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LOS ANGELES (KABC) -- Substitute teachers are trying to prepare for multiple scenarios when the school year begins. How to handle new security protocols for classroom teaching is just one. To think about kids who don't talk, don't touch, don't play. It has a lot of kids, says veteran LAUSD substitute teacher Annie O'Neil. Substitutes can play an important role. If teaching in the classroom continues, how will the classroom be disinfected when a submarine is called in to replace a teacher infected with coronavirus? They must also be able to switch to online teaching. When a kid gets it in the classroom, does the whole classroom go to distance learning, asks O'Neil? Currently, the district tells parents to be prepared for at least some distance learning. This raises other questions about the subs. If a sick teacher can assign students online homework, does that mean less work as substitutes and thus pay less? I don't think the region can fully appreciate how much work there is going to be. It's going to be less, for sure, but I don't know if they'd be willing to compensate us for that change or that loss, says substitute teacher Danielle Luedner. National education policy specialist Dr Mitchell Lingo believes replacements could have more work than ever before. COVID-19 can cause enough health problems for teachers to leave office or retire, creating unexpected vacancies. Lingo recounts a colleague's report. He told me that they had 14 openings in math and no one has applied for these positions, says Dr. Lingo. In recent months, some students have found benefits in the virtual classroom. One told O'Neil it was easier to concentrate. One girl said: Well you know there's less interference because a teacher can just silence people, narrated by O'Neil. As options are considered, Dr. Lingo calls on school districts to do inventory immediately with their replacement workforce. Find out if they're ready to teach which schools they're willing to teach, how often they're willing to teach, says Lingo, because schools may need all the help they can get. Coronavirus: Health officials show LA County schools have Plan B reopening, as community transmission spikes report correction or typo Which schoolchild isn't happy hearing their teacher is out for the day and class gets a replacement? This can seem like a lot of fun for students. But think of a substitute teacher, whether doing lessons on Zoom or skydiving into a socially distanced classroom with all the risks. With so many regular teachers getting sick, going into quarantine or experiencing burnout, subs are needed more than ever. Substitute Patrice Pullen of Orlando, Florida, finished the challenge early. I had complete regalia on, he said. I had a face shield, my gloves. And I said to the kids, I'm your warrior teacher. You're my warrior. I told you you were so brave. He thinks students are brave because they're in school during a pandemic. Not only that, but he admires them for the teachers' rotating door. The district started the year with everyone learning remotely, but then the school went into hybrid model in-person and online learning. Some teachers didn't want to come back to class, so more submarines were needed, which means Pullen teaches a lot of subjects to many grades. I went from art elementary school to art high school. And then history. And this long-term one that I'm now honoring in biology and chemistry, he said. Pullen admits he doesn't teach biology and chemistry. He is an organizer, which means he is only in the classroom to attend and help students with technical problems, while their regular teacher is engaged in mentoring quarantine at home, practically. But Pullen said he needs it because you can't just have students in the classroom yourself... children who are face-to-face need an adult there. Pandemic teaching requires more teachers. They are necessary to help large or hybrid classes and also to give children special education with the special attention that is needed. Local newspapers are full of stories about neighborhoods scrambling to find the subs. Nicola Soares, president of Kelly Education, a national placement service for substitute teachers, agrees. In every state, every school district has a huge diskuss, he said. He finds that some districts have reduced requirements and no longer ask for a teacher's certificate or anything more than a high school diploma. And Soares thinks the need for submarines will increase if the pandemic continues, as the country was already facing a shortage of teachers before the pandemic began. We don't have enough traditional students coming out of teacher preparation programs to make sure we're supplementing them with openings if you want, he said. Schools have already increasingly relied on long-term substitutes to fill the gaps and keep budgets down. In some ways, the subs are the original gig workers. On average, they make about \$15 an hour, and they rarely receive the same benefits as permanent teachers, such as health insurance and paid time off. While even in normal times the sub is hard at work - having to pick up other teachers' lesson plans for everything from Spanish to algebra gym - in-person work was its reward. Even if you had something like this before COVID, pre-training, you could at least walk around, walk around, see if you have any help and at least students, castrejon said. But these days of subbing online no longer offers these prizes and ends up being little more than having a participation and keeping an eye on students when they're doing their job. Still, Castrejon is in no hurry to get back to class. He lives with his