

WHAT SCIENCE SAYS ABOUT SCHOOL SAFETY, MASKING, AND THE DELTA VARIANT



WHAT DID THE ABC SCIENCE COLLABORATIVE STUDY?

The ABC Science Collaborative analyzed COVID-19 data from 20 North Carolina school districts made up of 783 K-12 schools that represent 59,561 students and 11,854 staff. The data were collected from June 14, 2021 – Aug. 13, 2021. During the study period, the Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 became the most dominant strain of the virus.

Researchers studied within-school transmission of COVID-19 in the setting of universal masking. **The “School Safety, Masking, and the Delta Variant” study was published in Pediatrics.**

20
NORTH CAROLINA
SCHOOL DISTRICTS

59,561
STUDENTS

11,854
STAFF



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FALL AND SPRING

This study was performed during the summer months, when schools had fewer people in attendance. Recess wasn't crowded, extracurriculars were not happening, masking adherence may have been higher due to an increased adult-to-child ratio, and lunch could be eaten distanced and outdoors due to better weather.

During the regular school year, extra considerations should be made regarding **Recess, Extracurriculars, Adherence, and Lunch (REAL)**. Recess will be more crowded, extracurriculars will be held, adherence to masking may be harder to enforce, and lunch will be more crowded.



WHO FUNDED THE RESEARCH?

Research was funded in part by the National Institute on Minority and Health Disparities Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics Underserved Populations (RADx-UP) coordination and data collection center, National Institutes of Health Office of the Director, the National Center for Advancing Translational Science Trial Innovation Network, and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Pediatric Trials Network.



WHAT DID RESEARCHERS LEARN?

The ABC Science Collaborative found that within-school transmission of COVID-19 was low with less than 3% of people exposed to COVID-19 in school developing infections, even with the more infectious Delta variant. Transmission was low in the setting of students and staff wearing masks.



HOW CAN THIS INFORM SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING GOING FORWARD?

Decision-making for schools in the setting of the Delta variant should include REAL considerations and multi-layered mitigation strategies including masking, physical distancing, and vaccination.