

Amid teacher shortages, Oklahoma schools bring in cops as substitutes

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Facing chronic teacher and staff shortages due to the spread of COVID-19 infections, Moore Public Schools in Oklahoma has called in police to supervise classes at three elementary schools. The Moore Police Department announced its involvement in a social media post.

“Moore PD is a proud community partner of Moore Public Schools. This week, several on-duty officers are serving in the classroom as schools continue to face teacher and staff shortages. Today, officers Stromski and Lewis covered 6th grade classes at Apple Creek Elementary. Additional officers are serving Houchin and Broadmoore. We are thankful to be able to assist our community during these difficult times.”

In the post’s attached photos, unmasked officers in uniform can be seen presiding over students doing virtual schoolwork at their desks. In one of the pictures, an unmasked officer is sitting at a desk with a mug with a large “Q,” a symbol associated with the far-right QAnon conspiracy theory, although some posters said this was the initial of the missing teacher. In any case, parents and teachers overwhelmingly commented on the inappropriate and irresponsible decision to bring police into the schools.

“Protect and serve? Outrageous and infuriating. How dare you! Unmasked and armed to teach little children. Not physically or emotionally safe. Not appropriate. And a horrible role model for children during a pandemic. Not only that, but these cops are literally putting human lives at risk, including their own. Absolutely disgusting,” said one parent.

“What are you going to do when all the police officers get COVID? Because unless the teachers have been attending some very intimate parties in their off hours that no one knows about, I think the whole ‘teaching in close proximity to students’ might be the

reason why they’re all sick in the first place,” another parent commented.

“As a teacher who caught Covid at school and was out sick last week, I’m appalled to see these officers unmasked in the classroom,” a teacher said.

With more teachers out of commission due to the highly contagious Omicron variant, school districts across the country have resorted to extraordinary measures to keep in-person classes running.

Earlier this week, Cincinnati Public School administrators attempted to prevent the shutdown of 11 schools by sending more than 60 staffers from the district’s central office to classrooms. However, the move was not enough to keep schools open, and the district was forced to move to virtual learning.

Just outside of Austin, Texas, the Hays Consolidated Independent School District sent emails to parents encouraging them to become substitute teachers. A potential applicant would only need to pass a criminal background check, and the principal could waive the 30-hour college credit requirement. In a statement, the district explained “having someone in class ... is better than the alternative of having to close schools.”

In Upstate New York, the West Genesee Central School District posted on Facebook asking youth to take on vacant jobs. “Are you home on college break and want to help out at your alma mater? Come be a Substitute Teacher or Teaching Assistant while you are home and earn some spending money before you go back to school,” the district said in the post.

In Bullock County, Alabama, parents reported their children were left in the cafeteria for hours because of a lack of cafeteria workers and teachers in the school district. WSFA 12 News said its office was “bombarded” with calls from Union Springs Elementary School parents saying many teachers and

staff did not show up to work.

In a photo sent to the news organization, dozens of students were gathered in the cafeteria with their coats and backpacks. Javan Avery told reporters she immediately picked up her child and nieces from the elementary school after seeing the picture on social media. Avery said she was told there were no cafeteria workers and the students had to sit in the cafeteria because their teacher was absent.

Avery expressed her frustration to WSFA 12 News and said she did not understand why the school refuses to shift to virtual learning due to staffing issues. “I can’t explain the fire burning inside of me. If we don’t send them to school and they miss so many days, we get a yellow slip. But we send them to school for you to take care of them. If you didn’t have any staff, you should just call parents to come pick them up or put them back on the bus and send them home instead of keeping them at school,” Avery said.

She continued, “It is very concerning. They haven’t kept us in the loop about anything. They need to answer, and they need to stop being stubborn. I want to see the school shut down and go virtual.”

Late last month, Michigan’s Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed a bipartisan bill allowing school bus drivers, cafeteria workers or any other school district employee in the state to serve as a substitute teacher until the end of this school year in June 2022.

All these measures explode the lies, repeated by politicians from both big business parties, that schools are being kept open to address the academic and emotional needs of children, which remote learning has supposedly failed to do. Cops are now being used to keep children in infected classrooms so their parents can be sent back to equally dangerous workplaces to produce corporate profit.

The absurd, desperate and outright criminal means employed to keep schools open during the pandemic reflect the sociopathy of the capitalist ruling class. The Biden administration, the unions and the media tout lies about “safe schools,” but the surge of infections and hospitalizations throughout the US has been a social disaster for American families. According to the American Academy of Pediatricians, nearly 1 million US children were infected with COVID-19 last week alone.

At the same time, educators, parents and students have increasingly demanded the closure of unsafe schools. Students in schools from New York City to Chicago to Florida to California have organized walkouts, demanding action be taken to save the lives of those in their communities. This followed the four-day job action by 25,000 Chicago teachers to stop in-person learning. While this struggle was halted by a miserable deal the Chicago Teachers Union signed with Democratic Mayor Lori Lightfoot, the struggle in the nation’s third largest district continues.

The fight to close the schools and save lives is inseparable from the growing class struggle in the US and internationally. Stopping the spread of infections and death requires a globally coordinated movement to shut down schools and nonessential production and employ all available public health measures to eliminate the deadly pandemic once and for all. This requires the expansion of rank-and-file safety committees into every school and workplace to link up the growing global opposition to the pandemic.

We urge educators, parents and youth to contact the WSWS for more information on building rank-and-file safety committees and to send information about conditions in your school district.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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