



# Online Learning or Face-to-Face: A Parent's Guide to Choosing Your Child's Education During a Pandemic

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Every year once the 4<sup>th</sup> of July has come and gone, another season starts: back to school! In every other ordinary summer, parents can expect their local retailers to offer special deals on school supplies, with ads gracing their TV screens for an entire month and through August. But this isn't any ordinary summer.

Thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic, the back-to-school season has been thrown into disarray, with parents, students, and teachers wondering whether school will resume as usual in the fall. After much of the country staying indoors and watching fireworks from their homes, most families now face having to make a very important decision during the second half of the summer: whether to send the kids to school or keep them home. Considering the recent surge in cases, and the state of the pandemic in the United States, you might be asking yourself which choice might be better for your family, online or face-to-face learning?

## Which Is Better: Online or Face-to-Face Learning?



According to a [recent announcement](#) by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the organization “strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school”. Their reasons are many, including supporting the overall mental health, nutritional, social, and emotional needs of kids and adolescents.

It’s also important to remember that the public education system supports a highly diverse country consisting of millions of students that come from a wide variety of different socioeconomic statuses, with each facing a different set of family circumstances. As far as the AAP is concerned, in-person classes benefit many students because school helps kids with food security issues, and to avoid further neglect and abuse that stem from their home lives.

Likewise, many educators will agree that face-to-face education allows teachers to hold students more accountable for their work, while serving as a guide that provides support where needed throughout the learning process. Indeed, for many students, in-person classes help children stay focused and attentive, as there may be many distractions in the home environment that take away from the learning experience.

On the flip side, traditional in-school classes are a detriment to some students, especially those who are more engaged and motivated when they are able to work independently and at their own pace. For some students, the testing, deadlines, and schoolwork required in the classroom setting is stressful, contributing to anxiety, depression, bullying, or worse.

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## Why Choose Online Learning?



There's no question that many educators and pediatricians support students going back into the classroom when it comes to getting an effective and meaningful education. But with coronavirus cases surging, it's important to ask the following questions before signing them up for school as usual:

- Are cases surging in the local community?

America is huge. Even if you live in a state with rapidly increasing coronavirus cases, it's possible that the county you live in is not one of those that is experiencing a surge due

to its proximity to large city centers. Always defer to local authorities and orders, but when it comes to school, is your district offering in-person classes because of a low number of cases? If so, you may consider sending your child back to school. But if the cases are rising in your area, it might be better off to keep kids safe at home and learning online.

- Will at least one parent or caregiver be available at home during the day when children are learning online?

This is a big factor for many working families. Many families have parents who have the privilege of working at home on a flexible schedule throughout the pandemic. For stay-at-home parents, online learning could be a great option when a caregiver is available to support student learning throughout the day.

- Are any members of your household considered to be at high-risk for contracting the disease?

According to [CDC guidelines](#), people who are at high-risk for getting the disease, or for experiencing severe illness should stay home. This includes families who live with elderly relatives, or household members who have underlying conditions that compromise the immune system. Think carefully whether any member of your family might be considered to be high risk. If so, sign up for online only classes to be safe.

- Does your family have the necessary technology to support online learning for all students in the household?

If you work from home, chances are, you still need a computer or tablet to accomplish your own tasks. Does your child have their own tablet or laptop to use? If so, online classes might be a great choice, especially if your child is already familiar with using technology and apps.

- Is your student individually driven or motivated?

Does he or she like schoolwork, or is it a battle to get him/her to do the work? Think for a moment about your child's work ethic. Some children, even from a very early age, are intrinsically motivated by school because they are naturally curious and love to learn. Many kids are also very good at keeping themselves on task and focused, while others need constant reminders to refocus. If your child is one of the former, your child might thrive with the individually driven online option.

## Can Face-to-Face Learning Still Work?



Given the factors above, it's true that many students, even young elementary students can be very successful using an online platform for their schooling needs. That's exactly why public virtual options have long existed to serve students who don't thrive in the traditional educational setting. But for many kids, they absolutely need the individual

teacher attention that one receives in an in-person classroom. The face-to-face educational option is still preferable for these students and their families:

- Kids who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and need special services, such as dyslexia support, or other accommodations as set forth by the district.
- Students whose parents are unable to stay home during the workday and no other caregiver is available to support online education at home.
- Children who are new to the country and require English as a Second Language (ESL) accommodations or services.
- Kids who live in an area with low Covid-19 community transmission, and whose state or locality has opened public schools for students to return.
- Students and their family members who have no underlying medical health issues.
- Children who struggle with motivation and/or schoolwork.
- Families who face tough home situations, such as domestic abuse or food insecurity.

Lastly, another major consideration in choosing to send your child back to school or opt for online learning is simply researching what your district is offering. This month, many schools will be disseminating information regarding their reopening plans, which will be based upon local and/or state guidance and requirements or restrictions. Besides that, each campus will offer their own form of in-person learning, whether that is a hybrid attendance program that staggers attendance, or schooling as usual 5 times per week. Likewise, campuses will also each be offering their own individual plan for online learning, with some teaming with a 3<sup>rd</sup> party online provider, and others forming a plan that utilizes their own district teachers.

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The final decision just might come down to whether you like what the district is offering as compared to the state of affairs in your community. Consider all of the above in this important decision, and remember that Kids Academy is here for you no matter what you choose, with educational apps and learning resources to supplement your child's education both inside the classroom and at home.

