

COVID rips through US schools during sixth surge

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COVID-19 is again ripping through schools throughout the US, fueled by the highly infectious and immune-resistant Omicron BA.2 and BA.2.12.1 subvariants. Total daily COVID cases throughout the US have reached over 100,000 per day and total COVID deaths have surpassed one million.

Safety and mitigation measures have largely been abandoned in schools, including testing, other surveillance such as contact tracing and quarantine and mask mandates, the consequence of the deliberate policies of the Biden administration. Biden has continued to double down on the lie that schools are the safest place for a child to be, yet students and staff continue to fall sick in droves, risking death, long term physical and mental illness and passing on the virus to loved ones.

According to the latest American Association of Pediatrics report, cases among children have been rising since students returned from spring break in April. For the week ending May 12, officially reported child cases jumped to 93,511. The report also notes significant increases in cases throughout every region of the US.

On May 18, the death toll among children reached 1,547 according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) with 29 new deaths reported this month alone. The next day, on May 19, the CDC removed 980 previously recorded COVID deaths, including 29 children reducing the number of child COVID deaths to 1,518. There was no footnote or explanation on the data tracker accompanying this reduction. Thursday's revision recalls an episode earlier in the spring, when the CDC removed over 72,000 deaths from their data tracker.

At least 12 million children have contracted COVID in the US, undoubtedly an undercount due to lack of systematic testing and contact tracing. As a result, hundreds of thousands of children are at risk of Long-COVID, an illness which expresses an array of symptoms that persist for months and even years after initial COVID-19 infection and can affect almost every organ in the body, including the brain, heart, lungs, kidneys, immune system.

According to a recent study published in *eClinicalMedicine*, mild COVID-19 cases may result in lingering cognitive symptoms. A significant minority of severe COVID cases result in chronic decline of cognitive function equivalent to 10 IQ points or early-stage dementia.

This reality demonstrates the self-serving hypocrisy of the political establishment, which insists on keeping schools open without restriction on the grounds of professed concern for “learning loss” among children and the need for a “return to normal.”

The mass infection policies enforced by the federal government have left teachers, staff and students entirely unprotected. For the vast majority of schools in the US, mask mandates have been lifted, school buildings have been left with poor ventilation systems, and COVID surveillance, including tests and contact tracing, are no longer systematically in use.

On Tuesday, **New York City** moved its COVID alert level to “high” in response to a surge which has surpassed 300 daily new cases per 100,000 and a hospitalization rate over 10 per 100,000 residents. As of Wednesday, the city's Department of Education was tracking 2,083 current COVID cases across New York City public schools, 74 percent of which are student infections. The Department of Education has no classrooms or school buildings in the entire district that are currently closed.

Despite the alarming surge, Democrat Mayor Eric Adams has reiterated that mask mandates will not be implemented in schools or other indoor spaces. At a press briefing Wednesday Adams showcased his insistence that the “pandemic is over,” stating, “I am proud of what we are doing, how we are not allowing COVID to outsmart us. We're staying prepared and not panicking ... variants are going to continue to come.”

A teacher in Westchester, New York told the World Socialist Website, “We had a school play in the first week of May and 86 were out. 12 were staff/teachers. Covid is definitely spreading in our district as well as every other. But there's also the flu and stomach bug spreading like crazy too.”

Schools throughout **California** have also seen a major uptick in cases. In Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the second largest district in the US with over 530,000 students, there have been at least 3,444 reported cases this week. Los Angeles County presently has 41 active outbreaks in K12 schools, with the largest outbreak currently reported at Chatsworth Charter High School in LAUSD, where there are 81 COVID cases on site.

As of May 17, the Sacramento City Unified School district reported 515 positive cases among students and staff, higher

than in March or April. COVID cases in San Diego Unified, the second largest district in the state, have risen to 891 cases with 14 school outbreaks in the district. Significantly, less than one-fourth of the student population is tested on a weekly basis, meaning the real number of infections is far higher.

