

Creating policy-oriented research and research-based policy for K-12 Schools during COVID19

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Guiding questions

- How did you get involved in this work? How did you find the relevant policymakers, introduce yourself and get involved?
- How did unique features of the COVID pandemic shape your work?
- How did you come to understand and help policymakers navigate (or fail to navigate) the high levels of misinformation and polarized politics of the pandemic?
- Tell us about how you framed equity issues in your work. Was any progress made?

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Impetus for the work: personal and professional



Early learnings: Several safe practices emerged

Masks, masks, masks, masks

Physical Distancing

Stay Home when Sick/Screening

Ventilation

Symptomatic and asymptomatic testing

Small, Stable Cohorts

Importance of each? MAJOR Barriers to “Success” Goal

Masks, masks, masks, masks

Physical Distancing

Stay Home when Sick/Screening

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Symptomatic and asymptomatic testing

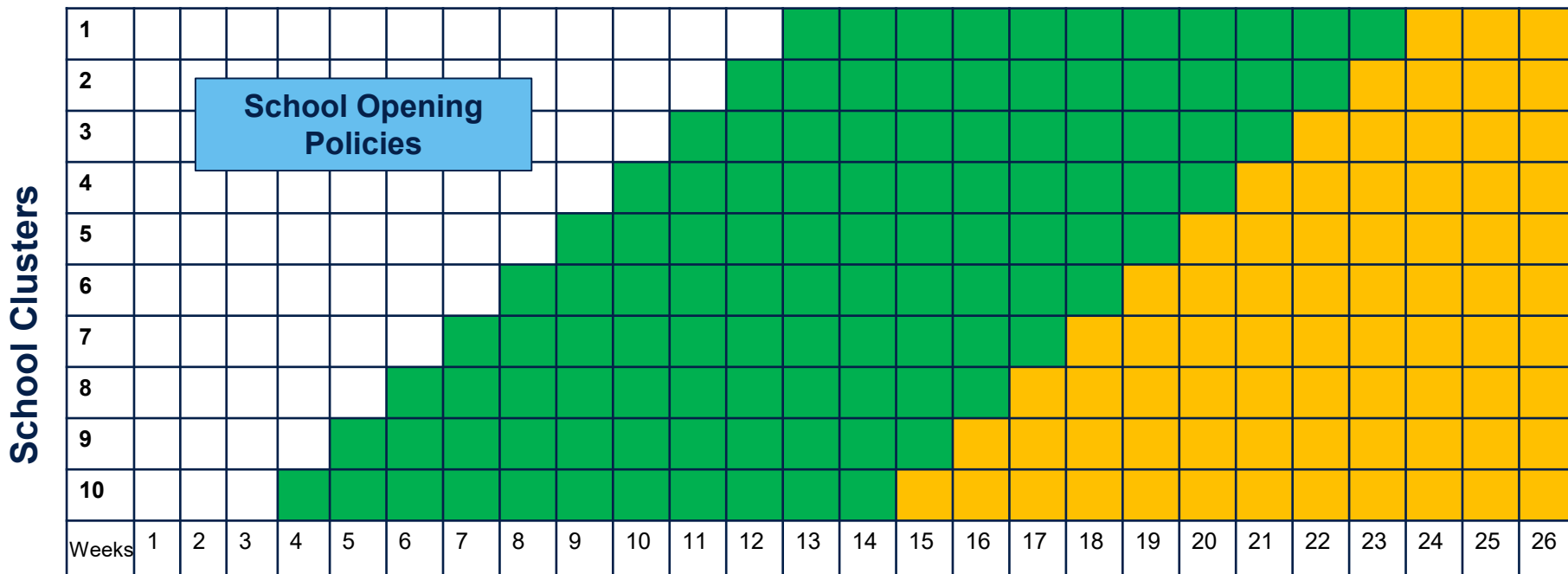
Small, Stable Cohorts

How to create policy-relevant evidence?

