



PAID ADVERTISEMENT

# WITH VIRUS TESTS, SCHOOLS CAN SAFELY GO BACK TO EDUCATING CHILDREN

*There is a way to make classrooms safe and functional. Unfortunately, the CDC does not even mention it.*

Fairfax County, VA, has concluded that to follow the CDC guidelines for a six-foot separation between students, its schools must keep students out of the classroom. Parents can choose between having their children watch remote instruction from home for four days a week or work two days a week in the classroom and three days a week at home on independent study projects. With either choice, students will fall farther and farther behind.

The way to return safely to normal operations is to rely on virus tests. This is how the Stanford

Medical Center reopened without compromising either safety or quality of care. It tested 11,000 staff members and arranged for temporary isolation for the 30 or so who turned out to be infectious. It is also testing patients before they come in for elective procedures.

If Stanford can afford to test its staff and patients, this nation can afford to test its teachers and students. By pooling samples, we can increase our capacity to test and economize on the use of scarce reagents. With the information that the tests alone can provide, we can keep anyone who is infected out of the classroom for the two-week interval when they are contagious.

With virus tests, life in a school can return to normal. Classrooms can stay as they were. No one has to pretend that teachers can get every first-grader to wear a mask

when the nation can't get all of their parents to wear masks.

The traditional approach favored, by the old guard public health professionals, avoids the use of new testing technologies. But if testing is good enough for the patients and staff of the Stanford Medical Center, it is good enough for our teachers and students. It is the only realistic way to give children who have already fallen behind any hope of making the educational progress required to catch up and keep up.

Americans are not quitters. We were not prepared for WWII, yet we still prevailed. We still have a chance to get one part of our pandemic response right. We should insist that Congress pay for the tests that will let schools safely return to the task of educating our children. We must get our children back into real classrooms.

**ROY ROMER**  
Former Superintendent,  
Los Angeles Unified School District

**PAUL ROMER**  
NYU Professor of Economics,  
2018 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences



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Paid for by The Rockefeller Foundation. The Wall Street Journal news organization was not involved in the creation of this content.