

“Just how many dead children is the threshold for action?”

West Coast Educators Rank-and-File Committees meeting supports October 1 strike of UK parents

West Coast Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committees
29 September 2021

On Saturday, the West Coast Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committees (ERFSC) held an online public meeting in response to the ongoing spread of COVID-19 in schools and the active efforts by the political establishment to cover up the spread of cases and outbreaks. Committee members presented our call for schools to be closed as part a globally coordinated strategy to eradicate COVID-19.

There is growing opposition to the criminal response of political leaders, district officials and the trade unions to reopen schools with little to no mitigation in place, creating conditions for the further spread of infection. During the meeting, the West Coast ERFSC agreed unanimously to provide full support behind the call for a nationwide school strike in the United Kingdom on October 1, spearheaded by UK parent Lisa Diaz.

On Friday, Diaz issued a video statement on Twitter explaining that the reopening of schools in the UK has been a disaster. More than 59,000 British children were infected with COVID-19 in the first two weeks of school reopenings. In her video, Diaz appealed for parents to take the independent initiative to keep their children at home and safe from the virus. The video has now been viewed over 84,000 times, liked over 2,500 times and retweeted over 1,400 times.

Conditions in schools in the US mimic those in the UK. The latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that at least 544 children ages 0–18 have died from COVID-19. According to the most recent report from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), there were 206,864 new cases in the week of September 16–23, and more than 5.7 million children have contracted the virus since the pandemic began. Data

out of Israel and the UK show that 10 –15 percent of all infected children suffer from Long COVID.

The call by UK parents for a nationwide schools strike is an important step forward in the growing fight against the herd immunity policies of the international ruling elite and should be supported by educators, parents and workers throughout the world. We will make every effort to share and promote the call far and wide.

During online discussion, teachers, students, and parents expressed support for the strike and provided insight into the unsafe conditions in the schools in their areas.

Alfonso, a middle school teacher in San Diego, California, described the lack of mitigation and reporting in his district. “Our schools have been open for several weeks now, and our students are constantly out sick. When I check the numbers that the district has been reporting, it is definitely not accurate. I have more kids out sick in my own classroom than they have recently reported on the district dashboard. And I guess they don’t count kids that get sick when not at school.

“With kids in the classroom, it’s your worst nightmare. Many students 12 and older are still unvaccinated in my district. Some teachers keep the windows closed because the district admin is telling them this is safe. What about multigenerational families and a mix of kids where brothers and sisters are in different schools? If one gets sick, it can be spread to multiple school sites and in the community like wildfire. The thought of a student or colleague passing is a huge concern.

“And our union is complicit, once the MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] was signed and schools were reopened, no one has been checking on ventilation. I purchased air purifiers out of my own pocket. There was

no option for online, there was no fight to argue for what procedures should be in school now that we have reopened.”

Alfonso expressed support for the UK parents’ strike saying, “There are a lot of parents and teachers who feel alone, but really we are not. A lot of teachers feel this way. These are real fears teachers have because we know the vaccine is not completely effective at keeping the virus away.

“I support the call by Lisa Diaz because we need something like this as a clarion call where we all gravitate to. We need to organize more of these rank-and-file organizations to keep people safe. I second her call, but that’s only the beginning of what needs to be a much larger movement to oppose reopening.”

Andy, a graduate student at San Diego State University, addressed the meeting. “We still have lecture halls with hundreds of people who aren’t socially distanced,” he said, “and at that point the mask doesn’t make a difference if people are sitting shoulder to shoulder for one to three hours.

“People are vaccinated and still getting COVID. They say 98 percent of the population on campus is vaccinated, but it’s hard to tell if that’s true. That they are testing 2 percent of the population, when 100 percent of the population can still catch the virus, doesn’t really make any sense. The university does try to blame COVID cases as happening outside of schools, but they are also holding their own mass events with concerts at stadiums.”

Deborah, a middle school art teacher in the New York City public schools, described horrific conditions in the largest district in the country, noting, “Schools are really overcrowded to begin with, and when we went back two weeks ago my classes were the same size as pre-COVID. We are still overcrowded. Kids are wearing masks but just thin paper masks, and they don’t keep them on.

“They were going to test two times per month, but now it’s one per week. But they can only test the students that have signed consent forms, and very few students have turned in consent forms. They say they are testing 10 percent of the students, but at my own school site they only called about 10 names for testing recently.

“Also, I went to get tested, and because I am vaccinated, I was not allowed to get tested on site. I certainly can still catch and spread the virus. I can go get a free test elsewhere. I don’t know why they would refuse me to be tested at my own school if it is not about keeping the numbers down.

“We have two air purifiers, but from the reading I have

done, this air purifier is ineffective. I have six windows, which only open about three inches. Only three windows open at all in my room, so you can imagine how poor the ventilation is. In the hallways, teachers and students are all shoulder to shoulder.

“The mitigations are a joke. We were all supposed to have been given PPE. I have over 300 students I teach in the school. I was given a tiny bottle of hand sanitizer, six paper masks and some alcohol wipes, and that was my 30-day supply to deal with all my kids. In the lunchrooms they all have their masks off and are not three feet apart.

“All of the teachers are feeling demoralized. We feel abandoned by our union. There hasn’t been a meeting yet since school started. We feel that the union has done nothing to protect us. We fear for ourselves, our health and our lives, and the lives of our students.

Mike, a parent in San Luis Obispo, California, said in response to our call for an eradication strategy to halt the pandemic, “I concur completely. We need to emphasize that the question of endemicity is not inevitable.”

He pressed the question: “Just how many dead children is the threshold for action? Two successive administrations with different parties have pushed ‘get back to work and school.’ They refuse to do what everyone knows works: Coordinate to crush new cases which can be done in 2–3 incubation cycles. As a former educator and administrator, I was pained to see systemic service to hierarchies at the cost of those we are claiming to serve. This isn’t about profits or power; it’s about humanity. If we don’t take a stand, who are we really?”

There is enormous support for independent initiatives such as the UK schools strike as millions of parents, workers and youth want an end to the suffering and death wrought by the herd immunity policies of the ruling elite. The West Coast ERFSC will do everything in its power to share and promote the event as widely as possible and encourage similar initiatives in the US. Initiatives such as this must take up an independent fight for the eradication of COVID-19 and counter the lies that we must learn to live with the virus and accept mass death.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact