

COVID-19 Safety Plan & LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services



Steve M. Tietjen, Ed.D. | County Superintendent of Schools

Date: February 1, 2021

Revised: August 9, 2021

2021-2022 COVID-19 School Guidance Checklist

Name of Local Educational Agency or Equivalent:

Merced County Office of Education Number of

schools: 8 (2 Charters)

Enrollment: 1480

Grade Levels: TK-12

Superintendent Name: Steve Tietjen

Address: 632 West 13th Street, Merced, CA 95341 Phone

Number: (209) 381-6600

Email: stietjen@mcoe.org

Type of LEA: County Office of Education and Charter Schools Date of

reopening: July 1, 2021

County: Merced

This form and any applicable attachments should be posted publicly on the website of the local educational agency (or equivalent) prior to reopening or if an LEA or equivalent has already opened for in-person instruction. For those in the Purple Tier, materials must additionally be submitted to your local health officer (LHO), local County Office of Education, and the State School Safety Team prior to reopening.

The email address for submission to the State School Safety for All Team for LEAs in Purple Tier is: K12csp@cdph.ca.gov

LEAs or equivalent in Counties with a case rate $\geq 25/100,000$ individuals can submit materials but cannot re-open a school until the county is below 25 cases per 100,000 (adjusted rate) for 5 consecutive days

LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

LEA Name: **Merced County Office of Education (MCOE)**

Option for ensuring safe in-person instruction and continuity of services:

- has developed a plan will amend its plan

1. Please choose one:

- The LEA has a plan, as of March 11, 2021, that is already compliant with the ARP statute and will review and, as appropriate, revise it every six months to take into consideration the additional requirements of the IFR: or

NOTE: If your LEA already has a compliant plan as of March 11, 2021, and has assured such by checking the box above, then you may skip questions 2-4 and complete the Assurance and Contact sections.

- The LEA has amended/created a plan compliant with the IFR using this template and has posted/will post it within 30 days of completing the ESSER III Assurances.

NOTE: If checking the box above that you are using this template to meet the 30 day plan requirements, you must respond to each question in the template.

Please note whether the LEA has a compliant plan and include a link to the plan or acknowledge that the LEA is submitting a new plan and will post it within 30 days of receiving funds.

MCOE has amended the COVID-19 Safety Plan compliant with the IFR using this template and has posted it on our website at www.mcoe.org

2. The LEA will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and LEA staff, and the extent to which it has adopted policies, and a description of any such policies, on each of the CDC's safety recommendations, including: universal and correct wearing of masks; modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing; handwashing and respiratory etiquette; cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation; contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments; diagnostic and screening testing; efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities; appropriate accommodations for children with

disabilities with respect to health and safety policies; and coordination with State and local health officials.

Describe how the LEA will maintain, or continue to maintain, health and safety policies and procedures. Include a description of any adopted policies and procedures regarding the CDC's safety recommendations (or available LEA website links to such policies). Include descriptions of appropriate accommodations adopted and coordination efforts conducted with outside State and local health officials. Please include or describe current public health conditions, applicable State and local rules and restrictions, and other contemporaneous information that informs your decision-making process.

MCOE continues to maintain health and safety policies and procedures for students, educators, and other school and LEA staff. These procedures are included in the COVID-19 Safety Plan elements.

3. The LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health and other needs, which may include student health and foodservices.

Describe how the LEA will ensure continuity of services in case isolation, quarantine, or future school closures are required, including how the LEA will meet the needs of students with disabilities and English learners.

MCOE will ensure continuity of services through the provision of instruction via independent study virtual learning. Teachers will provide scheduled virtual instruction and support to students, utilizing a variety of instructional materials aligned to California standards, including school textbooks, online educational resources, and supplemental materials.

Students will be provided with a technology device, mobile hotspot and other necessary equipment to access instruction and services remotely from home. Students will continue to have access to their school provided email accounts to communicate with teachers, counselors and staff.

If a student or parent requests, a hard copy or paper option will be provided that will be a comparable and equitable educational alternative.

MCOE will continue to provide an equitable and appropriate education for our students with a disability. Special education teachers will instruct students directly with core content teachers to accommodate and/or adapt lessons to meet the needs of students' IEP. Special education teachers will provide continuity of learning through a variety of in-person or virtual learning resources as appropriate so

that special education students have access to learning opportunities as other students. Related service providers (Speech and Language Pathologist, Adapted PE, etc.), will prepare virtual learning activities that can be completed at home as appropriate. Digital options to meet and collaborate on a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) shall be implemented when necessary.

