

PARTICIPANT SUMMARY

Perspectives from Black & Latino/a/x Students and Parents of Black & Latino/a/x Students on COVID-19 Vaccines & Masking in Schools

We appreciate you sharing your perspectives about COVID-19 prevention strategies in schools with us.

BACKGROUND

This document shares the main findings from the interviews conducted with students and parents from February to August, 2022. We interviewed 21 students and 38 parents about the 2021-2022 school year. Nearly all participants attended school in Durham, North Carolina.

This research was conducted as part of a larger NIH-funded study called, “SARS-CoV-2 Screening and Diagnostic Testing for Return to K-12 Schools”

(<https://abcsciencecollaborative.org/covid-19-testing-in-schools>)

led by The ABC Science Collaborative (<https://abcsciencecollaborative.org/about/>) in partnership with QualCore (<https://populationhealth.duke.edu/research/qualcore>) at Duke University.

PURPOSE

To foster positive aspects and mitigate negative impacts from COVID-19 testing and other prevention strategies in schools—including any stigma associated with race and ethnicity—by gathering the perspectives of students, parents and caregivers, and school personnel on the social, ethical, and behavioral considerations of COVID-19 prevention strategies in schools and sharing this information with key health and education stakeholders.

MAIN FINDINGS: VACCINES

Student Perspectives about COVID-19 Vaccines and Mandates

- Nearly all Black and Latino/a/x students interviewed thought the COVID-19 vaccine, as well as a potential COVID-19 vaccine mandate, would be valuable. Students said vaccines:
 - Give them peace of mind.
 - Protect them from COVID-19 directly, by preventing or reducing the chance they will get COVID-19.
 - Protect others such as people in their school, local communities, and globally.
- Only some students expressed concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine or mandates.
 - Reasons included parental disapproval if the child was vaccinated and concerns about potential side effects, for example.

Parental Perspectives of COVID-19 Vaccines and Vaccine Mandates

- Most parents of Black and Latino/a/x students interviewed mentioned some aspect of the COVID-19 vaccine that they felt was beneficial. Parents said the COVID-19 vaccine:
 - Provides a level of safety and protection from contracting COVID-19.
 - Prevents the likelihood of serious illness or reduces symptom severity.
 - Was an additional level of protection that could be used in combination with other prevention strategies to better protect against spreading of the virus.

- Most children of the parents interviewed were vaccinated.
 - The main worry that prevented some parents from pursuing vaccination for their child was concerns about unknown side effects.
- More than half of parents supported a vaccine mandate among students because:
 - The COVID-19 vaccine is no different from other vaccines that are already mandated to attend school in-person.
 - The health benefit for the larger public.
- A minority of parents were not in favor of a vaccine mandate. The most common reason was that the vaccine should be a choice for an individual to make.

Student Perspectives on Masking in Schools

- All students thought that the purpose of masking was to stay safe and healthy and to protect oneself and others against COVID-19.
- Students explained that masks would help keep them from getting and spreading COVID-19, as well as keep other students around them and their family members healthy.
- Many remarked that they found mask wearing to be uncomfortable and masks were unpleasant to wear while being physically active.
- Several students expressed negative feelings towards other people who were not masking properly.
 - Students explained that this behavior was annoying or irritating, remarking that it was inconsiderate and could be putting both the person and others around them at risk.
- One student mentioned differential treatment on wearing masks toward Black and/or Latino/a/x students.

Parental Perspectives on Masking in Schools

- All but one parent said a mask requirement at school reassured them that their children would be safe while returning to school in-person.
- Concerns shared focused primarily on their child's expressed discomfort with wearing a mask for the duration of the school day.
 - Some parents noted that these were only initial complaints, and that their children adapted to mask wearing over time.
- Most parents supported mask mandates at the beginning of the 2021 school year.
 - They felt masking should have remained mandatory throughout the year.
 - Numerous parents said that they prefer for their child (or their child prefers) to continue masking if or when masking became optional.