



The Kansas Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (KAAP), represents more than 425 pediatric health care providers. With support from the state's largest professional association of educators, Kansas NEA, we urge state officials in Kansas to prioritize children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, **we recommend providing access to the first round of COVID-19 vaccinations to teachers and support professionals who work most closely with students. Further, as we wait for a vaccine and to support a safe return to in-person learning, teachers and staff should have access to state-provided personal protective equipment that is medical-grade.** Like healthcare workers and first-responders, dedicated education professionals are working on the frontlines of our collective battle against the COVID-19 pandemic. Keeping our education institutions safe and fully staffed is vital for the well-being of Kansas kids.

Having students attend classes in-person *safely* is an important goal. We believe our schools can *potentially* be considered safe for teaching and learning, with proper safety precautions even when the community is having high virus transmission [MH1]. However, our schools can also become a hub for transmission through our classrooms, locker rooms, athletic and extra-curricular venues, and other meeting spaces without proper mitigation protocols.

We recognize the importance of permitting Elementary school students (in particular) to attend school in-person because of the reduced spread among this age group and the very significant need for continued skill development along with psychosocial support. However, we know that schools do not operate in a bubble protected from society at large, and everyone must do their part. Safe, in-person learning can only occur when we implement proven measures to ensure protection against transmission of the virus among our students, patrons, and staff. Mitigating the risk of transmission to and from school into the homes of students, education professionals, and the broader community keeps our schools open and our students learning.

As frontline workers during the pandemic, professional educators who work most closely with students should be prioritized for early receipt of a new COVID-19 vaccine and should be given options for obtaining it as soon as possible and according to their personal preferences. Further, medical-grade personal protective equipment should be provided by the state to our professional educators. Quite simply, teaching and learning can't occur without our teachers.

Please contact Mel Hudelson at [mel.hudelson@kansasaap.org](mailto:mel.hudelson@kansasaap.org) or (913) 530-6265 if there is anything KAAP can do to assist with this work.



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