



We, the undersigned physicians, based on the best evidence about Covid-19 and childhood development, call for elementary and middle schools to safely reopen this fall.

Our prescription, supported by the American Association of Pediatrics, the National Academy of Sciences, and numerous other scientific bodies, is that elementary and middle schools can safely reopen this fall. The risks of reopening schools for non-adolescent children are low while the rewards -- scholastic, social, and economic -- are significant.

We now know Covid-19 poses an extremely low risk to those under the age 15. In fact, the seasonal flu causes far more deaths in this age group than Covid-19, and we do not close our schools for the flu. Numerous studies show that this age demographic is infected by and faces serious complications from the disease at very low rates. Studies, including one recently published in the journal *Pediatrics*, find that children rarely transmit the disease -- either to other children or adults.

We also know that closing schools causes significant harm to children, especially those from low-income families. If we are to continue to disadvantage children by keeping schools closed, there must be highly compelling scientific evidence that this is of significant national benefit. There is no such evidence. In fact, current scientific evidence suggests the opposite.

With proper precautions these schools can reopen without increased risk to children, teachers, or families.

In-person schooling is vital for the scholastic and social development of children. For every day that children aren't learning, they fall further behind. For roughly half of American students who receive free or subsidized school lunches, school is also a place to get a nutritious meal. Offering physical activity and identifying depression and physical abuse are also valuable parts of in-person schooling.

School closings disproportionately impact the most vulnerable in society, including minorities and the disabled. In-person schooling for non-adolescent children is also necessary to allow parents to return to work and reboot the economy.

Because of children's relative lack of transmission, teachers and family members are also at low risk from school reopening. More broadly, we consider teachers essential workers -- just like grocery store, healthcare, and public safety employees. They play an indispensable role in educating the future of the nation. Virtual schooling, however, has proven to be a complete failure and no substitute for classroom learning.

Students, parents, and the country as a whole need not be consigned to this outcome given the relatively minimal threat that the disease poses to children and those with whom they contact. Based on our medical expertise and the well-documented consequences of keeping children from classrooms, our prescription calls on state, local, and district officials to reopen elementary and middle schools as normal this fall.