Virtual support services will continue to be accessible to students in case of isolation, quarantine or future school closures.

- Instructional Assistants and CALSOAP tutors will have virtual support hours to provide instructional support and assistance to students.
 - The school counselor will continue to provide counseling services and support to students in a virtual format.
 - The school psychologist will continue to provide counseling services and support to students in a virtual format.
 - Student Advocates from the Valley Crisis Center will continue to provide virtual counseling and support to students and families.
 - School meals will be provided and may be picked up from the school site.
4. The LEA sought public comments in the development of its plan and took those comments into account in the development of its plan.

Describe the LEA's policy or practice that provided the public with an opportunity to provide comments and feedback and the collection process. Describe how any feedback was incorporated into the development of the plan.

MCOE has sought public comments in the development of our plan through a regularly scheduled Board Meeting on June 21, 2021. Public comments were sought for the revision of the plan at the regularly scheduled Board Meeting on August 16, 2021. All public comments were taken into account in the development and amendment of this plan to ensure the health and safety of all students, educators, and other school and LEA staff.

In addition, the LEA provides the following assurances:

- The LEA has made (in the case of statutorily compliant plans) or will make (in the case of new plans) its plan publicly available no later than 30 days after receiving its ARP ESSER allocation.
Please insert link to the plan: www.mcoe.org
- The LEA sought public comment in the development of its plan and took those public comments into account in the development of its plan.
- The LEA will periodically review and, as appropriate revise its plan, at least every six months.

- The LEA will seek public comment in determining whether to revise its plan and, if it determines revisions are necessary, on the revisions it makes to the plan.
- If the LEA revises its plan, it will ensure its revised plan addresses each of the aspects of safety currently recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), or if the CDC has revised its guidance, the updated safety recommendations at the time the LEA is revising its plan.
- The LEA has created its plan in an understandable and uniform format.
- The LEA's plan is, to the extent practicable, written in a language that parents can understand, or if not practicable, orally translated.
- The LEA will, upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provide the plan in an alternative format accessible to that parent.
- The following person or persons is/are the appropriate contact person for any questions or concerns about the aforementioned plan.

Please list name(s), title(s), address, county, and contact information for the person or persons responsible for developing, submitting, and amending the LEA plan.

May Moua, Director of Student Programs

Merced County Office of Education 632
West 13th Street
Merced, CA 95341
209-381-6648

Susan Coston, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education

Merced County Office of Education 632
West 13th Street
Merced, CA 95341
209-381-6711

COVID-19 Safety Plan

For Local Educational Agencies (LEAs or equivalent) in ALL TIERS:

I, May Moua, post to the website of the local educational agency the COVID Safety Plan, which consists of two elements: the [COVID-19 Prevention Program \(CPP\)](#), pursuant to CalOSHA requirements, and this **CDPH COVID-19 Guidance Checklist** and accompanying documents, which satisfies requirements for the safe reopening of schools per CDPH Guidance on Schools

(<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2021-22-School-Year.aspx>)

I confirm that reopening plan(s) address the following, consistent with guidance from the California Department of Public Health and the local health department:

- 1. Stable Group Structures (where applicable): How students and staff will be kept in stable groups with fixed membership that stay together for all activities (e.g. instruction, lunch, recess) and minimize/avoid contact with other groups or individuals who are not part of the stable group. Provide specific information regarding:**

How many students and staff will be in each planned stable, group structure? (If planning more than one type of group, what is the minimum and maximum number of students and staff in the groups?)

Stable group sizes will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on classroom and school space and implementing mitigation strategies (e.g., masking) consistent with current CDC K-12 School Guidance.

If you have departmentalized classes, how will you organize staff and students in stable groups?