- Key step 1: Defining a policy-relevant question (keeping in mind step 4) +/- stakeholders
- Key step 2: Involving stakeholders in refining the question and designing the study (thinking about the potential changes in policy that might result)
- Key step 3: Timeliness
- Key step 4: Sharing the results, interpreting them in context, and sharing policy and implementation implications (“the last mile”)

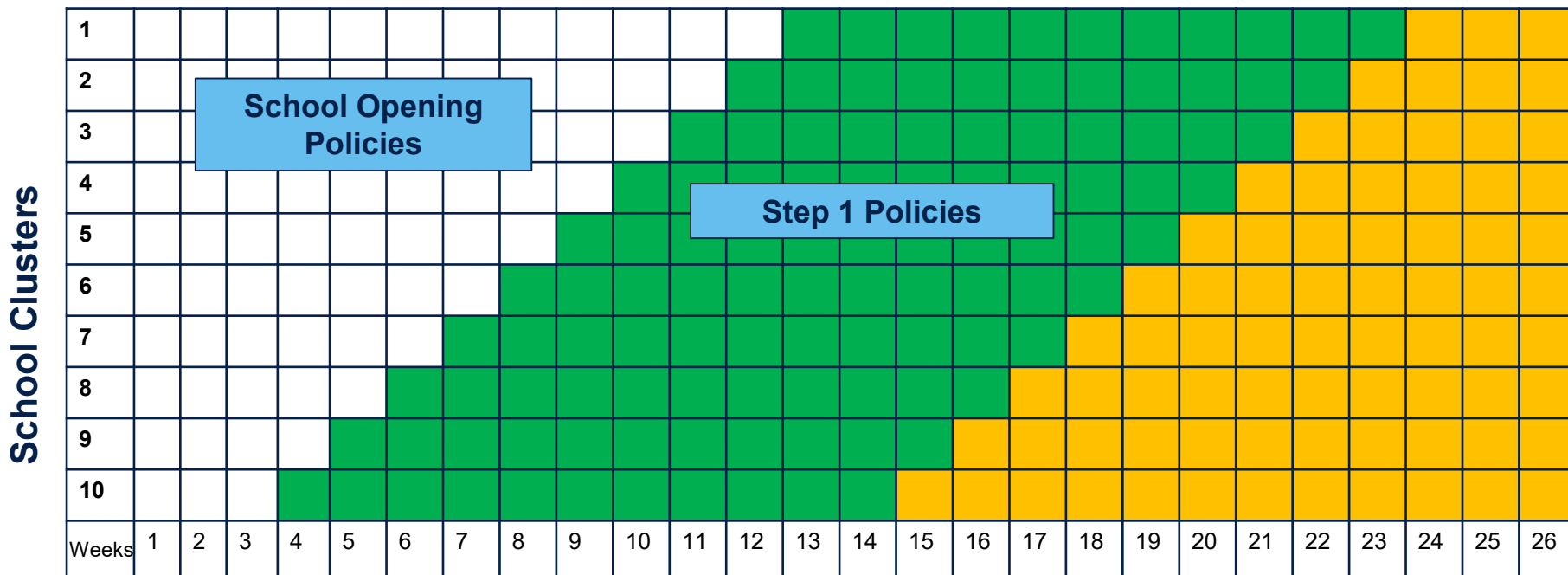
Assessment of safe and successful practices

