

Children, Schools, and Vaccines: COMMUNICATING TO PARENTS

August 2021

Parents have a lot of questions as students return to in-person learning. A national poll conducted August 4-5 shows that the spread of the Delta variant has raised parents' concerns about COVID-19 and has increased the likelihood of their child getting vaccinated.

For detailed poll results on school re-opening and student vaccination, visit www.debeaumont.org/school2021.

TIPS FOR TALKING TO PARENTS ABOUT SCHOOL REOPENING

- Make it clear that the safety of students, teachers, and staff is your first priority. There are many benefits to in-school learning, academically and socially, but in your messaging, safety should come first.
- Focus on the benefits of vaccination and in-person learning – not just the potential harm of virtual learning.
- Be transparent about how decisions are being made, how you will monitor your plan, and how you will communicate with parents.
- Select messengers who already have a trusting relationship with parents. Parents say they want to hear information about school safety from pediatricians or other doctors, state or local health officials, principals, school superintendents, and teachers.
- Tailor your message for your specific audience. In our poll, all parents said they care most about student safety, but Black parents also placed a high priority on the need to address mental health challenges and Latino parents were more likely to prioritize the safety of teachers and staff.

REASONS CHILDREN SHOULD GET VACCINATED

Parents chose these as compelling and convincing reasons to have children vaccinated against COVID-19.

- *The COVID-19 vaccination is the best way to protect our children from more dangerous variants.*
- *Pediatricians recommend that teenagers get the COVID-19 vaccination.*
- *Vaccination can help children stay in school safely and get the education they deserve.*
- *Medical science has proven that other vaccines keep dangerous diseases and viruses away from our children. The COVID-19 vaccines are no different.*
- *Parents can protect their children from needing hospitalization or having long-lasting COVID-19 symptoms.*

MESSAGE THEMES

These are the top three themes parents said would make them feel more confident as schools reopen. "Safety" was the clear winner among Democrat, Republican, white, Black, and Latino parents. (See table.)

1

SAFETY:

The safety of students, teachers, and staff is our first priority.

2

COMMITMENT:

Communities must take all necessary measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 to ensure that schools can remain open and safe for students.

3

EDUCATION:

Students need to be back in school physically to get the education they deserve.

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POLL HIGHLIGHTS

WHICH STATEMENT FROM A SCHOOL OFFICIAL WOULD MAKE YOU FEEL MOST CONFIDENT AS SCHOOL REOPEN? (COMBINED RESPONSES)

	Total	White	Black	Latino
Safety: The safety of students, teachers, and staff is our first priority.	53%	51%	53%	59%
Commitment: Communities must take all necessary measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 to ensure that schools can remain open and safe for students.	26	26	34	21
Education: Students need to be back in school physically to get the best possible education they deserve.	26	29	21	21
Science: Our plan for our community is based on science, data, and doctors. We will continue to review our policies for risks and additional needs.	22	22	15	27
Flexibility: Schools need the flexibility to respond to the specific needs of their students, teachers, and staff in their local communities.	21	21	25	18
Personal liberty: Students and parents have the right to make their own decisions about vaccinations and precautions like masking.	21	23	14	19
Respect: We should not allow students to bully others because of the vaccination status. Children and their parents should be respected for their decisions.	18	15	25	22
Equity: Some children are at higher risk than others, and we are committed to meeting the health and education needs of every student from every background.	12	12	13	13

WHICH STATEMENT WOULD YOU FIND THE MOST CONVINCING ARGUMENT FOR WHY PARENTS SHOULD GET THEIR CHILDREN VACCINATED? (COMBINED RESPONSES)

	Total	White	Black	Latino
The COVID-19 vaccination is the best way to protect our children from more dangerous variants.	40%	36%	42%	51%
Vaccinating children can help the country reach herd immunity and can protect mental and physical effects of lockdowns and other restrictions.	33	32	19	47
Parents can protect their children from needing hospitalization or having lasting COVID-19 symptoms.	31	32	42	23
Vaccinated children can go back to school -- in person and without masks -- to get the education they want, need, and deserve.	28	28	28	31
Pediatricians recommend that teenagers get the COVID-19 vaccination.	26	22	34	39
Medical science has proven that other vaccines keep dangerous disease and viruses away from our children. The COVID-19 vaccine is no different.	24	26	23	17
Parents can prevent illness, even if it's mild, in their children, just by getting them vaccinated.	24	26	25	18
Vaccinated children can safely see their family and friends again without masks and distancing.	15	15	10	13
Vaccinated children can return to sports and extracurricular activities without masks.	13	12	5	14
Children have been involved in the clinical trials and have not had any negative side effects.	11	12	12	10
None of these are convincing or compelling.	20	22	20	12

Based on a national poll of 1,100 parents of children age 12 to 17 conducted August 4-5 by Frank Lutz in partnership with the de Beaumont Foundation. For more information, visit www.debeaumont.org/school2021.



The de Beaumont Foundation advances policy, builds partnerships, and strengthens public health to create communities where people can achieve their best possible health. Get more resources about COVID-19 communication at debeaumont.org.



Made to Save is a national public education campaign rooted in grassroots organizing. Its goal is to build trust in COVID-19 vaccines and increase access in communities that have been hit the hardest by the pandemic. Learn more and get resources at madetosave.org.