

# New Mexico educators: Form rank-and-file safety committees to close schools and save lives!

**Texas Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee**  
**3 February 2021**

The Texas Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee calls on teachers, school workers, parents and their families in New Mexico to build committees in your districts to defend the lives, livelihoods and rights of educators, students and communities.

The actions of governors and governments throughout the Southwest region during the COVID-19 pandemic have prioritized profit over the lives of residents, and New Mexico is no exception.

Near the end of the spring of 2020, New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham decided to end her shelter-in-place order so as to begin priming the pump for her fall economic reopening plans. Another Democratic Party politician, Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller, proclaimed a May 15 summer school reopening as the city reached 5,500 COVID-19 cases and 242 deaths.

Grisham announced during a May 28 press conference that, “As businesses did their part to protect New Mexicans, we have to protect businesses that we continue to expand in terms of opening the economy.” That is to say, the back-to-work campaign was needed in order for businesses to keep making money.

In June, indoor venues were reopened and public safety measures rolled back. In other words, the measures that had led to a fall in infections and deaths were scrapped. Two months later, the worsening COVID-19 data graph showed the devastating consequences of this policy, which would continue to worsen.

New Mexico public schools reopened in the fall with the promise that they would only be at 50 percent capacity, and that private schools would be no more than a quarter full. By late November, the state was

experiencing upwards of 2,000 new infections each day.

In a December 18 press release, New Mexico Education Secretary Ryan Stewart let pre-kindergarten to third grade special education students be brought on campus between the weeks of January 2 and January 18, 2021, as the winter break came to a close, explaining that his choice conformed to “their needs.” He continued, “After much discussion, we now feel we can manage those safely, so we made that change.”

Similar actions were being taken in all the surrounding states.

The New Mexico Department of Education has set guidelines that all school districts are required to follow in their school reopening plans, including using a “hybrid” model whereby only some students attend each day. But this has not stopped the spread of the virus.

On January 25, four Rio Rancho (population 87,521) schools—Martin Luther King Elementary, Puerta Del Sol Elementary, Rio Rancho Middle School and Shining Stars Preschool—reported COVID-19 infections. Cases were also discovered in Enchanted Hills Elementary Schools and along a school bus route on January 26. The former involved a first grade student, while the latter was an employee.

Shining Stars Preschool warned on the district website of a confirmed case on January 27, stating that a prekindergarten student had caught the virus. The school put 15 students and eight contractors in quarantine to clean the classroom, restroom and school bus used. Vista Grande Elementary School then confirmed another case on January 29. Forty-two students from the school are in a 14-day quarantine

along with three school employees.

New Mexico's middle and high schools do not yet conduct in-person general education classes. However, the governor has declared that schools will open to every grade level in the month of February. Hobbes Municipal Schools intends to revert to face-to-face classes on February 8, in addition to Santa Fe Public Schools on February 22, which has been given the green light by the National Education Association (NEA)-Santa Fe. If this is allowed to go forward, many more children, educators and their family members will become infected and possibly die.

**These actions call for an immediate response. Educators must unite with the broader working class and demand the shutdown of all schools and nonessential production, with full compensation for workers and small-business owners.**

**Resources—including free high-quality computers, internet, special training, online support and more—must be provided to educators, students and their families to make online education effective and sustainable.**

The gargantuan wealth of the corporate financial oligarchy, which has only grown with the massive funneling of government money into the coffers of big business through the CARES Act bailouts, must be expropriated and used to fund these measures.

The US Congress delivered to the financial elite \$2 trillion through the CARES Act in March and an additional \$900 billion in December, both enjoying bipartisan support. The Federal Reserve, on the assignment of the legislation, offered essentially limitless money to these same elites, including \$4 trillion in cheap loans to major corporations and banks. These policies led to the further massive enrichment of the oligarchs, with the total wealth of US billionaires soaring by over \$1 trillion in the first nine months of 2020 alone.

Over 457,000 Americans have now died from COVID-19 because of government negligence and the deliberate implementation of the murderous “herd immunity” policy based on letting the virus rip through the population.

**To put an end to these homicidal policies and coordinate their response, education workers in New Mexico must organize independently of the unions and Democrats and form a New Mexico**

**Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, joining a network of such committees that have been formed across the country.**

These committees fight to unify educators with the struggles of other action committees among autoworkers, health care workers, Amazon and logistics workers, meatpackers, transport workers and all sections of the working class.

The struggle that educators face in New Mexico cannot be solved solely by educators or in your state alone. Battling the unions, the Democrats, the Republicans and all the myriad representatives of the capitalist class is a political struggle that requires the broadest possible mobilization of the entire working class across district and state lines.

The spontaneous inclination of workers to look toward trade unions for support is insufficient to conduct a successful nationwide general strike in defense of workers' lives and against the agenda of the capitalist class. The trade union bureaucracy only serves as a conduit for the subordination of the working class to the stifling influence of the right-wing Democratic Party faction of the ruling elite.

The union apparatus constitutes a privileged petty-bourgeois base drawn by the capitalists into what are effectively managerial cabinet positions in workplaces. Their interests stand in direct opposition to those of the workers, which is why, regardless of how they dress it up, the unions are pushing to get their members and students back into the schools. No constructive headway can be made by workers while in their clutches.

We urge New Mexico educators to read and carefully consider the numerous statements that have been published by the network of rank-and-file committees across the US and globally, and join the fight to build these democratic organizations in every school and workplace, fighting for the interests of masses of working people, not the profit interests of the corporations.



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