Stepped Wedge Design



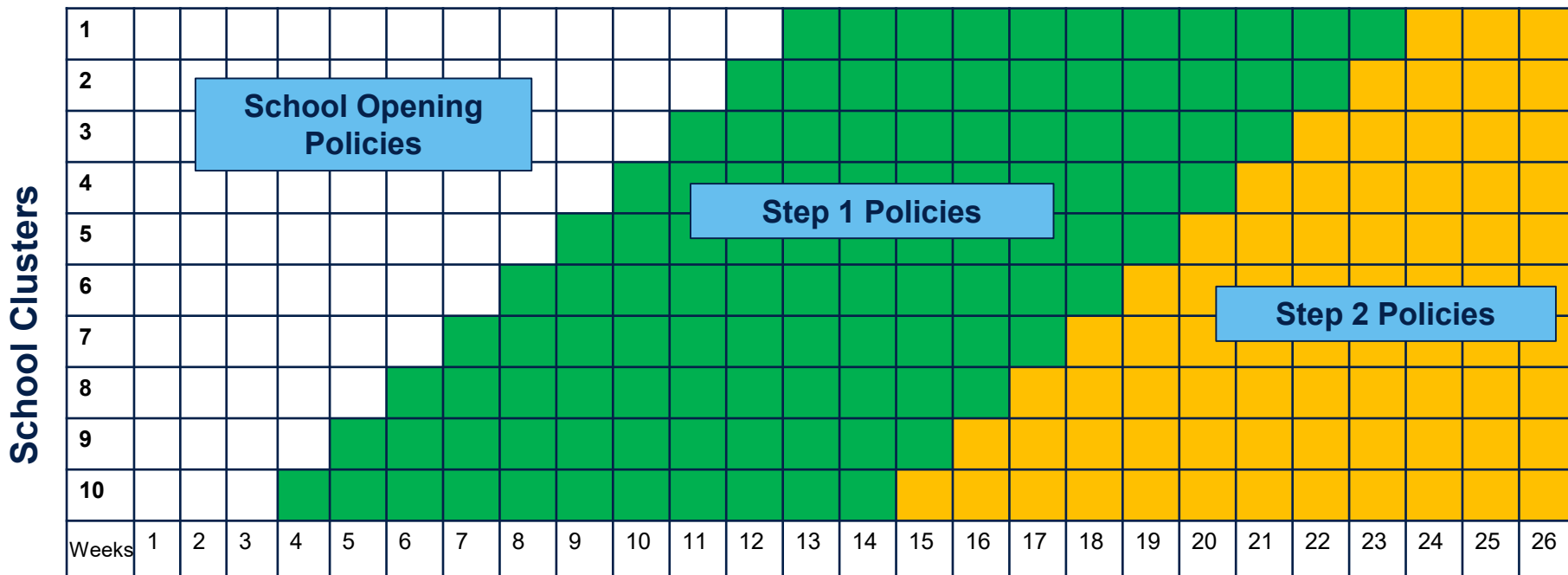
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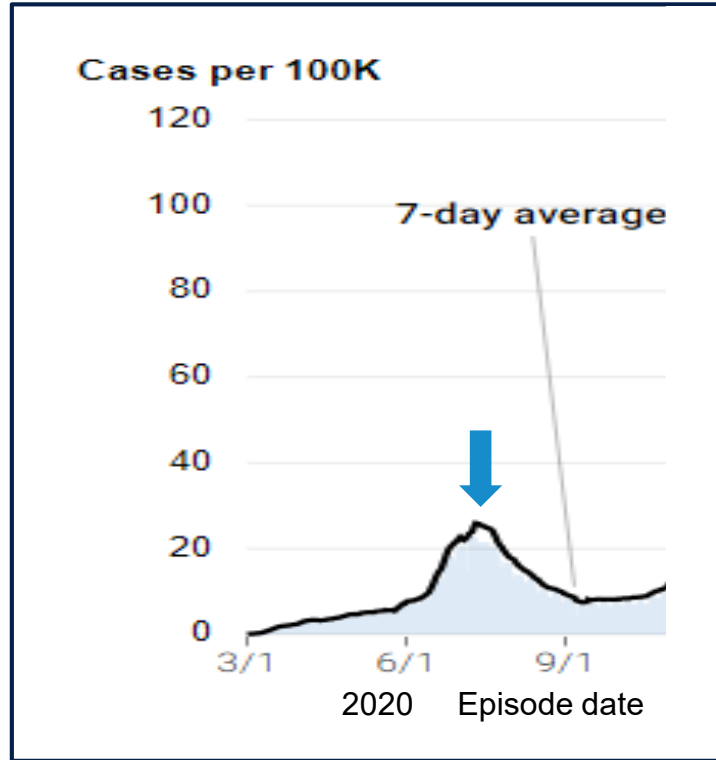


