

## Further information to support families as they make a decision

At the WRDSB, we are looking forward to welcoming students and staff safely back to school in September 2021.

In making the decision of in-person or remote learning for your child/children we feel it is important to share evidence and research. At this time, there is more research that suggests that in-person learning provides significant benefits for children and youth compared to remote learning.

The WRDSB believes that student learning, mental health and well-being are best supported through in-person learning, and the following research reinforces this.

**Experts from Sick Kids made the following statement:**

“Given the significant negative impact that the initial prolonged school closure (to in-person learning) had on children and youth, it is our strong opinion that an in-person school model....is the best option from an overall health and learning perspective for children of all ages allowing for consistency, stability and equity.” – [SickKids.ca](https://www.sickkids.ca)

In-person learning helps children and youth develop and maintain connections with their peers. Studies show that developing friendships and socializing helps children and youth learn more about themselves, overcome challenges and be more active. (Sources: [Life Education](#), [Essential Kids](#))

- For children, making friends is a vital part of growing up and an essential part of their social and emotional development
- For youth, they are less likely to experience mental health struggles when school changes and transitions occur if they have friends
- While children and youth can make connections/friendships remotely, in-person learning allows these connections to be done more easily and naturally.

In-person learning is important for the mental health of children and youth. The American Academy of Pediatrics (2020) stated: *“We recognize that children learn best when physically present in the classroom. But children get much more than academics at school. They also learn social and emotional skills at school, get... mental health support and other services that cannot be easily replicated online.”*

(Sources: [Sick Kids](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics](#))

- Recent research indicates that children and youth have experienced increased mental health symptoms over the course of the pandemic.
- In Ontario, the most significant predictor of worsening mental health symptoms was the degree of social isolation the student had experienced. This emphasizes the importance of social interactions, which are part of the fabric of learning in-person.

In-person learning makes it possible for teachers to be more actively involved in each student's learning. (Sources: [Daisy Christodoulou: Remote Learning](#), [PISA: Equity in Education](#))

- A key for a student's well-being and learning is the teacher's ability to create a sense of connection and belonging.
- Teachers consistently report that this is done much more easily and effectively in-person than through a remote environment.

Emerging research indicates that in-person learning is important for a student's academic achievement. (Source: [Virtual Illusion](#))

- One study showed that students who moved from in-person to virtual modes of instruction experienced large negative effects on their achievement in math and language arts that persisted over time.
- This finding suggests that students achieve greater academic success when they are learning in an in-person environment as opposed to a remote one.