

Three more children die from COVID-19 in New York City

Jesse Thomas, Sandy English
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Recent data released by the New York Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOH) has revealed that three children between the ages of 0-17 died of COVID-19 the week of January 14-21. Individual teachers and parent groups noted that the total COVID deaths reported by the DOH for this age group rose from 29 for the previous week to 32 in new DOH data.

No details have emerged on the victims, and families have not come forward with more information. A similar instance of a child COVID-19 death in October of last year prompted a single article from Gothamist.

No media outlet has commented on the most recent deaths. Neither Mayor Eric Adams nor Governor Kathy Hochul has issued statements on these preventable deaths or have gotten on a public platform and promised to stop what the politicians usually like to call a “senseless tragedy.”

The grieving families, whoever they are, have received no public condolence from a single politician, including elected officials from the Democratic Socialists of America, who now sit in the State Assembly and on the New York City Council. No one in official society has voiced outrage.

Instead, Adams and the local media have been entirely consumed with the shooting of a young police officer, Jason Rivera, on Friday night in Harlem as he and his partner (also shot) answered a domestic disturbance call. “After Shootings, Eric Adams Rushes to Release Safety Plan,” says the *New York Times*. “‘Save our city’: NYC Mayor Eric Adams makes desperate plea after cop shooting,” yells the Murdoch rag, the *New York Post*. And the *Daily News* reports: “Young widow of fallen NYPD officer posts tribute to late husband ‘fly high, my beautiful angel.’”

Adams has ordered the American flag in front of City Hall to be flown at half-mast to commemorate the officer. Gone are the days when the flags were lowered for the

victims of COVID-19. The message is unmistakable: As far as the corporate media and the political establishment are concerned, dead children do not matter.

It is better to ignore their deaths completely because now that the pandemic is being declared “endemic,” more children will die. The population of the city cannot be reminded of that, especially given the tide of sickness in the schools impacting both educators and students under conditions where Adams and the rest of the Democratic Party from Biden on down have insisted on keeping schools and businesses open during the Omicron surge.

The reactions of the educators and parents who do know of these deaths provide an example of why the establishment needs to censor it. “It’s heartbreaking, three preventable deaths too many,” one educator told the WWS. “It’s not worth hyping up in the media because they don’t want to cause ‘needless panic.’ The priority should have been for these children’s deaths not to happen to begin with. But we are putting families in a position where they feel they have no choice but to send their children to school because society dictates so. The compassion has been lost.”

These deaths are the outcome of an explosion of infections from the Omicron variant, which consumed New York City beginning in early December as part of an unprecedented surge in cases globally. In little more than a month and a half, more than one million of the city’s 8.8 million residents have tested positive. Countless more who contracted the virus were unable to get a test. Others took home-based tests that were not recorded in the official tally.

The silence and deflection of the media and the politicians about the deaths of the three children from COVID-19 are a part of deliberate policies aimed at allowing the virus to spread unchecked and infect the entire population while demanding that working people accept the consequences.

When the Omicron crisis is mentioned by state and local Democrats, it is to seize on decreases in reported new cases to claim that the crisis is over. In a press briefing last Tuesday, Adams declared that the city was seeing “good news on the COVID front.” He continued, “We are winning. We are winning. And we are going to win because we’re resilient.”

The situation, however, remains dire. From the few reports of conditions that appear in the corporate media, it is clear that the acute stage of the crisis is far from over. The *New York Post*, in an article on the situation in the hospitals, described the inability to process the number of dead because of the numbers of staff who are out sick and death rates that are on the rise. “The whole hospital system is at capacity with patients, and, of course, that includes the morgues,” according to one person quoted in the article.

While down from the peak in early January, transmission in the city continues at extremely high levels, including among school children. Last week the city recorded 23,859 new cases in the under-18 age group, with 230 of them admitted to the hospital.

This month the city school system has experienced a dramatic drop in attendance due to infections, as well as families opting not to send their children in for in-person learning.

Teachers also report that testing in schools continues to be a farce. One teacher described to the WSWS the experience of trying to get tested at her Brooklyn school last week, “You have to fill out the online form exactly three days before you come. We don’t know when they come in advance. It’s clear that they are trying to keep the numbers down.”

Adams, in lockstep with the Biden administration, has refused to even consider the temporary closing of school buildings or nonessential businesses to stop the transmission of the virus. He and Governor Hochul have reduced the quarantine period to five days, following CDC guidelines. The obligation to do contact tracing was also suspended.

As Omicron spreads there has been massive opposition by the working class to the reckless policies of the ruling establishment. In the past several weeks, New York City middle and high school students have led a number of protests, demonstrations and walkouts across the city against unsafe conditions in the schools, winning the support of educators, parents and school staff. Such actions, while underreported in the mainstream press, have multiplied in schools across the country.

To defuse opposition, the Adams administration issued a series of conflicting statements last week, raising then deferring the possibility of a remote option. Education Chancellor David Banks also held a meeting last Tuesday with a student organization that initiated the walkouts. The latest post from the group’s Twitter account expressed a sense of futility over the meeting. “As grateful as we are to have student voices at the center of the table, we felt dismissed and sensed some disrespect towards teachers. We’re looking forward to our second session and hope student voices are not only heard but acted upon,” it stated.

The three child deaths this past week demonstrate the reality lurking behind the deception of the Adams administration. Despite the magnitude of the health crisis and warnings by epidemiologists across the globe, the New York City government has followed the criminal “let it rip” policies of the Biden administration, which were themselves a continuation of the approach headed by fascistic ex-President Donald Trump. Both former Democratic Mayor Bill De Blasio and current Democratic Mayor Eric Adams, who took office on January 1, have endlessly repeated calls to keep New York City schools open no matter the costs.

These policies, which prioritize profits above all else, are directly opposed to the interests of workers and youth. It is urgently necessary to build and expand the New York City Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) as part of a global movement to save lives and protect the health and incomes of millions of workers and youth in the city and beyond. We urge those interested in joining this struggle to contact the WSWS today.



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