Creating policy-relevant evidence

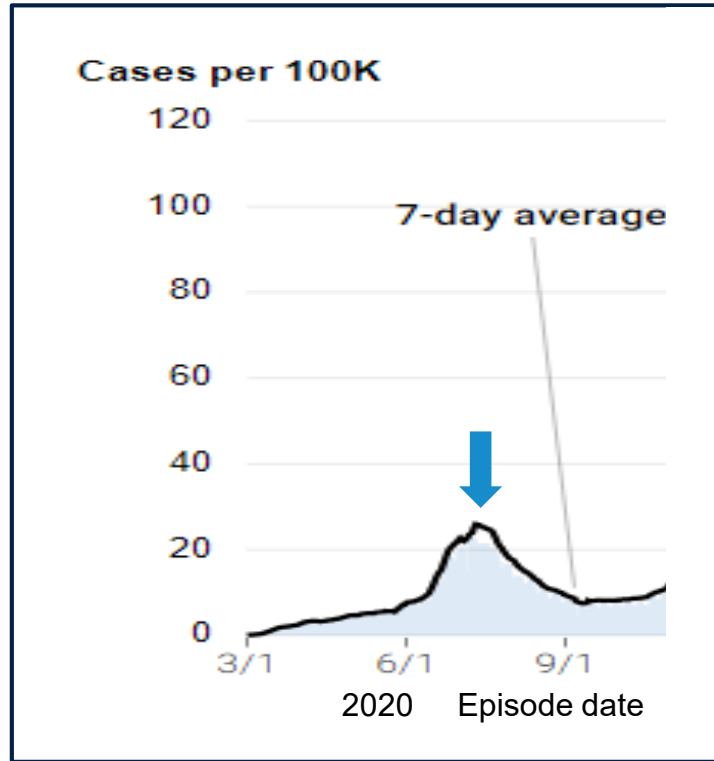
Stakeholders and collaborators

- Key question to inform research: What should the stages be? What are the pain points? What is feasible (logistically, emotionally, public health risk tolerance)?
- Key stakeholders: SFDPH partners, school administrators, teachers, families
- Key scientific collaborators: virology, infectious disease, implementation science, primary care pediatrics, preventive medicine

Summer surge 2020 decreased confidence



Summer 2020 decreased confidence



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Public Health Leadership Stories and Lessons Learned

Part 2: Making evidence-based policy decisions

- How do we put what we know into practice?
 - “The Last Mile Problem”
- Sharing and interpreting the science--thought leadership
 - Medicine Grand Rounds in July 2020
 - CARES UCSF webinars, listserve
 - Media collaboration: NYT op-ed solicitation
 - Chicago public schools testing consultation
- Service
 - SF DPH deployment to support design of school testing strategy for schools
 - CA DPH deployment to lead multi-agency Safe Schools Team

The interplay between branches of government

- March 2020: State of emergency (Executive branch)
- June 2020: Schools held harmless for remote learning (Legislative branch)
- Throughout: Public health agencies and orders (Executive branch)
- Winter and Spring 2021: Legal challenges to school restrictions from the executive branch (Judicial branch)

The interplay between branches of government

- March 2021: SB86—Legislation to incentivize re-opening (Legislative branch)
- April 2021: CDC testing monies for schools (over \$1billion for CA) (Executive branch—managed through the agencies)
- Summer 2021: Sundown of Hold Harmless leg., release of new school guidance, pathway forward for schools knowing Delta is on the way (Executive branch—CDPH)

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The pathway forward (this...)

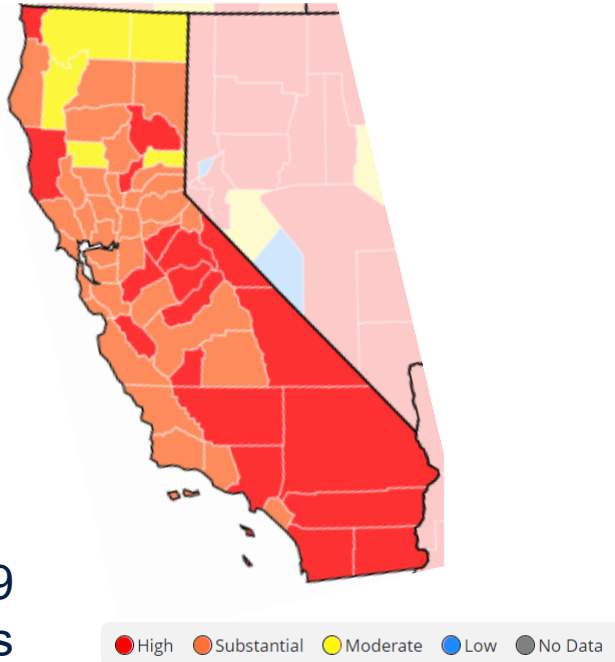


The pathway forward (not this...)

