally and internationally, from 3 feet to 6 feet. Considerations for schools implementing a shorter physical distancing policy between students: focus on high mask adherence—if there are doubts about mask adherence, consider more robust physical distancing practices; consider enhancing other mitigation layers, such as stable groups or ventilation; maintain 6 feet of distancing as much as possible during times when students or staff are not masked (e.g., due to eating or drinking). See below for sample classroom layouts.



960 Sq Ft Layout: 3 feet distance (29 students)



960 Sq Ft Layout: 3 feet distance (31 students)

8. Has the definition of a close contact changed since the minimum spacing between student desks has decreased to 3 feet?

CDPH has not changed the definition of a close contact. Any students sitting less than 6 feet from a confirmed COVID positive person for more than 15 minutes will be considered a close contact and will need to quarantine per VCPH quarantine guidelines.

9. What are the new face covering requirements?

Students in all grade levels TK-12th are required to wear face coverings at all times, unless they meet the criteria for a [Mask Exemption](#). Masks may be removed for meals, snacks, naptime or when it needs to be replaced. Staff must always wear a face covering, except when eating. Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition as outlined in the Mask Exemption for Students guidance, must wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge.

10. What is considered a “fever?”

While CDPH uses 100.5 as the threshold for a fever, VCPH uses 99.5. We are continuing to use this threshold.

11. What are the recommendations for bringing students on campus for one-time testing?

When schools bring students on campus for one-time testing, students will need to adhere to the COVID prevention measures of symptom screening, social distancing and wearing face coverings. Testing should be done in areas with adequate ventilation. Schools should keep students in their stable cohorts to the best of their ability and stagger the timing of tests between cohorts/students so that exposure is avoided as much as possible.

12. What is the guidance related to youth sports?

VCPH is following CDPH guidance on [youth sports](#). Inter-team competitions may resume in California beginning January 25, 2021, based on CDPH guidelines. The status of return-to-

competition is subject to change at any time given the level of COVID-19 transmission in California and/or Ventura County. Outdoor high-contact sports (orange tier) can be played in the purple or red tier with an adjusted case rate equal to or less than 14 per 100,000 under the conditions listed on the CDPH guidance on [youth sports](#). Ventura County met this case rate threshold on March 2, 2021, allowing sports to open on March 3, 2021.

13. Do schools need to submit their plan for athletics?

Athletic directors and/or superintendents or designees can submit their athletics plan to VCPH at covidschools@ventura.org. VCPH is not required to approve them, however, will keep them on file in the event of an outbreak or large exposure. Having the plan on file will aid in the investigation of the outbreak or exposure and allow VCPH to provide guidance appropriately.

14. Does a youth athlete have to test multiple times if they are being routinely tested and have a competition in order to meet the 24-hour test result requirement?

No. If the youth athlete is being tested weekly (PCR or antigen) then that weekly testing is sufficient and meets the testing requirements for that week and any competitions that week.

15. What guidance is available related to “stable groups?”

CDPH guidance can be found [here](#). VCPH encourages schools to keep groups/cohorts as stable as possible to assist with better contact tracing if there were to be an exposure. However, it is more important to ensure everyone is screened for symptoms, masks are worn properly and social distancing is maintained. It is understood that students will be moving from group to group at times, especially in middle and high school, as well as for sports. School staff should be able to keep track of the groups students may be in and keep them to a minimum. It is also recommended to have assigned seating for classes to ensure students are around the same people in each class.

16. What is VCPH's current guidance regarding band practice?

As of March 17, 2021, Ventura County is in the red tier allowing for the playing of wind instruments outdoors, with bell covers and 6 feet of distance between instruments. There must also be 20 feet of distance at a minimum between the instruments and the audience.

VCPH has always followed the guidance from CDPH which states "outdoor singing and band practice are permitted, provided that precautions such as physical distancing and mask wearing are implemented to the maximum extent possible. School officials, staff, parents, and students should be aware of the increased likelihood for transmission from exhaled aerosols during singing and band practice, and physical distancing beyond 6 feet is strongly recommended for any of these activities."

17. What is the current guidance for distancing on school buses?

VCPH is aligning with the guidance from CDPH and schools should read the [CDPH guidance](#) and follow it closely. The current guidance from CDPH specifically says to maximize space between students and between students and the driver on school buses and open windows to the greatest extent practicable. Two windows on a bus should be opened fully at a minimum. Buses are of varying sizes each district will need to come up with distancing based on the size of the bus. CDPH guidance provides flexibility to adjust the distance on buses as needed; however, students should distance as much as possible. Mask compliance is extremely important, and windows need to be opened as much as possible to improve airflow. Please ensure each school bus is equipped with extra unused face coverings for students who may have inadvertently failed to bring one and symptom screening is done before students get on the bus.