



Office of the City Manager

February 10, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From:  Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Re: COVID-19 Schools Update

School reopening is a top priority for the City of Berkeley. The California Department of Public Health's [Safe Schools for All Plan](#), issued on January 14, 2021, cites extensive [scientific evidence](#) that, when safety guidelines and practices are followed, COVID-19 transmission can be prevented among students and staff in open schools, particularly in elementary grades (TK-6). The City of Berkeley's most recent [Health Order](#) allows schools to open per the State's current guidance. To support the Berkeley Unified School District, the City of Berkeley has provided and continues to offer specialized support to aid the school district in opening quickly and safely. The City understands that when schools adhere to public health guidelines and carefully implements and layers key mitigation strategies (i.e., face coverings, use of stable groups, physical distancing, etc.), in-person instruction can be offered safely and successfully.

**Background on School Reopening in Berkeley:** The October 2, 2020 City of Berkeley Health Officer Order allowed elementary schools in Berkeley to re-open for in-person instruction for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Middle and high schools were permitted to open for in-person instruction per the November 5, 2020 Health Officer Order. During this time, 12 private schools submitted reopening plans to the City and nine reopened (and remain open).

The State of California's January 14, 2021 guidance specifies that TK-6 schools can open in Counties that are in the State's Purple Tier and have daily adjusted cases of below 25 per 100,000 population for five consecutive days. Late last week, Alameda County, including the City of Berkeley, met this criteria and case rates continue to fall. The City of Berkeley supports TK-6 schools re-opening for in-person instruction per the State's guidance.

Under the State's updated school guidance, all schools that intend to open and all schools that are already open must complete and publicly post their COVID-19 Safety Plan (CSP). The CSP consists of two components required by the State: 1) the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Prevention Plan (CPP); and 2) the COVID-19 School Guidance Checklist which concretely describes how each school that is re-opening will adhere to all elements of the State's guidance.

Grades 7-12 that are not yet open are not permitted to re-open for in-person instruction. Once Alameda County has been in the Red Tier for five days, grades 7-12 will be permitted to open. A CSP must be posted publicly for any K-12 schools for five days prior to resuming in-person instruction.

**City of Berkeley Is Poised for More School Reopening:** In response to the latest guidance and indicators of potential reopening, the City of Berkeley's Schools Reopening Team has created a learning community for schools who have re-opened and schools seeking to re-open. As part of this work, they have created a COVID-19 liaison toolkit for schools and they continue to provide information and respond to questions daily. The City has also established a Reopening Plan Review Team to evaluate schools' CSPs and reopening plans.

Eight Bay Area counties have decided to use age as the main criteria for prioritizing vaccinations. As the City of Berkeley enters the State's Phase 1B, Berkeley is also giving precedence to people over the age of 65 for vaccinations. In addition, Berkeley is aligning with Alameda County and will be offering COVID vaccines to school staff and child care providers during this next round of inoculations. This strategy reflects the City of Berkeley's commitment to helping children return to in-person learning and adults to in-person work. Educators, school and child care staff who are already providing in-person services will receive first priority for vaccines.

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