

# Toxic Positivity

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## Description

The COVID-19 pandemic is forcing US schools, teachers, and families to rethink the way children have always learned. This film focuses on K-12 schools serving students in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and those with disabilities as they navigate reopening and virtual learning. Through the stories of a diverse group of students, parents, teachers, and education experts, the film will examine the effects this turbulent school year has had on the student learning process, mental health, and the future of education.

## Synopsis

The story follows a diverse group of teachers, parents and students through the 2020-2021 school year as school is conducted online, in person, or a combination of both. Even before the school year begins tensions begin to rise across the country as school boards, federal and state governments, teachers, teacher unions, and parents clash over what is the best way to handle school during a global pandemic.

As the school year begins we see just how wide the digital divide really is and how under-resourced schools are as teachers and school administrators scramble to secure PPE and cleaning supplies. Health concerns grow as schools across the country struggle to stay open as cases rise. Students fall behind, quietly drop out, and lack access to basic needs like food in a virtual environment. Teachers and parents struggle to overcome the new challenges presented by the pandemic and this unprecedented school year. It becomes apparent that mental health is the unspoken pandemic.

Frustration builds resulting in protests, lawsuits, and heated debates over the safety of in person schools. School districts, teacher unions and local governments are at odds across the country. Meanwhile a global pandemic rages on striking fear, claiming lives, and causing controversy. Through all the challenges teachers, parents, and students feel the pressure to keep smiling and stay positive. Even if it's toxic.

However, it's not all bad. These challenges have brought people together and sparked remarkable creativity and innovation. Teachers and parents have built their own online communities where they can vent, offer support, and share ideas. Some students are actually thriving in virtual environments. Some families are enjoying spending more time together. Many have recognized the potential for technology and are using it in ways never imagined before. Perhaps most importantly, children and adults have shown how incredibly resilient and capable human beings can be.

Ultimately, this film sets out to answer the question - what lessons have been learned during this experience and how can we apply that knowledge to create positive change in the future?