

Because democracy is a work in progress and requires constituent participation, we invite your collaboration in developing and refining our plans. We have added comments in areas where we have identified that we need specific questions and welcome your input.

Keep Teachers Teaching Plan in the time of COVID-19

Introduction

Reopening schools with in-person classes creates a situation in which community spread of COVID-19 will spike within weeks of the fall semester starting. Within days of returning to school, we are already seeing children testing positive and interacting with classmates and teachers in a setting that encourages higher risk of infections. As there has been no cohesive plan from government officials across communities and states with respect to how to adequately address going back to school, the potential effects of these actions are negative with regards to childrens' learning, the potential overburdening of a community's healthcare system, and the continued weakening of an economy structure that is already struggling. Schools will have to close. Parents will have to make decisions about not going to work or finding an alternative childcare solution that has a chance at keeping their child safe. The schools will have wasted the last five to seven months not accounting for all the health risks and not exploring adequate alternative solutions to keep children and staff members safe while still allowing students to learn and teachers to teach. What follows is our approach to solving the inevitable education situation we are all about to experience.

First Principles

With each set of questions we're charged with answering, we find it both helpful and imperative to outline the guiding principles related to the subject at hand. These governing rules that apply equally to anyone asking the same questions must be considered in any proposal or solution we envision:

Theoretical First Principles

1. The purpose of education is to facilitate learning amongst students and teachers and invest in humanity's ability to grow in the future

2. We each have innate and indispensable information to contribute
 - a. We each need resources to live, and the highest return application of those resources is the maximization of ourselves
 - b. Our contribution of our unique knowledge into a system is equivalent to an investment in humanity's ability to expand its capacity for economic growth into the future
3. Education and learning provides the student necessary information for identifying their capabilities and interests that will inform their actions toward achieving their desires
4. The investment we make in education supplies our labor force and democracy of the future, and there are costs associated with deferring that investment
5. Educational institutions provide childcare, food, information, a stable environment, socialization, and extracurricular activities to the populations they serve, so education proposals must account for the various functions they provide

Contextual First Principles

1. Educational institutions allow parents to participate in the workforce and produce economic value in parallel with their childrens' education
 - a. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/working-parents-are-key-to-covid-19-recovery/>
2. Children and adolescents aged 10-19 transmit COVID-19 at a similar rate to adults
 - a. https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/26/10/20-1315_article
 - b. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm6931e1-H.pdf>
3. Children aged 0-9 transmit COVID-19 at roughly half the rate as adults do
 - a. https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/26/10/20-1315_article
4. Children and adolescents aged 10-19 show clinical symptoms in around 21% of COVID-19 cases
 - a. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41591-020-0962-9>
5. 24% of teachers are at high risk of serious illness if infected with COVID-19
 - a. <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/how-many-teacher-s-are-at-risk-of-serious-illness-if-infected-with-coronavirus/>
6. Prolonged school closures and interruptions to learning lead to deterioration of students' skills and academic outcomes into the future
 - a. <https://www.vox.com/2020/4/21/21223585/school-closure-impact-students-children>

Questions on education: what are parents going through right now?

As schools begin to reopen, parents face a difficult choice: send kids back to school, putting them and the rest of their family at risk, or keep the kids at home and experience disruptions to the parents' ability to work and to the childrens' education and social interactions?

To help us frame the policy solution we have built below, we have attempted to put ourselves in the shoes of parents today, and constructed a list of questions that we believe each parent will be facing as they are considering their options for sending their kids back to school.

