

# Debate: Reopening Schools vs. Closing Schools - 9/8/20

Mr. Carter - 7th Grade English/Language Arts

\* Required

1. First and Last Name: \*

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2. Date: \*

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*Example: January 7, 2019*

3. Period Number: \*

*Mark only one oval.*

7-2

7-4

7-5

7-6

## Five Minute Do Now:

One word answers and sentence fragments will not be accepted. Please write your answers in three complete sentences.

## 4. Do Now: Persuade a friend to give up drugs. \*

5 points

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**Learning Target:**

After completing this lesson, I will be able to read two opposing sides of an issue and, after thinking critically, will be able to use the information to develop my own personal viewpoint.

**Debate: Reopening Schools vs. Closing Schools Lesson:**

Please read through the following descriptions and instructions. Then, complete the readings and answer the activity questions.

**Introduction:**

As the coronavirus spread around the country in March and April, schools closed in all 50 states, and most stayed closed through the end of the academic year. The closures were meant to help slow transmission of the virus, which had already sickened parents, teachers, staff, and students nationwide, though it is unclear how many infections occurred in schools.

With school buildings closed, most districts switched to delivering instruction online, a process that posed its own challenges. Experts worried, for example, about how the 17 percent of children who lack a computer at home would complete remote schoolwork, and about how homeless students would find a place to study. Many feared that the shift to online learning would worsen existing racial and economic inequalities in education.

Nevertheless, no matter how much students, family, and the economy may struggle under an online-only education model, there are clear public health risks to reopening schools. Coronavirus cases are rising across the country and surging disturbingly in several states. The problem stands that schools, at least as they're traditionally structured, bring together hundreds of people every day, often for prolonged indoor contact with lots of talking—exactly the kind of activity that experts say is likely to spread the virus.

**Instructions:**

1. Read this article that argues for opening schools. Take note of important information.

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/08/17/covid-19-reopen-schools-give-parents-choices-for-children-column/5596364002/>

2. Read this second article that argues against opening schools. Take note of important information.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/mattperez/2020/08/05/here-are-the-early-opening-us-school-districts-already-battling-cases-of-the-coronavirus/#2d66897d79ba>

3. Fill out the form/worksheet while reflecting on the articles presented.

4. After answering all of the questions and proofreading your answers, submit the form (if participating online) or hold onto your work for a drop off at the school at a later date.

**Assignment Overview:**

After reading the two opposing articles, on the subject of reopening/closing schools, answer the questions with regard to the arguments and then offer your opinion.

Reference Articles:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/08/17/covid-19-reopen-schools-give-parents-choices-for-children-column/5596364002/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/mattperez/2020/08/05/here-are-the-early-opening-us-school-districts-already-battling-cases-of-the-coronavirus/#2d66897d79ba>

**Activity Questions:**

One word answers and sentence fragments will not be accepted. Please write your answers in complete sentences and do not be afraid to let your voice be heard.

- 5. 1) In the article, "Reopen Schools And Let Parents Decide How To Educate Their Children In COVID-19 Pandemic," what was the strongest argument for reopening schools? \* 2 points

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6. 2) Why did you feel that the argument from question 1 was so strong? \* 2 points

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7. 3) In the article, "More And More Early-Opening U.S. School Districts Are Being Disrupted By Positive Cases Of The Coronavirus," what was the strongest argument for closing schools? \* 2 points

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8. 4) Why did you feel that the argument from question 3 was so strong? \* 2 points

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9. 5) Based on the arguments found in the articles, what is your opinion on this debate? Should schools reopen or should schools be closed? Why? \* 2 points

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**Five Minute Exit Ticket:**

Reflect on today's lesson and answer the question(s) using complete sentences.

10. Exit Ticket: In your expert opinion, why do you think that people are so 5 points  
divided about this issue of reopening/closing schools? What information did  
you find in the articles that can support your answer? \*

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**OPINION** *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

# Reopen schools and let parents decide how to educate their children in COVID-19 pandemic

*Children can be harmed by lack of education, nutrition and mental health care. We cannot ignore the casualties of all other conditions to contain COVID.*

**Dr. Elinore McCance-Katz** Opinion contributor

Published 11:55 a.m. ET Aug. 17, 2020 | Updated 3:29 p.m. ET Aug. 20, 2020

Each of us today experiences an unprecedented time in our nation's history — a time that demands reflection, introspection and great caution about our next steps as a people. And, while today is just a moment in time, our actions will have consequences for future generations. In no place is that more true than in decisions around whether or not to reopen our schools.