The exact structure of departmentalized classes will depend upon the needs and resources at a given school site. Departmentalized classes may be structured in the following ways:

- A single stable group occupies one classroom and educators rotate between groups, or smaller groups move together in staggered passing schedules to other rooms/areas they need to use (e.g., science labs) without allowing students or staff to mix with others from distinctive groups.
- Teachers and support staff from different content areas may work in teams that serve a stable group. For example: math, science, English, and history teachers might work as a team with a set group of students they share.
- Students in one stable group that stays together may receive in-person instruction from one or two teachers and support staff dedicated to that group

- and receive virtual instruction from teachers in other subject areas.
- Block scheduling may be utilized to reduce the number of courses students take in any one day, therefore minimizing student/staff interactions.
 - Stable groups could switch schedules or membership after a break at the quarter, trimester, or semester to provide opportunities for students to take additional classes without substantial group mixing.
 - The school year may be divided into even smaller time units in which students study one or two subjects intensively, completing all of the work they might normally have completed in a semester or a year, staying in stable groups with only 1 or 2 teachers during this time.

If you have electives, how will you prevent or minimize in-person contact for members of different stable groups?

Electives may be offered virtually or organized so that no group of students takes more than one elective in a term and the elective teachers do not work with more than one or two groups.

- Elective teachers may be made part of stable groups.
- Elective teachers may employ other techniques to minimize cross-group exposure, such as teaching outdoors, masking or other mitigated strategies.

Other Guidelines for Stable Groups

Stable groups of students will be established to stay together for all activities, when feasible. The stable group structure minimizes the mixing and movement of students and staff, which mitigates the spreading of germs, enables health providers to trace contacts in the event of an infection, and minimizes the need for potential closures. The guidelines governing the stable group model for students are as follows:

- Stable groups of students will share the same classroom each day and have the same meal and recess times (except where otherwise noted).
- The use and maximization of outdoor spaces will be prioritized.
- Activities where there is increased likelihood for transmission (such as singing) are permitted outdoors.
- No non-essential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations with people who are not fully vaccinated will be permitted on campus.

2. Entrance, Egress, and Movement within the School: How movement of students, staff and parents will be managed to avoid close contact and/or

mixing of cohorts.

- Coordinators, teachers, and Principals will develop directionality plans to minimize clusters of students and staff entering/exiting buildings and classrooms.
- Arrival and drop off-times and locations will be staggered to minimize exposure across groups.
- Routes for entry and exit will be clearly marked, using as many entrances and exits as possible.
- Entrance and exit of school transportation vehicles will be staggered to minimize students congregating.
- Directionality/Signage will be in place for each campus to encourage distancing in passing areas.
- All signage, directionality plans, and distance markings will be developmentally appropriate and easy for students to understand.
- Minimizing contact between adults will be prioritized at all times.
- Recess, meal, and restroom breaks will be staggered across stable groups. Emergency restroom breaks will be handled on a case-by- case basis in a way that does not allow for contact between stable groups.
- Furniture and play spaces will be rearranged to maximize distance
- Outdoor space will be utilized when practical.
- No non-essential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations with people who are not fully vaccinated will be allowed on campus.
- Parents will wait in their vehicles when picking up/dropping off students. Special Education students will be escorted to the parent's vehicle by a staff member.
- For schools that utilize metal detectors, Principals will consult with the School Resource Officer and Campus Student Supervisors to develop a plan for minimizing contact during wandng.
- For schools where student altercations are a concern, Principals will consult with the School Resource Officer and Campus Student Supervisors for guidance on minimizing contact between staff and students during conflicts.

3. Face Coverings and Other Essential Protective Gear: How CDPH's face covering requirements will be satisfied and enforced for staff and students.

All staff and students will utilize face coverings in accordance with CDPH guidelines unless a person is exempt as explained in the guidelines.

(<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2021-22-School-Year.aspx>)

Masks are optional outdoors for all K-12 school settings.

TK-12 students are required to mask indoors, with exceptions per CDPH face mask guidance.

Adults in TK-12 settings are required to mask when sharing indoor spaces with students.

Persons exempted from wearing a face covering must wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their exemption status/condition permits.

People are exempt from the requirement if they are under age 2, have a medical or mental health condition or disability that would impede them from properly wearing or handling a face covering, those with a communication disability, or when it would inhibit communication with a person who is hearing impaired.

Specific guidelines for staff use of face coverings are as follows:

Each work site will provide clean, undamaged face masks and ensure they are properly worn (over the nose and mouth) as required by orders from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) or local health department.

