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Over 173,000 children infected and 22 killed by COVID-19 in the US last week

On Monday, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released its weekly report on COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths among children across the US. The results are once again horrific, with 173,469 children testing positive for COVID-19 and 22 dying from the virus last week. In total, some 5.9 million children have tested positive for COVID-19 and 520 have died in the US since the start of the pandemic.

Since schools began reopening throughout the US in late July, more than 1,772,578 children have officially tested positive and 171 have died from COVID-19, as the highly transmissible Delta variant has spread rapidly in poorly-ventilated, overcrowded classrooms across the country.



Students and parents walk to class at Tussahaw Elementary school on Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2021. (AP Photo/Brynn Anderson)

After more than 200,000 children officially tested positive over the previous five weeks, this figure decreased slightly last week. However, this is known to be a vast undercount of infections due to inadequate testing and various efforts by state governments to cover up cases.

Underscoring the ongoing severity of the crisis, the number of child deaths last week increased from the weekly figure throughout the previous month and nearly set a record for the entire pandemic.

Across the US and internationally, opposition is building among parents, educators and students to the homicidal school reopening policies that have infected millions of children and killed thousands worldwide. This was sharply expressed in the October 1 global school strike, with the central hashtag #SchoolStrike2021 trending for hours that day and used over 26,000 times in the week leading up to and including the strike.

Contrary to the lies advanced by the Democratic Party and the teachers unions that children are only at risk of infection and death from COVID-19 in Republican-led states that have no mitigation measures whatsoever, pediatric infections, hospitalizations and deaths have approached or exceeded all-time highs throughout the US in recent weeks. Child deaths took place last week in Arizona, California, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia.

The South remains the geographic region with the most COVID-19 infections and deaths among children and the broader population due to lower vaccination rates and the complete lifting of all mitigation measures, with the brutal “herd immunity” strategy in full effect.

Over the past week, five children died from COVID-19 in **Texas**, the most of any state in the country. Sha’Niyah McGee, a 16-year-old junior at Berkner High School in Richardson, died last week from COVID-19. Known as “Nienie,” she was a peer mediator at the campus. Another student in the same district is currently in an intensive care unit,

and on Monday it was announced that a fully-vaccinated teacher in the district, 71-year-old Eroletta Piasczyk, also succumbed to the virus.

Texas accounts for roughly one-tenth of all deaths among educators in the US, with an unofficial tracker logging 54 since late July. In total, at least 405 educators have died from COVID-19 across the US since July 1, 2021, and more than 1,430 since August 2020.

Three children died from COVID-19 in **Florida** last week, the second highest figure for any state. None of the children's names have been made public. In **Mississippi** and **Virginia**, four children died from COVID-19 last week. These included 10-year-old Teresa Sperry of eastern Virginia and 16-year-old Landon Woodson of North Mississippi.

In **Louisiana**, the state Department of Health reported Monday that a child between the ages of 12-17 died of COVID-19, becoming the ninth pediatric death in the state during the current surge of the Delta variant. The latest pediatric death took place only three days after another child under 4 years old died from COVID-19 in the state.

In total, 18 children have died from COVID-19 in Louisiana, with half taking place this school year alone. Across the state, 19,683 K-12 students and 2,339 staff have officially been infected with COVID-19, while some of the larger school systems have reported thousands of cases each week.

As with many other Democrat-led states across the US, Louisiana is increasingly lifting all mitigation measures. State Superintendent Cade Brumley recently announced a change in quarantine policies, allowing local school districts to decide whether or not to quarantine close contacts or to allow parents the "choice" to quarantine their children. Only a handful of districts have said they will not adopt the new policy.

In **Georgia**, 44-year-old teacher Heidi Hammond died from COVID-19 on September 24, less than one month after her husband, 51-year-old middle school football coach Sean Hammond, succumbed to the virus on August 30. The two left behind an orphaned 12-year-old son, Marshall.

Throughout the rest of the US outside the South, the pandemic continues to rip through schools wherever they have reopened, including in Democrat-led states where limited mitigation measures have only minimally slowed the spread of the virus.

In **California**, which is run by the Democratic Party and has a statewide mask mandate in all K-12 schools, a child under age 17 died from COVID-19 last week in Tulare County, the second pediatric death in the county since the start of the pandemic. Another child under 5 years old died in Orange County in early September, also the second COVID-19 death of a minor in that county.

In **New York**, also run wholly by the Democrats, there have been numerous outbreaks in K-12 schools across the state. In New York City, the largest school district in the US with roughly 1.1 million students, 2,672 students and 1,026 staff have officially been infected with COVID-19 since the start of this school year, despite the fact that 95 percent of all staff are fully vaccinated. Last school year, more than 25,000 students and staff tested positive for COVID-19 in the district.

In **Michigan**, the number of COVID-19 infections among students and staff tied to outbreaks in K-12 schools is already eight times the same figure last year, despite the fact that the state recently narrowed its definition of what constitutes an outbreak. The latest data released by the state found that as of September 30, there are 2,491 confirmed COVID-19 cases tied to new and ongoing outbreaks in K-12 schools, compared to 296 such cases at the same time last year.

The crisis in Michigan schools, as with schools across the US, is also being covered up. Renaissance High School in Detroit officially had only one infection last week. However, a student from the school told the *World Socialist Web Site* they estimate that roughly 400 out of 2,000 students are presently out with COVID-19 or in quarantine, saying, “They’re keeping us in the dark about the cases, but we see who is out in our classes. They try to hide it from us, but we see it. I think the school will be shutting down soon.”

Significantly, Michigan is one of eight states that does not report pediatric deaths from COVID-19. However, multiple children in the state have died from the virus, including 14-year-old Honestie Hodges, and many have suffered traumatic damages from

multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C), believed to be triggered by COVID-19 infection.

The deepening catastrophe of school reopenings across the US, which has fueled the surge in child infections, hospitalizations and deaths, must be brought to an end. Children's lives and long-term health must not be sacrificed to meet the needs of Wall Street and the major corporations, which have pushed for schools to reopen in order to send parents back to work producing profits.

The closure of schools and nonessential workplaces, while providing high-quality remote learning and social supports to all workers affected, is central to stopping the spread of COVID-19. This must be combined with the full deployment of all public health measures, including mass testing, contact tracing, masking, the safe isolation of infected patients and a globally-coordinated vaccination program, in order to eliminate COVID-19 in ever-broader geographic regions and ultimately eradicate the virus worldwide.

The capitalist political parties and their backers in the unions have made clear their hostility to this scientifically-grounded program. Therefore, the working class must organize itself independently through rank-and-file committees, unified across industries and national boundaries. On October 24, the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and the WSWS are hosting an online event with distinguished scientists to discuss the eradication strategy and chart a path forward in the fight to end the pandemic. All educators, parents, students and workers should register to attend today.

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