Proms and end-of-year functions have also led to major outbreaks throughout California and the US. At least 90 students at San Mateo High School tested positive for COVID after a prom at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco in early April. In Sacramento, at least 21 students tested positive who attended the C.K. McClatchy High School junior prom. The event was held indoors at the city's Masonic Temple without masks or any other protective measures including testing.

Another teacher in California told the WWSWS, "Just in the very small special education part of my school, we have both students and staff out with COVID. Just this week we had more positive cases in multiple classrooms, including two kids and my daughter's class who were at school for a week with COVID. There's also a nasty stomach bug going around. However, it is teacher appreciation week and the very kind parents are making us lunches and so everyone is sitting together in one little room eating. I take my stuff and leave because, thank you to the wonderful food and no thank you to the germs."

In **Pennsylvania**, the positivity rate has reached 14 percent and is rising. In Pittsburgh public schools, three schools announced they will be closing due to infection rates higher than 5 percent.

A parent in eastern Pennsylvania said, "The school sends daily emails letting us know that anywhere from three to eight children are testing positive each day for the past week. The 16 in one day, luckily, hasn't been seen since early May.

"The cases are accumulating quickly and we are only seeing maybe 10 to 30 percent of all positive cases via symptomatic testing. There is likely a much higher rate of transmission currently occurring.

"We can see the vaccines or prior infection has little impact on odds of infection so anyone can become infected, contagious and have longer term health issues from just mild symptoms. This is not endemic. This is a pandemic by every measure of the definition. This will not become endemic until we change strategies. With thousands of flights everyday all over the world, it is not going to become endemic.

"Nationally the curve is getting steeper, showing the exponential growth. At this stage, hundreds of thousands are getting infected every day. As prevalence grows, so do viral loads in any one space. Higher viral loads equals increased odds of more severe symptoms and long term systemic damage. If 15 percent to 30 percent have long term health issues, and just 5 percent become disabled by it, that is catastrophic. This is a mass disabling event. Every day, tens of thousands more will suffer for months, years and many will die 10 to 20 years younger than they otherwise would have."

Washington, COVID cases have skyrocketed throughout the state, rising by 124.8 percent last week as 22,365 cases were officially reported. The previous week had 9,949 new cases. Hospitalizations have also more than doubled over the past month from an estimated 200 to 450.

In Seattle Public Schools (SPS), the largest school district in the state with over 55,000 students, cases have risen back to the levels from January during the Omicron surge. According to the official COVID-19 dashboard for the district, there have been 1,577 cases reported among students and staff over the past two weeks.

Throughout the US there has been widespread suppression of data and updates to safety protocols. Catherine Brown, a principal at Cleveland High School in Seattle, was recently fired for "disobeying a directive" to "withhold information about COVID-19 Contact Tracing" from students, staff and families. This troubling firing speaks to the overall efforts by districts to treat COVID as if it is over. Parents have come out in defense of this principal on social media.

In **Michigan**, the 343 students and staff tested positive for COVID last week, according to the Department of Public Health. There are 46 school outbreaks throughout the state, including a major outbreak at Dewitt High School in Clinton County, where 62 students and staff have tested positive. This was just one of seven outbreaks involving 10 or more infected people.

A Flint, Michigan parent shared her reaction to a letter from her child's school informing her that two first grade students tested positive this week. The letter said that the situation is "low risk," and testing in this district is voluntary and only offered for asymptomatic children. "I feel it's very irrational," she said. "How someone can deem something low risk in this completely unsafe predicament? It's saddening that I have to yet again keep my kindergartener home from school to provide a safety net for her and my other children who cannot be vaccinated yet. They're literally jeopardizing the lives of so many and they keep getting away with it.

"I'm fearful every day I walk out of my front door, it's outrageous that people are still acting as if nothing is wrong."



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