



A Parent's Guide to the Upcoming School Year

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Ready or not, the 2020-2021 school year is almost here. While some districts have already welcomed students back to campuses or online, the majority of the nation's schools and parents are steeling themselves against what is sure to be a bumpy start to the school year amid the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic.

This August, parents are understandably apprehensive about sending their kids back into the classroom and have been busy debating the merits and pitfalls of online learning to make a seemingly impossible choice between going back to school in person or waiting out the pandemic at home. For many, virtual learning can seem impossible for families where both parents must go to work, or for single parent households that rely on school. Yet there is an inherent risk in sending students back to the classroom. It's no wonder that parents are feeling stressed!

By now, the critical decisions have been made by school districts and families alike. So, what comes next? Join us as we take a broad look at where schools stand with their reopening plans for the upcoming school year, before revealing crucial considerations parents must think about before the first day of classes.



School Will Reopen, Even if It's Different

Most parents are already aware that there's no one-size-fits-all plan for schools across the country. With virus cases and hotspots differing based on local populations and geographic area, many states have left reopening plans up to individual counties and school districts. This means that no two districts will open in exactly the same way, even if they are located next to each other!

While this may lead to confusion, it's important to remember that all schools are planning on reopening in some way, whether it be online, in person, utilizing a unique hybrid schedule, or all of the above. Some are also delaying the start date by days, a week, or even until after Labor Day to offer more time to administration and families to plan and prepare.

No matter what your own local schools have decided, it's possible that your child may be attending in-person, at least part of the time. And of course, for many parents, children who would otherwise be in school, may be entering daycare settings to complete online coursework. Even if your child will be fully virtual, the ultimate goal of all schools is to eventually transition back to the in-class setting, and remote learning is planned to be temporary. With this in mind, we know that parents have a lot on their minds and are

wondering what they should know and how they can prepare for this transition. Let's take a look at a few important points to remember as this academic year gets underway.

Starting a great school year with Kids Academy

No matter what happens, don't forget that Kids Academy is here to support you with every step! Allow the Talented and Gifted app to be your child's constant learning resource that can help smooth the back-to-class transition with teacher-led lessons, and exciting learn-through-play content.

Our courses are well-adapted to homeschool plans, remote, or hybrid learning, and will compliment your child's learning no matter what is happening with your local school district!

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Key Considerations for Parents



Reopening plans and precautions

Each school district has already made a detailed plan that includes the precautions they plan to implement, and the big return back to school will likely look unlike any that you

have witnessed in the past! Be sure to review your district's plan, paying special attention to details such as social distancing procedures in the classroom, whether classes will transition to other rooms throughout the day, where and how lunch will be served, and whether recess will be allowed.

With so much movement throughout an ordinary school day, it's important to think about how the campus will facilitate simple everyday routines like class changes or lunch. If the plan doesn't specify details, write down a list of questions and email or call your district to find out.

Will masks be required for in-person learning?

Many states already have mask mandates, but do those ordinances affect school kids? Many medical experts agree that one of the very best tools we have to fight the spread of Covid-19 are reusable cloth masks. But some states don't require children under 10 to wear them, while a few states don't have any mandate at all.

One critical consideration is whether your district will be requiring masks in the classroom, and if so, what ages, and under what conditions? Will kids be required to wear them all day, or just during transitions or in common areas of the school? Will younger learners in Pre-K through 4th grade be required to wear masks? If not, will plexiglass barriers be available or in use while at student desks?

To prepare for the smoothest back-to-school transition, it's important to understand what will be expected of children as they enter school buildings; if parents don't like what they find out, it may be time to take action and make alternate plans for the academic year.

Will the busses be running?

Little learners look forward to the day that they get to ride the big yellow school bus, but transportation is yet another consideration that parents must think about before kids transition back to school buildings. Seek out the plans for transportation, and whether students will be socially distanced and/or masked on busses to ensure safety.

Ask to find out how often busses will be sanitized, and whether they will be disinfected between runs. For parents with no other way to get children to school, there may be cases where bus capacity may be reduced, causing families to lose services that was once offered. Again, call or email your district to find out the details that affect your family's plans and needs.

Know and understand the revised sick policies

We all know that kids get sick! In the past, when a child came down with an ordinary illness like strep throat or even a bad cold, parents simply kept little learners home to monitor symptoms, and returned them to school once fevers were gone or antibiotics were started. This year, however, a simple return to school note from the parent might not suffice!

Most schools have revised their sick student policy to reflect the severity of the coronavirus and its myriad of vague, often flu-like symptoms. It might now be necessary to schedule a telemedicine visit with the pediatrician to verify that the child does indeed have a common illness, and a doctor's note specifying such might be needed, even in the case of a cold! Look over your district's new policies for keeping a sick child out of school, and the process that must happen to allow him or her to return to campus.

Is PPE available for teachers and staff?

Regardless of the school's plans for masking kids, will the teachers and other campus staff be required wear facial coverings? Will hand sanitizer be provided by the school to keep both teachers and children safe? As a parent, it's understandable that you might be thinking solely of your own child, but it's also important to consider the teachers, since those individuals will also be near the kids, and able to spread the virus. One indicator of a school system that cares about preventing illness is how they are preparing their own staff to be safe.

What's the deal with sharing supplies?

From paper and pencils, to books and laptops, sharing supplies is commonplace and completely normal when considering ordinary everyday class procedures. During the pandemic, however, it's likely that schools will limit what students can touch in the classroom. It's important to think about all the common surfaces your child comes into contact with, and that includes the school supplies that are often handed to multiple children throughout the course of any day. Check with your child's teacher to find out whether supplies will be shared, and how to avoid swapping germs when in-person classes are back in session.

Considering all of the above, it's easy to understand why parents are feeling overwhelmed and worried about the new school year! Old routines are out the window, and the year will likely have bumps along the way, with intermittent closures due to new cases and outbreaks. And if the points above has you extremely anxious, it might just be best to consider returning to public school after homeschooling instead.

