Clark County School District reopens with aim of returning 325,000 students to classrooms

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Clark County School District (CCSD), the fifth largest district in the US which serves roughly 325,000 students in the Las Vegas, Nevada metro area, resumed in-person learning for pre-kindergarten through third grade students last Monday, March 1. Over 40,000 students returned to schools with another 50,000 continuing to learn remotely as part of the district's hybrid model, meant to prepare a full return to in-person learning in April. Along with the students, 3,000 teachers returned to teach on campus last week with 1,500 still teaching remotely.

The return to school involves three cohorts of students categorized as cohort A, cohort B and cohort C. Students in cohort A come to school on Mondays and Tuesdays, with Cohort B coming to school on Wednesdays and Thursdays, while cohort C is currently remote-only. Cohorts A and B will learn remotely those days of the week they're not on campus. This hybrid phase of learning will continue until April 6, when all pre-K through third grade students are to return to campus full time.

The plan laid out by CCSD also includes having all employees return to schools by March 15. Students in grades 6-12 will return on a similar hybrid model in two phases beginning on March 22, with all grades to return by April 6. While the older students will remain on a hybrid model at least until the end of April, all pre-k through fifth grade students will resume fully in-person learning. Team sports, including football, soccer, tennis, cross country, and girls volleyball, are set to resume on April 3, with competitions beginning on April 16.

The plans for in-person learning were publicly released on February 24, with CCSD Superintendent Dr. Jesus Jara declaring at a press conference that by April 6 all grades will have returned to school. Dr. Jara said, "The governor's easing of the restrictions last week help speed up the process for us."

The "easing of restrictions" referenced by Jara included allowing for increased capacity in buildings and the relaxation of social distancing measures across Nevada. These included opening individual school buildings up to 75 percent of capacity and allowing students to be crammed into classrooms at no less than 3 feet apart from one another.

In other words, students will be within half of the minimum 6-foot distance recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines released last month, which in itself is not sufficient to prevent the spread of the airborne coronavirus in overcrowded classrooms.

The intent of the hybrid model is to push parents towards accepting fully in-person schooling after it becomes increasingly impossible for most to maintain hybrid learning schedules for their children. In particular, parents with multiple children will have to manage bringing some of their kids to school while others remain at home. The situation will also become virtually impossible for teachers themselves to manage.

One commenter on social media said, "Teachers will have their cohort A kids in the class, but also have the cohort B and C kids on the computer at the same time. Again, from what I have gained from talking to many friends at different schools, the directive has basically been: teachers, you still need to be on your computer teaching the online kids so the kids in class will just sit at desk, on Chromebooks, watching teacher. Same exact thing as now, but now they will be in same room

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as teacher."

The Clark County Education Association (CCEA) actually celebrated the return to these unsafe conditions, which will inevitably result in an increase in coronavirus infections and deaths throughout the region. The teachers union tweeted last Monday, "We want to wish all pre-k through 3rd grade educators a great first day back with students in the building today! We want to hear how your day goes! Let us know what your favorite thing that happens today is and what you're looking forward to most the rest of the week. Share your photos and share your stories!"

In fact, the CCEA had already agreed to the school reopenings in December without even showing the slightest pretense of opposition. As CCEA Executive Director John Vellardita said at the time, "the decision on when to open up is… going to be made on the part of the school district. But being ready with a plan is absolutely critical."

The reopening of Nevada schools coincides with the reopening of the nation's third largest school district in Chicago, which opened its doors to in-person learning on March 1 as a result of the betrayals carried out by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU). Both of these returns to in-person learning presage the drive to reopen Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the second largest school district in the US.

United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) has followed the playbook written by the CTU, agreeing that schools should reopen while only asking that teachers be prioritized for vaccination, ensuring that children will still remain susceptible to the disease and able to transmit it to their families and communities.

Last week, the UTLA held a sham vote of its members, asking teachers to "organize resistance" of an unspecified character should the district attempt to reopen before fully vaccinating teachers or before disease transmission rates drop into the still deadly "red tier" of community transmission. The vote was conducted in such a manner that the union could present teachers as agreeing with the need to return to classrooms provided that various inadequate conditions were met.

In Clark County, Dr. Jara announced that 50 percent of CCSD employees have begun to be vaccinated, while roughly 20,000 employees that have received both doses of the vaccine. However, even if all teachers and staff are vaccinated, there still is no vaccine for children, who will become major vectors for spreading the virus in their communites.

There has also been an alarming increase in the number of children hospitalized with Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children, or MIS-C, which has been directly associated with coronavirus infection.

According to the last update issued by the CDC, 2,060 children in the US have been diagnosed with MIS-C, 99 percent of whom had previously contracted SARS CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The remaining one percent were in close proximity to someone who was infected with the virus.

What is being prepared, and has indeed been already implemented in Nevada and in school districts across the country and internationally, is a crime of monumental proportions. The only way for educators, parents and students to defend themselves against this onslaught is to organize independently of both the Republicans and the Democrats and their accomplices in the trade unions.

We urge all educators and workers in the Las Vegas metro region to make the decision today to build rank-and-file safety committees in schools and workplaces throughout the region in order to organize the opposition to school reopenings and implement the measures to contain the pandemic and put an end to the ruling elite's policy of disease and death. Sign up today to get involved!

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