February 23, 2022 Board Meeting Written Comments
Received between Monday, February 21st and Thursday, February 24th
Submitted via Written Comments Form

1	Good Morning President del Valle, esteemed Board Members and Dr. Martinez. My name is Yennya Segura and I am honored to be here today and share with you the amazing work Acero Schools is doing. I have two students that attend Jovita Idar in the Gage Park Community, Oscar Godinez in 2nd grade and Edgar Godinez who is in 6th grade. My children and I love Idar and consider it a second home. I am blessed to have a school that has allowed me to partake in my children's learning experience. I have volunteered at Idar and engaged in several activities including supporting our office coordinator at the front desk and learning new clerical skills, participating in yearly school celebrations, and helped establish a community library for our spanish speaking families and continue to support by being involved with the after school reading club. The network has offered parents several learning opportunities to become involved including, Padres Comprometidos, a curriculum where I learned how to better support my children's learning. During these uncertain times when stress is a constant factor, the program gave me a greater understanding on the importance of mental health and provided me the tools to stay emotionally connected with my children. I have completed the curriculum twice now and I look forward to being a champion for Oscar and Edgar in their academic journey. At the start of the pandemic when we transitioned to remote learning, Acero was quick to offer the best academic support and kept my children engaged in their learning. The network has done an excellent job at keeping parents informed with the evolving health regulations and implementing safe health practices and sending out regular communications to parents. Acero has also informed families of important resources offered by community partners including testing & vaccination opportunities, food & housing resources and has hosted vaccination clinics throughout the Acero Network. I ask the Board today to recognize charter schools like Idar and see the impact they are having on families. Acero is more than a school, it is a community and resource for families. Buenos Días Presidente del Valle, estimados Miembros de la Junta y Dr. Martínez. Mi nombre es Yennya Segura y me siento honrada de estar aquí hoy y compartir con ustedes el increíble trabajo que está haciendo Escuelas Acero. Tengo dos estudiantes que asisten a Jovita Idar en la comunidad de Gage Park, Oscar Godinez en 2do grado y Edgar Godinez que esta en 6to grado. Mis hijos y yo estamos encantados de Idar y lo consideramos un segundo hogar. Tengo la suerte de tener una escuela que me ha permitido participar en la experiencia del aprendizaje de mis hijos. He sido voluntaria en Idar y participé en varias actividades, incluido el apoyo a nuestra coordinadora de oficina y el aprendizaje de nuevas

	habilidades administrativas, la participación en celebraciones escolares anuales, y ayudé a establecer una biblioteca comunitaria, para nuestras familias de habla hispana y continúo apoyando al participar después de la escuela, con el club de lectura. La red ha ofrecido a los padres varias oportunidades de aprendizaje para participar, incluido Padres Comprometidos, un programa en el que aprendí cómo apoyar mejor el aprendizaje de mis hijos. Durante estos tiempos inciertos en los que el estrés es un factor constante, el programa me dio una mayor comprensión sobre la importancia de la salud mental y me brindó las herramientas para mantenerme conectada emocionalmente con mis hijos. He completado el programa dos veces y espero ser una campeona para Oscar y Edgar en su viaje académico. Acero se apresuró a ofrecer el mejor apoyo académico, al comienzo de la pandemia, cuando hicimos la transición al aprendizaje remoto, y mantuvo a mis hijos comprometidos con su aprendizaje. La red ha hecho un trabajo excelente al mantener informados a los padres sobre la evolución de las normas de salud, implementar prácticas de salud seguras y enviar comunicaciones periódicas a los padres. Acero también ha informado a las familias sobre los recursos importantes que ofrecen en la comunidad, incluidas las oportunidades de pruebas y vacunación, los recursos de alimentación y vivienda, y ha organizado clínicas de vacunación en toda la red Acero. Hoy le pido a la Junta que reconozca a escuelas charter, como Idar, y que vea el impacto que dejan en las familias. Acero es más que una escuela; es un recurso y comunidad para nuestras familias.
2	Dear CPS, Quit holding our children hostage. Mask optional for all. The parents do not negotiate with the CTU. Follow Judge Grischow's order now.
3	On behalf of my children who attend Chicago public schools, you need to reconsider the mask mandate and make the masks a choice. It is against our childrens rights and our children are not governed by the CTU. Thank you. Cathy Carone
4	I am a parent of a student at a NW CPS school. This mask mandate is illegal. The collective bargaining does not include children. Also, I am in the CTU, and they passed the agreement before they even let the membership vote! We voted after it was already passed, and we were back to work. We never voted on having masks until the end of the year. These masks are PROVEN to NOT work! Our children have civil rights, and you are obstructing these rights. 70,000 people were at the Super Bowl maskless yet we demand that children sit in masks all day. We protect children. They do NOT protect us!
5	I strongly believe it is time for the covid protocols in our schools to end. They have become more toxic than the disease itself. Our children are suffering and we need to now address the very real issue of their mental health following the substantial damage 2 years of this has caused. I believe it is time for us to give them their childhoods back. Thank you.

6	Please make masks optional immediately. Mask wearing is causing severe anxiety and depression in my 3 CPS students. Chicago Covid positivity rate has been below 2% now. As the situation changes so should the rules. Enough is enough already. Please make masks optional and let our children get back to normal. They have suffered enough. As parents and grandparents yourselves, I know you can relate. Thank you!!!
7	We are a network of City of Chicago residents writing to share our concerns, as parents and taxpayers. It is in our sincere hope that the CPS BOE and superintendent will seriously consider our collective plea to offer a mask optional school environment. Collectively, while we acknowledge the challenges CPS faced in 2020-2021 and we know that administrators and educators did the very best for the sake of our children, we believe as data constantly is updated and changed, we as parents are in the best place to make decisions on whether our children should wear a mask in school.
8	It has been 2 years that my children have been subjected to your “contractual obligations”. These mask rules were forced onto my kids without one tiny bit of conversation with myself or my husband. My 7 year old has not had ONE normal school year. They both suffer from sinus issues and when they show a hint of that at school they are humiliated and sent to the office to hurry up and have the school call me to pick them up because COVID clearly is killing all of your staff and the children in the schools, so we must not have any other option outside of forcing them into quarantine and shoving qtips into their brains in order to “clear” them of a virus that has now effected almost the entire human population and supposedly 70% of American people are now vaccinated - but that’s not enough. There is an overwhelming amount of kids with delays, mental health issues, physical issues and you people INSIST on forcing masks and quarantines and irrational measures on our children for a disease that is NEVER going to go away now. What is your end goal here? What is it going to take for you people to see what you’re doing is causing far more pain on our kids than what this disease has ever done? Will you just continue to forcefully abuse our children and rip away our rights as parents and their rights as human beings until you’ve completely destroyed their spirit and their entire immune systems? It is absurd for any of you to think that you know better what to do for the health and well-being of our children. It has been a disgusting abuse of your “powers” to strip us of everything. We as parents have a right to speak on what we believe is right for our children - we should have a voice in the votes that occur. And until we do, those of us who know what you’re doing is wrong. We will fight you until there is a fair system. Every single step of the way. This is just the beginning. And for many of us, our children have JUST began school. So you will have years and years of constant court cases on your hands. We deserve a voice. Period. And we won’t stop fighting until we, and our children, have one. You’ve pushed too far and now we are pushing back. We will continue to do so. Finding every single avenue to assure that you are all held accountable for your abuse.

9	As a parent of 3 children who have been forced to cover their mouths and noses for 8 hours a day, with only 20 minute food breaks, and a few minutes of “mask breaks” a day, I have reached my limit. I am the parent, and I am not in agreement with the school or the state determining what is best for my children. I should have the right as the parent to decide if I want to place a covering over my child’s face as a safety concern, or if I feel that my child is safe enough based on our own circumstances of what we have already dealt with regarding this virus. Those who choose to wear a mask and vaccinate have that right and yet those who choose not to are forced to still comply with regulations that schools should no longer be enforcing. This issue has taken precedence long enough, and we are all ready to get back to normal existence and have children show their expressions again. This is quite inconsiderate to disregard parents choices, and to keep these extreme measures in place at the expense of our children's social and emotional well-being. Now it has become unlawful and parents are being forced to move toward legal action in order to see change. We did not want to feel stuck, and should not have to be cornered in this way. The agreement between CPS and CTU to keep masks on our children is overstepping parental boundaries when our children are the pawns involved. We are expecting that the board of education set financial gains and undisclosed agreements aside, and put the children’s bests interests first.
10	Last board meeting, a speaker pleaded with the board to do away with the CPS Residency Policy and I finally stopped laughing so I could type up a rebuttal to their plea. See, the policy is 'Much Ado About Nothing' as the CPS Inspector General's office under William Flecther refuses to investigate several residency violators and they uncovered 1 violator in his 2021 annual report and 6 in 2020 out of total of 317 employee residency complaints In fact, Fletcher's office has such a poor job of investigating that some violators have moved from one suburban home to another one. Let's be clear here, I'm not alluding to CPS employees initially hired while living outside Chicago on renewable residency waivers for working in special need subject areas or those employees grandfathered-in with the old residency that allows them to live wherever they choose if they were hired before November 20, 1996. No, I'm talking about the employee residency violators that are lying and fraudulently living outside Chicago in clear violation of the residency policy. The CPS OIG and other CPS leaders were given a confirmed list of close to 40 employees in violation multiple times over the past 2 1/2 years ago, including some employees in violation from 10-20 years. It's truly hard to figure why Fletcher's office refuses to investigate any of them. Since the 2015-16 school year, one school (Steinmetz HS) had up to 24 employees in violation at one time working in their school with 5 of them being department chairs of program leaders. Let's give this the respect it deserves, "Steinmetz has had 24 residency violators working in their school since the 2015-16 school year. Yes 24!!!" You might find 1-3 residency violators per CPS school, but nothing like the nonsense going on at Steinmetz.

The lack of a meaningful investigation by Fletcher and his staff into the 24 at Steinmetz in violation isn't righteous or fair to all the CPS employees that abide by the policy and pay city of Chicago property taxes.

Below, are the statistics on the last (4) years of employee residency violations from the CPS OIG's annual reports

2021 (William Fletcher, CPS OIG)

140 residency complaints (12.89%) of 1086 total complaints

Investigations and consequences listed in annual report
1 (ONE) - SPED teacher

2020 (William Fletcher, CPS OIG)

177 residency complaints (9.09%) of 1948 total complaints

Investigations and consequences listed in annual report
2- Principals
1- SECA
1- SPED teacher
2- Teacher

2019 (Nicholas Schuler CPS OIG)

140 residency complaints (6.44%) of 2175 total complaints

Investigations and consequences listed in annual report
2- Principals
1- SECA
1- SPED teacher
7- Teacher
1- Technology coordinator
1- Clerk
1- School Culture Coordinator
1- Security
1- Lunchroom Attendant
2- Central office employee

2018 (Nicholas Schuler, CPS OIG)

180 residency complaints (11.84%) of 1520 total complaints

Investigations and consequences listed in annual report
2- Principals
1- Principal
1- Assistant Principal
14- Teacher
3- Clerk

2- Central office employee (manager and director)
1- Social worker 1,
1- Talent Office employee
1- Warehouse employee
1- Counselor

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I would like to go on record with my response to this blatantly deceptive email sent by CPS o Friday, February 18.