Employees may provide their own face masks or use the disposable face masks provided at the point of entry to the site. The following are exceptions to the use of face masks in the workplace:

- When an employee is alone in a room
- While eating and drinking at the workplace, provided employees are at least six feet apart and outside air supply to the area has been maximized to the extent possible if indoors
- Employees wearing respiratory protection in accordance with CCR Title 8 Section 5144 or other safety orders.
- Employees who cannot wear face masks due to a medical or mental health condition or disability, or who are hearing-impaired or communicating with a hearing-impaired person. Alternatives will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Specific tasks that cannot feasibly be performed with a face mask, where employees will be kept at least six feet apart.
- Any employee not wearing a face mask or other effective alternative or

respiratory protection for any reason shall be at least six feet apart from all other persons unless the unmasked employee is tested at least twice weekly for COVID-19.

Other guidelines related to the use of face coverings and other protective gear include:

- A cloth face covering or face shield should be removed for meals, snacks, naptime, or when it needs to be replaced. When a cloth face covering is temporarily removed, it should be placed in a clean, safe area and clearly marked with the student's name and date, until it needs to be put on again.
- Education/training will be provided to all staff and families in the school community on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>). Training will also include policies on face covering exemptions (<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx>).
- Schools will offer masks or other appropriate face coverings to any student without one to prevent unnecessary exclusions from learning.
- Any student who does not meet the exemption requirements and refuses to wear a mask will be excluded from in-person learning settings. Schools will offer alternative educational opportunities for students who are excluded from campus because they will not wear a face covering, including an opportunity to enroll in MCOE's Independent Study program.
- Face covering policies apply on school buses and any vehicle affiliated with the school that is used to transport students, staff, or teachers to and/or from a school site
- School transportation vehicles will have a supply of unused masks for students who may not have one, and bus drivers will be trained on exemption guidelines.
- 3-ply surgical masks are recommended.
- Workers or other persons handling or serving food must use gloves in addition to face coverings.

- Disposable gloves will be provided to staff in other appropriate situations, such as in the handling of frequently touched objects.
- Face coverings, goggles, and disposable gowns are available for staff as needed.
- Desk shields will be placed on each teacher's desk.
- Essential sanitizing equipment will be provided (hand sanitizer, hand soap, disinfectant sprays/wipes)

4. Health Screenings for Students and Staff: How students and staff will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and how ill students or staff will be separated from others and sent home immediately.

Employee Health Screenings:

- Before first returning to in-person work, employees must review and acknowledge the [MCOE COVID-19 Protection Program \(CPP\)](#) expectations for reporting to work.
- Daily, each employee must take their temperature. Any temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher is defined as a fever. Any staff with fever or symptoms will be advised to stay home and follow the protocol for quarantining/testing/returning to work as described in the CPP.

Student Health Screenings:

- Parents will conduct health screening questions and temperature checks of students before students are sent to school or enter school transportation and instructed to keep their child at home if the child is feeling ill or has symptoms of COVID-19, even if symptoms are very mild, and to get their ill child tested for SARS-CoV2.
- Each site will have a health and safety station (touchless thermometer, face coverings, gloves, hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray/wipes).
- If a student's temperature is 100.4 degrees or above, the student will be isolated and sent home.
- Students will be monitored for signs of illness and immediately isolated/sent home if they exhibit any of the following:
 - Headache
 - Fatigue
 - Shortness of Breath or difficulty breathing

- Cough
- Muscle or body aches
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Inability to participate in routine activities
- Behavior changes
- Persistent crying.
- Staff and students should self-monitor throughout the day for signs of illness; staff should observe students for signs or symptoms of illness to support students who are less able to self-monitor or less likely to self-report.
- Any students exhibiting symptoms will be required to immediately wear a face covering and wait in isolation until picked up by their parent/guardian.
- Isolation protocol:
 - Staff will contact the student's parent/guardian.
 - The student will be taken directly into the private isolation room/area of the classroom with staff supervision.
 - The door/space of the isolation room/area will remain closed off as much as possible.
 - Signage will be placed on the door/area to indicate it is an "ISOLATION ROOM/AREA".
 - Staff should limit entering and exiting the isolation room/area to avoid unnecessary exposure. If it is safe to do so, only one staff member should be assigned to the isolation room/area.
 - While in the isolation room/area, staff will wear a face mask, KN95 mask or face shield with drape. If staff need to attend directly to the student and cannot safely social distance, they should also wear gloves and a disposable gown.
 - While staff and the student are in the isolation room/area, they are to practice physical distancing to the extent possible.
 - The student will utilize a vinyl mat/desk-chair while waiting for pick up
 - The mat/desk-chair will be disinfected after each student use
 - The student will remain in the isolation room/area for no more than 1 hour or until the parent/guardian picks up the student, whichever is sooner.
 - If the student is not picked up after 1 hour, school staff will take the student home.