1. Evaluating the safety protocols and level of preparedness at my child's school
 - a. How do I know if the school is making good decisions for reopening safely?
 - b. Where do I go to learn about the school's plan for reopening?
 - i. Are all the schools in my area following the same guidelines for reopening?
 - ii. Do the guidelines for reopening match what doctors are recommending?
 - c. How many students will my child be around each day?
 - d. Will everyone in school be required to wear a mask?
 - e. What is the school doing to keep my child from getting sick?
 - f. Is the school following the health guidelines they should?
 - g. Can I change schools if I don't think the school is being safe or following the best guidelines?
 - h. Will the school still be staffed to take care of my child's healthcare needs?
 - i. Are there different safety protocols that I should be aware of?
 - j. Will the school provide protective equipment for all the children and the teachers?
 - k. What happens if the school runs out of protective equipment?
2. How will my child get safely to and from school?
 - a. Will buses still be running? Will they run on the same schedule as they have in the past? Will the children be allowed to sit next to each other on the bus?
 - b. Will my child be safe from infection while riding the bus?
 - c. Is it safe for my child to walk to school like before?

- d. How will the dropoff/pickup process and timing change when I take or pick up my child to school?
 - e. Will students be going on field trips this year?
 3. How should my family behave at home to be as safe as possible?
 - a. What can I do to keep my child from getting sick?
 - b. Do I need to take my child's temperature everyday when they get home from school?
 - c. Can we have friends over to the house, or should the children only be allowed to play outside? How many children can play in a group at one time safely?
 - d. Can we have other family members visit our home?
 - e. Do we need to wash my child's clothes every day after school? Can the virus affect us if it's on someone's clothes?
 - f. Does my child need a new mask every day? Or do we need to wash the mask daily?
 - g. If I work outside the home, how do I protect my family from getting sick?
 - h. Am I able to visit locations outside my house safely?
 - i. Should I wear a mask at all times when I'm not at home?
 4. What do I do if myself or someone close to me gets sick?
 - a. What do I do if my child gets sick?
 - b. What do I do if my child's friend gets sick?
 - c. What do I do if my spouse/partner or I get sick?
 - d. What do I do if someone at my work or my spouse/partner's work gets sick?
 - e. Is it safe for me to stay around my children if I'm sick and I'm their only caregiver?
 - f. How do I keep high-risk members of my household from getting sick?
 - g. How do I handle a situation where a coworker is not being safe?
 - h. Is it safe for me to go to work if I am around people who don't wear masks or take other precautions?
 - i. How will my child be able to interact with their friends that don't live in our neighborhood that they used to see at school?
 - j. If I get sick, how will I care for my children? Will I have to find other childcare? Will I be able to afford it?
 - k. Will I have to stay home from work to take care of my child if the schools close?
 - l. How am I going to afford staying home from work?
 5. Understanding my child's school's preparedness for COVID-19 outbreaks
 - a. School reopened. Somebody gets sick. What happens next?

- i. Will parents be notified when someone at the school gets sick? How will the school know when a student or teacher is not feeling well?
 - ii. Will I be notified if another parent of a child becomes sick?
 - iii. Will students have to wear masks all day? How are the teachers expected to manage this?
 - iv. Will the school be sanitizing any exposed areas?
 - b. What do I do if someone in my child's class/school gets sick?
 - c. What will the school do if a child or teacher gets sick?
 - d. How long will the school be closed if someone gets sick?
 - e. How will my child's lessons continue if the school closes?
 - f. If someone in my child's class gets sick, how many days will the students from that class be required to stay home?
 - g. Can I take my child to a daycare if someone in their class gets sick and I can't take off work?
 - h. Will the school be staying in contact with the other students who were around someone who got sick to make sure they know if anyone else gets sick?
 - i. If children from a different class get sick, will my child have to stay home? For how long?
 - j. Who makes the decision if/when the school will have to close?
 - k. How many people will have to get sick before the schools close?
 - l. Can I take time off from work for a few days to care for my child while their school is closed?
 - m. What if I lose my job because I need to stay home to take care of my child?
 - n. If the schools reopen sometime after they close, will I still have a job to go back to?
 - o. How do I know if it makes more sense for me or my spouse/partner to stay home to care for our child/children if the schools close?
- 6. Managing my child's educational experience if he or she transitions to remote / virtual education
 - a. Will the teaching be all online? What equipment does my child need for online classes?
 - b. How will I afford the equipment my child needs if the school does not provide it?
 - c. Will the lessons be live or pre-recorded?
 - d. How will we turn in homework?
 - e. Will there be testing, and how does the grading process work with online classes?
 - f. How will my child get help when they have questions?

- g. Will my child be able to interact with their friends, and how will that work?
 - h. What do we do if our computer breaks down?
 - i. What do we do if we don't have the internet, or our internet is too slow?
 - j. What will it cost to change schools if I can?
 - k. If I change schools, how am I going to get my child to school?
 - l. Is my child able to use all the tools themselves or will they need an adult to help them?
 - m. How do I keep my child safe from bad people on the internet?
 - n. How do I help my child understand subjects that I struggle with?
 - o. Will my child be able to ask questions during class? How will that process work?
 - p. If my child is learning remotely, how will the teacher know if my child is needing help understanding the material?
 - q. How will my child be able to develop their writing skills if all the classes are on the computer?
 - r. What will my child do for food? Will the school provide the food? How will I have time to go to the school to pick up the food when I have to go to work every day?
 - s. How will the teacher make sure my child is getting a chance to ask and answer questions during class? How do I know my child won't be forgotten if they are too shy to speak up on their own?
 - t. How does my student reach their teachers outside of school hours or class time for help with their lessons?
 - u. Will I be able to reach my son or daughter's teacher if they are struggling with the lessons?
 - v. How will my child get the help they need if they have special needs?
 - w. If I have to go to work and my child is at home for school, how do I know they will be safe?
 - x. What do I do if my child opens the door to a stranger?
 - y. If my child is at home and has a medical emergency, what do I do?
7. Supporting my child's social and emotional health
- a. Can my child play with their friends or family members after school? Do they have to wear a mask while they play?
 - b. What is my child supposed to do after class is over for the day until I get home from work?
 - c. Will there be any organized sports while the school is closed? What do I do if my child was planning on going to college on a sports scholarship and there are no sports?

- d. If sports are allowed, how will my child be safe from getting sick? What happens if my child gets injured and has to go to the hospital?
- e. How can my child experience other high risk classes and activities like choir and band and still be safe?
- f. Will my child still be able to participate in clubs and organizations?

Policy Proposal

Policy Outline

1. Assuming that our plan to “Keep Teachers Teaching” is passed by Congress in November, we’ll begin rolling it out in January
2. Grades 4 - 12 will transition to remote school using federal subsidies for virtual tools and remote education resources with the same class structure and teachers
3. Grades Pre-K - 3 and students with special needs of any age will attend in-person classes with reduced student count based on classroom dimensions and approved social-distancing guidelines, using their existing locations and the now-empty 4th - 12th grade classrooms
4. Federal funds will be made available to states for technology/hiring solutions, implementation, and ongoing support
5. Students and teachers within Pre-K - 3rd grade and special needs classrooms who are at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 will also convert to virtual classrooms, and in-person coordinators will be hired to support classrooms with teachers who need to teach remotely
6. Parents who opt to leave work to monitor their own children who are learning remotely may receive compensation to also e-monitor the grades 4 - 12 virtual classrooms to maintain students’ focus and safety

Recommendations

Grades 4 - 12 will transition to remote school using federal subsidies for virtual tools and remote education resources with the same class structure and teachers

1. Grades 4 - 12 will transition to remote school only
 - a. States will negotiate contracts for laptops, video/web conference, and e-learning portal access for students and teachers to work/learn from

home

- b. Students without high-speed internet at home will fall into three groups
 - i. In-person, socially distanced virtual classrooms – available space at schools will be reconfigured to allow students to use the technology/internet already accessible at the school
 - ii. High-speed internet at-home subsidy – school district can pass through funding for high-speed internet for students where available and cost-effective
 - iii. Lease underutilized retail and office space – school districts can rent local retail and office space to reconfigure for use by their students to have access to high-speed internet and technology
- c. Teachers and curriculum will remain intact to minimize disruptions to the normal course of education
- d. Virtual Monitors will be hired and compensated to remotely monitor the focus, health, and safety of students who are learning remotely with periodic check-ins scheduled throughout the school day
 - i. Preference will be given to parents of students who opt to stay home from work to care for their children
 - ii. Their geographic proximity to the students will allow them to physically visit a student's home in the event that it is needed for non-emergency assistance
 - iii. Emergency protocols and guardian contact information will be circulated to the Virtual Monitors to ensure the safety of students

