



Opening or Delaying School: A Dilemma for Parents, School Administrators and Teachers

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Editorial

Volume 4 Issue 3

Received Date: August 17, 2020

Published Date: September 02, 2020

DOI: [10.23880/mjccs-16000257](https://doi.org/10.23880/mjccs-16000257)

Editorial

Never before has greater debate or indecision impacted the onset of a new school year. We're familiar with the implications of teacher strikes to clarify and achieve fair wages and promotion criteria, classroom size, pension, and health care benefits. Threat of the unknown with respect to what constitutes safe conditions for children, teachers, and their families is a novel concern where all involved find themselves in uncharted waters.

The only question not up for debate is that practically all parties would like to return to a level of normality. Unfortunately, what was once considered perfunctory and normal that school resumes in mid to late August has been replaced by numerous obstacles and never before encountered doubt as to the relative safety and merit of re-opening of schools at all levels. The impact of Covid-19 on our lives, recognition of its continued devastation and the absence of a cohesive leadership planning effort to irradiate this has become unwieldy. Gross failure to acknowledge fault, a rising death toll and state by state increasing case numbers have done little to allay current apprehension concerning a return to schooling.

Advocates for school re-opening for the purpose of enhancing the declining economy and workforce have elected to ignore the surge in cases and overwhelming scientific and evidence - based support for the endangerment of health of frontline participants. Statements have recently emerged that over 2000 students and teachers have been put under quarantine because of reports involving hundreds of Covid-19 cases across 5 states.

The nation is witnessing wide variation in case numbers and severity of contagion. While children under the age of 18

appear significantly less affected by the sequelae of Covid-19, communicability of its aerosol pathogens remains flagrant with potential exposure and transference to family members, teachers and their families. The POTUS in daily press releases attempts to deliver the deceptive message that we are in a very comfortable state, that 99.95 % of young children show no signs of the disease or its spread that the disease will soon magically disappear.

Distortion and misinformation that defies scientific fact is contributory to a further proliferation rather than resolution of the virus. Such appears to prevail amongst advocates of a return to school for all children. The development of numerous strategies in an effort to justify a return to school in view of areas and states where victims of virus and continually increasing mortalities seems at this juncture to be ludicrous if not simply without any shred of scientific evidence let alone common sense. Because of proliferation of the virus, the scientific community, in contrast to the political arena, has concluded that the U.S. has entered the next elevated cycle of the disease. Two million deaths are projected before January. Current non-efforts of the administration which persist to deflect and attempt to perpetuate the delusion that things are going well that complete resolution along with tested and proven vaccines are near on the horizon, appear motivated by political gain with an approaching election. School boards appear conflicted and are experiencing difficulty in determining the viability of safe re-opening vs postponement, in lieu of pressures brought to bear on parents needing to return to the workforce to meet financial demands.

Had political bi-partisanship occurred and a common ground consensus of the value of social distancing,

masking, and case tracking been implemented from the outset, we might not have reached the current state of affairs. Disregard for a factual and scientifically based plan by the current administration no doubt places society in an untenable position with regard to the reality of what constitutes a safe basis for a return to the classroom.

For parents, the consequences range from being prepared to return with little or no interruption to not being able to provide a roof over one's family or food on the table. Fundamental liberties we once enjoyed and took for granted have been lost. Interpersonal contact and assumptions of health and well-being are now distant for many. The anguish of failure to prevent loss of life or maintenance of employment

sufficient to thrive has been seriously challenged.

The question of what route to choose to enable children to return safely to the classroom is it through virtual methods or onsite attendance is heavily veiled. Inevitable exposure to this virus in a classroom is likely to result in a repeat of school closure and further delay in a return to normalization. All evidence cited by the scientific and medical community suggests that delay in opening schools is both prudent and realistic until a flattening of cases and mortalities become evident. Society has already witnessed the effects of ignoring these facts by prematurely attempting to return to life as we once knew it.