The appellate court did indicate that school districts are able to enact their own policies, however, they still must do so within the confines of state law. The ruling on February 4 indicated that all entities within the state are required to adhere to the IDPH Act, where there can be no forced quarantine, either mask or physical, without due process. The policies that CPS has in place violate this act as no parents and children have been provided the required due process under state law. The email sent by CPS is nothing other than a flat out lie. No court or state law/order has ever allowed them to circumvent due process rights. Staff members who are involved in violating state law, regardless of whether they are 'just following orders' are also liable.

I do not now, nor have I ever supported the masking of children and masking is the reason I withdrew 2 of my children from CPS in August 2020. Due to unforeseen circumstances, I unfortunately had to enroll my first grader in CPS this school year. Every day I tell my daughter not to wear her mask at school, but when she is told to put it on she does so. She wants nothing more than to see her friends smile, but due to policies that are not only misguided, but harmful and not based on any fact, she has been deprived such a basic right and desire.

Unfortunately, the continued false rhetoric that masking prevents viral spread and that Covid is equally as dangerous to everyone is still very much alive with the city of Chicago.

1. Masks do not work. Please refer to the >340,000 participant randomized clinical trial in Bangladesh (https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abi9069). At best, the use of masks found a 9.5% reduction in Covid-19 symptoms, yet only captured a difference in positive Covid test of 0.08% between the masked and non-masked groups. The CDC has now even indicated that only N95 masksare capable of potentially limiting the spread of Omicron, which indicates that masks have been completely ineffective up to this point. The virus did not all of a sudden be able to penetrate through cloth/surgical masks, it has always been able to and only provided people with a false sense of security, the ramifications of which are already being seen in the huge increases in both adults and children with mask related anxiety.

2. The CDC's own data has consistently shown that the risk of death from Covid-19 is extremely small for those under age 65 (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/burden.html). This data shows there is only a 0.17% risk of death for those under the age of 65, with the 0-17 year age group having a nearly non-existent risk of death at only 0.002%. Imposing restrictions on individuals who are healthy and at a very low risk of death is non-sensical, but also a violation of individual rights. Masking of children with a risk of death from Covid that is nearly non-existent is not only unnecessary, it is plain and simply wrong.

	In fact, there is simply no data to support there have been any excess deaths in Chicago due to Covid. I recently submitted a FOIA request to the city to obtain all cause death data over the time period of January 1, 2020- December 31, 2021 in Chicago. The response I received was that they did not have this data available and if I checked back in mid April, they should have the 2020 data available. This admission is essentially proof of the continued gaslighting by the city, CPS and CTU to orchestrate control over parents and students when there is no proof that Covid resulted in any excess deaths during this time period. Is it possible that it did? Absolutely, however there is ZERO evidence to show this was the case. This serves as your notice that I am pursuing legal action against the BOE, CPS, CTU, as well as any individual staff members who continue to violate my child's right. The rights of children and parents are not, and have never been subject to bargaining. You CANNOT bargain my child's rights away and I will no longer stand for the blatant disregard for laws and individual rights.
12	I am a CPS parent of two young elementary students. I am writing today to voice my hope that CPS will adopt a mask-optional policy in schools as quickly as local health guidelines allow. School-aged children have had widespread vaccine access since November 2021, and adults have had vaccine access for over a year. Given the effectiveness of the vaccine's ability to prevent serious illness from Covid, it's time for CPS to view health more holistically. Health is not merely the absence of Covid— it's also mental health, speech development, and social connection. Masks can be a detriment to these aspects of health. As districts across the nation and world adapt to the changing Covid landscape and reduce their reliance of non-pharmaceutical interventions, I am hopeful that CPS will do the same.
13	End mask mandates in CPS. Please do right by the students and give them room to breathe. End mandatory masking now! And shame on CEO Pedro Martinez for attempting to gaslight CPS parents and students. In emails sent Feb 18 2022, he lied by omission that "the appellate court confirmed that CPS has the authority to enforce key COVID-19 safety measures, including the required use of masks by all students and staff while they are at school." CEO Martinez did not used aforementioned emails to promote or advertise Feb 23, 2022 CBE meeting at which parents and students can exercise their right to due process and protest the implementation of these scientifically ineffective mandates. CEO Martinez acted in bad faith, setting up CPS for more years of failure and political cronyism. End the mask theater NOW!
14	I'm writing in support of the fight for Chicago Public Schools to be successful and safe. I'm asking that the board demand our schools be kept safe by supporting the mandate of wearing masks while inside our schools. This is the minimum requirement for reducing the number of Covid victims going forward.

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School is an essential part of our democracy and our society. It shapes how we grow up, how we parent, how we organize our work, and how we develop and connect as citizens. We expect Board members to do everything in their power to ensure the long-term availability, stability, and integrity of these institutions.

For nearly two years, pandemic conditions have forced administrators into the unprecedented decision of replacing in-person schooling with virtual remote instruction, whether in the form of systemwide closures or rolling quarantines. While plausibly necessary in the early days of the pandemic, there is no scientific ambiguity about the negative effects of this historic shift in K-12 education: school closures and quarantines have proven ineffective at curbing the spread of COVID-19 while proving extremely effective at curbing the intellectual and social health of kids and the economic health of households.

Against the shifting scene of pandemic conditions, CPS's current policy- which automatically sends unvaccinated "close contacts" of a COVID-19-positive peer home for 10 days of remote learning- is unscientific, unethical, and unfair. With its constant threat of keeping healthy kids home for no reason, CPS policy continues to erode public confidence in our schools, hitting working families and poor families with extra force. Since September, between 4,000 and 23,000 kids have been kept home every day.

Test-to-Stay would end this misguided policy, allowing such students to stay in school, so long as testing yields a series of negative COVID-19 results. As parents and community members, we demand that the Chicago Public Schools move toward immediate adoption and implementation of a Test-to-Stay policy for students who have been identified as exposed to a COVID-19-positive peer.

Our view is simple: Only a child who is sick with COVID symptoms or has a confirmed positive test should ever need to be excluded from school. Test-to-Stay provides the relevant data, enacts a safety procedure on that basis alone, and allows us to minimize the disruptions and stratifications that COVID (and misguided COVID policy) have enacted on our city.

As we all hope for COVID's ultimate passage from a pandemic to an endemic stage, parents, teachers, and citizens need to stand by the pillars of our civic life, and resist the temptation to relapse into modes of panic or paranoia.

On the Costs and Burdens of Remote Learning
Weighed against the obvious benefits of active, thriving school communities, CPS' current quarantine policy is ill-fitted to the realities of the pandemic, imposing a rolling schedule of child-care emergencies on parents, and needlessly interrupting the intellectual and social development of our children. With only 40 documented instances of transmission within Chicago schools since September and less than two percent of quarantined kids ultimately contracting the virus, the public health benefits of intermittent mass quarantines are dubious. Meanwhile, the lost wages, lost learning, and replacement of social life with screen-time are measurably bad news for kids and families.

On the Social Injustice of Quarantines

	Current policy has effectively created two tiers of educational access in Chicago, using a blunt-- and in light of the transmissibility of current variants irrespective of vaccination status-- scientifically irrelevant data point to exclude masses of kids with no symptoms or positive test results from schooling. You don't need to look at a map to guess where the heaviest count of unnecessary exclusions are landing. Working families and poor families will continue to be hit hardest by the current policy. On Chicago being Out of Step with National Policy Amid the rise and fall of the latest omicron surge, school districts nationwide, including New York City, Los Angeles, Cleveland, and Atlanta, have ended their use of rolling quarantines for cases of close contact. Chicago stands outnumbered in its inability or unwillingness to do the same; the city's Test-To-Stay pilot, initiated in November, operates at a single schoolhouse, while thousands of children continue to be excluded from school on a daily basis. On the Politics The wisdom of maintaining in-person schooling is being embraced irrespective of political party. No matter if you usually root for Republicans or Democrats, progressives or conservatives, we should all welcome support of good public policy! In the recent agreement that ended the 5-day stoppage of classes, BOTH CPS and CTU affirmed the intent to "promote" the Test-to-Stay pilot, which is currently only active at one school. The Board needs to turn this unique point of agreement into policy. On the Science A Test-to-Stay policy represents the most responsible and scientifically supported approach to safeguarding the health of our children and educators while also ensuring the integrity and stability of our institutions of public schooling. The Federal Centers for Disease Control, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Department of Public Health, and the Chicago Department of Public Health have specifically authorized a Test-to-Stay protocol as part of official Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools.
16	It is time to start following the judges order and unmask our children. It should not be up to the school district if our children should be masked or not, this is something that falls on the parents. Hundreds of schools have gone mask optional since the judges order and CPS should be no different. What you are doing is illegal and even the judge said so. Drop the mask mandate in all of Chicago Public Schools and leave it up to the parents!
17	On behalf of the Englewood Community Action Council (CAC.) We are honored to write this letter of support for the renewal of the charter for Englewood Urban Prep. Englewood Urban Prep is a valuable asset to the Englewood community and provides an excellent educational option for young men of color. Englewood Urban Prep provides an educational choice to families that offers rigorous academics, core values and high standards, which prepares students for success in college and career, and creates contributing connected citizens. Urban Prep is not just a successful high school it has become an important part of the Englewood community. Urban Prep works with community organizations including the Englewood CAC to improve the quality of life of Englewood families.

However, Englewood Urban Prep is perpetually locked in the renewal process. This process is taking away from educating the young men of this community. A 5-year charter renewal can help the school be successful. Anything less than a 5-year renewal does not provide stability for school staff, students, families or the Englewood community. A 5-year renewal will allow the school to create a 5-year strategic plan that would outline goals and objectives for school continuous improvement and advancement. Without a 5-year renewal the school is constantly in a state of preparing to renew staff members don't feel stable because the school is always in a state of charter renewal, and this is not productive for students. Urban Prep needs a 5-year renewal so it can continue to provide a high-quality education to young men in our community.

Denise Dyer, Co-Chairperson
Englewood Community Action Council

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This Wednesday, you will be asked to vote on 22-0223-RS2. The resolution has two parts. The first ratifies the entirety of CPS' current COVID policy approach, and the second authorizes the delegation of any future decisions regarding changes to COVID policy to the CEO. I urge you to vote NO on this resolution. Were it to pass, it would constitute an abdication of authority by the Board and a breach of the public trust placed in its members.

