

# U.S. Teens Advise Schools on Fall Reopening During COVID-19 Pandemic

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When U.S. schools begin the next academic year with the country still fighting the coronavirus pandemic, students should spend half their time in classrooms and half doing online activities that pinpoint their individual learning style such as videos or reading.

That advice comes from Nimish Mathur, 17, and his team from DuPont Manual High School in Louisville, Kentucky.

The “I’m So Confused Gang” team submitted its idea for re-opening school in the age of COVID-19 to a competition sponsored by Discover Your Genius (DYG), a nonprofit company that challenges young people to solve real-world business problems.

Teams from 23 states are vying for a piece of the \$5,000 prize, which will be split among eight winning teams on Monday, June 29. The competitors range from ages 13 to 24.

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With the start of the 2020-21 school year just two months away, many school leaders and education boards are scrambling to make opening plans amid countless unknowns about how the virus spreads.

Some experts said the best ideas may come from students themselves, like those in the DYG competition. They noted that schoolchildren have risen to safety challenges before, particularly in response to mass shootings.

“Student input is critical,” said Sandra Chafouleas, a psychology professor at University of Connecticut’s Neag School of Education. “We can’t just assume that we know best because we are the adults.”

The Louisville team’s Virtual Aristotle website is designed to be used by grades K-12. Half of each class would learn remotely for half the week before switching schedules with the rest of the class, keeping classrooms sparsely filled so students can self-distance to thwart virus spread.

It would also help students prepare for another round of 100% remote learning if a second wave of the virus hits, Mathur added.