

More students sent back to Las Vegas schools, as health expert claims Nevada is reaching ‘herd immunity’

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On March 22, thousands of sixth, ninth, and twelfth graders returned to in-person learning at Clark County District Schools (CCSD), which includes children from Las Vegas, Nevada and surrounding communities. This follows the return of pre-K to third graders to school buildings on March 1. The remaining grades will return in a hybrid model on April 6, with all elementary students scheduled to return to campuses five days a week.

While an estimated 26,764 students were expected to return Monday, the parents of 44,912 students chose to keep them in remote learning, despite the barrage of propaganda from the media and political and union officials that in-person learning is not only safe, but essential to the mental well-being of students. As one teacher noted on social media, “41 students got off buses today at my high school. ...We had less than a 100 on campus, but we were supposed to have 400.”

As for the pre-K to third grade students who were sent back on March 1, 36,440 are in Cohort A and attend in-person classes on Mondays and Tuesdays, and 32,685 are in Cohort B, which meets on campuses on Thursdays and Fridays. According to the district, 93,644 pre-K through third grade students remain in remote learning.

Students and teachers returned to schools in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement reached between CCSD and the Clark County Education Association (CCEA) on December 14, 2020. The deal was approved by the CCSD trustees on January 14, 2021. The CCEA not only did not put up any struggle but left the wording of the document so ambiguous that social distancing measures were allowed to be reduced weeks before the CDC reduced its guidelines from six

to three feet to pack more children into classrooms.

In total disregard for the safety of educators, students and the community at large, the CCEA has backed the drive to reopen schools. When the district first threw open its doors, union officials declared on Facebook, “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!” This post was followed by a smiley face.

The reopening of schools has been accompanied by a months-long media blitz feigning concern over the academic and emotional well-being of students. This comes after decades of annual budget cuts to programs, which are designed to address the mental health and other needs of children.

Just as this second wave of students returned to school, Mark Pandori, director of the Nevada State Public Health Laboratory, stated at a COVID-19 press conference, “It does appear that we are on a trajectory to achieve some of the low end of herd immunity in the next couple of months.” Pandori claimed the spread of the virus was slowing due to the number of people who had already been infected, plus the number who were being vaccinated.

The CDC reported that 23 percent of Nevada residents had antibodies in their system in mid-January when total vaccinations were below 10 percent. Now that slightly over 20 percent of the population has received at least one dose of the vaccination, he told the *Las Vegas Review Journal* (RJ), “This suggests that up to 46 percent of Nevadans have at least some level of

protection to the virus,” while noting “there is probably some overlap between the group studied with antibodies and the group vaccinated.” He said, “It’s an educated guess, it’s not proof, but it’s one of the best explanations” for the declining numbers.

This is the height of irresponsibility. It also shows that the opening of schools is deliberately aimed at spreading the virus on the basis of the criminal policy of accelerating herd immunity. Pandori completely left out that mitigation measures had been in place until the beginning of March, when schools began reopening.

At the same time, new more virulent and lethal variants are spreading in the state. Pandori said two new California variants, B.1.427 and B.1.429, now make up 25 percent of the cases in the state. According to the CDC, these variants are 20 percent more transmissible than the original SARS-CoV-2 strain.

Pandori said there were at least 43 different variants present in Nevada. These include the South African variant first found in February and the British B.1.1.7. While the P.1 variant from Brazil has yet to be reported, it has been identified in all of the surrounding states save Idaho.

Given these conditions, he admitted, “What we don’t know, and what we didn’t have in the past, is the recipe of, of opening things up and having people get together in the presence of variants ... that recipe could mean that my hypothesis is incorrect, that the presence of these variants means that it’s going to get around some of this herd immunity.”

This recipe is there for anyone to clearly see in Brazil where so many are dying, they are unable to bury their dead. The Brazilian P.1 variant developed because of what was essentially an open-air laboratory for the creation of variants due to the premature opening of nonessential businesses and schools. This is precisely what is being carried out not only in Nevada and California but in every state in the nation. The P.1 variant is of concern not only because it is more transmissible, but it is likely that people can become reinfected with it. According to scientists, antibody effectiveness is six times weaker against P.1 in comparison to previous SARS-CoV-2 strains.

In the state of Michigan, the number of infections almost tripled in one month after schools were reopened. In St. Clair County, the number of infections more than doubled in a week after schools returned to

in-person learning on a full-time basis. Michigan is also the state that has seen the highest per capita rate of infection for the B.1.1.7 variant, which has been linked to the return to school team sports.

The second wave of students returning to in-person learning comes directly after the busiest tourist weekend for Las Vegas since the beginning of the pandemic. It also follows one week after the easing of restrictions on occupancy levels in theaters, casinos, convention centers and the decision to allow stadiums to open up at 50 percent capacity.

Nevada teachers and support staff employees should join the growing network of educators rank-and-file safety committees, which have been formed independently of the unions around the country and internationally. These committees are organizing to expose outbreaks, organize collective action to protect educators and students, and mobilize the working class to demand the closure of schools and nonessential businesses, with full income protection, until the population is widely vaccinated, and the pandemic is fully contained.



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