As regards the first part of the resolution, ratifying the current basket of COVID mitigations is precisely the opposite of what the Board ought to do in light of shifting public health conditions. Parents demand careful oversight, not rubber stamps. In addition to containing misrepresentations of current CDC, IDPH, and CDPH guidance (specifically as regards quarantines for all unvaccinated persons exposed to COVID-19 and universal masking), the resolution presents no basis for supporting its broad assertion that all of CPS's current mitigation strategies are "curb[ing] the spread of COVID-19." Questions about the legality and efficacy of any of the current layers of mitigation are ignored entirely, as are the widely understood disruptions and harms that their prolonged use continues to impose on kids and families.

As regards the second part of the resolution, the text is even more troubling. The resolution asserts the Board's "broad authority" and then surrenders it voluntarily and completely. In its proposed delegation of all decisions related to COVID to the CEO and public health officials (and vaguely invoked consultations with stakeholders), the resolution asks the Board to seal itself off from further deliberation on the question, effectively firewalling the public off from the opportunity to meaningfully speak its voice or exert its will. In no uncertain terms, the resolution snuffs out any sense we might have of the Board of Education as a mechanism of democratic accountability.

Given the historically unprecedented disruptions to public schooling that COVID and COVID policy have occasioned, we expect you as a Board member to step boldly into your role as overseer of our public institutions, to assess frankly the costs and benefits of public health protocols, and to enact the will of the people when we demand a drawdown of unnecessary mitigations. 22-0223-RS2 would make it permanently impossible for you to do your job. Vote NO on Wednesday.

Sincerely,
Suzanne D'Addario Brouder and Michael brouder

19	We are deeply troubled by resolution 2 (22-0223-RS2), scheduled for a vote on Wednesday, which would ratify all current COVID-19 mitigation policy and remove future decisions from the Board's purview. We urge a NO vote on resolution 2 and insist that Board members retain their oversight authority over these important policies
20	With a majority of schools across the state and the country back in school with mask optional protocols, we need to find a way to remove the mandates from our schools so our children can start to heal and get back to a sense of normalcy after the past 2 years. CTU does not fight for our children, or for parents' rights, they fight for themselves and their political agenda. We urge the board to vote to keep decision right and start to remove the now unnecessary COVID mitigations including quarantines and masking. This is not only affecting Chicago Public School children and staff, but their families and communities as well.
21	We are deeply troubled by resolution 2 (22-0223-RS2) We urge a NO vote on resolution 2 and insist that Board members retain their oversight authority over these important policies.
22	Thank you for serving as on the Board of Education for Chicago Public Schools. In regard to masking students: Judge Grischow's order is clear and was recently held according to the Appellate Court. CPS does not have the ability to violate the due process rights of a student. The ruling does not say districts can continue with Covid-19 mitigation strategies without following due process. Chicago Public Schools still needs to follow the law. If the Governor and IDPH have to follow due process, so do Chicago Public Schools. Please keep that in mind when making decisions. Additionally, over 700 school districts in Illinois are mask optional. I find it incredibly disheartening that children in Chicago are not afforded the same choices as their suburban peers. The Board does not have the legal authority to mask students without due process. Thank you!
23	We are deeply troubled by resolution 2 (22-0223-RS2), scheduled for a vote on Wednesday, which would ratify all current COVID-19 mitigation policy and remove future decisions from the Board's purview. We urge a NO vote on resolution 2 and insist that Board members retain their oversight authority over these important policies.
24	I urge the Board to go mask optional and lift quarantine mandates for CPS kids. I am deeply troubled by resolution 2 (22-0223-RS2), scheduled for a vote on Wednesday, which would ratify all current COVID-19 mitigation policy and remove future decisions from the Board's purview. I urge a NO vote on resolution 2 and insist that Board members retain their oversight authority over these important policies.

25	Please unmask our children and follow the true science we all followed prior to covid 19. All children deserve to live free and not in fear. Stop the mistreatment and segregation of the unmasked and unvaccinnated children.
26	We are deeply troubled by resolution 2 (22-0223-RS2), scheduled for a vote on Wednesday, which would ratify all current COVID-19 mitigation policy and remove future decisions from the Board's purview. We urge a NO vote on resolution 2 and insist that Board members retain their oversight authority over these important policies."
27	Many parents are waking up to the fact that the tyrant rules set forth by the Chicago public schools are unconstitutional. The recent collective bargaining agreement to keep masks on at schools was between teachers and staffers and CTU, not our children. Our children ARE NOT part of that contract and CPS needs to stop spreading false information to the parents and guardians. Be open and be truthful. The parents voices need to be heard as we should be the ones responsible for the health and safety of our children, that it is our top priority as parents. The priority and focus of teachers should be strictly school academics and education only and you are failing our children as these masks are debilitating their education. Also, ESSER funds received by CPS is now over $2.8 billion! We know the reason these mandates continue to be pushed on our kids, so that the funding for CPS district continues! So just where is this money going??? Parents deserve answers now. Worry about the education you need to give and NOT the tons of money you want to be given!
28	I am deeply troubled by resolution 2 (22-0223-RS2), scheduled for a vote on Wednesday, which would ratify all current COVID-19 mitigation policy and remove future decisions from the Board's purview. I urge a NO vote on resolution 2 and insist that Board members retain their oversight authority over these important policies.
29	Meghan Barr
30	I am deeply troubled by resolution 2 (22-0223-RS2), scheduled for a vote on Wednesday, which would ratify all current COVID-19 mitigation policy and remove future decisions from the Board's purview. I urge a NO vote on resolution 2 and insist that Board members retain their oversight authority over these important policies.
31	As a CPS parent of 4 children, I am done playing political pandemic. Our children should no longer be forced to wear the masks. We have plenty of data now to support removing the mask. Even Dr. Fauci and CDC has now said the masks, unlessN95 or KN95s, aren't really effective at keeping out virus. Their age group are the lowest demographic to be severely impacted by this virus, yet we've turned their lived upside down, leading to higher rates of mental crisis, abuse, and self harm.

	I am tired of being held hostage and having choices being taken away from me by CPS and the CTU. Our kids SHOULD have been in person learning last year like almost ALL Illinois schools were and our kids SHOULD NOT be forced to wear a mask, again, just like almost ALL Illinois schools won't be starting next week. CPS and CTU have be screeching to trust the science, get vaccinated, get boosted...well myself and my kids did, yet here we are still wearing these masks that have no been proven to be useless. It's a virus, it's never going away, we have to learn to live with it and get on with our normal lives. Our children NEED to go back to normal.
32	Given the many missteps in COVID-related policy that have disrupted families and communities over the last two years... "We are deeply troubled by resolution 2 (22-0223-RS2), scheduled for a vote on Wednesday, which would ratify all current COVID-19 mitigation policy and remove future decisions from the Board's purview. We urge a NO vote on resolution 2 and insist that Board members retain their oversight authority over these important policies."
33	As a representative of Activate Chicago Parents, we fully support keeping universal masking in all CPS K-12 schools until the end of the school year. Please see the attached Urgency of Equity toolkit in support of this. Thank you.
34	Up until now i supported masks in school. Im not anti vax or anti mask. Im pro give our children their innocence and youth experiences back. I taught my children compassion for others. You have to wear your mask so you don't get others sick. Even though our pediatrician said this whole thing is ruining our kids. They are suffering immensely. Teens missing prom, sports that earn them scholarships, walking across stage for graduation. My best friends daughter was suppose to be the first to graduate high school without a GED but it wasn't allowed to her due to the pandemic. My 3rd grader has sensory issues and will only wear a cloth mask from target that costs $5 a piece and they wear out every 3 months being washed. I've spent hundreds of dollars on masks just to find those for him so he's comfortable at school. My 1st grader cries because he has no friends like his brother does. He didn't get the fun introduction to school kindergarten and socializing. He got hours in front of a computer screen and mom yelling at him to stay seated. He didn't get to meet friends and play fun games that made him want to learn. He had to stay 6 feet apart, and stay away from his peers. No recess or games or lunches to socialize. I'm so so sad for them. They have turned video games into their friends because of quarantine and having no friends. I'm to the point where I say enough is enough. 3 years later, we have a vaccines, testing, and multiple treatments. Covid is not a threat to children. 71% of IL is vaxed and that's not including the heard immunity omicron brought. Please take the masks off them. Both my kids caught Covid at school wearing a mask and hand washing spaces out in class. Also, Cloth masks do not protect against Omicron so why are we wearing them? Please give our kids their youth experiences and innocence back. Stop the radical CTU from walking out on our kids every temper tantrum they have. Stop them from protecting those bad teachers who don't want to work, but yet can go to the bars or vacation houses while e learning. Our kids are not to be pawns anymore I'm disgusted

	with this. I work at a south suburban low income school who have thrived and busted their butts during this pandemic and the teachers there mock Chicago teachers and CTU. My kids teachers are amazing and they don't deserve the bad name they are getting from the bad leadership of CTU. I think as parents we can all agree leadership needs to change and parents need to be heard on what they think is best for their own child. It's embarrassing because I have to send my kids to CPS because we have to live here. My husband is a city worker and he saves lives daily so the least you guys can do is save my childrens lives and give them the education, compassion, and nurturing they Deserve. Because believe me they survived Covid easily but I don't know how much more of these mandates and mitigations they can survive.
35	We are deeply troubled by resolution 2 (22-0223-RS2), scheduled for a vote on Wednesday, which would ratify all current COVID-19 mitigation policy and remove future decisions from the Board's purview. We urge a NO vote on resolution 2 and insist that Board members retain their oversight authority over these important policies.
36	As a new parent to cps, I am frustrated that I have no voice on any of the matters that pertain to Covid mitigations. Why haven't parents been surveyed by their schools? Why do CPS and CTU continue to dictate what is best for our children? At this stage of the pandemic parents have been given enough tools necessary to handle this virus as they so choose. Whether that be to continue masking or not, whether they feel they should vaccinate their child or not. I want to reiterate that I, as a parent should be making these decisions. We need to move forward now.
37	I understand that by ratifying the district Covid safety response agreement today, you are committing to masks required in CPS schools until August 26. I encourage you to think about the implications of making kids mask for 6 more months, including possibly the start of the next school year if it ends up being the 8/22 calendar, when the rest of the city and state is not requiring masks. Kids and teachers will be able to go anywhere else in their lives without a mask, except school. It also seems to primarily taking into account lower vaccination rates in CPS students, but not recognize how many kids might have had Covid in the last months on top of that...providing more protection currently in schools than just vax rates. I have supported masks in schools, but this illogical approach that seems to be simply tied to this pre-negotiated safety agreement and a lack of desire to re-negotiate anything with CTU does not serve CPS students.
38	Given the many missteps in COVID-related policy that have disrupted families and communities over the past two years, it's essential that decision-making about such significant policy remains subject to public scrutiny and citizen participation. We are deeply troubled by resolution 2 (22-0223-RS2), scheduled for a vote on Wednesday, which would ratify all current COVID-19 mitigation policy and remove future decisions from the Board's purview. We urge a NO vote on resolution 2 and insist that Board members retain their oversight authority over these important policies.
39	In regards to the new calendars, I am in total agreement with both of the proposed changes to future CPS calendars; I am a little frustrated as this change came with short

notice, you have families that have commitments and plan ahead their vacations and this change may affect those plans. We are planning on traveling during the winter to a pre-planned wedding, our tickets were purchased ahead of time (back in December of 2021) based on the 2022-2023 calendar that was then posted and now deleted due to the new proposed changes. Why is this new calendar suddenly needed? Why can CPS planned 2 years in advance to release a change as big as this one to give advance notice to your families?

