

**Subject:** FW: Newsom mandates virtual instruction in most California counties for now

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**From:** POLITICO California Pro

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**To:**

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By Mackenzie Mays

07/17/2020 03:08 PM EDT

SACRAMENTO — California Gov. Gavin Newsom laid out new rules Friday that will require schools in counties with high rates of coronavirus infections to keep campuses closed until they can meet certain public health standards.

Schools located in counties that are on the state's coronavirus watch list must not physically open for instruction until they have been removed from that monitoring list for 14 consecutive days. As of Friday, more than half of California's 58 counties were on the [state's watch list](#), including most of Southern California, the Central Valley, Sacramento region and Bay Area.

About 80 percent of California's population lives in a watch list county. The order applies to all schools, including private and charter programs that might have been planning to run in-person classes.

For schools that do reopen, students in the third grade and above will be required to wear a face covering. An official in the Newsom administration told POLITICO Friday that California is the first state to take school mask enforcement further and will exclude students from schools if they refuse to wear a mask and force them to partake in distance learning instead.

Teachers in schools able to reopen will be routinely provided coronavirus testing by their districts.

The news comes as the California Teachers Association has [ramped up demands](#) to prolong distance learning as the state is slammed by a surge in Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations. It marks a significant shift from Newsom's deference to local control, though he is allowing county health officers to provide waivers to elementary schools if requested by a superintendent, labor unions and other community members.

"Learning is non-negotiable. The virus will be with us for a year or more, and school districts must provide meaningful instruction in the midst of this pandemic. In California, health data will determine when a school can be physically open – and when it must close – but learning should never stop. Students, staff, and parents all prefer in-classroom instruction, but only if it can be done safely," Newsom said in a statement Friday.

*To view online:*

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/states/california/story/2020/07/17/newsom-mandates-virtual-instruction-in-most-california-counties-for-now-1301843>



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