



an impossible decision

ABOVE //
Heather Vance Devers
in her home with her
daughter, Betty, and
son, Jude.

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JUST THIS WEEK WE WERE TOLD that all students in our district will be learning virtually until *at least* Labor Day. But when (or if) campuses reopen, we've been given a choice: Do we want our 6-year-old to learn virtually or in person? I've spoken to people on both sides of the fence, and when you break down the pros and cons, most parents are left with a stalemate.

My husband and I have gone around and around on what we think is best for both our children. We are lucky that neither is immunocompromised or has respiratory issues. With our first grader, Betty, we have tentatively decided on school in person. When she is in front of a screen all day, her behavior suffers—staying seated in a chair while staring at a screen for four hours a day is a lot to ask of a 6-year-old. She is also very social and has struggled being isolated from her peers.

So has my 2-year-old. Since March, he has been asking to go to school and see his friends and teachers. It's funny—he struggled at first with the transition of going to school while I went to work, but soon I began hearing his excited stories about a craft they did or a firetruck that paid a visit. His teachers would send me pictures of his tired chubby cheeks resting on his nap mat after a fun morning, and stories of him falling in love with a book about Frosty the Snowman (something he *still* talks about). He adores his school, and for that reason we have decided that he will also go back when it opens in September.

Our decision for our children may not look like yours. My husband and I both work, and it is very difficult to manage our jobs and two young children if they are home. We've been doing it for five months, and to be very honest, we are pushed to the brink. Voices have been raised more than I would like to admit; tears have been shed by our children and ourselves. The choice to send our children back to school is about their needs, but also about ours. We need help shaping these young minds.

There is a ton of mom-shaming and finger pointing going on. Honestly, I don't think it's really all about the school issue—everyone is worn out and lashing out. We're all exhausted, stressed and begging for clear answers when there are none. We don't know what the next year is going to look like, so I implore you above all else to be kind. Give your fellow parents the benefit of the doubt that they are doing what is best for their families. We have to support each other if we're going to make it through this crazy season of life.

Be well,

Heather

Heather Vance Devers