40

Dear Chicago Board of Education,

I call on you today to put an end to the universal masking requirement in our schools, or at the very least announce a reasonable, attainable set of metrics that, once met, will allow all Chicago Public School students to return to the much needed and deserved sense of normalcy of their pre-pandemic lives.

Illinois and the city of Chicago will drop their indoor mask mandates for most public places on February 28th. Of the 850 school districts in Illinois, 700, of 82%, have already moved to mask optional policies, or are about to in the weeks ahead. School mask mandates are also dropping across the country and around the world. Schools that have removed mask mandates, or have never required masks from the start, have not experienced any reported large-scale outbreaks, nor has the removal of masks caused any disruption to their in-person learning. Why do our Chicago Public School children not deserve the same opportunity - to have a normal school experience, and to heal from the mental toll they've carried these last two years - as the rest of students in Illinois and beyond?

An email from Chicago Public Schools on February 22, 2022 states universal masking will remain in place at this time, with no set timeline on when this may change. One of the reasons given is there is still a great deal of anxiety about covid in our community. This fear is real, but it is not grounded in science, and we must not let fear drive decisions that are critical to the well-being of our children. Public health officials have said from the beginning, children have the lowest risk of becoming seriously ill from Covid. This was true before vaccines were widely available, and with vaccines, kids are incredibly well protected. Yet our school children, the population with the lowest risk, must continue living with the tightest restrictions. Under the guidelines beginning February 28, it will be ok for a group of elderly unvaccinated adults, those at greatest risk, to gather in a public venue in Chicago without masks, but at school our children, whose risk from Covid is minuscule, may not. It is commonly said that while children may be at low risk, they may still contract Covid and spread it to others in their homes. Yet the same reasoning can be applied to adults who will soon be free to mingle about society unmasked; they may go home and spread Covid to their at-risk loved ones as well. Children are unfairly considered to be vectors of the virus yet there is no scientific or logical explanation that supports this. On the contrary, the universal masking mandate in our schools is mired much more in politics than it is science. It is unreasonable and unfair to our school children that their welfare is at stake amidst the ongoing bargaining tensions between CPS and CTU, or perhaps more accurately, the unwillingness of CPS to upset the current collective bargaining agreement, for fear it may spark another strike or work stoppage. We cannot continue to let the demands of the CTU hold our children back while the rest of the world happily moves on, showing us it is clearly safe to do so.

This is not the first time we've seen the politics between CPS and CTU play out like this. Exactly one year ago it was school reopening that the CTU fought mightily against, convinced it would set off a record number of cases and have deadly consequences. Similarly, the rest of the world had already moved to in-person learning, showing us what was safely possible, but it was a long arduous fight for Chicago's kids. Upon finally reopening, none of the fears that held our kids back for so long from attending in-person school actually came to fruition. And the damage to our kids of a full year of remote learning had already been done.

Is it not clear to you, Chicago Board of Education members, what is plainly happening here, again, when it is absolutely crystal clear to us parents? This is why so many of us are coming forward to speak out against masks at this point. Thinly veiled as a measure to protect our kids and necessary keep our community safe, masks are a political weapon and our kids are the prisoners. There are no longer any scientific reasons supporting the mask mandates in schools for CPS kids, only fear-driven excuses. Let me paint for you another fear-driven argument. If we continue choosing to not keep pace with the rest of Illinois and the world in removing unnecessary covid measures, families with means - money to donate, time to volunteer - will leave the city in droves, worsening educational inequities, lowering property values, and driving up poorer socio-economic conditions for those who remain.

Another reason for keeping mask mandates in place per the February 22 CPS email states that schools are not like other indoor spaces; they require students and staff to be together in close quarters for many hours each day, raising the risk of viral transmission when masks are removed. Yet other schools have managed to lift mask mandates without dire consequences, proving schools can be unmasked successfully. Consider the United Kingdom, who never required masks for younger school children from the beginning of the pandemic. Consider other public places where people come into contact with others all day long, such as grocery stores and other retails outlets and warehouses. Yet Amazon, Walmart, and Target, among others, have recently announced they have lifted mask mandates for their workers. With so many examples of schools and other places with similar indoor settings successfully moving forward, this argument from CPS holds no weight.

We are no longer living in the panicked spring of 2020, when we raced to take all precautions necessary to keep the population safe from the novel coronavirus, given the lack of information and nary the hope of a vaccine. This was all understandable at the time. Masks were widely accepted and worn by the general public, and they were meant to be temporary. Over the last two years, much has changed, including the wide availability of vaccines and various medical treatments. The knowledge we have is greater, and the opportunities to protect ourselves are greater. It only makes sense, given where we are at this point in time, that we evolve the mitigations we have in place with the goal to return life to normal as quickly as possible, and remove mitigations where the risks are beginning to outweigh the benefits. We are seeing progress being made for all Illinoisans, and all Chicagoans, but this unfairly excludes our children, with no end in sight. We cannot possibly think it appropriate that our children remain masked - while adults are free to do as they please - until an unspecified time in the future when either Covid goes away, which will never will happen, or when pediatric vaccinations increase to the level that satisfies our school officials, which will also never happen, barring any vaccine mandate. We must acknowledge that parents who haven't already chosen to vaccinate their children by this point, likely never will. We cannot continue

	asking our kids to wait for them to change their minds. With these as our goalposts, our kids will be masked for the rest of their school lives. Our kids deserve to have a normal school and life experience, before they age out of school and this is all they've ever known or experienced. Please consider that our kids are already quickly approaching that reality, when the the last normal full school year for kids who are currently in 4th grade was in 1st, and for kids who are currently freshmen in high school, it was 6th. Our children are the future of this city. For their mental health and well being, it is time to put an end to mask mandates that for the long term are more disruptive to our students' academic learning and social development than they are protecting them from the virus - a virus from which they are already naturally well protected, and even more so with the vaccine, should they choose. While the rest of the state, country, and world move forward, Chicago Public School kids will be left further behind. This is not fair, appropriate, nor equitable. In light of all presented above, our kids deserve to reclaim the same normalcy we're on the cusp of granting to all Chicago adults, that millions of school-children outside of Chicago already have, lest the cure we've imposed upon our kids become much worse than the disease itself. I ask that you seriously consider the weight of your decision regarding mask mandates on our kids, and to strongly consider the words above as you continue to evolve these policies. Thank you very much for your time.
41	I woud like CPS to review their Covid mitigations surrounding the mask policy. I would like CPS to become mask optional. It has been stated by Dr. Arwady that the transmission of Covid is not occurring inside of the school, but rather the community. No mask has proven to be effective in not transmitting Covid 19 so why wear them, it makes no sense. Over 700 school districts as of today 2/23 have gone mask optional. Both the Governor of IL and the Mayor of Chicago have lifted the mask/vaccine mandates effective February 28 yet CPS still has not. This needs to change.
42	ASPIRA CEO Statement at CPS Board Meeting Wednesday, February 23, 2022 Good Morning President Del Valle, Members of the Board, and CEO Martinez, I am Fernando Grillo and serve as CEO of ASPIRA. Thank you for your dedicated service to the students and families of our great city. I would like to thank CPS leadership for leading a collaborative, transparent conversation between our ASPIRA and North River Elementary school's community of school leaders, students, and parents. Today, ASPIRA is here in support of the collocation of the North River Elementary School and ASPIRA's Haugan Middle School. Last year as ASPIRA's CEO, I publicly stated before this Board, and I reiterate today, that ASPIRA supports a new facility for North River Elementary School. I am on record that all children in Chicago Public Schools deserve to learn in a quality facility that offers the same amenities as the building on Leland Avenue has afforded our ASPIRA students. For ASPIRA, it is vital to

	continue serving our students and community with the academic instruction, enrichment programs that support violence prevention and workforce development programs we currently offer. ASPIRA is thankful for the ongoing respectful dialogue between our two school communities continues and fully anticipates that our discussion will result in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which will be equitable and provides the opportunity for both campuses to flourish and grow; and for ASPIRA to continue delivering our programs to students, ASPIRA, North River Elementary School, and those living in our Albany Park community without risk of losing funding for programs specifically funded to provide services and support in that community area. Thank you for your continued collaboration, ASPIRA looks forward to welcoming our new neighbors from North River Elementary School for the 2022 and 2023 school year. This concludes my statement.
43	My name is Nick Kryczka, and I am a parent of two kids in the Chicago Public Schools. I'm here today to advance three demands to you– all related to your duty to oversee COVID policy, and all with the goal of bringing our school system into step with science and into step with the rest of society. The first demand is an urge to vote NO or to table resolution 2, which is on your agenda today, and which proposes to ratify all current COVID-19 mitigation policy and delegate all future decisions to the CEO,effectively removing COVID policy from the Board's oversight and away from the input of the public. In place of this, I urge a second demand: an immediate end to quarantines for students identified as "close contacts" of a COVID case. Hundreds of healthy students and families continue to be disrupted daily by this protocol, while our peers in New York, LA, Cleveland, and Atlanta and countless other large districts have abandoned the policy. Finally, I urge a vote by the board to transition CPS to a mask-optional policy to coincide with the end of the state and citywide mask mandates on March 1st. It will be a truly shameful spectacle if all of us are set free to enjoy our normal adult lives, at church, at restaurants, at shopping centers, and in meeting rooms like this one- while our kids are left to carry on straining to learn through the muffle of a mask. The Board can sit by and let Chicago continue to take last place in everything related to the drawdown of COVID policy, or you can play a dynamic role in getting us back to normal and restoring our faith in the public schools.
44	Please maintain a universal mask mandate until the covid vaccine has been added to the list of vaccinations required to attend school. Universal masking is what makes it possible for my child to attend in-person school safely. Please don't let a tiny (under 1%) but loud minority of parents drown out the majority of us who understand the continued need for universal masking in school. Thank you.
45	Keep the mask mandate in place. There is no harm to children and educators for remaining masks, and the potential for harm without masking is too great to risk.