I am a psychiatrist, and I know the grave consequences of not sending our children to school. I know that pre-pandemic, about 10% of our nation's 74 million children lived with serious emotional disturbances, and more than half of these children get their mental health services in school. This proportion only increases for minority children with mental health needs. I know that unlike what we have seen in the vast majority of children who have contracted COVID-19, the impact of untreated mental illness can be lifelong.

I think about these children and their families every day and wonder what has happened to their treatment, how they are progressing, how they will survive with such a gap in care and services. I also think about the children who do not have these severe conditions but who rely on social interaction with their peers, who need the aid of a teacher to learn — what will their future be? As a physician, I agree with the American Academy of Pediatrics. I have not even a small doubt that children should be in school. But I'm not writing this from that perspective only.

## Parents' job is to weigh risks, benefits

Rather, I write as a mom and because of what I know medically. As a mother, if I had a school-age child, I would be demanding answers. I hope every American parent reading this knows you can and should be demanding answers from your local officials. Parenting is about weighing risks and benefits as we make decisions for our children. Every decision — from the type of car seat you brought your newborn baby home in to whether or not your teenage son was allowed to go to that unsupervised party — is about you as a parent weighing those risks and benefits and deciding what is best for your child.

This one, arguably one of the most important ones — not just where your children will be educated but whether they will be — has been taken from you. Yet it has not been taken from all. My three children, now adults, attended public schools that provided them a great foundation for their future. But, today, I can tell you with certainty that if my children were in a public school system that elected not to open, as a doctor, as a psychiatrist, as an infectious disease epidemiologist and as a mother, I would want them in school despite the risk of COVID-19.

As so many parents are doing today, I would remove them from the public school system and pay for them to be educated elsewhere. I would have that choice to weigh the risk of my children getting COVID-19 against my children not getting the education so critical for their growth and development, and I would choose to educate them.

### ***Whose making the decisions about schools: School reopening debate shows power of local school boards***

The reality is that for millions of Americans, this choice does not exist. State and local officials have taken away your ability to parent your children. Why, as a mother, shouldn't you be able to do the risk analysis you do with everything else simply because your income may be a certain level? When a school is closed, the message is that your child's education is less important than the risk of COVID-19, that mental health services are less important than the risk of COVID-19. It tells you that the risk of your child getting poor nutrition is less important than the risk of COVID-19. It tells you that your child's special needs provided for in school are less important than the risk of COVID-19. It tells you that your ability to go to work and feed your family is less important than the risk of COVID-19.

These officials decide all of that. I ask — who are they to make that decision for you?

And again, we must remember the “you” here are only those who might not be able to afford to make a different decision if they wish to. Private schools in my county were ordered closed, but after 10,000 signatures of paying parents and only 48 hours, that decision was overturned.

Minority children are disproportionately underrepresented in American private schools. As we struggle with race relations in our country, why is it that local politicians who claim so vigorously to support movements like Black Lives Matter make decisions that will have a disproportionate impact on the ability of young Black and brown students to get the education they deserve?

## **Open schools to protect US future**

When schools are closed, we simply accept that there will be millions of children who do not get educated, but more important we also accept that there will be certain children who continue their education without interruption. A 2018 study found that 17 million students lacked high-speed internet at home, and that a third of Black, Latino and American Indian/Alaska Native families do not have high-speed home internet.



The divide and disparity that exists might have begun years before us, but its perpetuation and expansion will be a direct result of the actions knowingly taken today. I can only imagine the protests 20 years from now.

