

Why Schools Should Remain Open Despite Other Things Closing

Weighing Risks Beyond COVID-19 is Essential in Our Approach to Ensuring Children's Safety and Education

Risks to children exist beyond the pandemic and should be factored in the decision-making process to include learning, socialization, nutrition, physical safety, school supports, etc.

- The other factors equate to a much larger costs to weigh against going back to in-person education.
- Alternate learning models such as distance learning will substantially widen the achievement gap between families with resources vs those with limited resources.
- Many students have likely already fallen behind in their learning due to school closures in spring 2020, with disproportionately negative effects on students who are economically disadvantaged, living in transition, or who have a disability, etc.
- **The effect is going to be felt for a very long time and some children may never recover.**

Children and their parents are best served when schools are open full time.

- Full-time school is the optimal learning environment for most students.
- A full-time school schedule is consistent with many parents' work schedules.
 - Hybrid learning models often increase transmissible moments due to kids needing alternate care during their "off" days
- Food service programs tailored to meet the nutritional needs of students are well established.
- Children and families are struggling due to lack of access to school support services provided within the school (i.e., behavioral health issues benefit or special developmental needs).
- **Many kids are safer in a school environment than elsewhere.**

Children receiving optimal educational opportunities at school is equivalent to, or perhaps more important than, the function of other businesses that have been deemed "essential."

- Many other much higher risk activities such as bars, restaurants, etc. pose far greater risk for spread than schools.
- Children infected with COVID-19 have a low risk of severe illness.
- Science does not justify children's education being the first casualty when considering closing things.
- Schools have controlled and consistent mitigation strategies in place.
- Mask wearing is similar to vaccinating populations. The more people who are masked or vaccinated, the higher benefit to the whole population.
 - Masks work to slow the spread.
 - Easiest and most effective mitigation strategy
 - Combining additional mitigation strategies is always more effective than relying on a single strategy.
- Athletics and other extracurricular activities can pose risks similar to other social settings, and the sheer nature of the activity can make mask wearing and social distancing impossible or rendered ineffective due to the length of play while mitigation strategies cannot occur.
 - Academics should take precedent over extracurricular activities.

Although children may not be at increased risk for severe outcomes due to COVID-19, parents and grandparents, teachers, and other school staff may be at an increased risk.

- High-risk students and staff members are at risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19 and may need accommodations or to participate via distance learning.
- School staff are kept safer than in many other settings due to the controlled and consistent mitigation strategies within schools.
- School staff spread is coming from community spread and not from instructional settings.