

“No one should be allowed into the classrooms until it is safe!”

Connecticut educator endorses October 15 school strike, shares her experiences during the pandemic

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Parents across the United Kingdom are striking today, keeping their children away from unsafe schools to protest the herd immunity policies of Prime Minister Boris Johnson. This powerful initiative has galvanized support across the world. The *World Socialist Web Site* has joined with Lisa Diaz, British mother of two school age children, to spearhead a global online picket line. We urge you to join us and send your message of solidarity on Twitter using the hashtag #SchoolStrike2021 and tagging @WSWS_Updates.

Linda Lambert, a retired city public school teacher from Connecticut, spoke with the WSWS about why she supports the protest begun in England and stretching across the globe, stating, “I support the British parents’ strike 100 percent for sure. Our children are our most precious commodity!”

Linda asked, “Why are governments insisting children go back to the classrooms? So their parents can go back to work. It’s just like in the Kentucky coal mines, our lives are worthless to the elite. It is all about money. It is the elite that run the country. Just like in the ‘Hunger Games,’ the people in this country and others are completely expendable.”

Linda taught kindergarten for two years, then first grade for 16, then Special Education at the high school level. “I loved these children,” she said, adding, “I was happy until COVID.”

Last school year, Linda became acutely conscious of the intransigence of the politicians that schools must fully open, and the failure of the unions to protect educators during the pandemic. She commented, “The unions are just an arm of the administration. They

don’t care. After the district went back face-to-face I began waking up with nightmares of being on a ventilator. I called in sick for a month. I had to reach out to my union rep. My boss knew what was happening and my union rep did not care. They don’t do anything for the teachers themselves.

“My union rep had no idea what was going on, or who to call if I needed anything. Instead, it was, ‘Go figure it out yourself.’ Yet, I was forced to pay union dues for nothing. My dues went into the void, their pockets! As a single mother raising two children and having a hard time even affording food, these extra dollars would have gone a long way!

“The first death at my school was a sweet bus driver I knew. She brought it home and she and her husband passed. I also found out that it was up to the Special Ed faculty to check the incoming students for COVID and make sure their paperwork was in order, that they had no fever that day. But I had students who would come in and say, ‘I threw up this morning.’ The fact they had Special Ed teachers who were face-to-face with every student coming in shows to me how expendable we were.

“Two of my students died from COVID. One was during the school year, only 21 years old, in Special Ed, a very sweet child. The second one, a girl, had recently graduated and worked in a bowling alley.

“Every single school in my district has had COVID among students and teachers bringing it home to their families. Teachers were assigned to ‘watch kids at home on their computers’ but still had to come in so the administrators could watch them.

“I always caught everything from my students when I taught, I even had pneumonia and lice. I couldn’t see dying of COVID. I called in sick until I retired, hoping to stay with the school system through zoom classroom or a ‘leave of absence’ which they would not give me.

“My brother and my sister-in-law, who is a nurse, both knew all the protocols and still caught COVID. Afterwards, my brother had to carry an inhaler, even though he never had asthma before. My brother got it when Trump was lying that COVID was just like any other virus. He was hospitalized for a short bit, but never really recovered, despite being released. He died on November 29,, 2020.

“My cousin, 49, also got COVID and ‘recovered’ but didn’t. He was a long-hauler who won’t be counted. He developed heart problems, a blood clot, and died in his partner’s arms in July. After three months of ‘recovering,’ he was never the same and his heart just stopped.

“As you know, there was no chance for goodbyes. We had been there for each other through the loss of my parents and after my ex-husband left for me to raise my two children by myself.

“This is a killing pandemic that has taken millions of lives. We are educated, smart people that believe in science. Vaccines have been a part of schools since smallpox, they need to be a part of them. It should not be about ‘political correctness’ or someone’s feelings—no one should be allowed into the classrooms until it is safe!”



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