

Survey of epidemiologists exposes lies that children do not spread COVID-19

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In an article published Saturday by the *New York Times*, a survey of 723 epidemiologists made clear the central role that children play in spreading COVID-19. The findings contradict claims made throughout the pandemic by the entire political establishment of supposedly minimal dangers posed to children and society as a whole by the policy of reopening schools.

The report also exposes the reckless and anti-scientific decision by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), under the direction of the Biden administration, to end guidelines that call for all individuals to wear masks indoors and socially distance. A central aim of this change is to facilitate the reopening of schools for in-person learning before it is safe.

The *Times* article, titled “723 Epidemiologists on When and How the U.S. Can Fully Return to Normal,” begins, “Covid-19 cases are decreasing in the United States, and masks are no longer required everywhere, but the pandemic is not over—and won’t be until younger children can also be vaccinated.”

The *Times* writes, “Half of respondents said at least 80 percent of Americans, including children, would need to be vaccinated before it would be safe to do most activities without precautions. Though children are less likely than adults to develop severe cases of Covid-19, the scientists said their immunity was important because they could be hosts for the virus and a way for it to continue to circulate or develop new variants.”

Corinne McDaniels-Davidson, the director of the San Diego State University Institute for Public Health, told the *Times*, “Children cannot be left out of the equation as we reopen.” She added, “The ideas that they cannot transmit Covid or are immune from disease are pervasive among the lay public. We need education here.”

The lie that children do not readily transmit the coronavirus—disproved by multiple studies at the very beginning of the pandemic—was promoted by the Trump

administration and continued under Biden. Upon his election, Biden pledged to resume in-person learning at all schools where children were still learning safely from home, with his top economic advisor Brian Deese bluntly stating that this was “so that parents ... can get back to work.”

In February, Biden lied directly to a second-grade student at a CNN town hall event, stating, “Kids don’t get ... COVID very often. It’s unusual for that to happen.” On April 30, he reiterated this lie in an NBC News interview, saying, “There’s not overwhelming evidence that there’s much of a transmission among these people, young people,” concluding that schools “should probably all be open.”

The *Times*’ survey demonstrates that the single most destructive decision that could be made in February and March was to open the schools and allow the virus to spread, which is exactly what was done. This has been a major reason that daily new cases and deaths have declined so slowly in the US. Over 30,000 people continue to become infected each day despite the fact that nearly 37 percent of the population is now fully vaccinated. Roughly 1.5 million people have been infected and 20,853 have died from COVID-19 in the past month alone. Since Biden’s inauguration, more than 175,000 people have succumbed to the virus, with the seven-day average now standing at 613 deaths each day.

The drive to reopen schools has never been based on science, but rather aimed at compelling parents to return to work in order to expand corporate profits and the stock market, which has risen astronomically during the pandemic.

A critical aspect of the *Times* survey of epidemiologists is their consensus on the scientific need to maintain mask-wearing and other measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The article notes, “In particular, they say that masks are a norm that should continue, even if that view

puts them at odds with the new CDC guidance. More than 80 percent of them say people should continue to wear masks when indoors with strangers for at least another year, and outdoors in crowds.”

In direct opposition to these experts, last Thursday the CDC encouraged vaccinated people to stop wearing masks indoors, absurdly using the “honor system” under conditions where millions of Americans deny that the virus is even real. Numerous major retailers and large businesses—including Walmart, Costco, Publix, Trader Joe’s and Starbucks—have immediately dropped their mask mandates.

On Sunday, CNN chief medical correspondent Sanjay Gupta said the CDC “made a critical error here in surprising basically everyone with a very significant change.” Gupta told CNN that when he spoke to leading CDC officials earlier last week, they had told him that indoor masking would likely be one of the last mitigation measures lifted, because “it is so effective and it’s not that hard to do in most situations—just to put a mask on.”

While the CDC claim that their decision is based on “science,” one of the studies they cite from Israel found that 14 percent of individuals who were fully vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine had asymptomatic infections. Following the new guidelines, millions of vaccinated people could continue to unknowingly spread COVID-19.

The unexpected shift in CDC guidelines was driven by political calculations and profit interests. Underscoring the calculated character of the decision is the fact that it was announced hours after American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten gave a speech in which she declared, “There is no doubt: Schools must be open. In person. Five days a week.”

Over the past year, Weingarten and the AFT, as well as the National Education Association (NEA) and their state and local affiliates, have been the linchpin of the school reopening campaign. In February, Weingarten told the *Times* that she spends upwards of 15 hours each day on the phone with the White House, the CDC and local union officials, orchestrating the reopening of every major Democrat-led school district that had remained closed under Trump.

As a member of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), Weingarten is a political operative who personifies the corporatist character of all the trade unions, which over the past 40 years have been integrated with the state and serve the interests of the capitalist class. Weingarten has a base salary of roughly \$500,000, which places her in the top one percent of income earners in the

US.

Weingarten and the unions’ hostility to rank-and-file educators, whom they have allowed to become infected en masse over the past year, has been extended to tens of millions of children increasingly herded back into unsafe classrooms. The CDC itself has estimated that nearly 26.7 million children under 18 have been infected with COVID-19. A recent study found that roughly 10–15 percent of all infected children develop “long COVID,” meaning that up to 4 million children may already be suffering from long-term complications, the majority undoubtedly infected in reopened schools.

The pandemic is a global medical and social crisis, in which developments in any country affect all other countries. New infections are now at their high point globally, fueled by more infectious and lethal variants that can become resistant to existing vaccines. In Brazil, where the P.1 variant has decimated the country and surrounding region, one study estimates that more than 2,200 children under five have died from COVID-19.

The premature reopening of all schools and nonessential workplaces under these conditions, which can only lead to a major surge of new infections and deaths, is a monumental social crime that must be prevented. Alarm bells must be raised in every school, workplace and neighborhood, with every effort made to scientifically educate workers in order to counter the bourgeois propaganda that saturates all aspects of society.

There is enormous opposition to the ruling class response to the pandemic and the prioritization of profits over lives. To carry out a successful fightback, the working class must unify on a global scale through the development of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, wholly independent of the corporatist trade unions and the capitalist parties. Above all, a revolutionary socialist leadership must be built to arm the working class with a Marxist understanding of society and to guide the coming struggles to a successful conclusion.



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