Grades Pre-K - 3 and students with special needs of any age will attend in-person classes with reduced student count based on classroom dimensions and approved social-distancing guidelines, using their existing locations and the now-empty 4th - 12th grade classrooms

1. Grades Pre-K - 3 and students with special needs will attend socially-distanced, in-person classes
 - a. Locations previously used by grades 4 - 12 will be converted to socially distanced classrooms for Grades Pre-K - 3 and students with special needs
 - b. If adequate space is unavailable after the grade 4 - 12 transition, additional retail and office space will be leased and reconfigured
 - c. Teachers will remain in place as much as possible, but school districts will pre-screen their teachers and staff for susceptibility to serious illness from COVID-19 and transition those who are at higher risk to remote positions supported by in-person classroom coordinators
 - d. In-person classroom coordinators will be hired from the pool of local labor to support the needs of their teachers to manage the smaller class sizes and to allow teachers who are at heightened risk of severe illness from COVID-19 to teach remotely
 - e. Students at high-risk of severe illness will transition to remote education

- channels with a preference for in-home learning supplemented by in-person classrooms with increased safety precautions/monitoring
- f. Students, teachers, and staff will be provided with PPE, and sanitation protocols will be implemented
 - g. Federal government will develop testing and quarantine procedures using the best science available, and communities will implement and distribute these procedures to teachers and in-person classroom coordinators to manage exposure risk and minimize interruptions to in-person learning channels

Federal funds will be made available to states for technology/hiring solutions, implementation, and ongoing support

1. A baseline of federal funding will be made available to fund schools' transition from in-person to remote learning under the criteria defined above
 - a. States will receive funding to set up the internal structures necessary to coordinate this transition statewide
 - b. States will also receive funding and be responsible for the coordination of high-level essentials across all communities, including:
 - i. Web-casting technology (Zoom, Cisco WebEx, etc.)
 - ii. Online-delivery of class materials (Blackboard, etc.)
 - iii. Implementation and ongoing IT support for the purchased platforms and troubleshooting
 - iv. Provision of internet access to as many students and teachers as possible
 - v. Rental and set-up of off-campus spaces for use by students and teachers who are unable to access the internet
 - vi. Hiring of virtual monitors and in-person classroom coordinators
 - vii. Purchases of PPE and related supplies for in-person teachers, students and staff
 - viii. Arrangements and funding for additional transportation for in-person channels
 - ix. COVID-19 testing and hiring of contact tracers
 - x. Certification and hiring of additional teachers in case there is a shortage
 - c. States will receive access to a pool of Federal funding that can be used to meet the needs of individual communities that have completed the Education Community Needs Assessment:

- i. Federal government will provide an Education Community Needs Assessment to help communities frame funding needs and areas of spending
- ii. State leaders will distribute information and support to communities and school districts about the Education Community Needs Assessment process to allow the school districts to:
 1. designate students and teachers at high-risk of severe illness for the appropriate channels
 2. deploy local assets and safety protocols
 3. ensure sufficient staffing levels for virtual monitoring and in-person classroom coordinators
 4. reconfigure schools for in-person learning channels
 5. satisfy purchasing requirements for additional space and high-speed internet access for students
- iii. Community government and school districts will coordinate with all community members to complete the Education Community Needs Assessment
- iv. Communities will forward their completed Education Community Needs Assessment to states, along with a set of proposals from businesses (local or national) to meet their specific needs