46	As a parent of 2 CPS student, we support the mask mandate for their safety and everyone else. This is our new reality. The pandemic is not going anywhere and we expect CPS to keep our kids safe and one way is enforcing the mask mandate.
47	I would like CPS to continue having students, faculty, staff, and visitors wear masks in schools.
48	Please maintain mandatory masking in schools to protect students, staff, and community.
49	As the parent of two Chicago public schools students, I support the Board's decision to maintain a mask mandate in schools for now. We have only recently seen a decline in cases and vaccination rates remain too low across the district. Classrooms are small and it is difficult for children and school staff to socially distance. I worry about the health of our teachers and vulnerable children. I applaud the Board's cautious approach and its focus on the health and safety of students and teachers. I do hope that we continue to see investments in ventilation and vaccinations so that we can eventually remove the mandate if cases get and stay lower.
50	As a parent of two CPS students, I strongly support keeping all students masked through at least the end of 2021 for the safety of teachers, staff, parents, and families. Right now children under 5 cannot be vaccinated, and vaccination rates for all students are too low to prevent widespread infection when any student is exposed to covid. This will mean increased quarantine periods for students, which disrupts teaching, affects families, and makes working difficult for parents who must stay home with students. The *least* CPS can do is keep masking for a long as possible, in addition to imposing a vaccination requirement as soon as the FDA moves past emergency authorization.
51	As a CPS parent of a sophomore and a 6th grader, I want to voice my support for continued public health strategies that reduce the risk of COVID for Chicago's kids, including indoor masking policies. In addition to school vaccination events, regular testing, and educational outreach to parents and families, having an indoor mask policy reduces the risk for my son, his classmates and their families, and school teachers and staff members. This year my son has had several close contacts with covid + kids—both in his class and in his aftercare program. Thanks to universal masking combined with his vaccination, he has avoided covid and bringing covid home to us. His teachers have also avoided covid. I feel better knowing he and his friends are wearing masks—keeping his teachers, aftercare team, and and all of our school families safer. Although there are lots of loud voices complaining about masks, my kids have had no issues with them. They wear masks to keep their grandparents, teachers, and friends safer—we've had a healthy year at CPS and we hope that continues!

52	I am a CPS parent and alum and I support the decision to maintain COVID19 safety measures in schools during these trying times. I understand that wearing masks is an important part of the layered approach to mitigating the horrible effects of the virus, despite what the critics may say. The health of our CPS community is too important not to take these precautions. Our students, teachers, & staff deserve a safe and INCLUSIVE place to learn.
53	I am a CPS parent and was horrified to learn that BoE might be considering dropping the protective mask measures in schools. As a single parent with health issues, my family relies upon measures like masking to keep us safe. With abysmally low student vaccination numbers, low testing, and reduced quarantining - masks remain the most effective way to prevent infection. As encouraging as the new lower positivity rate is, it is important to remember that only a month ago we were in the middle of a deadly surge. The idea of removing masking in schools seems extremely rash, especially considering that the positivity rate is currently about the same as it was in September just before the Omnicron wave. Without a sustained reduction in cases, it doesn't make sense to just assume that we aren't in another lull before the next wave.
54	I am a CPS parent and I support the mask mandate.
55	My education in the sciences while a CPS student was excellent. Even if I had not taken a single science class in high school I would have known enough from my middle school science teachers at Kenwood Academy to understand that masks work and the pandemic is not over, and so to keep kids and teachers safe, we need to keep masking in schools. To all grappling with the complaints of the loud and petulant folks who are demanding you eliminate masking in CPS schools, please remember you are dealing with people who did not have the benefit of learning science from amazing CPS teachers. So you can ignore their angry demands that fly in the face of compassion as well as science. Masking works, the pandemic is not over, infection rates are still obscenely high and new variants are on the radar of the CDC and the WHO. Masks are not perfect, and they are uncomfortable, but they save lives, and the schoolchildren of Chicago understand that-- just ask them. In addition, all these parents who are upset about masking, will this loud but scientifically challenged group who want the masks gone stick around to deal with the more serious problems CPS students are facing? CPS students are not afraid of masks, and are not limited because they have to wear them. But too many CPS students are afraid of gunfire and limited by food deserts; they are challenged by lack of internet access at home, and have parents who may be too busy working to sit and help with homework. Some are even dealing with housing insecurity or abuse. So while these anti-mask parents clearly have a loud voice they can bring to bear, will they be willing to use those voices to support CPS students in dealing with the far more serious problems? These very vocal parents have been silent on so many other important issues! Just as they have ignored the needs of many CPS students facing serious problems, ignore their anti-masking demands, and keep masking in CPS schools!

56	My name is Lara Mele, and I am a parent of one child in the Chicago Public Schools. I am commenting in regard to your duty to oversee COVID policy, with the goal of bringing our school system into step with science and into step with the rest of society. I urge you to vote NO or to table resolution 2, which is on your agenda today, and which proposes to ratify all current COVID-19 mitigation policy and delegate all future decisions to the CEO, effectively removing COVID policy from the Board's oversight and away from the input of the public. In place of this, I urge an immediate end to quarantines for students identified as "close contacts" of a COVID case. Hundreds of healthy students and families continue to be disrupted daily by this protocol, while our peers in New York, LA, Cleveland, and Atlanta and countless other large districts have abandoned the policy. Finally, I urge a vote by the board to transition CPS to a mask-optional policy to coincide with the end of the state and citywide mask mandates on March 1st. It will be a truly shameful spectacle if all of us are set free to enjoy our normal adult lives, at church, at restaurants, at shopping centers, and in meeting rooms like this one- while our kids are left to carry on straining to learn through the muffle of a mask. The Board can sit by and let Chicago continue to take last place in everything related to the drawdown of COVID policy, or you can play a dynamic role in getting us back to normal and restoring our faith in the public schools. Thank you
57	"Masks are not oppressing anyone. … Oppression and systemic inequality is what has actually caused the disproportionate impact along those lines of race and class." I and many parents find this above statement by board member Elizabeth Todd-Breland so out of touch with what is right for our entire community. How can she as a board member and use such political work speak after listening to all the parent speakers yesterday and what I'm sure is even more submitted comments. It's a disgrace to our city that these are the people who have been appointed to keep our children's best interest in mind during this time. I hope all parents have the opportunity to see what these officials have done to our kids just to garner support from a union leadership that will not follow the science and only want more power and control at the expense of our children. A day of reckoning is coming for these members and I hope the parents never forget what you've done to our children over the last 2 years.
58	NETWORK 8 Parent: The Children of CPS deserve to go to school in a safe environment. It is impossible to do so without masks. Of course the masks on all day are a bother to some students, but to the students that have immune systems that are compromised it's not an option for them. The schools need to remain masked for the safety of all children. We need to be united in the fight against spreading Covid not arguing about weather or not it's your right. It's The Right of ALL Students to be Safe.
59	We need to keep mask

60	I am a CPS parent with children at Sauganash and Decatur, and I support continuing the mask mandate in schools until at least the end of this school year.
61	To whom it may concern, I have a five year old daughter in a Chicago Public School. She is very smart and she understands that COVID is bad and we all have to do what we can to help each other survive. As soon as it was possible for her to get vaccinated, she wanted to go. She bravely got two shots and did not cry because she wanted to go to school, meet new friends, and be her happy self. She has also worn a mask at day care and school since June of 2020 with no complaints. She understands that the masks protect her and the other kids, and though it isn't always easy to wear one, she knows that it is important. I have difficulty understanding why adults are so quick to say that kids are tired of masks when my daughter has worn one for years with no issue. I hope that the Chicago Public Schools will continue to require masks and help provide vaccinations until the positivity rates are lower and all of the kids who can get vaccinated are vaccinated. Thank you for listening.
62	My family and I are in agreement that we support the CPS decision to keep mask mandates for all students, staff, and teachers K-12 through the remainder of this school year. Please care for those among us who are immunocompromised.
63	GET RID OF THE MASKS! Why are we the last ones to lift it!?!
64	I urge the board to keep the mask mandate in place at all CPS schools for the remainder of the school year. Wearing a mask is a small price to pay to protect the health and safety of immunocompromised students and staff and to keep the COVID-19 transmission rates low.
65	Greetings, I am a parent to a CPS 2nd grader and I support continued masking in our schools until the end of the school year. I am in favor of a covid vaccine requirement for all students and staff by fall 2022. The parents (especially Nancy Griffin) who spoke at this last BOE meeting do not represent me or any parents, students or caregivers that I know. My student has a speech delay and masking has not stopped her from growing by leaps and bounds in vocabulary and pronunciation. Please listen to parents of Special Education students, not those who use them in talking points to get their way.

ATTACHMENTS

Remarks

CPS Board Meeting | Feb 23, 2022

Good Morning President del Valle, esteemed Board Members and Dr. Martinez.

My name is Yennya Segura and I am honored to be here today and share with you the amazing work Acero Schools is doing. I have two students that attend Jovita Idar in the Gage Park Community, Oscar Godinez in 2nd grade and Edgar Godinez who is in 6th grade.

My children and I love Idar and consider it a second home. I am blessed to have a school that has allowed me to partake in my children's learning experience. I have volunteered at Idar and engaged in several activities including supporting our office coordinator at the front desk and learning new clerical skills, participating in yearly school celebrations, and helped establish a community library for our spanish speaking families and continue to support by being involved with the after school reading club.

The network has offered parents several learning opportunities to become involved including, *Padres Comprometidos,* a curriculum where I learned how to better support my children's learning. During these uncertain times when stress is a constant factor, the program gave me a greater understanding on the importance of mental health and provided me the tools to stay emotionally connected with my children. I have completed the curriculum twice now and I look forward to being a champion for Oscar and Edgar in their academic journey.

At the start of the pandemic when we transitioned to remote learning, Acero was quick to offer the best academic support and kept my children engaged in their learning. The network has done an excellent job at keeping parents informed with the evolving health regulations and implementing safe health practices and sending out regular communications to parents. Acero has also informed families of important resources offered by community partners including testing & vaccination opportunities, food & housing resources and has hosted vaccination clinics throughout the Acero Network.

I ask the Board today to recognize charter schools like Idar and see the impact they are having on families. Acero is more than a school, it is a community and resource for families.

Buenos Días Presidente del Valle, estimados Miembros de la Junta y Dr. Martínez.

Mi nombre es Yennya Segura y me siento honrada de estar aquí hoy y compartir con ustedes el increíble trabajo que está haciendo Escuelas Acero. Tengo dos estudiantes que asisten a Jovita Idar en la comunidad de Gage Park, Oscar Godinez en 2do grado y Edgar Godinez que esta en 6to grado.

