

# California schoolnews

Weekly Update

March 17, 2021

Opt in to receive texts about important education events and COVID-19 developments by texting CSBA4Kids to 52886.

## In this Issue

- COVID-19 update: Biden signs stimulus, committing \$128 billion for K-12 education
- SBE approves pursuit of federal assessment waivers
- San Diego court decision granting temporary reprieve from CDPH framework has statewide implications
- English learner professional development grant program applications open
- Updated national student survey shows improvements since last year
- School boards in action: A CSBA blog series about you
- Assistance with state eligibility and funding applications

## COVID-19 update: Biden signs stimulus, committing \$128 billion for K-12 education



President Joe Biden on March 11 signed a historic \$1.9 trillion relief package [H.R.1319](#), known as the [American Rescue Plan Act of 2021](#), that includes \$128 billion for K-12 education, \$7 billion for an Emergency Connectivity Fund and \$350 billion for state governments to fill their budget gaps. California's share of education funding is just over \$15 billion in federal K-

12 aid, with local educational agencies receiving about \$13.5 billion directly. The money must be spent by **October 2023**.

**Districts must use at least 20 percent of the federal funding to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning, comprehensive after-school programs or extended school year programs, and ensure that interventions respond to students' academic, social and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on underserved student groups.** The remaining funds can also be used to address learning loss, as well as for a variety of purposes related to supporting pupil education and well-being, including to purchase personal protective equipment, upgrade HVAC systems, or provide educational technology, mental health services and supports, professional development and much more. [Read more on the CSBA blog](#) | [View EdSource database estimating how much each district will receive](#)

### In other COVID-19 developments:

- California is offering **affordable and accurate rapid COVID-19 testing to school employees and students returning to campuses** in an effort to help prevent the spread of the virus. The BinaxNOW tests will be available to school districts and will provide results in 15 minutes, according to the California Department of Education, which is working to identify school districts that are interested in testing students and staff. For now, **the antigen testing will cost \$5 per test, but the state will try to offer the testing free to schools in the future**, officials said. The tests are accurate and are 20 times cheaper than PCR testing, according to Dr. Charity Dean, co-founder of the Public Health Company. [Read more on the CSBA blog](#) »
- Several additional federal announcements were made today. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced that it will provide **\$10 billion to states to support COVID-19 screening testing for K-12 teachers, staff, and students** in schools. Additionally, a **Congressional Research Service report details estimated state grants under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** under the ARP. **CA will get about 9.8 percent of the \$3 billion**

for a total of **\$299.7 million** (\$250.2 million for IDEA Part B, \$20.8 million for Part B preschool and \$28.7 for Part C). Finally, the U.S. Department of Education announced the **virtual National Safe School Reopening Summit will take place on Wednesday, March 24 at 12 p.m. EDT**. More details to come.

- A group of **Democratic House and the Senate members submitted a letter** March 9 to Education Secretary Miguel Cardona requesting the U.S. Department of Education issue blanket waivers for federal student assessment requirements this year. Even with declining COVID case rates and flexibilities being offered, “forcing schools to navigate the logistical maelstrom of administering standardized tests in a remote learning environment will only work to demoralize students who have already faced the toughest year of their young lives,” legislators wrote. **Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said today that he intends to continue the plan to require states to hold standardized testing.**

## SBE approves pursuit of federal assessment waivers



In the first day of a rare three-day **State Board of Education meeting, members authorized the California Department of Education to pursue numerous assessment waivers for the 2020–21 school year**, including one that would allow **local educational agencies to use the most viable option for assessments in their local context**. These could include the Smarter Balanced assessments, or other

various diagnostic, benchmark or interim assessments that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and math; are available to assess students in grades three through eight and grade 11; are uniformly administered across a grade span, school or district; and provide results that can be reported to families and the public.

Additional waivers approved during the March 16 meeting **would relieve any consequences for the state if less than 95 percent of students are tested, extend the timeframe by two weeks for administering all tests until July 30, and request relief for the administration of the California Science Test.**

The board’s action Tuesday **reflects the calls of the Assessment Waiver Coalition, of which CSBA is a member**. In a **March 12 letter** to Board President Linda Darling-Hammond and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, the coalition noted that “even in normal times, California is as unique a state as there is due to our large size, diverse student population, various language needs, range of socio-economic status, troubling digital divide and vast geographical differences.” The **letter says the state must pursue the Biden Administration’s offer of prescribed flexibilities as well as their invitation to “address their individual needs and conditions” based on the specific circumstances across the state to conduct assessments that will provide a view of the pandemic’s impact on student learning without sacrificing crucial instructional time.**

