

Updated MCAAP Policy on Safe In-Person Learning

In [August 2020*](#), the MCAAP demonstrated our support for advancing the safe return to school of as many children in the Commonwealth as was feasible by reflecting the best available science on school transmission and community transmission and by applying a layered approach to risk mitigation that includes masking, hand hygiene, testing, contact tracing, distancing, and building safety.

Since that time, we have real-world evidence from many districts in Massachusetts and across the nation who have demonstrated successful return to school programs in either a full or hybrid model by implementing rigorous evidence-based safety protocols. In these school districts, masking, hygiene, and communication with families as part of contact tracing have ensured minimal disruption to school attendance by focusing on containing outbreaks in pods and classrooms. **Almost universally, schools that practice this multilayered risk mitigation have demonstrated lower transmission rates than in their surrounding communities.**

The MCAAP reaffirms our earlier statements on risk mitigation to keep students and adults in schools safe from COVID infection. We applaud the efforts of the schools to keep COVID transmission rates low amongst the members of their school community. Since August, we have seen that in most cases, schools have been able to allow for distancing between 3 and 6 feet by maintaining masking and hand hygiene. This safe range of distances is consistent with the [January 2021 AAP Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools.**](#)

Our children have been experiencing adverse mental health outcomes and a heightened risk for other non-communicable diseases during the pandemic which we feel are directly related to losing the social, physical, and learning benefits of in school learning. The MCAAP recommends all districts offer universal in-person school utilizing rigorous public health strategies (masking, hand hygiene, testing, contact tracing, building safety, and distancing) while simultaneously allowing for adjustments such as the 3- to 6-foot distancing that will allow more students to return to safe in-person learning.

*<https://mcaap.org/2018/wp-content/uploads/MCAAP-School-Reopening-Statement-Final-081620-1.pdf>

** <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>