***Target money, make it work: Racial inequities will grow if schools don't open safely this fall. Here's an action plan.***

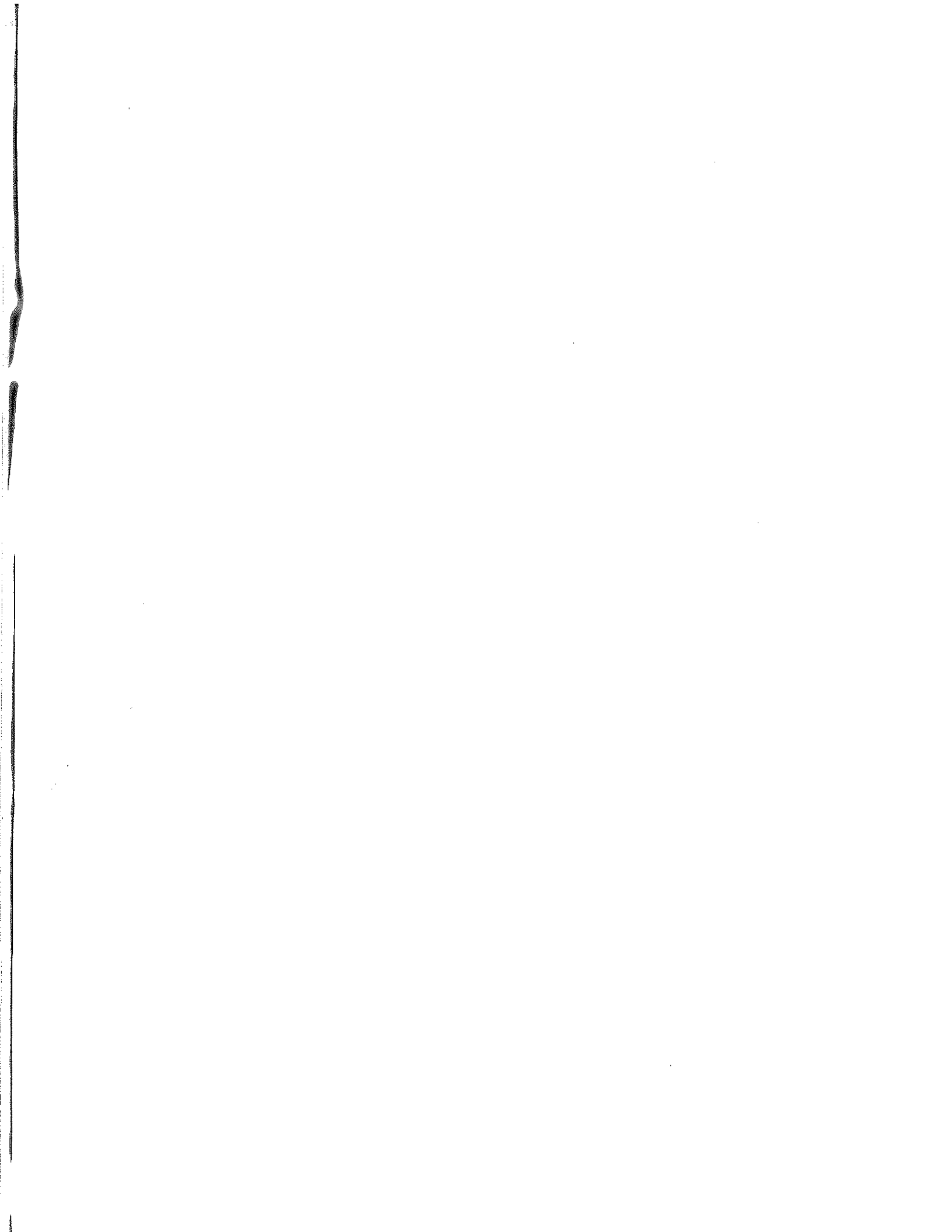
In no way do I believe that COVID-19 is a small matter. Thankfully, its effect on children has been very low. The Trump administration and I simply believe that all children have a right to an education, which means the right to attend public schools, and that all parents have the right to weigh the very real risk of harm from being out of school against the risk of potential harm from COVID-19.

The Trump administration wholeheartedly understands and appreciates the difficult choice ahead of us. All parents may not elect to make the decision I would make, but all parents should be afforded the opportunity to decide. Schools should not open without safety plans and precautions; we have tools and safety measures that can and should be put in place to protect your child from contracting the virus in school.

However, care should also be exercised to protect your child from harm due to lack of education, lack of nutrition, lack of mental health care. We cannot simply continue to ignore the casualties of all other conditions in favor of containing the virus. Our nation's future depends on the action we take today.