## San Diego court decision granting temporary reprieve from CDPH framework has statewide implications



A San Diego County Superior Court on March 15 **issued a temporary restraining order (TRO) in *A.A. v. Newsom, et al***, a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the **reopening framework and guidance issued by the California Department of Public Health on Jan. 14** brought by several students against six school districts in San Diego County, Gov. Gavin Newsom and key

members of his COVID-19 response team. The **TRO “restrains” the defendants from enforcing or applying the CDPH Framework orders, statutes or laws** that include the prescriptions or provisions of the CDPH Framework **and applies to all local educational agencies in California.**

Specifically, the judge found that the CDPH Framework’s requirement that students in grades seven through 12 remain in distance learning while LEAs could offer in-person instruction to students in transitional kindergarten through grade six **unconstitutionally denied the fundamental right to education to students in grades seven through 12**. While this order means that LEAs are temporarily not obligated to follow the CDPH Framework, **CSBA urges boards to continue to use**

**best practices for safety with respect to COVID-19 for school reopening plans.** LEAs providing in-person instruction should continue to follow best practices for mitigation of COVID-19. The parties are scheduled to return to court on March 30 to argue whether the TRO should be lifted or whether a preliminary injunction should be issued against the state defendants. [Read more on the CSBA blog »](#)

## English learner professional development grant program applications open



The National Professional Development Program awards competitive grants to institutions of higher education or public or private entities in consortia with state or local educational agencies to **provide professional development opportunities to improve classroom instruction for English learners.** The estimated available funds for this program total \$25,500,000 contingent upon the

availability of funds and the quality of applications. **Further information and applications, due by April 23,** are [available here »](#)

## Updated national student survey shows improvements since last year



In a follow up to its July 2020 survey of more than 20,000 middle and high school students about their learning and well-being during that first wave of school closures, **YouthTruth's** latest results from its ***Students Weigh In: Learning & Well-Being During COVID-19*** series show some positive shifts, though challenges remain. On an optimistic note, **61 percent of students said they learn a lot**

**every day — up from 39 percent in the spring and on par with pre-pandemic levels. Additionally, teens reported an increased sense of belonging compared to spring 2020,** and students experienced increased academic support from their teachers. Still, **nearly half of students report their biggest obstacles to distance learning are feeling depressed, stressed or anxious, and stubborn technology barriers and other hurdles continue to hinder distance learning** at higher rates for Hispanic or Latino, multiracial and Black students. [Read more on the CSBA blog »](#)

## School boards in action: A CSBA blog series about you



We want to recognize you! Throughout the pandemic, **local educational agency boards have continued working to support programs and initiatives that offer students the academic and social-emotional opportunities they need** — no matter which mode of instruction they are in. Each week, CSBA will feature a **roundup of LEAs' successes on our blog.** We have also

launched a new series called **5 questions** where board members have a chance to share the accomplishments of their LEAs and their experiences during this challenging time in their own words. Check for **new posts every Tuesday and Friday.** Want to share what your board has accomplished in our 5 questions series? Email [editor@csba.org](mailto:editor@csba.org). [Read more on the CSBA blog »](#)

## Assistance with state eligibility and funding applications

Assistance with  
**STATE ELIGIBILITY  
& FUNDING  
APPLICATIONS**

The State Facilities Funding Programs are complex and ever changing. **Total School Solutions provides assistance with all aspects of the funding process, from the initial establishment of eligibility to the closeout audit process.** TSS professionals meet with the representatives of agencies to determine the needs of specific projects and assist in optimizing benefit from the programs.

The expertise of the TSS staff can help secure additional funding for districts which had not previously been identified. [Learn more »](#)

## COVID-19 resources

Stay up to date with the latest news and resources related to COVID-19 on [CSBA's dedicated webpage](#) and with articles frequently posted on the newly redesigned [CSBA blog](#).

## Virtual events

**MIG Course 2: Policy & Judicial Review / Student Learning & Achievement**  
March 19-20 | **SOLD OUT**

**MIG Course 2: Policy & Judicial Review / Student Learning & Achievement**  
March 26-27 | **SOLD OUT**

**Governance with an Equity Lens: A Systemic Approach to Closing Equity Gaps in Public Education**  
March 27 | [Register here](#)

**MIG Course 4: Human Resources/Collective Bargaining**  
May 21-22 | [Register here](#)

**MIG Course 5: Community Relations & Advocacy/Governance Integration**  
June 11-12 | [Register here](#)

[View complete calendar](#)

## Business Services

