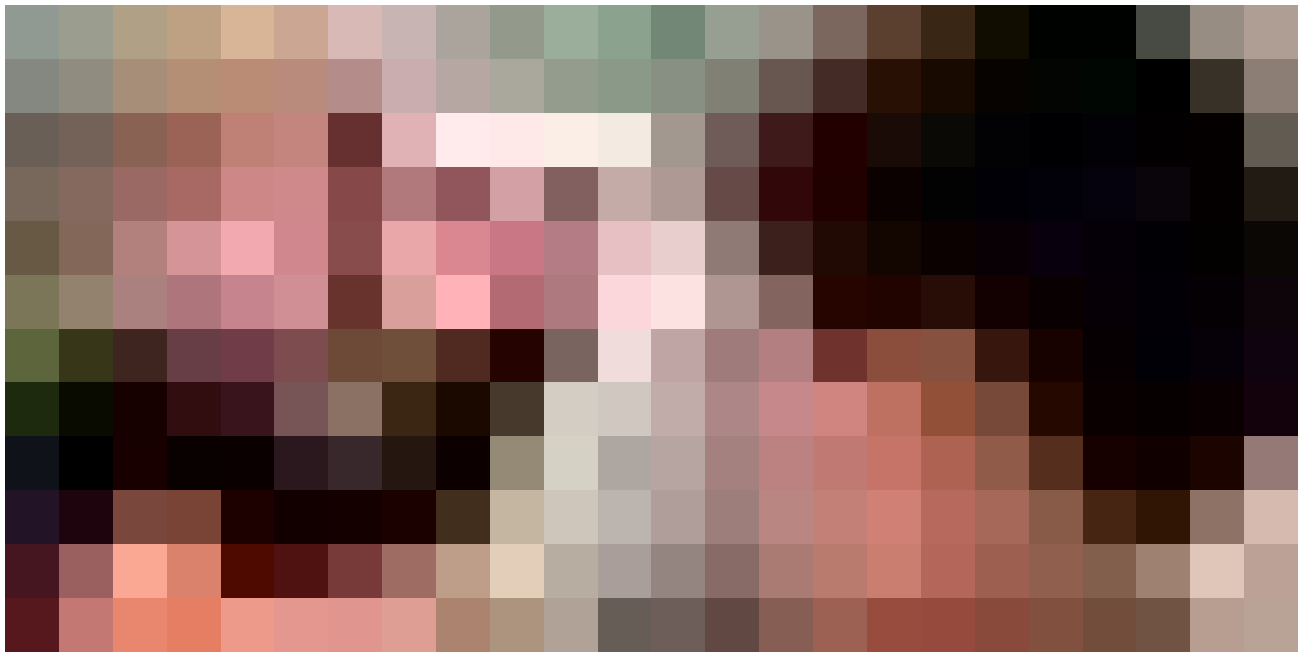


## An emergency medicine physician projects that if schools open in the fall, they'll close by the end of October with COVID-19 outbreaks



The principal Pam Rasmussen taking the temperature of arriving students as part of coronavirus guidelines for summer-school sessions in Monterey Park, California, on July 9.

[Reopening schools during the coronavirus pandemic](#) has been a point of contention among lawmakers, school boards, parents, and students alike.

Citing the "confluence" of the flu season and the increased exposure that in-person classes would introduce, one doctor with experience advising city officials on public health said schools could pursue

reopening with strict safety precautions but might still need to shut down again as soon as the end of October.

Matt Lambert, an emergency medicine physician who previously worked as the chief medical information officer for New York City Health and Hospitals, the nation's largest public-health system, told Business Insider he was "all for very thoughtful attempts at reopening schools."

But so far, he said, he thinks "we haven't had a lot of guidance at the federal level on any of this, specifically around schools."

A reporters tour of College Gardens Elementary School in Rockville, Maryland, on July 9.

"For local schools, if they want to try and open up using some really practical techniques around mask-wearing and distancing and maybe even rotations of when students come, I think that is

something worthwhile to try," Lambert said, adding: "But the virus is more prevalent now than it has been at any other time."

"If we move to open up schools, even with the best models we can think of, passing the virus is going to be inevitable," he continued.

"Kids can contract the virus – kids can transmit the virus. There might be some varying levels of what it's like in kids compared to adults, but it is clear that they can do that."

Lambert said it would be "inevitable" for an infected student to pass on the coronavirus "to either a chronically ill teacher or an elderly loved one at home who may have a bad outcome from this."

As the fall semester quickly approaches for numerous US school districts – and has started for others – there is still plenty of uncertainty. Chicago officials announced Wednesday that the Chicago public-school system, the third-largest in the country, would begin with online-only classes.

"We are in a better place than most places in the county and the surrounding area, but we are seeing an increase of cases," said Mayor Lori Lightfoot said in a press conference Wednesday.

The decision to keep those students online leaves the New York City public-school system as one of the last large US school districts to announce whether it will allow students to attend in-person classes in the fall.

More than 250 employees in [Gwinnett County School District in Georgia](#) – the state's largest school district – either tested positive

for the coronavirus or had been exposed to it while planning for in-person learning for the coming semester.

A Granite School District teacher joining others gathered at the district's office Tuesday in Salt Lake City to protest the district's plans for reopening.

[Photos of maskless students crammed into a hallway](#) at one school in Georgia that opened Monday were widely shared, exemplifying the difficulties of properly reopening a school during a pandemic.

The US still doesn't have much of a grasp on a proper testing and contact-tracing infrastructure, and Lambert sees a challenge in identifying and separating coronavirus cases and flu cases given the similarity between symptoms and increased exposure to other people who may be infected.

"When the flu comes back around October, it's going to create some challenges intermingling with the coronavirus, because patients don't

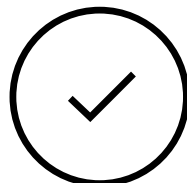
come in saying, 'I have the coronavirus,' or, 'I have the flu' — they come in saying, 'I have a fever, a cough, or shortness of breath,'" Lambert said.

He added: "The virus would be increasing during that time of the viral season in this country, so I think that it's the confluence of increased exposure at schools and the return of times that we typically see the viruses" that would make it difficult for schools to reopen properly.

"I think it's reasonable for a local school system to try to put together a good plan on mask-wearing and social distancing and to try and go back to school," Lambert continued. "But for most of them, I think we'll find that that's going to be something that's not going to work out."

*Do you have a personal experience with the coronavirus you'd like to share? Or a tip on how your town or community is handling the pandemic? Please email [covidthips@businessinsider.com](mailto:covidthips@businessinsider.com) and tell us your story.*

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