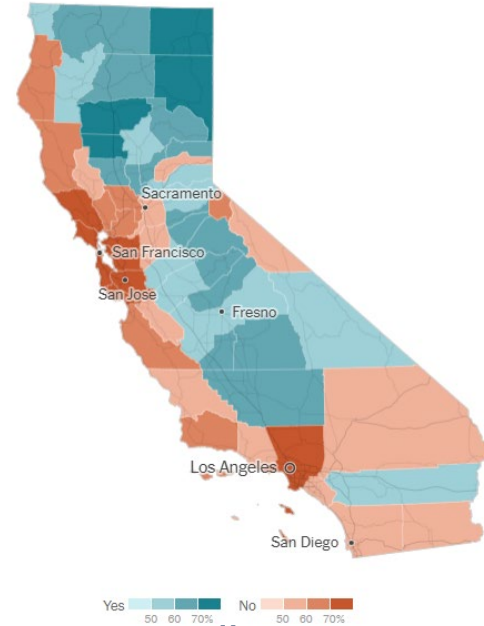


The great diversity of CA's 58 counties

COVID-19
case rates
Dec 2021

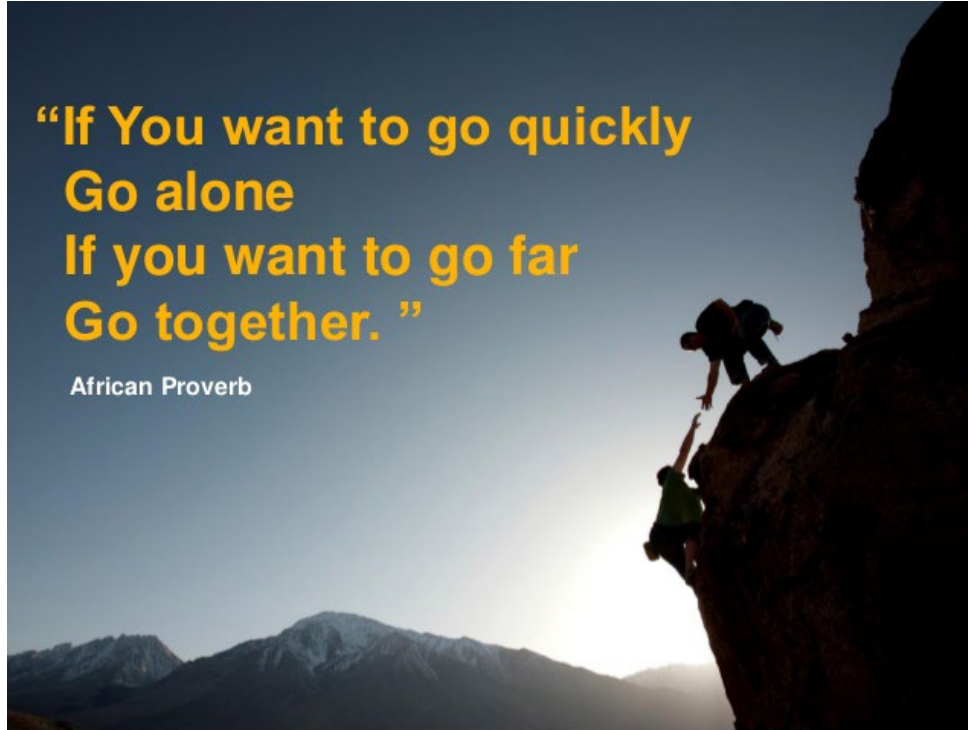


Newsom recall
results



**“If You want to go quickly
Go alone
