The **Ventura County Coalition of Educators** (VCCE), composed of seven local educator associations within Ventura County, seeks to promote the safe and healthy reopening of physical school campuses that is guided by data, science, local public health agencies and grounded in the understanding of significantly diminishing risk to staff, students, and communities as paramount for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As members of the coalition we have agreed to advocate and advance the guidelines identified by our parent organizations, the California Teachers Association and the National Education Association, for the safe reopening of schools and facilitation of learning during this unprecedented emergency.

**Current conditions with the surge in spread of COVID-19 in Ventura County indicate that it is unsafe to physically return to the school campus.** The VCCE recognizes the need to use the balance of the summer to collaborate and negotiate intently with district leadership to design, support, and implement robust and rigorous remote learning plans with flexibility that include and increase internet accessibility and devices for all students to begin the 2020-2021 school year.

A physical return to school campuses should only begin as a phased approach once the following conditions have been met as a *minimum benchmark*:

* **A substantial, near zero incidence downward trajectory of cases, hospitalizations, and positivity rates for a minimum of 14 days within the county.** This is the foundational criterion from the May 2020 CDC guidelines for reopening the U.S. economy, and it has been used by Governor Newsom and the California Public Health Department to evaluate county reopening plans in the state.
* **A robust system to ensure widespread, accessible, and frequent testing of students, staff, and parents, coupled with a rigorous contact tracing and case isolation program conducted by the county health department.** Since up to 75% of infected people may not have symptoms, this is the only way to know if a student or staff member is infected and to adequately reduce the risk of community spread at school.
* **Implementation of fully funded, public health recommended COVID-19 prevention measures, including: smaller class cohorts and fewer total contacts, six-foot social distancing, symptom screening, face coverings, personal protective equipment, adequate ventilation, handwashing, cleaning and disinfecting, and firm protections and accommodations for those staff and students at greater risk.**

Collectively, we stand in agreement that students must only return to school when conditions are safe.  Students belong in schools, and our members crave a return to the classroom.  Schools make communities better, schools keep students fed and safe, schools provide families support and assistance.  We remain passionate and dedicated to our students, families and communities and we want what is best for them with safety as a top priority.

Additionally, as a member of the Ventura County Coalition of Educators we agree to extend our support and voice to any member of the coalition that may require additional support to advocate and advance the values identified above during these challenging times. We understand that we are stronger when we stand together. In these most uncertain and unsettling times our partnership remains essential to the continued safety of our members, students, and our communities.