Parents, demand that we take the right actions and demand that your voice as the people truly responsible for the health, safety and future of your own children not be silenced.

*Dr. Elinore McCance-Katz is assistant Health and Human Services secretary for mental health and substance abuse. Follow her on twitter: @DrMcCance\_Katz*



BREAKING | 53,564 views | Aug 5, 2020, 07:30pm EDT

# More And More Early-Opening U.S. School Districts Are Being Disrupted By Positive Cases Of The Coronavirus

BETA



**Matt Perez** Forbes Staff

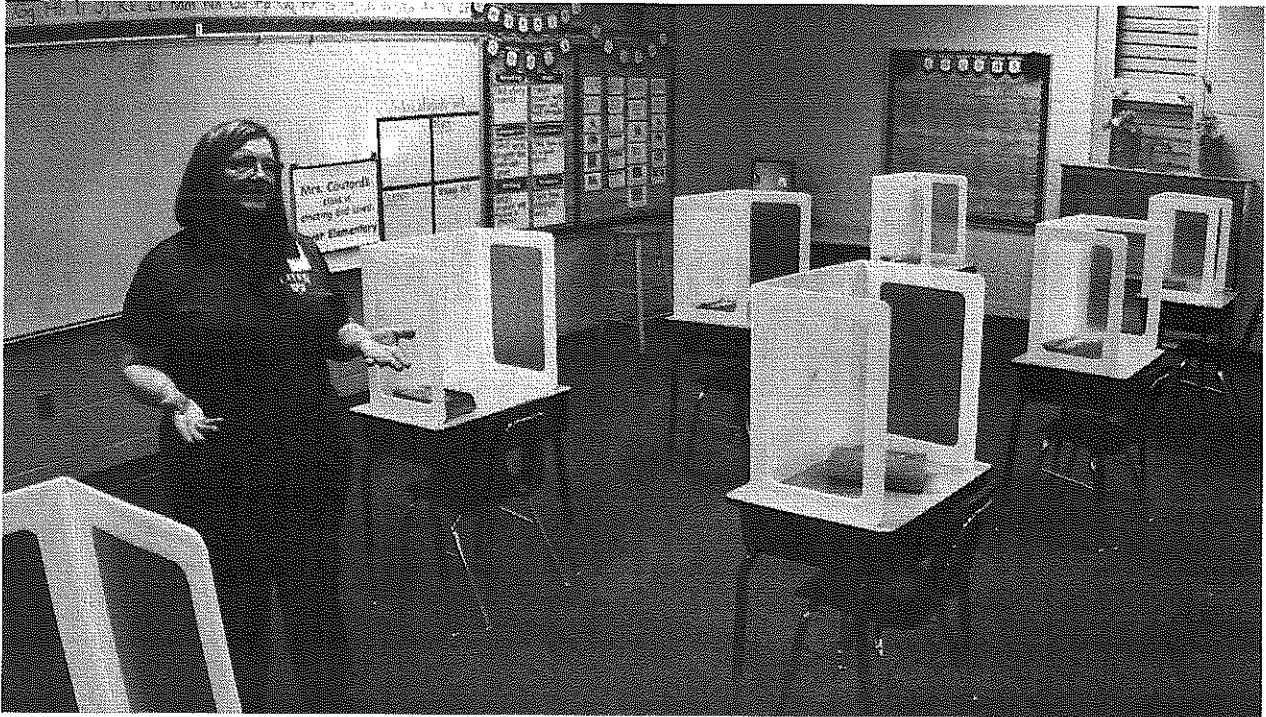
Innovation

*I cover breaking news.*

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Updated Aug 12, 2020, 02:52pm EDT

**TOPLINE** Many school districts, particularly in the southern states, opened doors to students in late July and early August, but more and more are forced to quarantine whole classrooms and switch to remote-only instruction as students and teachers test positive for the coronavirus, a worrying trend as lawmakers and educators debate how best to reopen schools this fall.



Cheryl Nicholas, Principal of Layer Elementary School, explains to the media the social distancing ...  
 [+] NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES

## TIMELINE

- **August 11**

Lawrence County schools in Alabama planned to open on August 12, but an elementary and middle school is starting remotely after an individual tested positive for the virus, preventing 1,200 students from attending, according to the *Associated Press*.

