

Monkeypox cases double in the week since Los Angeles schools opened

Hong Jian, Kimie Saito
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The number of monkeypox cases in Los Angeles County doubled over the past week, after Los Angeles Unified School District opened with virtually no mitigation measures in place. A total of 7,885 COVID-19 cases were also registered in Los Angeles on August 22.

On the first day of the school year, 50,000 LAUSD students failed to attend classes. While there are number of factors driving high rates of absenteeism, a majority of parents and students are doubtless concerned about walking onto school sites which for all intents and purposes have been converted into human petri dishes.

As of Tuesday, LA County recorded 3,200 COVID cases a day. While this number represents a 7 percent decline over the previous week, experts are expecting a sharp increase in cases during the fall and winter seasons.

Moreover, monkeypox is rapidly spreading among US children, with cases now reported in North Carolina, New York, Georgia, Oregon, California and other states. While the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other public health organizations have been desperate to claim that monkeypox is a disease affecting gay men only, in actuality the disease affects individuals of all ages and sexual orientations and will have a particularly devastating effect on students at school sites.

In response to these devastating developments, the district, city and county governments in Los Angeles have been running a public relations campaign to downplay the danger of both monkeypox and COVID-19. Each day since their virtual Town Hall meeting on August 11, the LACDPH (Los Angeles County Department of Health) has argued that COVID-19 numbers have been steadily declining, in an

effort to prop up the policy of “living with the virus” established by the Biden administration and the CDC.

On the day of the Town Hall almost two weeks ago, LA County officially reported 15 deaths from COVID-19. The number of deaths for August 23, 2022 was 14. According to figures from the *New York Times*, the number of deaths for Monday was actually 24. For the same day in 2021, the number of deaths was 19.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been 3,386,161 reported cases of COVID-19 in Los Angeles County, a number which is almost certainly a vast undercount, and a total of 33,041 deaths. All of these deaths would have been entirely preventable had there been a rational policy in place to eliminate and eradicate the disease rather than the decided-on approach of allowing the virus to spread unchecked, prioritizing profits over lives.

Monkeypox has been around for over 50 years and while there is still much to be learned about the virus, much is also known, including that it spreads through direct contact with infected rashes, scabs, or body fluids from a person with monkeypox, touching objects, fabrics and surfaces that have been used by someone with monkeypox and contact with respiratory secretions.

Anyone can become infected with monkeypox, with the CDC stating that they have “previously warned that there has been some preliminary evidence to suggest that children younger than 8 years old are at risk of developing more severe illness if infected, alongside pregnant people and those who are immunocompromised.”

As of August 18, 2022, 14,115 people in the U.S. have been diagnosed with monkeypox, with California having the second highest number of cases behind New York. There have been nine children diagnosed with

monkeypox in the US as of August 22. However, it was only declared a pandemic in the last month, while schools have been on break. The incubation period for the virus is up to three weeks.

The reckless reopening of LA schools takes place in spite of the fact that the district's teachers have been without a contract for over two months. The United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) allowed the contract run out on June 30 without even calling a strike authorization vote.

The *World Socialist Web Site* recently spoke to a teacher for LAUSD about the conditions she faced. Veronica (not her real name), said, "My son is also a student in LAUSD, at a different campus that has the Accelerated Career and College Program. They told us all that we must attend this in-person meeting. He is a special needs student. So they called us to a mandatory meeting in a classroom. Hardly anybody was wearing masks. There were between 40 and 50 people crammed into this bungalow, no social distancing. Basically they told us everything that we already knew about the program. I just don't think it's safe to have meetings like that. There were way too many people for that room. We were told that everything was going to be virtual now. But I must take him there once a week.

"As far as the staff being informed about incidence of COVID or monkeypox, it's no more. The program we all had before to use to check in and take our weekly testing, we no longer use it. There are no protocols anymore. There's nothing unless somebody is symptomatic and chooses to test themselves.

"I got COVID two times. I knew it when I had it both times because I was very, very sick. But I also met people who said it was no big deal. They just felt like they had a runny nose. No big deal, but everyone's different. But the problem is when the people who only have a runny nose come to school, they're going to be spreading it.

"We work with low-income people too. So, you know, especially given inflation and all that, since these things aren't being given out free like before, I don't see anybody really taking the COVID test unless they're gravely ill.

"Right now it feels like they're trying to go back to pre-pandemic times. It's scary because I don't think we're out of the pandemic yet. Plus the cold weather is coming. That's what kicked us into the surge last

year."

The complete lack of mitigation measures in schools has parents, teachers and students justly worried for their safety and health and that of their loved ones. Many have already opted to stay away, with the *LA Times* reporting that over 20,000 students are missing from the attendance rolls since schools returned to in-person learning. There is one reason, and one reason only for the drive to herd students and teachers back into schools during this health crisis, and that reason is corporate profit.

We urge all those who are concerned about the current state of affairs in California schools to register now to join this Saturday's online meeting "NO to Another School Year of Mass Infection, Death and Austerity," sponsored by the US Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee.



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