

Minnesota Chapter



The Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics agrees with guidance from the AAP that in-school learning is the best option for children and adolescents to thrive, intellectually, socially and emotionally. Choosing between in-person education and distance/virtual learning can be stressful and every family faces unique challenges. We know that this is a very personal decision and there are no right or wrong answers. Here are some thoughts that may help you as parents to decide the best course of action for your family.

- **Personal and Family Health concerns:** Does your child have significant health issues that would put them at risk being around other children? Are there other family members in your household that have significant health problems that you feel you need to protect by not having your child attend school in person?
- **School safety:** Consider what steps your child's school is taking to keep students safe. What have they put in place about masking and social distancing in the hallways, lunchroom and classrooms? We strongly believe that students of all ages above 2 years old, with very few exceptions, will be able to get used to wearing a mask at school.
- **School Health concerns:** Find out how your child's school will handle students who become ill, for any reason. What are the plans if your child is exposed to someone with COVID-19? What will be your child care plan if they need to stay home?
- **Distance learning:** Do you have a computer or tablet for each person to use for distance learning? Do you have WiFi and can it support multiple people using the internet? Is there a quiet place for your children to do their work? Will there be an adult to help supervise and keep kids on track?
- **Special Needs:** If your child has special needs, how did they do last spring with virtual learning? Were they receiving special services in school prior to last spring and if so, how are they doing without those services? If your child receives special services from school can they get their needs met virtually? If your child has struggles with English as a second language, how did they do with distance/virtual learning last spring?
- **Your child's emotional needs:** Ask how they are doing being at home without the social support they get in person at school. Are they dealing with mental health or behavioral problems that are worsened by not being in school?
- **Your child's thoughts:** Talk to your child to find out what they are thinking. Even young children can tell you how they felt about online learning this past spring, as well as how they are doing being apart from friends at school.
- **Family finances:** Are you able to work from home or do you need to be going in to work? Can you afford additional child care if your child does not attend school in-person? Does your child depend on free or reduced meals at school to provide them with predictable, healthy meals?

These are only some of the issues you will need to consider as you decide what is best for your child and your family. Also, please check with your pediatrician to be sure your child is up-to-date on immunizations for school. We **strongly recommend getting the Influenza vaccine** this fall. Call your doctor's office to get your child vaccinated.

Your pediatrician or primary care clinician is willing to talk with you, but ultimately, the decision how to proceed with learning for your child will be up to you. Please keep in mind that whatever you decide now may need to change throughout the school year as conditions change. It is important to be flexible and be kind to yourself as you navigate these difficult decisions.