If you want to go far
Go together. ”**

African Proverb

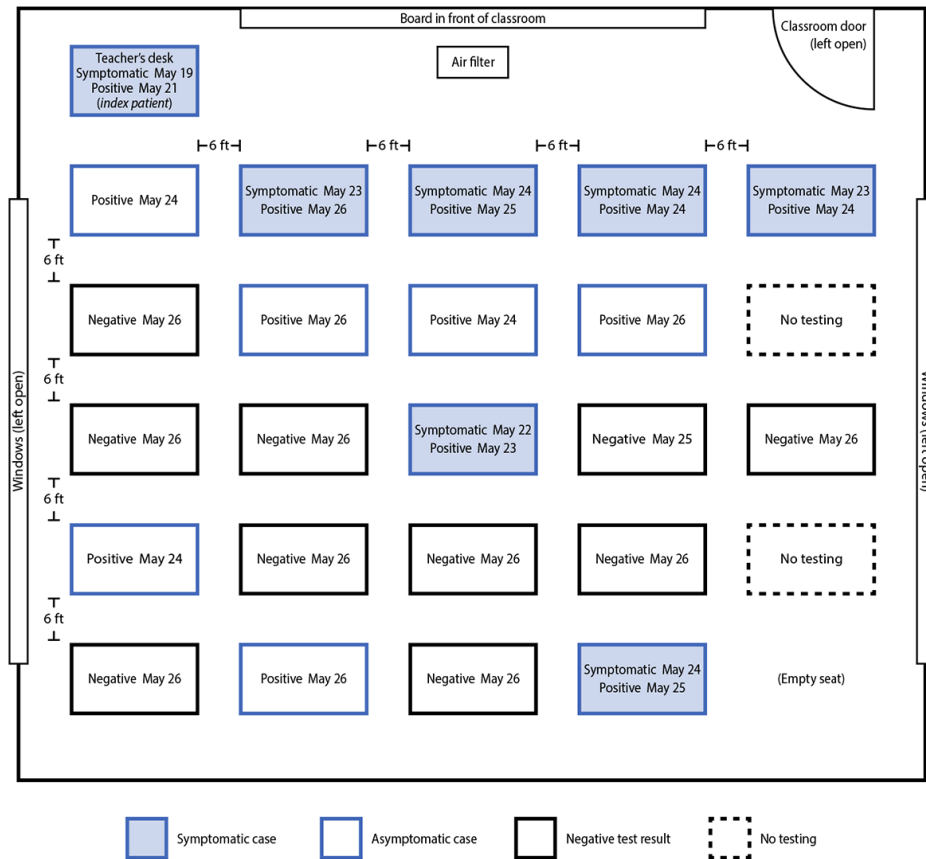


School year 2021-22
Masking in Schools:

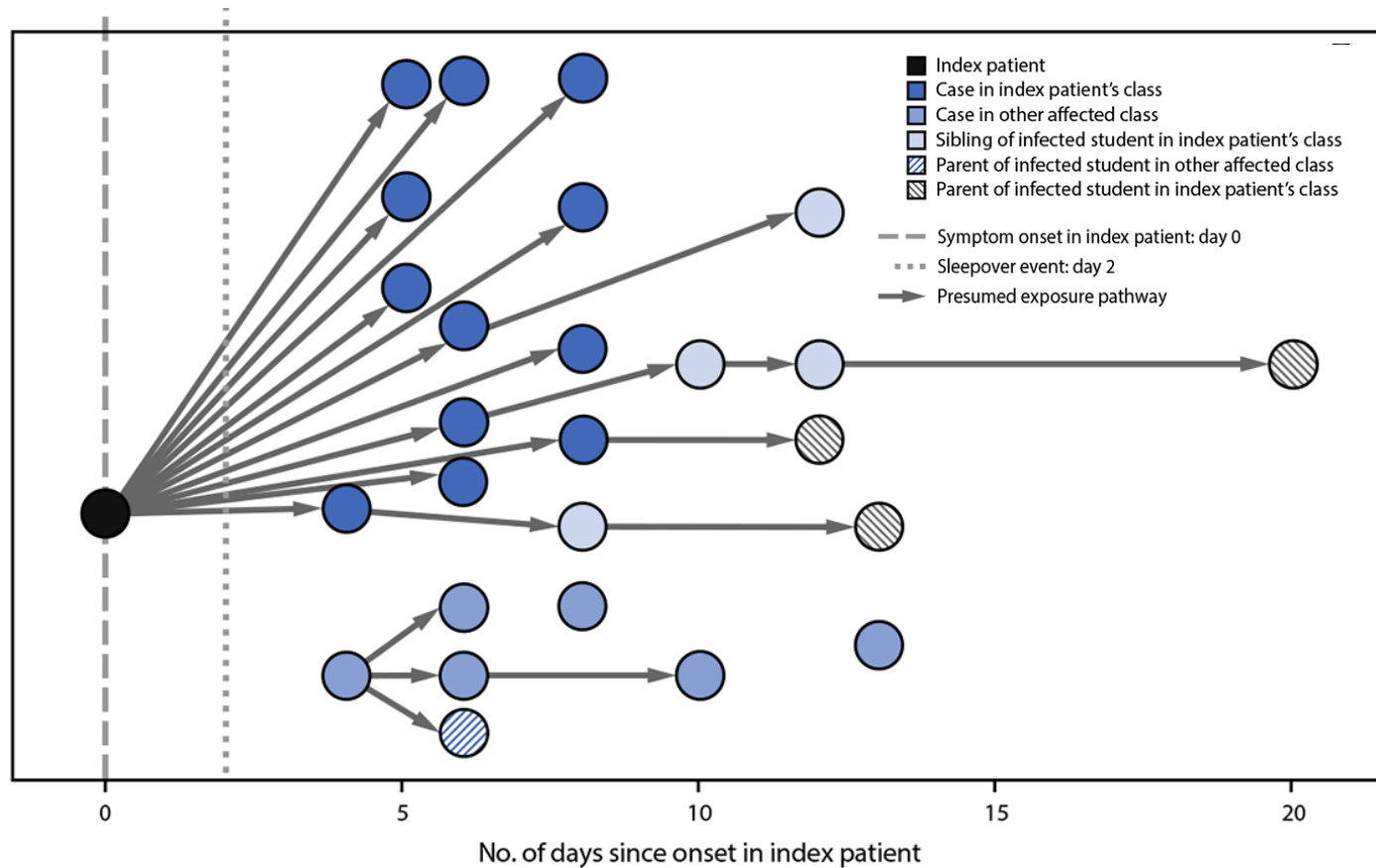
“If we don’t enforce,
COVID enforces”



