



# TSTA NEWS

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## **TSTA agrees with physicians: Virtual learning must remain an option**

Texas State Teachers Association President Ovidia Molina issued the following statement:

Two of the state's leading physician organizations — the Texas Medical Association and the Texas Pediatric Society — believe it is a mistake for school districts to discontinue virtual learning and require in-person instruction for all students while the COVID-19 pandemic is resurging in Texas, and the Texas State Teachers Association agrees.

TSTA will go a step further and demand that Gov. Greg Abbott and the Texas Education Agency take control and require all school districts to continue virtual learning as an option for the remainder of the school year without any loss of funding. Districts that already have ended virtual learning must be ordered to reinstate it.

The state leadership has to quit pretending that Texas is returning to "normal." Texas reported more than 10,000 new COVID cases yesterday, and more than 6,700 Texans were hospitalized with the disease. This is not normal. This is dangerous, and it is dangerous for school districts to deprive students of the virtual learning option.

The health and safety of students, educators and families must take priority over everything else until this pandemic is under control.

Many schools are being forced to close in-person instruction for days at a time because of COVID outbreaks on their campuses, yet TEA is not reporting these closures. TEA also must require districts to report these closures to the state so that information can be made readily available to the public. Parents need more transparency about how prevalent the spread of COVID is in Texas communities.

In a letter to the Texas Association of School Boards and the Texas Association of School Administrators, the Texas Medical Association and the Texas Pediatric Society expressed reservations about school districts discontinuing virtual learning and requiring in-person instruction.

"School policies must not put high-risk members of the community at unnecessary medical risk, disadvantage families advised by a physician that virtual learning remains in their best interest, or undermine public health efforts to slow the surge of COVID-19 already happening in our state," they wrote. "Completely discontinuing virtual learning at this time fails all three tests."

The physicians' concerns are linked here:

<https://www.texmed.org/TexasMedicineDetail.aspx?id=55172>