

Parents remain concerned about safety of in-person instruction

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A gap remains between white parents and Black and Hispanic parents in their preferences for in-person schooling, but it has narrowed since May. The RAND Corporation survey, funded by The Rockefeller Foundation,

details parents' responses concerning school hesitancy and preferences for COVID-19 safety practices in U.S. schools in fall 2021.

RAND fielded the survey July 16-29 as the delta variant had greatly increased the national number of COVID-19 cases. It is a follow-up to a similar RAND survey fielded in May.

The portion of parents who planned to send their [children](#) to school in-person this fall rose from 84% in May to 89% in July. Yet while 94% of [white parents](#) planned to send their children back to school in-person as of July, only 82% of Black and 83% of Hispanic parents planned to do the same.

"To feel safe sending their children to school in-person, most parents—especially those still unsure about in-person schooling—want classroom ventilation, teachers to be vaccinated, and social distancing in schools, in that order," said Heather Schwartz, co-author of the report and director of the Pre-K to 12 educational systems program at RAND, a nonprofit research organization. "School principals are the source that the greatest number of parents trust for information about school safety practices."

Other key findings:

- Parents whose children were under 12 years old (and thus too young to be vaccinated for COVID-19) were as likely to plan to send them to school in person as were parents with children over 12.
- COVID-19-related health concerns remained the top reasons for parents not sending their children to school in person this fall, more than academics, racial discrimination, bullying or concerns about schools teaching critical race theory. Two-thirds or more of Black, Hispanic and Asian parents needed each of the

following practices in place to feel safe sending their children to school in person: ventilation in classrooms; teachers vaccinated; social distancing; mandatory masking; and regular COVID-19 testing. Fewer white parents needed these practices in place to feel safe. Parents who were unsure about sending their children to school in-person especially wanted these safety practices, and more.

- The survey found 61% of parents wished to know more about which COVID-19 safety measures their child's school is enacting for the fall. Only 27% said they already knew in detail which specific COVID-19 safety measures their child's school will have in place. Sixty-one percent selected a school staff member—most commonly the principal—as the most trusted source about school safety measures.
- The survey found 51% of parents supported voluntary, free weekly COVID-19 testing at school, which was similar to the percentage in May; 75% supported COVID-19 testing if their child showed COVID-19 symptoms. The most common reason parents did not support COVID-19 testing at schools was a concern that the test was physically uncomfortable for children.
- The survey found 57% of parents planned to get their child vaccinated for COVID-19 as of July 2021; 79% of vaccinated parents planned to do so, compared with 10% of unvaccinated parents.

The survey was designed in part by members of the State & Territory Alliance for Testing (STAT) who expressed a need for concrete data on [parents'](#) current sentiments toward in-person learning. The Rockefeller Foundation's funding for the report is part of its efforts to provide educators and policymakers with the tools to help facilitate [school](#) reopening.

More information: Full report:

www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1393-2.html

Provided by RAND Corporation

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