



San Francisco Department of Public Health

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***** STATEMENT *****

Statement from the Acting Health Officer Dr. Susan Philip on School Reopening in Response to the CDC Updates on Physical Distancing for Students

“I am in full support of reopening all schools for TK-12 grades as safely as possible. Today's announcement from the CDC stating that students can safely return to the classroom at 3 feet apart (as opposed to 6 feet apart) is great news and follows the scientific evidence. This will allow more students to return for in-person learning as safely as possible.

SFDPH follows the data and science as it has emerged throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The research now clearly shows that schools can be safe environments for teachers, staff, and students as long as COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures are followed. The data also shows there are significant harms to children's health and well-being from being away from in-person instruction. Today's news from the CDC allowing students to be at least three feet apart adds to the evidence that schools can be safe environments for in-person instruction.

As the Acting Health Officer for the City and County of San Francisco, I am ultimately responsible for approving schools for safer reopening once a school passes our application process. Since last September, my office has approved 114 schools for grades TK-12 for in-person learning for over 16,800 students and nearly 3,000 staff. We have seen minimal cases of in-school transmission and outbreaks due to COVID-19 as a result of these schools reopening in San Francisco. Please see our [public dashboard](#) for more information. Meanwhile, these students have received the significant and proven health benefits of in-person learning, supporting their physical, mental, and socio-emotional health. We look forward to working with SFUSD and other schools to complete the reopening process so they can open as safely as possible for the benefit of their students, families, teachers and staff.

In response to the CDC's news, we will be working with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to best determine how to incorporate this guidance into our schools reopening process locally. There will be more to come in the next few days as we work with the CDPH on how to move this forward. More updates will be announced early next week to demonstrate my support for safer school reopening.”

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