father and doesn't want to risk exposing him to the virus. So the pandemic is a lot of substitute teachers don't know, like full-time teachers, whether it's worth going back to their jobs at all. This should create another problem for school systems: Who goes sub subs? As a not-for-profit news organization, our future depends on listeners like you who believe in the power of the public service press. Your investment in Marketplace will help us remain paywall-free and will ensure everyone has access to reliable, impartial news and information, regardless of their ability to pay. Donate today - any amount - to become a Marketplace Investor. Now, more than ever, your dedication will make a difference. As schools across California tiptoe toward reopening, decisions about whether to routinely test teachers, staff and even students for the COVID-19 virus have proven controversial - and potentially costly. In addition to preventive measures such as mandatory masks, handwashing and social distance on campus, regular testing of school staff can help prevent new outbreaks if the virus continues to spread in the community, public health experts say. California public health officials have largely remained on testing options in individual counties, showing only that school districts work with county health officials to periodically test teachers and employees, depending on community transmission levels and as lab capacity allows. In its guidance to schools, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the usefulness of routine testing of school staff and students is unknown and declined to recommend it. But some U.S. lawmakers are investigating whether the CDC's guidance jeopardized political interference by the Trump administration, which has pushed schools again quickly, The Washington Post reported. California recently signed a Massachusetts diagnostic company to double the state's COVID-19 testing capability, allowing our schools not only to be open but stay open and with some certainty, California Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly said sept. 15 press conference. But there are so many questions left: should testing be compulsory for teachers and staff to return to school? Should students be tested? What about the school volunteers? Who's going to pay for the test? How often should this happen, if at all? I think regular testing would make me feel a little safer, but only if it was part of a complete set of precautions and only concluded in a place where community communication was low said Sarah Ciccarello, who remotely teaches third grade at James Franklin Smith Elementary School in San Jose and is secretary of her local teacher association. TESTING OF COVID-19 remains a contentious issue as public schools negotiate with teachers' unions. In a strongly worded letter, the California Federation of Teachers called for state regulators to ensure that school staff and students are regularly tested to prevent outbreaks. But some union representatives told CalMatters that some teachers are concerned about mandatory tests and their medical privacy. The Ciccarello district, which recently extended long-distance learning until January, has not yet completed its plans to return to school. All we really want is to get back in the classroom and have things normal again, but in the meantime we need to do what it takes to keep our kids safe, said Ciccarello, who recently tested negative for COVID-19 after experiencing respiratory symptoms. Other states and large school districts have reported widespread COVID-19 testing programs for schools. Rhode Island has promised 5,000 tests a day just for school staff and students. Boston tests a rotating 5% of its union teachers every week. Minnesota sends all private and public school staff a saliva test kit that they can use before returning to school, or save them if they experience symptoms. But the ever-increasing scale of school supervision testing in California is daunting. Some school districts serve more students than entire states. More than 6.1 million students attend more than 10,000 California public schools, taking classes with nearly 320,000 public school teachers. It does not even include tens of thousands of other public school employees and employees of many private schools in the state. Nobody's got the money for this. Schools don't have the money for this. And the county doesn't, said Napa County health official Dr. Karen Smith, who served as California's health official from 2015 to 2019. There's a little dead end. I'm sure it'll make everyone nervous. In California, schools can reopen or have reopened - in 11 counties, according to the state's reopening criteria. Schools in another 17 counties placed in California's moderately restrictive red layer, including densely populated Orange and San Diego counties, may reopen if their county's COVID-19 transmission rates remain stable or decrease for more than 14 days. Health officials also approved 527 elementary schools, most of which are private schools, to open in-person guidance as part of local waivers. Ever Flores, a Healdsburg High School counselor and president of the teachers' union, said that no testing provisions have been added to the union's temporary employment contract with the Healdsburg Unified School District, where classes are still online. District officials don't think it was their responsibility, said Flores, who also works on the school board in Santa where he lives. The Agreement, known as the Memorandum of Understanding, will soon be reviewed. District officials did not immediately respond to CalMatters' request for comment. I don't want to be responsible for infecting