

TO: The California Teachers Association
FROM: Hart Research Associates
DATE: March 24, 2021
RE: Recent Survey of California Voters and Parents on Reopening Schools

From March 9 to 16, Hart Research Associates interviewed 1,839 registered voters in California about their views on whether, when, and how the state's public schools should be reopened for in-school instruction. The interviews were conducted both online and by phone, and the sample was constructed in a way that allows us to analyze the results among a representative cross section of all voters statewide, as well as among parents of public school students across the state.

Summary of Key Findings

1. Californians are feeling more optimistic about the direction of the state than they were since we last polled in September, and a growing number think that the spread of coronavirus is mostly under control. Still, a majority of all voters (53%) and the subset who are public school parents (63%) continue to say that the spread of the virus remains a serious problem in the area where they live.
2. Majorities of voters (62%) and parents (70%) approve of the decisions their school district has made about whether, when, and how schools should reopen for in-person instruction, and 65% of parents are satisfied with their child's education in the current school year.
3. By large margins, voters (72%) and parents (75%) believe that the more important consideration in reopening schools should be keeping students, staff, and families as safe as possible, as opposed to getting students back into classrooms as soon as possible. A plurality of parents (44%) think that schools are reopening at the right pace; to the extent parents think otherwise, more say they are opening too quickly (33%) than too slowly (23%).
4. Parents of color are especially likely to be cautious. While pluralities of parents of color say schools are reopening at about the right pace, 40%

- of them think schools are opening too quickly, while only 17% say schools are opening too slowly. (Among white parents, by contrast, 44% say schools are reopening at the right pace, 25% say too quickly, and 31% say too slowly.) And while a majority of white parents say they are comfortable sending their own child to school for in-person instruction at this time, fewer than half of parents of color feel that way.
5. Since last fall, there has been an increase in confidence among parents that schools are safe for in-person learning—but still, fewer than half (47%) are very or fairly confident. By 57% to 35%, parents say they are more worried about their children being infected or infecting other family members than about their children falling behind academically if schools only offer remote learning. When schools do reopen, half (51%) will opt to keep their child participating in remote learning from home.
 6. Fewer than one in four voters or parents want schools at any level (elementary, middle, or high) to reopen fully; pluralities want to see hybrid learning, and the remaining one-third or so would prefer to see remote education only. Only when transmission rates are below 5% do a clear majority say public schools in a given county should be open for in-person instruction. Even if a county is in the red zone (5% to 7.9%), only 40% of voters and 46% of parents say that schools in that county should be open.
 7. Large majorities of voters (78%) and parents (76%) think that schools need to make major modifications in order to reopen for in-person instruction. What's more, 71% of voters and 63% of parents say schools should reopen for in-person instruction only after teachers have had the chance to be vaccinated.
 8. Public health officials—both Dr. Fauci and the California Department of Public Health—and local teachers are the most trusted by voters and parents to make good decisions about whether, when, and how schools should reopen. Majorities also trust President Biden, the California Teachers Association, and their local teachers union.