Mis hijos y yo estamos encantados de Idar y lo consideramos un segundo hogar. Tengo la suerte de tener una escuela que me ha permitido participar en la experiencia del aprendizaje de mis hijos. He sido voluntaria en Idar y participé en varias actividades, incluido el apoyo a nuestra coordinadora de oficina y el aprendizaje de nuevas habilidades administrativas, la participación en celebraciones escolares anuales, y ayudé a establecer una biblioteca comunitaria, para nuestras familias de habla hispana y continúo apoyando al participar después de la escuela, con el club de lectura.

La red ha ofrecido a los padres varias oportunidades de aprendizaje para participar, incluido *Padres Comprometidos,* un programa en el que aprendí cómo apoyar mejor el aprendizaje de mis hijos. Durante estos tiempos inciertos en los que el estrés es un factor constante, el programa me dio una mayor comprensión sobre la importancia de la salud mental y me brindó las herramientas para mantenerme conectada emocionalmente con mis hijos. He completado el programa dos veces y espero ser una campeona para Oscar y Edgar en su viaje académico.

Acero se apresuró a ofrecer el mejor apoyo académico, al comienzo de la pandemia, cuando hicimos la transición al aprendizaje remoto, y mantuvo a mis hijos comprometidos con su aprendizaje. La red ha hecho un trabajo excelente al mantener informados a los padres sobre la evolución de las normas de salud, implementar prácticas de salud seguras y enviar comunicaciones periódicas a los padres. Acero también ha informado a las familias sobre los recursos importantes que ofrecen en la comunidad, incluidas las oportunidades de pruebas y vacunación, los recursos de alimentación y vivienda, y ha organizado clínicas de vacunación en toda la red Acero.

Hoy le pido a la Junta que reconozca a escuelas charter, como Idar, y que vea el impacto que dejan en las familias. Acero es más que una escuela; es un recurso y comunidad para nuestras familias.

Last board meeting, a speaker pleaded with the board to do away with the CPS Residency Policy and I finally stopped laughing so I could type up a rebuttal to their plea.

See, the policy is 'Much Ado About Nothing' as the CPS Inspector General's office under William Flecther refuses to investigate several residency violators and they uncovered **1** violator in his 2021 annual report and **6** in 2020 out of total of 317 employee residency complaints

In fact, Fletcher's office has such a **poor** job of investigating that some violators have moved from one suburban home to another one.

Let's be clear here, I'm not alluding to CPS employees initially hired while living outside Chicago on renewable residency waivers for working in special need subject areas or those employees grandfathered-in with the old residency that allows them to live wherever they choose if they were hired before November 20, 1996. No, I'm talking about the employee residency violators that are lying and fraudulently living outside Chicago in clear violation of the residency policy.

The CPS OIG and other CPS leaders were given a confirmed list of close to **40 employees** in violation multiple times over the past 2 1/2 years ago, including some employees in violation from 10-20 years. It's truly hard to figure why Fletcher's office refuses to investigate any of them.

Since the 2015-16 school year, one school (**Steinmetz HS**) had up to 24 employees in violation at one time working in their school with **5** of them being department chairs of program leaders. Let's give this the respect it deserves, "**Steinmetz has had 24 residency violators working in their school since the 2015-16 school year. Yes 24!!!"**

You might find 1-3 residency violators per CPS school, but nothing like the nonsense going on at Steinmetz.

The lack of a meaningful investigation by Fletcher and his staff into the **24** at Steinmetz in violation isn't righteous or fair to all the CPS employees that abide by the policy and pay city of Chicago property taxes.

Below, are the statistics on the last (4) years of employee residency violations from the CPS Pig's annual reports

2021 (William Fletcher, CPS OIG)

140 residency complaints (12.89%) of 1086 total complaints

Investigations and consequences listed in annual report
1 (**ONE)** - SPED teacher

2020 (William Fletcher, CPS OIG)

177 residency complaints (9.09%) of 1948 total complaints

Investigations and consequences listed in annual report
2- Principals
1- SECA
1- SPED teacher
2- Teacher

2019 (Nicholas Schuler CPS OIG)

140 residency complaints (6.44%) of 2175 total complaints

Investigations and consequences listed in annual report
2- Principals

1- SECA
1- SPED teacher
7- Teacher
1- Technology coordinator
1- Clerk
1- School Culture Coordinator
1- Security
1- Lunchroom Attendant
2- Central office employee

2018 (Nicholas Schuler, CPS OIG)

180 residency complaints (11.84%) of 1520 total complaints

Investigations and consequences listed in annual report
2- Principals
1- Principal
1- Assistant Principal
14- Teacher
3- Clerk
2- Central office employee (manager and director)
1- Social worker 1,
1- Talent Office employee
1- Warehouse employee
1- Counselor

The Urgency of Equity

A Toolkit to Make Schools Safer for All from COVID-19

To advance slides, please use arrow keys, click, or swipe

Download a pdf of this toolkit

Sign on for toolkit

www.urgencyofequity.org
info@urgencyofequity.org
Last updated February 22, 2022

Version 1.0

The #UrgencyofEquity Toolkit was developed by a coalition of public health experts and grassroots organizations to help educators, parents, and communities advocate for safer, equitable schools, and separate fact from fiction about COVID-19 protections.

This toolkit will continue to be updated, as new science and information are available.

Urgency of Equity Toolkit Contents

Introduction

Background

Strategies for Safer Schools

Facts About COVID-19 & Schools

- COVID-19 is an airborne virus. Clean air and masks are essential to stopping its spread.
- COVID-19 can cause severe and chronic illness, disability, and death for educators, students, and families.
- Vaccines help protect against severe disease and death — but too few students are vaccinated.
- Reducing the spread and impact of COVID on children and their families is an important part of protecting their mental health.
- High-quality masks, especially when universally used, limit transmission.
- Testing helps keep schools safer and informs decision-making.
- The U.S. public supports protections in schools.

Conclusion

Resources

Introduction: The Urgency of Equity

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, we are continually reminded that we live, work, and learn together in communities. In this world of shared breath, it is a practical and moral urgency that we protect the most vulnerable among us — low-income people, elderly, the disabled and immunocompromised, and Indigenous, Black and Latinx communities, among others — who have been disproportionately harmed by the impact of COVID-19.

As microcosms of our community, schools reflect broader inequalities. We all want students to be safe and able to learn: **evidence suggests that the best way to ensure the safety of students, teachers and staff and to keep schools open is to use layers of protection.**

These include paid sick leave for staff, mental health care for staff and students, coordinated ventilation and filtration efforts, sustained access to the best quality masks and testing, as well as proactive efforts to keep community viral levels low. These are inevitably political demands of our local, state, and federal governments and require vocal public support. **As COVID-19 rates allow, we can alter protections — and bring them back if needed.** Having a plan to use data to inform these decisions helps ensure that protections are sufficient to safeguard the most vulnerable.

Introduction: The Urgency of Equity

As schools face continuing questions about sustainably protecting even the most vulnerable groups from COVID, **this toolkit aims to provide accurate, fact-checked information and up-to-date research summaries to help schools and communities make decisions that will keep ALL members of school communities safe.** This toolkit emphasizes ways we can prioritize health and well-being in our schools, **recognizing that collective, rather than individual, approaches are the best way to mitigate the harms of an airborne virus.**

Normal should not mean accepting perpetually high rates of COVID-related illness, chronic disability, and death. The turbulence of the pandemic can motivate us to recognize and rectify pre-existing disparities. Two years into the pandemic, we have the knowledge and means to do just that. We can take measures to keep schools and communities safer and begin to move towards a new normal–one that values the lives of our most vulnerable members.

Introduction: The Urgency of Equity

The facts are:

- COVID-19 is an airborne virus. Clean air and masks are essential to stopping its spread.
- COVID-19 can cause severe and chronic illness, disability, and death for educators, students, and families.
- Vaccines help protect against severe disease and death — but too few students are vaccinated.
- Reducing the spread and impact of COVID on children and their families is an important part of protecting their mental health.
- High-quality masks, especially when universally used, limit transmission.
- Testing helps keep schools safer and informs decision-making.
- The U.S. public supports protections in schools.

Background:
Urgency of this Moment

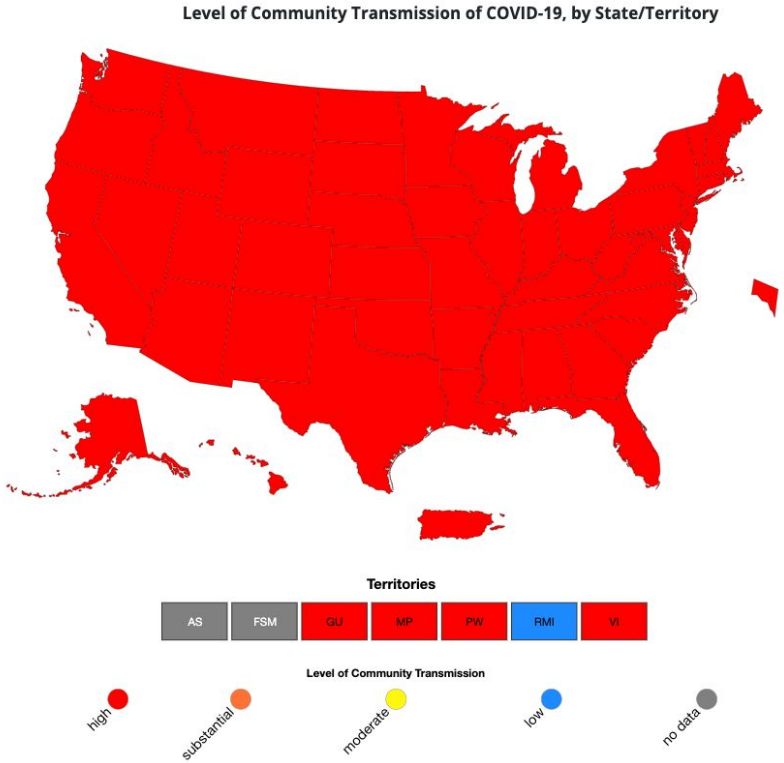
Urgency Of This Moment: **Pediatric Hospitalizations**

- School plans must be centered on protecting the whole community, including those placed at highest risk.
- Pediatric hospitalizations were at the highest point of the entire pandemic in mid-January 2022 and remain high.
- Throughout the pandemic, **hospitalizations and deaths have been highest in low-income, Indigenous, Black, and Latinx communities.**

Source:https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#new-hospital-admissions; https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_community; https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#demographicsovertime; https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/low-income-and-communities-of-color-at-higher-risk-of-serious-illness-if-infected-with-coronavirus/

Urgency Of This Moment: **High Case Rates**

- Even as we move past the worst of the Omicron surge, cases remain incredibly high across the nation.
- The CDC defines low community transmission as <10 cases per 100,000 and < 5% positivity.
- Schools are not bubbles – they can both reflect and affect community transmission rates.