- **August 11**

Gulfport School District in Mississippi will teach around 100 students remotely for two weeks after a teacher showed mild Covid-19 symptoms, though, has not officially tested positive for the virus.

- **August 4**

Tennessee has already seen cases in 13 school districts among nearly 65

that have started back up since late July, according to the *Tennessean*, with some schools reporting positive cases among staffers that attended in-person pre-planning sessions prior to reopening.

- **August 4**

After starting both in-person and remote classes on July 27, Corinth School District in Mississippi has been hit with cases among students and staff in its elementary, middle and high schools, forcing over 100 students into quarantine, according to the state's health officer, Dr. Thomas Dobbs, who noted on August 4 there have been positive cases in the school systems of four other counties.

- **August 4**

While it hasn't begun classes yet, Somerville Independent School District in Texas reported a student athlete had tested positive on August 4, a day after some sports teams were able to begin practicing again.

- **August 3**

A fourth grade class at Thales Academy in Wake Forest, North Carolina, which began classed on June 20, was forced into quarantine on August 3 after a student was infected by a family member. It's one of eight locations for the private non-sectarian community school, with another in Apex getting a visit from Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos on July 29.

- **August 3**

Cherokee County School District in Georgia, which also offers both physical and virtual instruction, reported on August 3 that a second-grader contracted the virus on the second day of classes, forcing the child's teacher and 20 of their classmates into quarantine for two weeks.

- **July 31**

This follows the news from Georgia's largest school district, Gwinnett County Public Schools, that approximately 260 teachers were sidelined either due to positive tests or contacts with infected individuals 24 hours after beginning in-person pre-planning on July 29.

- **July 31**

In Indiana, the Greater Clark County Schools and Lanesville Community Schools districts have reported cases since opening on July 29 from high school to elementary school, according to the *Courier Journal*, forcing some students into quarantine and necessitating virtual classes.

- **July 30**

On its first day of instruction on July 30, Greenfield Central Community Schools in Indiana, which is conducting both in-person and virtual classes, reported a junior high school student tested positive for the coronavirus, according to the *Indianapolis Star*.

- **July 24**

Tennessee has already seen cases in 13 school districts among nearly 65

that have started back up since late July, according to the *Tennessean*, the earliest being Alcoa City Schools on July 24.

#### CRUCIAL QUOTE

“It’s impossible to imagine that we are not going to pay the price for cramming kids into schools right now,” said Mississippi health officer Dobbs, who voiced his preference for delaying in-person instruction and requiring universal mask use when reopenings occur. “There’s just no plausible scenario where it’s just not going to be bad.”

#### CHIEF CRITICS

While children are less likely to suffer from the severe symptoms of Covid-19, they can still spread it to teachers, prompting some unions to demand better safety protocols before reopening schools. The American Federation of Teachers, the second-largest teacher union in the country, informed its 1.7 million members they would be supported if they decided to strike against their district over inadequate safety measures. Florida’s largest teacher union sued Gov. Ron Desantis and the state’s education commissioner over their plan to reopen schools for in-person classes five days a week.

#### KEY BACKGROUND

Throughout the summer, as Covid-19 has ravaged the country, President Trump has demanded schools reopen in the fall. Trump falsely claimed children don’t easily spread the virus and threatened to withhold federal funding from districts that don’t resume in-person classes. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government’s top infectious disease official, has noted “evidence of the negative impacts on children because of schools closures in the spring of 2020,” but that coronavirus hot spots should keep schools

closed and that, "The primary consideration should always be the safety, the health of the welfare of the children, as well as the teachers and the secondary effects for spreading to the parents and other family members." Some large school districts like Los Angeles and San Diego have decided to teach online-only this fall. The U.S. leads all other countries in confirmed cases of the coronavirus with 4,816,509, as well as reported deaths 157,690.

### Full coverage and live updates on the Coronavirus

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**Matt Perez**

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I cover breaking news and also report on the video game industry. I previously wrote for sites like IGN, Polygon, Red Bull eSports, Kill Screen, Playboy and PC Gamer. I...

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