anyone not knowing that I'm asymptotically positive, Flores said, noting that he and other school staff are sporadically getting their COVID tests because they sometimes need to work on campus. Having the ability to do (testing) once a week or every other week to make sure we all keep each other safe would be ideal, mainly because we have an aging lecturer. I wouldn't want anything to happen to someone who's in danger. Spats over school COVID-19 testing have frayed the tempers of already stressed communities. In Placer County, politically conservative rocklin school officials announced they could not reopen campuses because county health officials said there was not enough timely access to COVID-19 tests and results. Some parents were furious. The confusion continued: After the county board of supervisors lifted the county's state of emergency two weeks later, county health official Dr. Aimee Sisson resigned in protest. There was a lot of finger pointing between school and county health officials, said Rocklin Teachers Professional Association President Travis Mougeotte, a high school history and geography teacher. He said some union members were concerned only about testing school staff, not students. We will do nothing if it endangers the safety of students or staff, Mougeotte said. The union's stuck in the middle. The parents have turned on us... Accusing the union of holding the children hostage. The ugly side of society has come out. I really don't think it's the majority, but they're very loud. Earlier this week, the union filed a complaint against the Rocklin Unified School District arguing that the district had not taken the precautions it promised before reopening schools, including air filters in classrooms. In-person classes are expected to Monday. In, and meanwhile, the Placer County Office of Education has begun training health professionals and creating COVID testing sites for school staff. State officials have recommended that school workers pay for their health insurance. Although national emergency rules require insurers to pay for COVID testing for their essential employees, it is not agreed on how often they should be required to pay for supervised testing, and employees may be charged co-payment. The stakes can't be higher. As schools have reopened across the nation,

recent news of at least six teachers dying from COVID-19 has intensified fears of deadly new outbreaks coming from the campus. In California, more than 61,000 school-age children have been infected since the pandemic began, in about 8% of all cases, closed in March. One Marin City school recently delayed its reopening a week after announcing that an employee tested positive for COVID-19 just days before students had to return. The San Jose Unified School District, with more than 30,000 students, cited concerns about the ability to pay and provide enough COVID-19 testing among the reasons it decided to expand remote learning through the December. Orange County public health laboratory is unable to do surveillance testing for schools, and the burden could strain even private labs, especially during the flu season, Marc Meulman, the county health department's operations manager, told CalMatters in an emailed statement. Some school districts instead have turned to the university's health systems, with their sophisticated labs, for help. Stanford Health Care works in Bay Area school districts, including the district of Burlingame, to test school staff. And some of the university's medical school faculty consult with the Los Angeles Unified School District, the second-largest school district in the country. Dr. Christina Kong, medical director of pathology at Stanford Health Care, said the CalMatters health system would use combined testing, in which individuals' samples are combined for testing, then again if there is a positive outcome to reduce costs and speed results. School staff are tested on a rotating basis, so that every once every two months is tested every two months in accordance with the recommendations of the state. The results will be presented to staff and, if positive, to health officials to start monitoring contacts, but not to school administrators. What I'm surprised about is how many logistical barriers schools have to go through to get testing, Kong said. I didn't think it was that complicated. In the San Diego area, hundreds of Solana Beach School district students and school staff received COVID-19 tests this week as the district's primary schools prepare to re-study on Monday. They are tested periodically throughout the school year under the district's new testing partnership with UC San Diego Health. The coastal school district serving about 3,000 students estimates it will spend between \$500,000 and \$2 million on re-entry and monitoring testing this year. The district is using the money from the federal Coronavirus Assistance, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act to help with costs, said Superintendent Jodee Brentlinger. On a Facebook page for parents of Solana Beach students, Dr. Richard Sacks, a local doctor who treats COVID-19 patients, admonished parents who she said were disputing the need to test, questioning the motives (district) and UCSD Health regarding its testing and even insinuating that they could not have their children tested. Some tests are better than any. Wrote. If schools even identify one asymptomatic person who tests positive, we would potentially avoid the unlimited spread of the virus throughout our school and groundbreaking shutdowns. Send Barbara Feder Ostrov at [email protected]. [Email protected].

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