Source: https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#new-hospital-admissions; https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_community; https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#demographicsovertime

Map as of 2/7/2022

Urgency Of This Moment: **Caregiver Deaths**

- Healthy schools mean fewer children bringing the virus home to their families where it can spread to other vulnerable family members, including grandparents and younger siblings.
- **Over 200,000 children have lost a caregiver** during the pandemic, causing emotional stress, poor mental health, and severe disruptions to learning. Black and Latinx children have been disproportionately impacted. Even more students have had a caregiver hospitalized or suffering from long COVID.
- Tragically, more than **400 teachers have died** from COVID.

U.S.

COVID Orphans—Over 200,000 U.S. Children Have Lost A Parent or Caregiver to the Pandemic

BY KHALEDA RAHMAN ON 2/4/22 AT 4:00 AM EST

Source: https://www.newsweek.com/covid-orphans-over-200000-children-lost-parent-caregiver-1675856;
https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/148/6/e2021053760/183446/COVID-19-Associated-Orphanhood-and-Caregiver-Death
https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/educators-weve-lost-to-the-coronavirus/2020/04#2021

COVID-19 is an airborne virus.

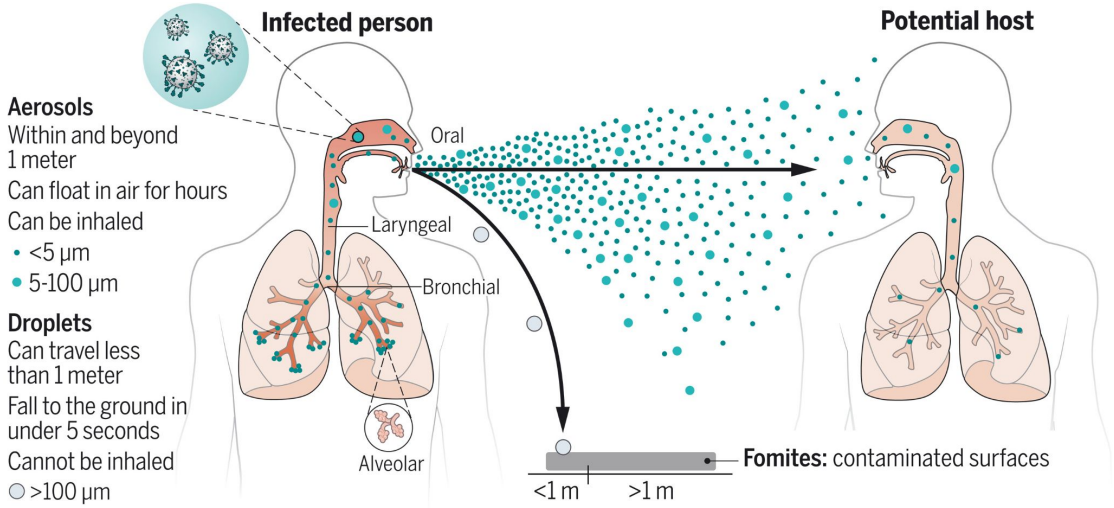
Clean air and masks are essential to stopping its spread.

Fact: **COVID is airborne. It spreads through the air we breathe.**

Concern: Public health guidance early in the pandemic told us COVID spread primarily through droplets, emphasizing the importance of six-feet of social distance at the expense of cleaning and regulating indoor air.

- Airborne transmission means that individuals are primarily infected through inhaling aerosols containing the virus. These are produced when an infected person exhales, speaks, shouts, sings, sneezes, or coughs.

- A cough or sneeze can propel COVID particles up to 12 feet. Even exhaled aerosols can fill indoor spaces rapidly and be recirculated by ventilation systems. Laboratory experiments suggest that the exhaled infectious virus can remain suspended in the air for prolonged periods of time.*



- Cleaning indoor air is essential to reducing COVID's spread & masks reduce the amount of virus in the air.

*The data about how long the virus can stay infectious in the air are mixed, and range from 20 minutes to up to 3 hours.

Sources: https://www.thelancet.com/article/S0140-6736(21)00869-2/fulltext; https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7707926/pdf/jkms-35-e415.pdf; https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7121658/pdf/NEJMc2004973.pdf; https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.01.08.22268944v1.full.pdf; https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epub/10.1080/22221751.2020.1777906?needAccess=true; https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abd9149

COVID-19 is Airborne:
Multiple layers of protection keep schools safer.

1. **Keeping community transmission low** will keep schools safer for all students and staff.

2. **Increase vaccination rates** among students, staff, and teachers; encourage everyone to get their COVID vaccinations and boosters as advised by the CDC.

3. **Improve ventilation and air filtration** in schools by both opening windows (wherever possible) and filtering indoor air using HEPA air purifiers. Monitor air quality with CO2 monitors when possible. Move activities (especially lunch) **outdoors** whenever possible.

4. Provide and encourage wearing **high-quality masks** (N95/KF94/KN95) for all students, teachers, and staff.

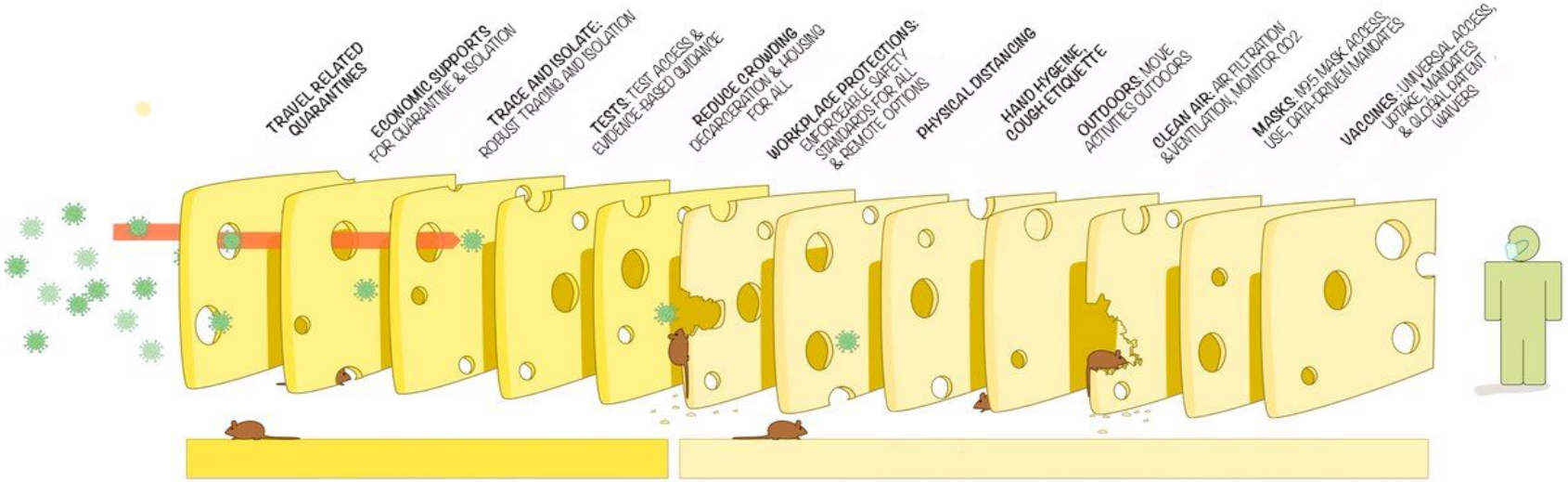
5. Use **universal at-least weekly testing** for students, teachers and school staff. When individuals are experiencing symptoms or test positive, stay home for the full ten day isolation period. For those who want to or have to exit isolation early,* negative rapid tests on two consecutive days (no earlier than day 5) should be used to guide their decision making.

Sources: See the updated guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics which encourages masking and vaccination, for more details: https://publications.aap.org/aapnews/news/19512/AAP-updates-pandemic-guidance-on-school-sports and https://www.uchicagomedicine.org/forefront/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/early-data-suggests-many-individuals-still-covid-positive on the insufficiency of 5 day quarantine.

*There are not evidence-based guidelines to follow with regard to exiting isolation early with Omicron, and it is likely that the timeline for safely exiting isolation early depends on vaccination status and will change with each variant.

The Swiss Cheese Respiratory Virus Pandemic Defence

Layered Policy Interventions Are Our Best Protection



"Each intervention (slice) has imperfections (holes) which change in size, number, and position, depending on pre-existing structural inequities and rates of community uptake. Multiple layers of intervention improve the likelihood of success, particularly for those most vulnerable

Misinformation mouse

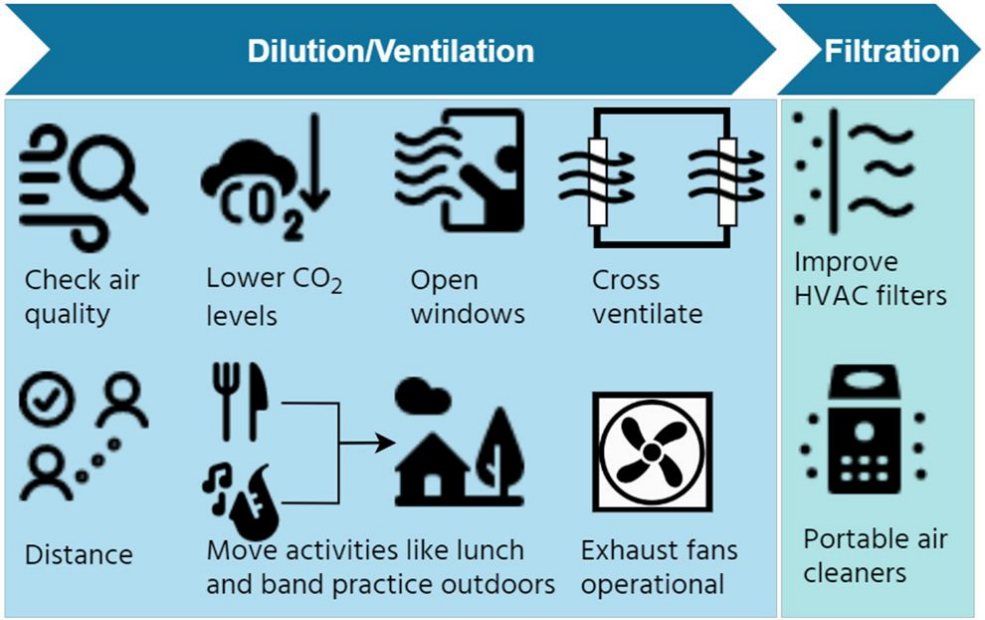
VaxPlus Coalition
Adapted from Ian M Mackay
Based on the Swiss Cheese Model of Accident Causation, by James T Reason 1990

Adapted from: https://twitter.com/MackayIM/status/1434033705312415747/photo/1

COVID-19 is airborne: Improving indoor air ventilation and filtration makes schools safer.

