



Student Spacing in Classrooms

The California Department of Public Health's COVID-19 and Reopening In-Person Instruction Framework & Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, 2020-2021 School Year (January 14, 2021, last revised March 20, 2021) strongly recommends at least 3 feet of spacing between student chairs in a classroom.

Students should wear masks consistently and appropriately regardless of the distance between student chairs. However, when students or staff are not masked (e.g., when eating or drinking), schools should maintain 6 feet of spacing as much as possible.

A review* of Massachusetts public schools that included over 500,000 students and nearly 100,000 staff found that student spacing of less than 6 feet can be instituted without impacting student or staff case rates as long as masking and other mitigation recommendations are followed.

Contra Costa County K-12 schools that need to use between 3 to 6 feet of student spacing in order to reopen or continue with a phased reopening should consider:

- **Focusing** on high mask adherence among students and staff.
- **Using** additional mitigation tools such as stable groups, ventilation, partitions between desks, and arranging desks to minimize face-to-face contact.
- **Identifying** alternative snack and lunch locations where students are spaced at least 6 feet apart and can remove their mask to eat and drink.
- **Potential disruptions** to in-person instruction in classrooms with less than 6 feet of spacing. Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of a case for more than 15 minutes in a 24-hour period. Should there be a student with COVID-19, a classroom with desk spacing less than 6 feet will likely result in more close contacts needing to quarantine for 10 days compared to a classroom with 6 feet of spacing.
- **Reminding** families of quarantine requirements for close contacts. Students seated less than 6 feet from a student with COVID-19 will need to quarantine for 10 days, even if face coverings, face shields, partitions, and ventilation were used. These tools help reduce the likelihood of transmission and infection but do not prevent the need to quarantine after close contact.
- **Grouping** students who are in the same household, same before/after school program, or same sports team when feasible.
- **Continuing** to offer distance learning for students/families who request it.

Although students may be spaced between 3 to 6 feet, staff-to-staff desk spacing and staff-to-student desk spacing may not be less than 6 feet.

Additional school reopening information is available on the CDPH Safe Schools For All Hub: schools.covid19.ca.gov/ and www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/for-schools-and-childcare

*Link to Massachusetts public school review: academic.oup.com/cid/advance-article/doi/10.1093/cid/ciab230/6167856?fbclid=IwAR2j0fAmQltmtzdVQ3IS_ByvnnvH2Uaxs5V1gJXeucf_iwy-e-gD4GOZrq4

March 22, 2021

