

K-12 schools caused more than half of all COVID-19 outbreaks in Michigan last week

Zac Corrigan, Debra Watson
23 September 2021

K-12 schools in Michigan have been open for less than a month, and they have quickly become not just the number one source of COVID-19 outbreaks in the state, but the source of the *absolute majority* of new outbreaks.

Out of a total of 175 new COVID-19 outbreaks in Michigan last week, 98 (56 percent) took place at K-12 schools, according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). An additional 14 outbreaks were placed in a separate category that includes child care, youth sports and after school programs.

[Click here for interactive map.](#)

All parts of Michigan are affected, with 49 of its 83 counties reporting at least one school-related outbreak in the last month. Counties with large numbers of outbreaks in K-12 schools include Lenawee (14); Monroe (13); Saginaw and Jackson (12 each); Lapeer (10); Kalamazoo and Oakland (9 each); Ottawa (8); Genesee, Kent, Macomb, Midland and Wayne (7 each); Ionia and Livingston (6 each); and Barry, Eaton, Marquette and Tuscola counties (5 each).

The 44 COVID-19-positive students, teachers and staff at Cedar Springs High School near Grand Rapids make up the state's largest individual K-12 outbreak. Next are St. Charles High School near Saginaw, with 42 cases, followed by Pinconning High School in Bay County, Lakeview High School in Battle Creek, and Adams Elementary in Midland, each with 31. The next 17 worst-hit schools have between 10 and 26 cases each.

Burbio's school opening tracker shows that schools across Michigan have temporarily gone virtual or canceled classes outright in the face of COVID-19 outbreaks, including Morley Stanwood High School, Engadine High School, Mt. Pleasant Middle School, St.

Charles Community High School, and Battle Creek's Lakeview High School. Eastpointe Middle School, near Detroit, recently went virtual, not due to a COVID-19 outbreak, but because not enough teachers agreed to report to the dangerous school building.

Thirty-three Michigan children are now hospitalized with COVID-19, according to the MDHHS. Child hospitalizations are on the rise nationally, and in the last five weeks over 100 children have died from COVID-19 across the US, or roughly three per day. Eight Michigan children under 15 years old have died from COVID-19, many from the horrific condition known as multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C). Another 36 young Michiganders age 15-24 have lost their lives to the virus since the pandemic began.

The devastating effects of "Long COVID" are only beginning to be understood, but according to a recent study, those who survive after being hospitalized face an average reduction of two to seven IQ points, depending on whether or not the patient needed to be placed on a ventilator, itself a physiologically traumatic experience.

For the third time since the pandemic began, school-related outbreaks are fueling a surge of COVID-19 through communities in Michigan. In Fall 2020 and again in Spring 2021, COVID-19 exploded through Michigan's schools. The first surge took place with the "wild type" of the virus, followed by the more infectious B.1.1.7 Alpha variant. Each wave reached a peak of over 10,000 daily new cases in Michigan, and then diminished when schools were closed first for Thanksgiving and Winter break, and then Spring Break and summer vacation.

The new surge is taking place under the domination of the Delta variant, which is even more infectious than

the Alpha variant. In addition, more Michigan schools are now open for in-person learning than at any time since the initial closures in March 2020. As a result of the full reopening of schools and nonessential workplaces, daily new cases statewide now exceed 3,200.

The deadly reopening of schools in Michigan and across the US has been overseen by the Democratic Party and the trade unions. Today, First Lady Jill Biden will appear at Oakland Community College in Michigan to conclude her nationwide tour dedicated to her husband's policy of keeping schools open. American Federation of Teachers (AFT) union president Randi Weingarten conducted a similar tour recently under the banner "Back to School for All."

Since the beginning of the pandemic, first under Trump and then under Biden, Michigan's Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer has dutifully subordinated the lives and health of Michiganders to the profit motives of the auto companies that largely control Detroit and Michigan. In order for workers to report to work at the auto factories—which are another major source of COVID-19 outbreaks—their children must be physically in school.

The mainstream media is presenting right-wing opposition to mask mandates and vaccines as the main political obstacle that must be overcome to ensure that mitigation measures are enforced, thereby making schools safe for teachers and children. In fact, leading scientists have demonstrated that with a virus as contagious as Delta, mitigation measures like masks and vaccines are not enough to stop the spread. More is needed.

As Dr. Malgorzata Gasperowicz explained at the webinar *For an International Strategy to Eradicate COVID-19*, convincing a few percent more people to get vaccinated or having them wear masks properly will only have a small effect on the spread of Delta. It won't "bend the curve," because Delta is so contagious that it can spread from person to person through the air at the slightest opportunity, especially in crowded indoor environments like schools.

However, with increased vaccinations, combined with the closure of schools and nonessential workplaces, a scientific program of testing, contact tracing, the isolation of infected patients, and other basic public health measures, COVID-19 could be eradicated in two

to three months.

The key to stopping the spread of any virus, including COVID-19, is to cut off the chain of transmission from one person to others. Without this critical pathway, the virus cannot spread. It will die, either after killing its host or after being itself destroyed by the host's antibodies.

As long as COVID-19 is circulating anywhere in the world, it will continue to mutate and evolve according to the laws of natural selection. The Delta variant has already caused a concerning number of "breakthrough cases," which means that someone who has been fully vaccinated nonetheless became infected with COVID-19. As long as the virus continues to spread worldwide, a variant which fully resists current vaccines could potentially emerge.

Ending the pandemic therefore requires a strategy not of mitigation but of *eradication*. But because eradication necessitates a shutdown of schools and businesses, even though just for a few weeks, it is unacceptable to the rich, who control both political parties and the unions.

Teachers, parents and students in Michigan and across the US who want to learn more about the program of eradication and how to fight for it should visit wsws.org/edsafety and join an Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee in your area today.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact