



August 30, 2021

Hon. Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
First Floor, State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Hon. Toni Atkins
Senate President pro Tempore
State Capitol, Room
Sacramento, CA 95814

Hon. Anthony Rendon
Speaker of the Assembly
State Capitol, Room
Sacramento, CA 95814

Hon. Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

Hon. Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: School Opening and Budget Trailer Clean Up on Independent Study

We write on behalf of the California Association of Suburban School Districts (CALSSD). As the new school year begins, in-person school has been the choice for the majority of our students and families. Teachers, staff, principals and district leaders are heartened by the return to full-time in person instruction, with independent study programs available for those who choose. Our schools and communities are encouraging all those eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccination and are participating in events to promote opportunities. Schools are enforcing state health orders including mask wearing and school facilities have been enhanced to provide additional layers of safety mitigation including ventilation systems, equipment, and custodial services. We thank the Legislature and the Administration for supporting students, parents and educators throughout the pandemic and for providing state policies and fiscal resources to help schools address the impact of the pandemic.

Despite these measures and the commitment to in-person instruction, the spread of the Delta variant and the increasing numbers of students requiring quarantine and contact tracing are proving challenging to our schools. We urge the legislature to address these five critical issues outlined below before the legislative recess begins:

- Authorize students to participate in short term independent study for more than 15 days a year when the reason for placement is due to quarantine. The current 15 day per year maximum on individual students for short term independent study is bumping up against the rise in positive COVID-19 cases and student quarantine requirements. We believe that individual students may require quarantine multiple times in the year. In addition, for some students identified through contract tracing, they may have to quarantine for 20 days at a time.
- Clarify that LEAs will not lose ADA funding for students who have to quarantine. We were glad to hear last week on the Safe Opening of Schools webinar convened by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, that there would be clean-up language on this issue. There will likely be quarantines happening throughout the school year and it does not seem that J-13A waivers are designed for these types of occurrences.
- Authorize local use of instruction via a virtual platform, e.g., zoom, in instances where full classes or schools must quarantine and ensure that local educational agencies will receive ADA in these

situations. When AB 130 was drafted and enacted, the COVID-19 context was different, and we did not anticipate the large numbers of students who would be required to quarantine. In instances where large numbers of students from the same school must quarantine, educational continuity, operational logistics, and parent choice make this limited-term distance learning a reasonable solution.

- Provide flexibility to allow any qualified credentialed teacher to teach independent study courses, even if they are not a part of the IS team, for short periods of time for those students who are in quarantine. The existing teacher shortage has been exacerbated by COVID-19. Now, with ever increasing numbers of students participating in independent study, the challenges are at a critical point.
- Amend definition of parent-pupil-educator conference in EC 51745.5 (c) so that not all parties who signed the pupil's written agreement must be present. There are numerous individuals who sign these agreements (see Ed Code 51747 (g)(9)(A)). For example, clinicians who provide behavioral health services, speech, and language therapists, Title I tutors. In many instances, conferences are called to address specific issues, that might pertain to one class. The requirement to have all the staff who signed the agreement present at every conference will result in scheduling delays in order to accommodate so many different individuals' calendars. We recommend requiring the presence of staff who provide services directly related to the meeting purpose.

These actions will make an important difference for schools to ensure they can accommodate student needs in light of the continued pandemic and provide high quality teaching and learning.

Thank you again for your commitment to California's students and to the health and safety of all Californians. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us via e-mail at andrea@ballfrostgroup.com and jeff@ballfrostgroup.com.

Sincerely,



Andrea Ball
Legislative Advocate
California Association of Suburban School
Districts



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Copy: Hon. Tony Thurmond, State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Members, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
Members, Assembly Budget Committee