

Mobilize the working class to eliminate COVID-19! Attend the October 24 meeting on “How to end the pandemic!”

New York City Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee
20 October 2021

The New York City Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee met on Saturday, October 16 and endorsed the following statement.

In the month since schools in the city opened in the largest district in the United States on September 13, children aged 5-12 have become the population segment with the fastest growing number of COVID-19 infections. The last five weeks have been a period of horrific anxiety and fear for teachers, parents and students alike, as the authorities have concealed infection outbreaks and at least one child has died.

The New York City Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee calls for an emergency program of action to protect children from the pandemic and stop the community spread of the deadly virus, which has already claimed the lives of at least three-quarters of a million people in the US, 55,600 of them in New York City.

To fight for this, the working class must base itself on scientific facts. That is why we are urging educators, parents, and students to attend the October 24 webinar, “How to end the pandemic” to listen to noted scientists explain how the virus can be eliminated.

We must understand the different responses to the virus by various sections of the corporate and political establishment.

They are:

1) Herd immunity: The policy of intentionally letting the virus infect as many people as possible and opposition to the slightest safety precautions.

2) Mitigation: Vaccines and mask mandates and other half measures designed to slow the spread while schools and non-essential workplaces are opened. This policy, which includes ever-more threadbare safety

measures in the New York City schools, still allows COVID-19 to be transmitted and to mutate into more infectious and vaccine-resistant variants.

3) Elimination: the use of all public health measures including vaccinations, testing, contact tracing and quarantining, *combined* with the temporary closure of schools and non-essential workplaces while protecting incomes. This would reduce the transmission rate of the virus to as close to zero as possible and allow its elimination region by region and across the US. This must be part of a global strategy to **eradicate** COVID-19—the global extirpation of the virus in nature, including in animal reservoirs—once and for all.

The narrative promoted by politicians of all stripes is that “We have to learn to live with the virus.” This is only a justification for more death and the devastating long-term consequences of this disease for children. Modern science and medicine have proven the possibility of defeating once widespread diseases like smallpox (wiped out worldwide in 1980), polio (reduced by 99.9 percent since the 1950s) and measles (declared eliminated throughout the Americas in 2016).

The failure to stop the spread of COVID-19 is not primarily a scientific problem—it is a social and political one. In one fashion or another, all the political decision-makers, from Biden to de Blasio, to Republican-controlled state and local governments, insist that no measures can be taken that interfere with corporate profit and their drive to reopen the economy.

Republicans in Florida, Texas and other states are cutting off funding to school districts that implement mask or vaccine mandates, while promoting fascistic attacks on science and public health measures. For their part, the Democratic Party, with the full backing of the

United Federation Teachers and other unions, claim that mitigation measures are sufficient while they keep schools and non-essential workplaces open, allowing the disease to spread and take more lives.

The supposed critics of the disaster unfolding in New York's schools, such as the Democratic faction of the City Council led by member Mark Trayger in the special Education Committee hearing of October 6, cannot offer any alternative to the de Blasio administration. The entire political establishment is united in saying that schools must remain open, which is the same as saying that children must continue to get sick and die.

The force needed to implement a scientific and human strategy to end the pandemic is the broad masses of working people who have the greatest stake in ending this mad sacrifice of life for corporate profit. Over the last several weeks, a powerful movement of the working class has emerged against wages that fail to keep up with rising living expenses and unbearable levels of forced overtime imposed by employers scrambling to deal with labor shortages and supply chain interruptions.

More than 10,000 John Deere workers have gone on strike in Illinois, Iowa and other states. Thousands of nurses and other health care workers are striking in western New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut and California. More than 1,400 food processing workers at Kellogg's have also walked out. The biggest strike wave in the US in generations, moreover, is part of an international upsurge of the working class, including 150,000 metalworkers in South Africa.

On October 15, parents in the United Kingdom conducted a second school strike, with widespread support from working people around the world, against Tory Prime Minister Boris Johnson's reopening of schools. The determination of the British parents to fight back—independently of the established parties and the unions—has inspired millions, not least of all in New York City. That the working class is the social force that can eradicate COVID is now becoming clear for everyone to see.

In all these struggles, workers are rebelling against “unions,” which falsely claim to represent them. The most glaring proof of the fact that the unions and their highly paid executives are on the other side of the barricades is the role of the UFT's parent union, the

American Federation of Teachers. The day before UK parents launched their first school strike on October 1, the AFT held an online town hall in partnership with the far-right parent group Open Schools USA and the pseudoscientist who co-authored the herd immunity manifesto, the Great Barrington Declaration.

The working class needs science. It also needs organization and leadership. That is why the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) was formed on May 1. The IWA-RFC has sought to unite the working class across national barriers and to arm workers with the scientific knowledge to counter the propaganda of the ruling class and mobilize its strength behind a program of stopping the pandemic and saving lives. That is why the IWA-RFC is co-sponsoring the October 24 webinar with the World Socialist Web Site.

We urge educators, parents and college and high school students to:

1. Register for the “How to end the pandemic” meeting on October 24
2. Encourage your colleagues and friends to attend.
3. Promote the meeting on social media.
4. Create communications networks via texting applications and on social media to discuss elimination and the independent organization of the working class to defend its right to health, safety and life.
5. Spread information about ending the pandemic and the developing strike wave. Distribute articles on these topics from the *World Socialist Web Site*.
6. Join the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee in New York and begin to build local committees in your school buildings, districts and neighborhoods to prepare action to shut the schools as the first step in putting an end to the pandemic.



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