

Expanded In-Person Learning for Public Schools: The Data

To date, COVID-safe practices (CSPs) implemented in New Mexico’s public schools have been working; we now have the entire first semester’s worth of data to support our eligibility determination. Although we know increased interactions can lead to community spread of COVID-19, the data generally show that schools are not significant contributors to spread. International medical consensus indicates that schools are relatively safe.

Regarding COVID-19 children and youth transmission, the medical literature suggests that most transmission occurs in households, with children transmitting at the same rates as adults. Severe disease can occur in children and appears more commonly in infants. The long-term (even mild) effects of COVID-19 remain unknown. Proper implementations of infection control is critical for epidemic control and consequence mitigation in children and their close contacts.

With respect to COVID-19 in schools, the medical literature suggests that teacher-to-student infections are about 3:1, but when COVID-safe practices are followed, reopening of schools does not “cause” any significant increase in community cases. Locally, schools in New Mexico have seen relatively low infection rates. At its peak, New Mexico public schools saw around 200 cases, representing just 1.5% of the total 12,912 cases reported in the same week. Relatively speaking, schools in New Mexico are not experiencing major COVID-spread events; to date, no school has gone above 3 rapid responses within a 14-day period, and there is little difference in the likelihood of contracting COVID-19 between remote and hybrid learning models. Generally, CSPs in schools are working to control outbreaks, even in high prevalence areas. And with very few exceptions, schools that have had numerous cases do not seem to show evidence that significant transmission occurred at school.

For additional information:

1. [Using social contact data to predict and compare the impact of social distancing policies with implications for school re-opening](#)
2. [Determining optimal strategy for reopening schools, impact of test and trace interventions, and the risk of occurrence of a second COVID-19 epidemic wave in the UK: a modelling study](#)
3. [European countries with high transmission rate: school reopenings led to higher community infections](#)
4. [COVID-19 in children and the role of school settings in COVID-19 transmission](#)
5. [On effect of age on the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in households, schools and community](#)

This resource is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical guidance.

While the content herein was informed through consultation with the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH), it should not take the place of advice from an individual medical provider. If you or your child are [high-risk](#), you are strongly encouraged to consult your family physician before making the determination to return for in-person learning.

Additional expanded in-person learning information and guidance is available at bit.ly/BackToSchoolNM.