- Parent or guardian will be provided with written information regarding their child's symptoms and the steps to take to return to school.

5. Healthy Hygiene Practices: The availability of handwashing stations and hand sanitizer, and how their safe and appropriate use will be promoted and incorporated into routines for staff and students.

- Students and staff will be taught and have the following topics reinforced: washing hands (<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html>), avoiding contact with one's eyes, nose, and mouth (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention-H.pdf>), and covering coughs and sneezes (https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html).
- A schedule for handwashing/hand sanitizing will be established in all stable groups and teachers will reinforce the schedule. Students and staff will wash their hands frequently throughout the day, including upon arrival at work/school; before and after eating; after coughing or sneezing; after classes where they handle shared items; before and after using the restroom; and after any direct contact with another student or staff member.
- Students and staff should wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap, rubbing thoroughly after application. When hand-washing is not practicable, students and staff will use hand-sanitizer. Fragrance free hand sanitizers are recommended, and children under age 9 should only use hand sanitizer with close adult supervision. Hand sanitizers must be 60% alcohol content or greater and not contain methyl alcohol.
- Staff will model and practice handwashing and the use of hand sanitizer.
- Adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, tissues, face coverings, and hand sanitizers will be available in all campuses/classrooms.

6. Identification and Tracing of Contacts: Actions that staff will take when there is a confirmed case. Confirm that the school(s) have designated staff persons to support contact tracing, such as creation and submission of lists of exposed students and staff to the local health department and notification of exposed persons. Each school must designate a person for the local health department to contact about COVID-19.

Actions to be taken when there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 with a staff member:

In accordance with [MCOE's COVID-19 Prevention Program](#), MCOE will take all of the following steps in response to a COVID-19 case in the workplace.

- Determine the day and time the COVID-19 case was last present and, to the extent possible, the date of the positive COVID-19 test(s) and/or diagnosis, and the date the COVID-19 case first had one or more COVID-19 symptoms, if any were experienced.
- Determine who may have had a COVID-19 exposure. This requires an evaluation of the activities of the COVID-19 case and all locations at the workplace which may have been visited by the COVID-19 case during the high-risk exposure period.
- Give notice of the potential COVID-19 exposure, within one business day, in a way that does not reveal any personal identifying information of the COVID-19 case, to the following: a.) All employees at the workplace and their authorized representatives. b.) Independent contractors and other employers present at the workplace. If student(s) were exposed, send a notice, developed in collaboration with the Merced County Department of Public Health, to parents to inform them that a case of COVID-19 in a staff member has been reported and that the school will work with the Merced County Department of public health to notify exposed people.
- Offer COVID-19 testing during their working hours, at no cost to employees who had potential COVID-19 exposure in the workplace.
- Provide employees with the information on the COVID-19-related benefits to which the employee may be entitled under applicable federal, state, or local laws. This may include any benefits available under workers' compensation law, Labor Code Sections 248.1 and 248.5, Labor Code Sections 3212.86 through 3212.88, local governmental requirements, the employer's own leave policies, and leave guaranteed by the collective bargaining agreements.
- Investigate whether any workplace conditions could have contributed to the risk of COVID-19 exposure and what could be done to reduce exposure to COVID-19 hazards.
- Keep all personally identifying information regarding COVID-19 cases or persons with COVID-19 symptoms confidential. All COVID-19 testing or related medical services provided by the employer under this Section and Sections 3205.1 through 3205.4 shall be provided in a manner that ensures the confidentiality of employees.
- Arrange for cleaning and disinfection of the classroom and primary spaces where the case spent significant time. This does not need to be done until students and staff in the area have left for the day.

