

The Virgin Islands Consortium

CDC Says Vaccinated or Not, Students Should Return to In-Person Learning at Schools

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday issued its clearest indication thus far that it believes the coronavirus has receded and continues to diminish — even with the now-dominant Delta Covid variant in the U.S. — as the federal health agency said schools should reopen to in-person learning whether or not students and teachers are vaccinated.

The guidance offers further proof that vaccination has proven extremely effective against Covid-19, with cases drastically down from peak numbers last year. The CDC said Friday teachers and students who are not vaccinated should wear masks, while vaccinated individuals don't need to. Children under 12 for whom no vaccine has been approved

should continue to wear masks, the federal health agency said. Additionally, students of all ages should continue to receive instruction three feet apart, as [established by the CDC in March](#).

If such precautions are not possible, the CDC said schools should open for in-person learning anyway – even where there is elevated spread of the highly contagious Delta variant — and that ventilation, weekly testing of unvaccinated individuals and cleaning should be adopted to help keep the disease at bay.

Dr. Erin Sauber-Schatz, lead for the CDC’s Community Interventions and Critical Populations Task Force, said Friday the latest guidance allows maneuverability for schools to implement their own guidelines based on the Covid situation in their communities. And in instances where vaccination rates are high and infection rates low, jurisdictions, Dr. Sauber-Schatz added, could ease restrictions further than what the CDC recommended.

“You can start to talk about when and how you might want to remove schools’ prevention strategies such as physical distancing,” she said. Multiple studies have shown that in-person learning is much more beneficial to students than virtual.

Governor Albert Bryan in May told the Consortium schools would reopen to full in-person learning [on August 9](#). The governor encouraged parents to get their children, ages 12 and up vaccinated, which he said would further boost safety when schools reopen.

The V.I. Department of Education has had a taste of in-person learning amid the pandemic, which it [started in March](#) for Pre-K to 3rd grade students.