

## **PRESS RELEASE: Marin Public Health Recommends Delaying Full Return of In-Classroom Learning**

Marin County, CA – Marin County Public Health is recommending local TK-12 schools begin the new school year with a gradual approach that includes distance learning and small in-person groups. During the first few weeks of school, staff and students can be oriented to the health and safety [guidelines](#) to reduce the spread of COVID-19, developed jointly by Marin County Public Health and Marin County Office of Education. Safety measures include the use of face coverings for K-12 students and staff, regular hand and classroom sanitizing and social distancing.

“Our goal is to support the health and well-being of students and staff during this process,” said Marin County Superintendent of Schools Mary Jane Burke. “We recognize the concerns and anxiety surrounding the return to the classroom and believe that a transitional approach will allow staff and students to feel more comfortable in this new environment.”

The phased-in approach is in response to surges in COVID-19 cases regionally and in Marin County, including an increase in cases among youth and young adults. This activity, in combination with a surge in hospitalizations, placed Marin County on the State’s “County Monitoring List.” In addition, the State of California is facing statewide testing scarcity, making it difficult to ensure adequate testing resources are available to perform rapid testing if a local school should experience any COVID activity.

During this transition period, districts may choose to bring small groups of students into the classroom to get to know their new classroom environment and conduct academic and emotional assessments. Teachers can return to the classroom and meet with students individually or in small cohorts, as well as prepare for the eventual return to in-classroom instruction when Marin Public Health deems it safe to do so. Depending upon local data, safety readiness, testing availability and with guidance from Marin County Public Health, local districts may begin in-person instruction no sooner than September 8.

“We still have hope that we can bring students back into schools full time, but with the current spikes we’re seeing in Marin County and across the region, we need more time,” said Dr. Matt Willis, “We’ve been watching the data closely. If we open when community transmission is high, we may have to close classrooms more frequently, which could be even more disruptive.”

Students have been in classroom environments, using protocols developed by Marin County Public Health, through pop-up childcare programs since March 19. On May 18, Marin County special education and alternative education classes reopened under the guidance of Public Health. Since March, Marin County Public Health has guided the development of protocols for returning students to the classroom. Online training and

community discussions for implementing protocols are available on the Marin County Office of Education's [Rethinking Schools](#) website.