



We have been fielding a lot of questions about children returning to school in August. This updated statement is to address these questions.

It seems that most schools are choosing to start online, with an optional return to in-person schooling as early as 8/17/2020, as recommended by Arizona Governor, Doug Ducey. Those that choose not to send their kids to in-person schooling can remain online as desired.

The AAP has released more specific recommendations which stress the importance of analyzing the local transmission and presence of Covid-19 before promoting in-person school. **At this time, Pima County does not have numbers suggestive of a safe return to in-person school.**

Every family has to assess their children's learning style, their family's access to childcare and online school supervision, the need for other services and benefits that schools provide (meals, social interaction) and the health risks of anyone living in the home to come to a decision about which option they should take.

If your child cannot learn effectively in an online format for any reasons intrinsic to the student or for lack of appropriate resources or supervision at home, then you may have to assume the risk of sending them to school. That risk may not be high **if schools are adhering to recommendations, but it is not zero.**

There is some inherent risk in sending our kids to school. We see this every year when school starts and strep throats and flu tests start coming in positive. This year, we have Covid-19 with which to contend. But in looking at the literature<sup>1</sup>, it seems as though the risk of transmission of Covid in primary school children is low. The study referenced has low numbers but is a start in giving us some scientific evidence with which to base our recommendations. The high school age kids have a higher risk and therefore, if they are attending in-person school, it is imperative for reducing risk that **they wear a mask.**

Our current recommendation is that if your school or district has the following measures in place, sending children to school is a reasonable option **once Pima County numbers show a consistent decline in new cases:**

Social distanced classrooms: students 6 feet apart, no sharing of objects/utensils.

Closing down of shared spaces: lunch rooms, playgrounds

Facilities: open windows when possible; outdoor study when possible

Cleaning: protocols for cleaning rooms with Covid-19 appropriate cleansers

Strict protocols on no students with fevers, cough and/or sore throat admitted. Students must also stay home until they have a negative test OR they are asymptomatic for 3 days before returning.

Additional measures: limiting changes in classrooms for students; consider staggering entrance and exit times to facilitate social distancing; limit higher risk activities like band and PE.

A special word about **masks**. Please know that **masks prevent the spread of Covid-19**. This is not a political statement but scientific fact. Our recommendation is that everyone who is able to wear a mask (children >2yrs) do so. In a school setting, this may not be possible for the younger kids (<5<sup>th</sup> grade), but should be encouraged for all students and mandated for staff.

Heavey Laura , Casey Geraldine , Kelly Ciara , Kelly David , McDarby Geraldine . No evidence of secondary transmission of COVID-19 from children attending school in Ireland, 2020. Euro Surveill. 2020;25(21):pii=2000903. <https://doi.org/10.2807/1560-7917.ES.2020.25.21.2000903>



#### Mask Study Citations:

Identifying airborne transmission as the dominant route for the spread of COVID-19  
 Renyi Zhang, Yixin Li, Annie L. Zhang, Yuan Wang, Mario J. Molina  
 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Jun 2020, 202009637; DOI:  
 10.1073/pnas.2009637117

<https://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/feature/to-wear-a-mask-or-not-is-not-the-question-research-indicates-its-the-answer>