

# Chapter Talking Points

*February 15, 2021*

## Info for chapter leaders

### Citywide Chapter Leader meeting

- There will be an emergency citywide meeting next Wednesday, February 17 at 4:30 pm. We need to meet to discuss our potential response to the misguided pressure from politicians and others for a physical reopening of our schools before we have the necessary conditions and measures in place to ensure the safety of all, district employees, students, and the community.

It is needless to say the gravity of this moment and the importance of our response, which will be the topic of Wednesday's meeting. Please be sure to attend or have someone representing your site.

- Wednesday, February 17 at 4:30 PM

Register in advance for this meeting

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYvce2rqjoqGND2GiYXKG527VEpBWQdkOm2>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

### Rebuild your Chapter Action Teams Now

- While we are bargaining over hybrid instructional models, the extension of the school calendar, and what constitutes the conditions for a safe reopening of our schools, it is essential that we build our capacity for collective action at every structural level of the union, including having a Chapter Action Team (CAT) at every school and well-functioning clusters in every area.

- We have to be ready to fight against any attempts by the district, county, or state to reopen our schools before it's safe, and we have to be ready to fight in the near future for more funding from the state and federal governments, more staffing and special education support in future bargaining, and a healthcare agreement beyond 2021. We need to build our capacity to play defense and offense with collective action in a fluid and unpredictable environment.
- CATs are an essential component of this fight. Your team facilitates communication between all members in the group and will help you respond quickly when necessary to take action. If you haven't finished putting your team together, this is the time to do it.

## March 3 Area meetings

- Our next Area meetings will be held on Wednesday, March 3. This is a crucial time as we continue to bargain hybrid instructional models, an extended school calendar and the safe reopening of schools. Please be sure to attend or have someone representing your site.

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## Talking points for chapter meetings

### Bargaining update

- The bargaining process continues to be shaped by the changing conditions around us, including community infection rates and the availability of vaccines. In light of these dynamics, UTLA and LAUSD have agreed to shift focus in bargaining from targeted in-person services to hybrid instructional models. **Bargaining on hybrid schedules does not mean that a return to in-person learning is close.** LA County remains firmly in the purple tier, which indicates an extremely high risk level of getting COVID-19 based on cases per capita and test positivity rates.

Embedded in our bargaining framework are the necessary components of a safe return, which include:

- vaccines for all educators and school staff
- safety protocols and multi-tiered mitigation strategies (such as COVID testing, physical distancing, PPE, proper ventilation, isolation/quarantine procedures, and a cleaning regimen)
- LA County out of the purple tier (as currently defined)

We continue to bargain over the extension of the school calendar. LAUSD's proposal would add 10 days to provide students with expanded learning opportunities and social-emotional support in recognition of the trauma experienced by students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and physical school closures. The Board of Education will be voting on the calendar option next month. Any agreement we reach with LAUSD would be put to a vote of the UTLA membership.

## **New CDC guidelines don't fully address big-city challenges**

UTLA released the following statement in response to CDC guidelines issued last week:

- We applaud the CDC's efforts for a national strategy to return to in-person instruction, but the new guidelines released today do not do enough to address the specific challenges of large urban school districts like LAUSD. And most troubling is that they do not require vaccinations for school staff, six-foot distancing in all schools, nor improved ventilation as a key mitigation measure.

We reiterate that the path to a safe reopening must include: vaccines for all educators and school staff, multi-tiered mitigation strategies (such as COVID testing, physical distancing, use of masks, hand hygiene, and isolation/quarantine procedures) and lowered community transmission rates — LA County must be out of the purple tier.

On the same day that the CDC released its new guidelines, LA County Supervisor Kathryn Barger sent a letter to Governor Gavin Newsom, calling for the immediate reopening of K-6 classrooms, even without proper funding for mitigation measures nor vaccinations for school staff. It's clear that political pressure is rising to force a return to in-person instruction. Without important health and safety protocols in place, we know whose lives will be on the line — the low-income communities of color disproportionately impacted by illness and death from the virus.

We ask those like Barger who are pushing to reopen in the purple tier and without lowered community transmission rates: How many infections and deaths are considered “safe”?

While LA educators want nothing more than to be back in classrooms, the risk of community transmission of COVID-19 in Los Angeles County is still too high. UTLA remains committed to the health and safety of our students and our communities.

## **Black Lives Matter at School resolution passes Assembly**

- With the support of UTLA and CTA educators, the California Assembly passed a resolution this month recognizing the first week of February as Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action. The resolution was introduced by Assemblymember Reggie Jones-Sawyer, who said, “This sets aside time to uplift the experiences of the Black community and affirm individuals’ self-worth and right to be treated with respect.”

The resolution had long been in the works, but at the last minute it looked like it was going to be side-lined by Republican legislators before approval. UTLA Board member Ingrid Gunnell and CTA Legislative Advocate Seth Bramble went into action and helped keep the resolution alive through virtual lobbying and organizing a letter-writing campaign.

[\*\*Black Lives Matter at School\*\*](#)

[\*\*Teaching for Black Lives: UTLA Resources\*\*](#)

[\*\*AFT Share My Lesson Black History Month Activities\*\*](#)

[\*\*NEA Black History Month Lessons\*\*](#)

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## **UTLA calendar**

**Feb. 17:** Citywide Chapter Leader meeting

**Feb. 24:** Board of Directors meeting

**March 3:** Area Meetings

**March 10:** PACE/Elementary/Secondary meetings