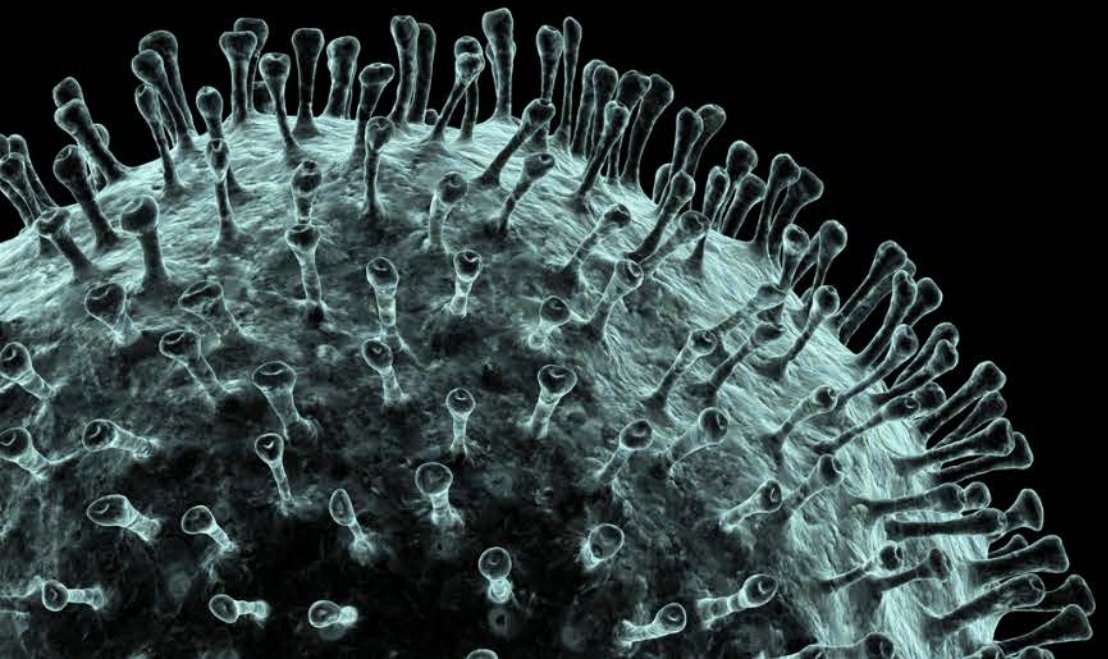
COVID-19 Conversations

Caitlin Rivers

Senior Scholar
Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security



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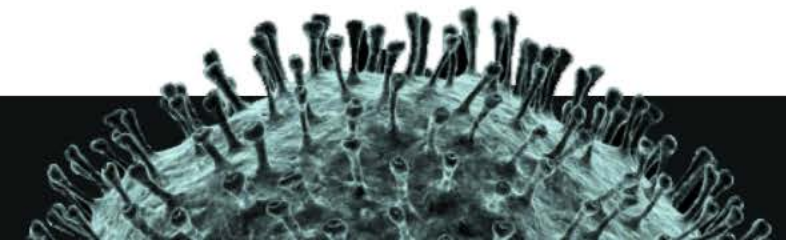
Reopening K-12 Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Prioritizing Health, Equity, and Communities

- **ENRIQUETA C. BOND** (*Chair*), QE Philanthropic Advisors, LLC
- **DIMITRI A. CHRISTAKIS,** School of Medicine, University of Washington
- **MICHAEL LACH,** Township High School District 113, Illinois
- **PHYLLIS D. MEADOWS,** The Kresge Foundation
- **KATHLEEN MOORE,** Retired State School Facilities Director
- **CAITLIN RIVERS,** Center of Health Security, Johns Hopkins University
- **KEISHA SCARLETT,** Seattle Public Schools, Washington
- **NATHANIEL SCHWARTZ,** Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University
- **JEFFREY VINCENT,** Center for Cities & Schools, University of California, Berkeley
- **KENNE DIBNER,** *Study Director*
- **HEIDI SCHWEINGRUBER,** *Director,* Board on Science Education
- **LETICIA GARCILAZO GREEN,** *Research Associate*
- **MATTHEW LAMMERS,** *Program Coordinator*



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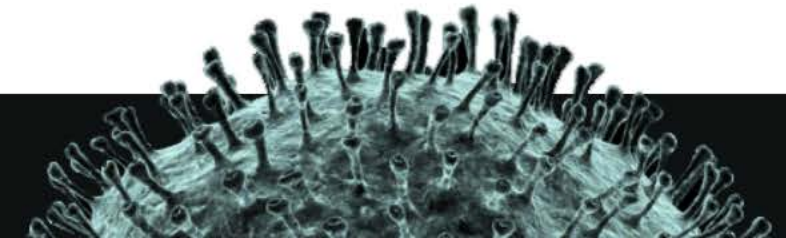
Recommendation 1: *The Decision to Reopen*