Outbreak in Marin Elementary School— Delta Associated, May 2021



Outbreak in Marin Elementary School— Delta Associated, May 2021



Cases per 100K

Cases

120

Pending

60K

100

40K

80

60

Distancing
and HS Law
suit

Mask Law suit

40

20K

20

0K

0

3/1

6/1

9/1

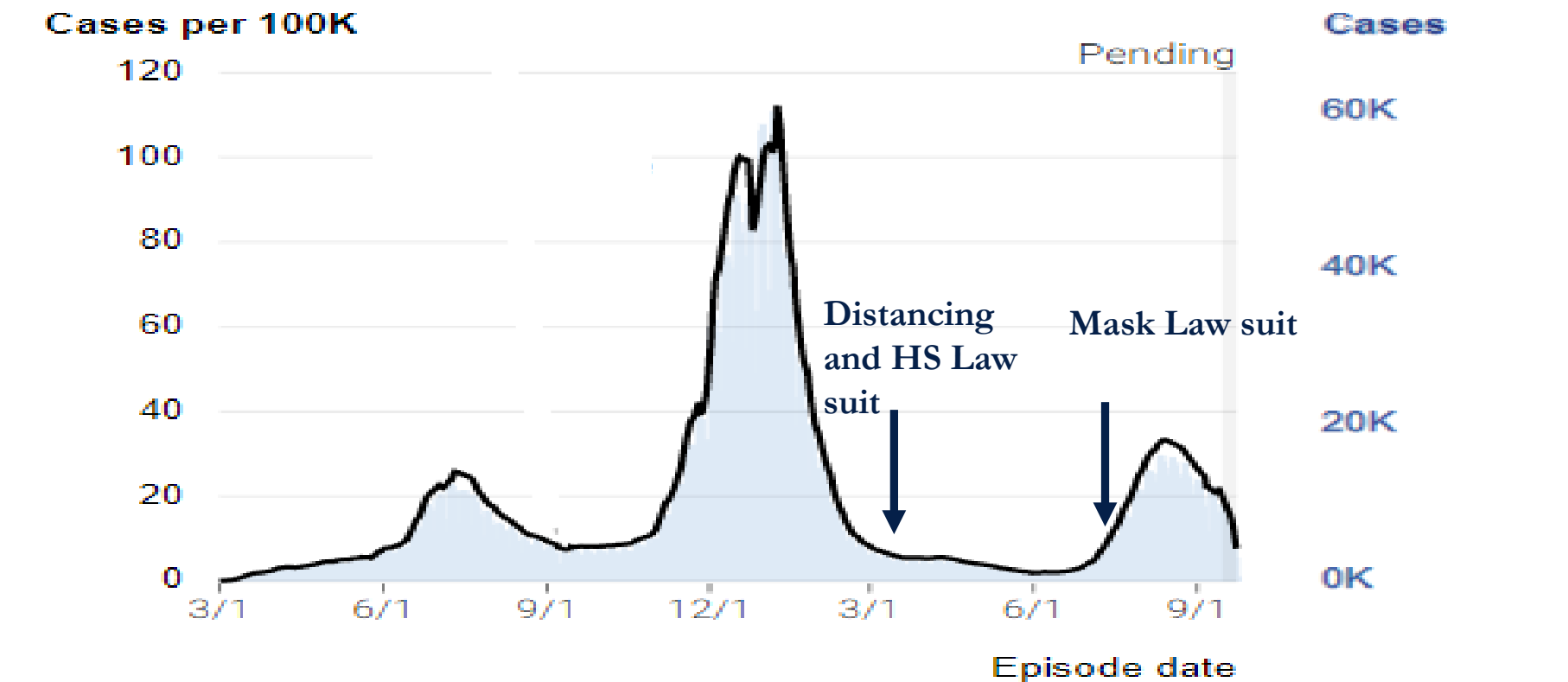
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Episode date



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Equity: Listening for, eliciting, and lifting up voices

- “Please send me emails!”
- Need to remember to listen to the often-silent voices, to reach out to them, otherwise the loud voices dominate.