- Contact tracing for staff is conducted by a designated Human Resources Employee, who will inform the Merced County Department of Public Health of the positive case.
- The staff member who tested positive will be excluded from the workplace until return-to-work requirements are met.
- Staff members who had COVID-19 exposure (as identified through contact tracing) will be excluded from the workplace for 14 days after the last known exposure to a COVID-19 case.
- Continuing and maintaining an employee's earnings, seniority, and all other employee rights and benefits when determined that the COVID- 19 exposure is work related.
- Providing employees at the time of exclusion with information on available benefits.
- Refer to the Merced County Department of Public Health Covid-19 Decision Tree for Schools for further guidance
(https://drive.google.com/file/d/16YtzlqHtyfVW_tziHxTB2cww_a07M0gC/view?usp=sharing)

Actions to be taken when there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 with a student:

- Follow the guidelines contained in the Merced County Department of Public Health Covid-19 Decision Tree for Schools
(https://drive.google.com/file/d/16YtzlqHtyfVW_tziHxTB2cww_a07M0gC/view?usp=sharing) and the California Department of Public Health Guidelines
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2021-22-School-Year.aspx> regarding contact tracing, testing, and return to school.
- Contact tracing for students will be conducted by Principals/Coordinators at the school level and Adult ROP level and Coordinators for the Special Education Program.
- Send a notice, developed in collaboration with the Merced County Department of Public Health, to parents and staff to inform them that a case of COVID-19 in a student or staff member has been reported and that the school will work with the Merced County Department of public health to notify exposed people.
- Arrange for cleaning and disinfection of the classroom and primary spaces where the case spent significant time. This does not need to be done until students and staff in the area have left for the day.
- Implement online/distance learning for student cases if they are well enough to participate.

Should multiple cases or a major outbreak of COVID-19 occur at an MCOE workplace or school site, MCOE will follow the specific guidelines contained within its [COVID-19 Prevention Program](#).

To further support contact tracing, MCOE will:

- Maintain confidential staff self-assessment documents for one (1) year.
- Require all essential visitors to school campuses to sign in for contact tracing purposes.

7. Physical Distancing: How space and routines will be arranged to allow for physical distancing of students and staff.

In accordance with CDPH and CDC K-12 Guidance as of July 12, 2021, in-person instruction can occur safely without minimum physical distancing requirement when other mitigating measures are in place (e.g., masking, vaccination, etc.).

Ventilation in indoor and confined spaces (e.g., school transportation vehicles) will be optimized following CDPH Guidance on Ventilation of Indoor Environments and Ventilation and Filtration to Reduce Long-Range Airborne Transmission of COVID-19 and Other Respiratory Infections

Guidelines for Distancing

- Use and maximization of outdoor space for activities will be prioritized where possible.
- Stagger arrival and drop off-times and locations as consistently as practicable to minimize scheduling challenges for families.
- Maximize entry and exit points and utilize signage and floor markers to decrease congestion and reinforce proper distancing.
- Serve meals outdoors or in classrooms instead of cafeterias when possible. Where cafeterias or group dining rooms must be used, keep students together in their stable groups, ensure physical distancing, hand hygiene before and after eating, and consider assigned seating.
- Distancing on school transportation vehicles
 - Maximize space between students and between students and the driver on school transportation vehicles and open windows to the greatest extent practicable.
 - Face covering policies apply on school buses and any vehicle used to transport students, staff, or teachers to and/or from a school site.
 - School transportation will be equipped with extra unused face coverings for students who may have inadvertently failed to bring one. Ventilation considerations are also important on school transportation vehicles; use open windows as much as possible to improve airflow.
 - Clean frequently-touched surfaces on school transportation vehicles daily.
 - School transportation vehicles will be thoroughly cleaned daily and after transporting any individual who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.

Drivers will be provided cleaning materials, including but not limited to wipes and disposable gloves, to support cleaning of frequently touched surfaces during the day.

- Students refusing to wear face coverings will not be allowed on school transportation vehicles.

8. Staff Training and Family Education: How staff will be trained and families will be educated on the application and enforcement of the plan.

MCOE will provide effective training and instruction that includes:

- COVID-19 policies and procedures to protect employees and students from COVID-19 hazards.
- Facts about how COVID-19 is spread and how to minimize spread.
- The importance of frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, using hand sanitizer when staff/students do not have immediate access to a sink or hand washing facility, and that hand sanitizer does not work if the hands are soiled.
- Proper use of face masks and the fact that face masks are not respiratory protective equipment - face masks are intended to primarily protect other individuals from the wearer of the face mask.
- COVID-19 symptoms, when to seek medical attention, the importance of obtaining a COVID-19 test, and not coming to work/school if the staff member/student has COVID-19 symptoms.
- The plan and procedures to follow when staff or students become sick at school.

Training for students and parents will take place in-person or virtually. Regular messages will be sent home about safety precautions and teachers will model and reinforce healthy habits and social skills with students. Teachers will also create lessons using social stories to educate the students and families on these topics. As the understanding of COVID-19 develops and public health guidelines evolve, changes will be communicated to staff, students, and parents in a timely manner.