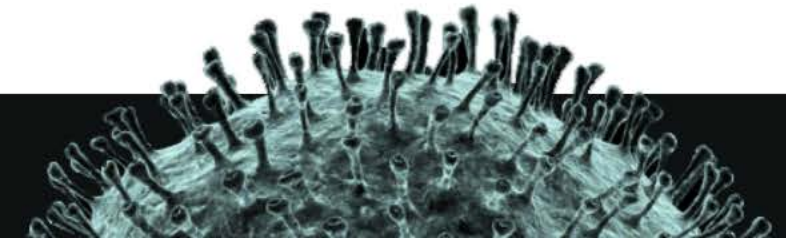
Districts should weigh the relative health risks of reopening against the educational risks of providing no in-person instruction in Fall 2020. Given the importance of in-person interaction for learning and development, districts should prioritize reopening with an emphasis on providing full-time, in-person instruction in grades K-5 and for students with special needs who would be best served by in-person instruction. *(emphasis mine)*



Recommendation 5: *Decision-Making Coalitions*

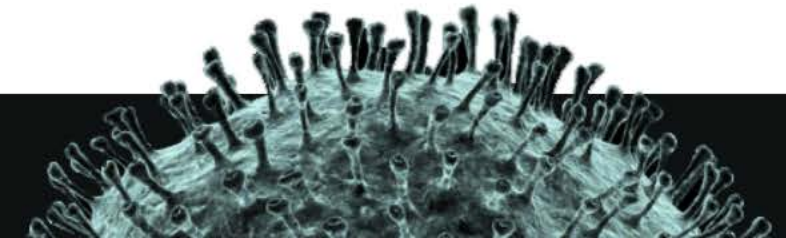
State and local decision-makers and education leaders should develop a mechanism that allows for input from representatives of school staff, families, local health officials, and other community interests to inform decisions related to reopening schools. The task force should:

- determine educational priorities and community values related to opening schools;
- be explicit about financial, staffing, and facilities-related constraints;
- determine a plan for informing ongoing decisions about schools;
- liaise with communities to advocate for needed resources.



Recommendation 6: *Equity in Reopening*

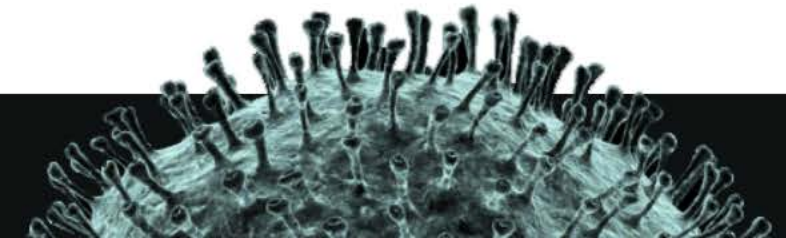
In developing plans for reopening schools and implementing mitigation strategies, districts should take into account existing disparities within and across schools. Across schools, plans need to address disparities in school facilities, staffing shortages, overcrowding, and remote learning infrastructures. Within schools, plans should address disparities in resources for students and families. These issues might include access to technology, health care services, ability to provide masks for students, and other considerations.

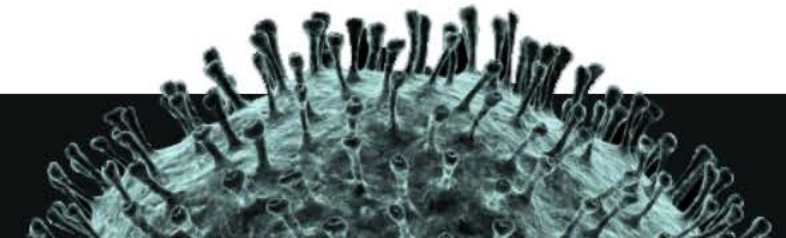


Recommendation 9: *Urgent Research*

The research community should immediately conduct research that will provide the evidence needed to make informed decisions about school reopening and safe operation. The most urgent areas for inquiry are:

- children and transmission of COVID-19,
- the role of reopening schools in contributing to the spread of COVID-19 in communities,
- the role of airborne transmission of COVID-19, and
- the effectiveness of different mitigation strategies.



Developments Since the Report

- The outbreak has resurged in many parts of the country, ending a period of decline through May and June.
- Further evidence has emerged that children both can be infected and are infectious, with numerous reports of outbreaks in summer camps and schools.
- These developments reinforce the importance of careful decisions to reopen for in person learning, with careful mitigation measures for those who do reopen.
- Questions remain about the susceptibility and infectiousness of asymptomatically infected children and kids under the age of 10.