Key tools for safe and successful CA school 2021-22

- Summer communications campaign to share science and instill confidence—strong focus on equity
- Mask mandate for all, no minimum physical distancing—equity focus
- “Test to stay” for mask-on-mask exposures at any distance and shortened quarantine option
- Vaccination efforts—equity focus
- Testing capacity (\$887 million plus \$300 million for LA)—equity focus

Moving towards endemic

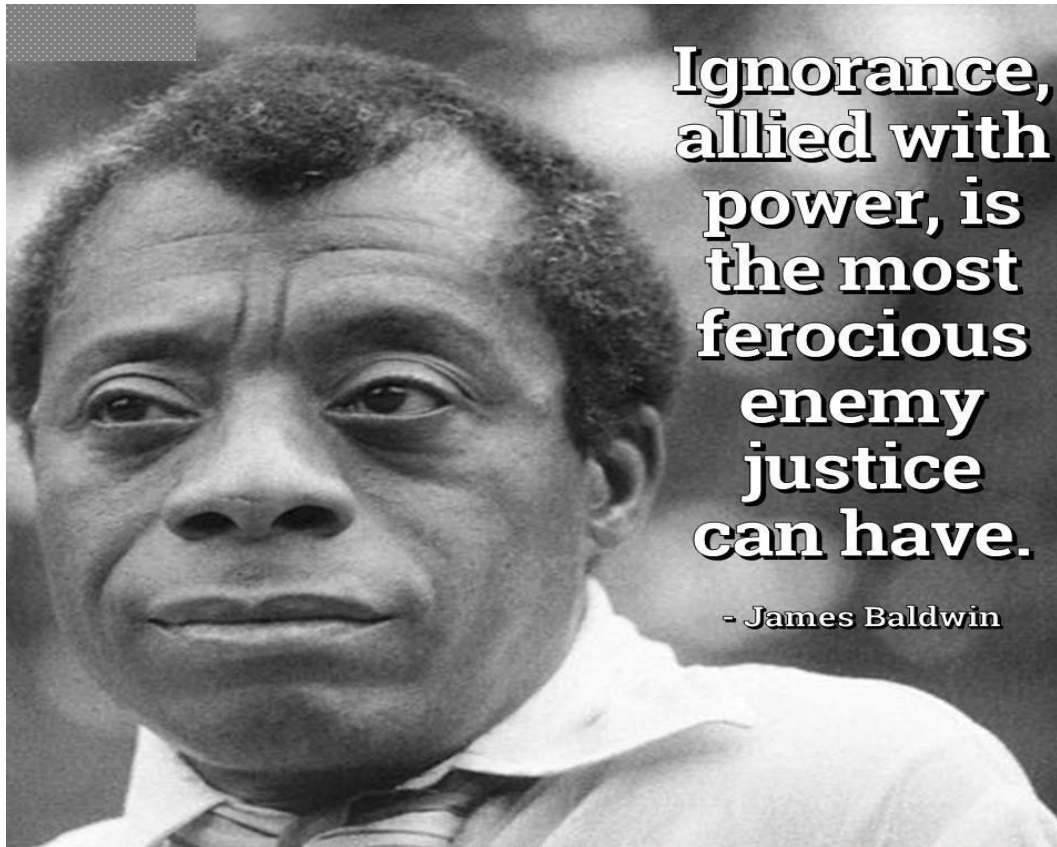
- Focus on keeping kids in school. Shorten or eliminate isolation periods once recovering, without needed to test negative
- Keep focus on vaccines.
- Common sense approach—supporting a stable and less chaotic environment. With an equity focus.

Stories and lessons learned

- Interplay between legislative branch, executive branch, judicial branch
- “Compared to what?” Safe AND Successful
 - Need for better data systems—school days missed to balance COVID infection rate numbers
- “The only way we are going to get through this is unprecedented levels of collaboration”
 - Scientific collaboration
 - Greater transparency and signs of unity across public health, education, finance
 - Community cohesion

Stories and lessons learned

- The great diversity of CA
 - Partnership with local public health officers
 - Partnership with schools
- “COVID is the enemy”
- Fighting inequity: Whose voices get heard? Listen into the silence and lift up all voices



**Ignorance,
allied with
power, is
the most
ferocious
enemy
justice
can have.**

- James Baldwin

Questions?

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