Vaccination Information

Parents/guardians will be asked to voluntarily provide vaccine verifications for his/her child(ren), similar to immunization information

(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#anchor_1625662083743). Vaccine verification information will inform implementation of prevention strategies as they may vary by vaccination status, such as testing, contact tracing efforts, and quarantine and isolation practices.

Schools will continue to provide regular communications to the school community regarding COVID-19 vaccinations and available vaccination clinics in the community. When feasible, schools will coordinate with the local department of public health to schedule vaccination clinics for students and staff on campus.

- 9. Testing of Staff: How school officials will ensure that students and staff who have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 will be rapidly tested and what instructions they will be given while waiting for test results. Describe any planned periodic asymptomatic staff testing cadence. Note different testing cadence based on county tier status, if applicable.**

MCOE will follow the **the CDPH K-12 School-Based COVID-19 testing strategies** (<https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/332/2021/07/School-Testing-Considerations.pdf>)

Staff may be referred to free testing sites throughout the community or testing sites operated at MCOE locations.

Staff with symptoms will be referred to appropriate testing sites in the community. They will be instructed to quarantine in accordance with state and local guidelines while awaiting their test results, and to follow the return- to-work guidelines spelled out in [MCOE's COVID-19 Prevention Program](#)

- 10. Testing of Students: How school officials will ensure that students who have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 will be rapidly tested and what instructions they will be given while waiting for test results. Describe any planned periodic asymptomatic student testing cadence. Note different testing cadence based on county tier status, if applicable.**

MCOE's student testing plan will follow **the CDPH K-12 School-Based COVID-19 testing strategies** (<https://testing.covid19.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/332/2021/07/School-Testing-Considerations.pdf>)

Students with symptoms will be referred to local healthcare delivery systems or appropriate testing sites in the community. Students will be instructed to quarantine in accordance with state and local guidelines while awaiting test results, and to follow the return-to-school guidelines spelled out in the CDPH Guidance (<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Guidance-on-Returning-to-Work-or-School-Following-COVID-19-Diagnosis.aspx>) and the Merced County

procedures after testing positive

(<https://www.co.merced.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/26240/Testing-Positive-Guidelines-English?bidId=>)

11. Identification and Reporting of Cases: At all times, reporting of confirmed positive and suspected cases in students, staff, and employees will be consistent with reporting requirements.

MCOE will adhere with all federal, state, and local guidelines for identification and reporting of cases, including those of the California Department of Public Health

(<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Schools-Case-Reporting-Directive.aspx>).

Current guidance calls for MCOE to notify the Merced County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) of any positive cases, and to collaborate with the department to conduct contact tracing and to notify persons who may have been exposed. Each school and program has a designated staff member who is responsible for notifying and collaborating with MCDPH.

12. Communication Plans: How the superintendent will communicate with students, staff, and parents about cases and exposures at the school, consistent with the privacy requirements such as FERPA and HIPAA.

The Superintendent and MCOE Administrative Team will interface with school sites, staff, students, families, and the appropriate public health agencies to communicate about cases and exposures in a way that is consistent with FERPA, HIPAA, and all other guidelines. Reports will not reveal any personal identifying information of the COVID-19 case, and MCOE staff have been trained in how to follow these regulations when communicating with the school community about COVID-19.

13. Consultation: (For schools not previously open) Please confirm consultation with the following groups:

Labor Organizations

Name: Merced County Office Teachers Association

Date: January 26-29, 2021

Name: California School Employees Association Chapter 541

Date: January 26-29, 2021

Parent and Community Organizations

Name: All MCOE Parents

Date: January 19-22, 2021

- 14. Local Health Officer Approval: Send plan to Local Health Officer for certification and approval.**

For Local Educational Agencies (LEAs or equivalent) in PURPLE:

- Local Health Officer Approval:** The Local Health Officer, for Merced County has certified and approved the CSP on this date:_. If more than 7 business days have passed since the submission without input from the LHO, the CSP shall be deemed approved.

This area is not applicable as the Merced County Office of Education reopened for in-person instruction while Merced County was in the red tier.

Additional Resources:

COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, 2021-22 School Year
(<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2021-22-School-Year.aspx>)

Safe Schools for All Hub

(<https://schools.covid19.ca.gov/>)