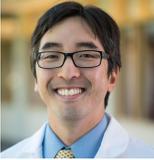


COVID-19 Check In: Conversation with South Burlington School District Parents November 20, 2020

		
Denise Aronzon, MD Pediatrician	Benjamin Lee, MD Pediatric Infectious Disease Physician	Kate Goodwin, APRN, CPNP Pediatrics

Q: How are you feeling things are going in the schools?

A: *I am so thrilled that our kids have been able to return to school in-person. We have friends in other states whose kids do not have that option. My daughters have adapted so quickly to new routines and new safety measures and they are so much happier being back in their classrooms and seeing their friends. As the infectious disease experts have pointed out, schools have not proven to be a major source of COVID spread. I am so happy and grateful to see that the careful planning by the schools has been successful at keeping our kids safe, happy, and in school!* ~ **Denise Aronzon, MD**

A: *There certainly have been a lot of challenges and changes (particularly for middle- and high-schoolers, who haven't been able to return for in-person learning to the same extent as the younger children), but I am so amazed at how everyone has stepped up to meet the challenge. For my two elementary-school aged children, it has now all become routine and all they know is that they are in school and learning! Before the year started, we predicted that schools would not be major centers for transmission--and thus far our predictions are proving correct.* ~ **Benjamin Lee, MD**

A: *I'm impressed and delighted by the transmission mitigation measures put into place in our schools. The nurses, teachers, staff, administrators, and students have been doing a wonderful job of masking, washing hands, and distancing as much as possible. With the return to in-person school and a somewhat "normal" routine, I have seen great improvements in mental health both in my own young children and the children I see in primary care. I applaud families for their patience in adjusting routines and working hard to keep illnesses out of school. Everyone is really making the best out of a crummy situation.* ~ **Kate Goodwin, APRN, CPNP**

Q: What can our families and students do to keep our schools open?

A: *COVID has begun spreading through our community at much higher rates. Fortunately, schools have proven to be a safe place for our kids and not a significant source of COVID infection. The newest infection clusters are coming from small gatherings of family and friends. Our day-to-day choices will determine if illness rates worsen and if our kids can stay in school. This fall and winter, we all need to make sacrifices to keep our families and community safe. Some of the activities we enjoyed all summer are no longer safe options. This means no playdates, no sleepovers, no exercise outdoors with friends, no meals inside or outside with friends or family, and no travel. The best way to keep our kids in school is to follow this advice and limit all your activities to your immediate household members only. I am sad that we will not be joining*

grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins for Thanksgiving, but I feel good knowing I am doing my part to keep our kids and everyone else safe. ~ **Denise Aronzon, MD**

A: *The most important thing we can ALL do to help keep our schools open is to follow the Governor's recent restrictions regarding social gatherings. It is clear that the transmission that is currently occurring is due to small social gatherings, NOT school attendance. But if rates of transmission get too high, it could make it challenging for schools to remain open, for example if too many teachers or staff members end up out on quarantine. If we want to flatten the curve again, as we did so successfully in the spring, this will require all of us to sacrifice and limit our social gatherings, as hard as that may be. This means no play dates, sleepovers, dinner parties (including Thanksgiving), etc. with other households. This does NOT mean parents can't make arrangements for needed child care. But as parents, it is up to us to make necessary sacrifices for the benefit of our kids. For me, knowing that I am doing this for the sake of all our kids makes it easier to deal with and motivates me to rise to the challenge. There is still a ways to go, but with the encouraging news about vaccines in the past week, we can now see light at the end of the tunnel. Now is the time to double down on our efforts, not throw in the towel! ~ **Benjamin Lee, MD***

A: *In-person school provides the most effective and equitable learning for all students and I dearly hope we can continue working together to keep schools open! Keep doing a great job of sending your healthy children to school with well-fitting masks. Limit your family's exposure to other people to situations that are a NEED rather than a WANT. School is NEEDED. The grocery store is NEEDED. In-person socialization is not vital; those social exposures to others can result in rapid case spread, as we have seen from the Halloween parties and recent bowling tournament. I very much want to see my brothers and their families for the holidays, but we have all agreed that the sacrifice of giving up our gatherings this year are worth the huge payoff of helping to prevent community spread. Decreasing the number of cases in the community will help keep our hospitals functional and our schools open. ~ **Kate Goodwin, APRN, CPNP***

Q: What advice/suggestions would you give to families about the upcoming holidays?

A: *Have a small, creative holiday celebration within your own household. Explain to relatives that we need to keep Covid rates low and our kids in school and so the safest option for everyone is to stay home and not gather at all. Getting a Covid test and then gathering with a group is not a safe option. Instead, have fun with this different holiday season. Arrange a toast over Zoom, host a virtual centerpiece decorating contest between households, and open presents over Facetime. Let the kids pick some new or exciting holiday dishes that otherwise might not show up at your traditional celebration. Use a shared screen app to watch a holiday movie with family somewhere else. Leave holiday treats on the doorsteps of family and friends instead of visiting or sharing a meal. ~ **Denise Aronzon, MD***

A: *Make it an even more special time for your own household. Let the kids pick something special to do at home as a treat and reward (my kids are always partial to a movie marathon!) While it is disappointing to not be able to gather with a larger group of friends and family, it is a rare opportunity to have a much more intimate holiday. We have all experienced so many challenges this year, and have all endured so much. I have so much to be thankful for (including this wonderful South Burlington community). Personally, I'm taking this moment to remind myself what I am most thankful for is already right in front of me... ~ **Benjamin Lee, MD***

A: *Enjoy and embrace your immediate family. Make your family's favorite meal for the holidays; take this opportunity to skip Aunt Edith's green bean casserole and have lasagna instead. Have a contest with your household to see who can come up with the wackiest Thanksgiving Day outfit. Video calls with family,*

scavenger hunts and pinatas, sending special letters to family - incorporating some of these “simple” but fun things that we do infrequently will help to make the holidays feel special. ~ Kate Goodwin, APRN, CPNP