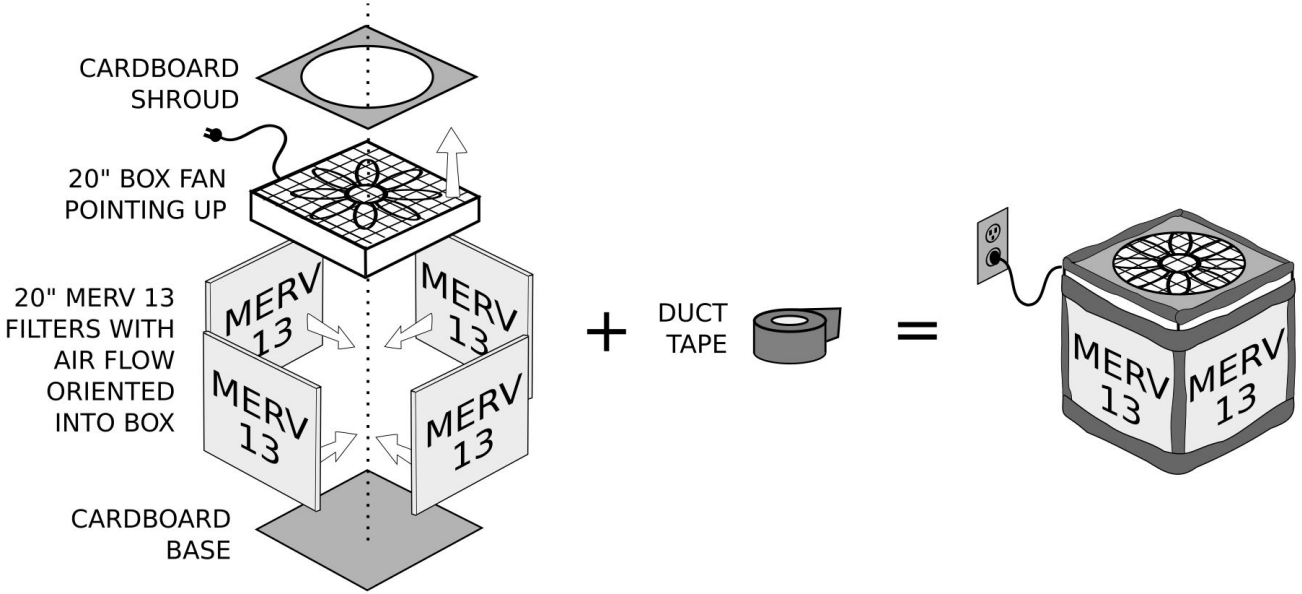
Air ventilation and filtration go hand-in-hand. As with the Swiss cheese model, more layers increase protection:

- Opening windows is a free and accessible way to improve ventilation (in locations where this is possible).
- HEPA Air Purifiers and Corsi-Rosenthal boxes are recommended to filter infectious virus and other air pollution from air in classrooms.
- Some school districts are using CO2 monitors to assess air ventilation. CO2 levels should ideally be close to outside air quality, at <800ppm.



Sources: https://cleanaircrew.org/schools/; https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2022.805780/full; https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/8810; https://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/resources/COVID-19/COVID-19-resources/tips-to-improve-school-vent.html

COVID-19 is Airborne: Air Purifiers Help Clean Indoor Air.



Corsi-Rosenthal Boxes are low-cost DIY Air Purifiers, which are are effective and can be made by parents or staff. HEPA Air purifiers – consumer and DIY -- can also be used in homes to limit the spread of COVID in the home if one person gets sick. This is especially critical for multi-generational households and those with immunocompromised and vulnerable household members.

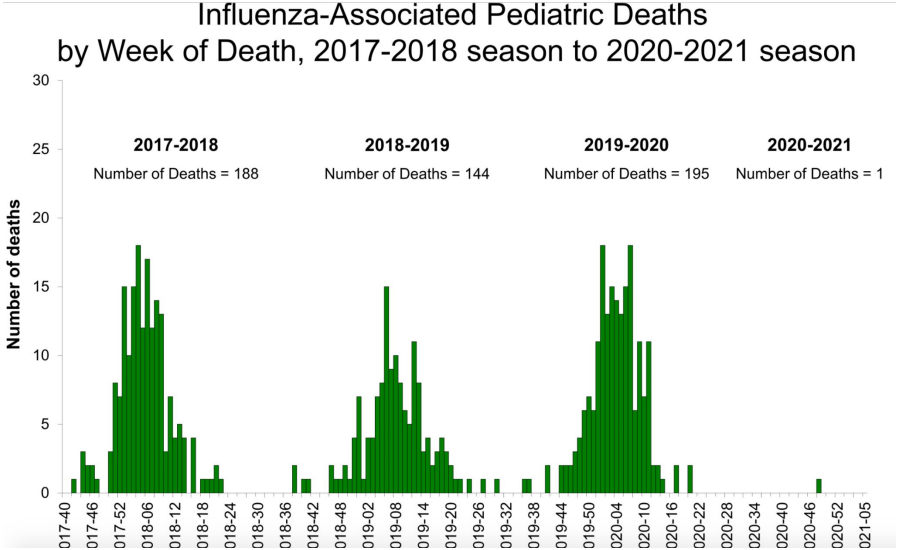
Source and Detailed Instructions on how to build Corsi Rosenthal Box :https://cleanaircrew.org/box-fan-filters/ Preprints on Corsi-Rosenthall Boxes efficacy: https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.01.09.22268972v1; https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.01.09.22268972v1

COVID-19 can cause severe and chronic illness, disability, and death.

Fact: **COVID-19 is far more serious for children than the flu.**

Concern: Some have advocated for the removal of masks and other protections for students, claiming COVID-19 is no more dangerous than the flu. But these claims are not supported by the evidence.

- **Over the pandemic, more than 1,200 children have died from COVID-19 in the US.**
- Over the same time frame, fewer than 10 flu-related childhood deaths have been reported.*
  - Before the pandemic, fewer than 200 children died from the flu each year.
  - *5 flu deaths have been reported so far in 2021-22



Source: https://data.cdc.gov/NCHS/Provisional-COVID-19-Deaths-Focus-on-Ages-0-18-Yea/nr4s-juj3; https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/148/6/e2021053760/183446/COVID-19-Associated-Orphanhood-and-Caregiver-Death https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/weeklyarchives2020-2021/PedFlu05.html; https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#demographics

Fact: **Children can develop Long COVID.**

Concern: Some claim that COVID-19 is not a serious concern for children and dismiss the reality of children developing Long COVID

- A growing body of research shows many adults **and** children develop Long COVID.
- Long COVID sufferers experience a wide range of long-term symptoms and conditions after a COVID-19 infection, often after mild or fully asymptomatic infections.
- Studies have shown multiple organs can be affected, including brain, kidneys, lungs, and the heart.

The New York Times

'This Is Really Scary': Kids Struggle With Long Covid

Lingering physical, mental and neurological symptoms are affecting children as well as adults, including many who had mild reactions to the initial coronavirus infection.

Sources: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects/; https://www.longcovidkids.org/long-covid-research-on-children; https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Post-COVID-Conditions-in-Children-and-Teens.aspx; https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-00334-w; https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7927578/; https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/08/health/long-covid-kids.html; https://www.salon.com/2022/01/22/the-kids-are-not-alright-data-suggests-10-of-children-with-19-become-long-haulers/; https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/ocr-factsheet-504-20210726.pdf; https://bmcnephrol.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12882-021-02389-9; https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8376118/

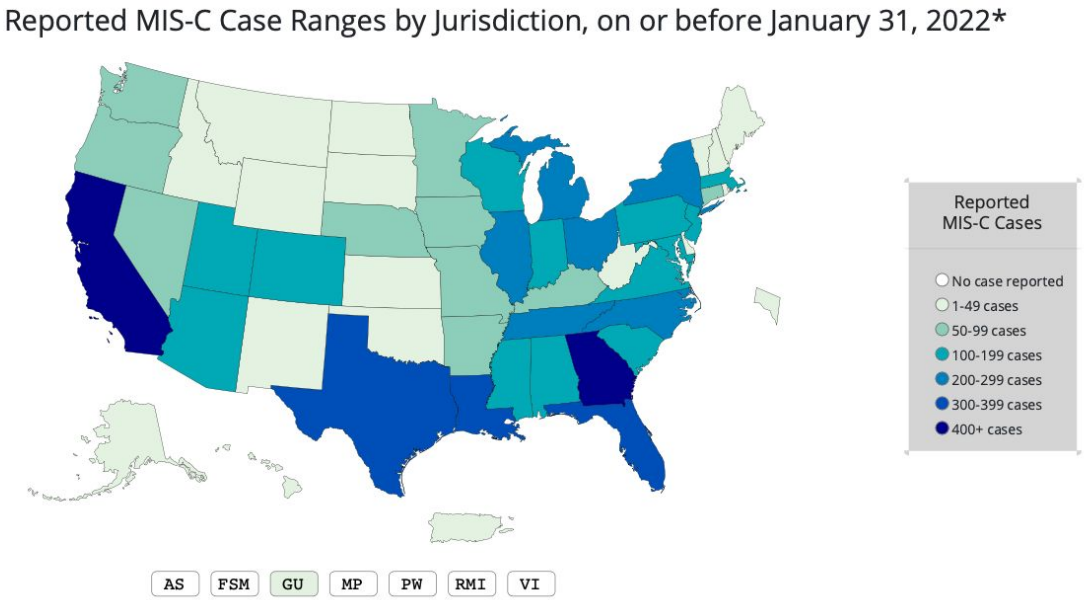
Fact: **Long COVID can have serious effects on children's health & learning.**

- Symptoms and disability can impact children's everyday life, often making it difficult to attend school or participate in extracurricular activities.
- Long COVID is recognized federally (Section 504 and IDEA), with guidance on how schools should support students with Long COVID.
- Preventing Long COVID by reducing COVID infections is important for students' learning and current and long-term health.
- Children are not the only ones at risk in schools. Teachers and school staff can also develop Long COVID.

Source: https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/ocr-factsheet-504-20210726.pdf; https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects/; https://www.longcovidkids.org/long-covid-research-on-children; https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7927578/; https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/10/03/long-haul-covid-kids-schools/; https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/bulletins/covid19schoolsinfectionsurveyenglandprevalenceofongoingsymptomsfollowingcoronaviruscovid19infectioninschoolpupilsandstaff/july2021; https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/long-covid-rising-fastest-teaching-and-education-staff

Fact: **Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS-C) is a Serious Consequence of COVID-19 for Many Children**

- MIS-C is a rare but serious condition that appears in some school-aged children 2 to 6 weeks after a COVID-19 infection.
- A total of 6,851 MIS-C cases and 59 MIS-C Deaths (meeting case definition) have been reported as of January 31, 2022



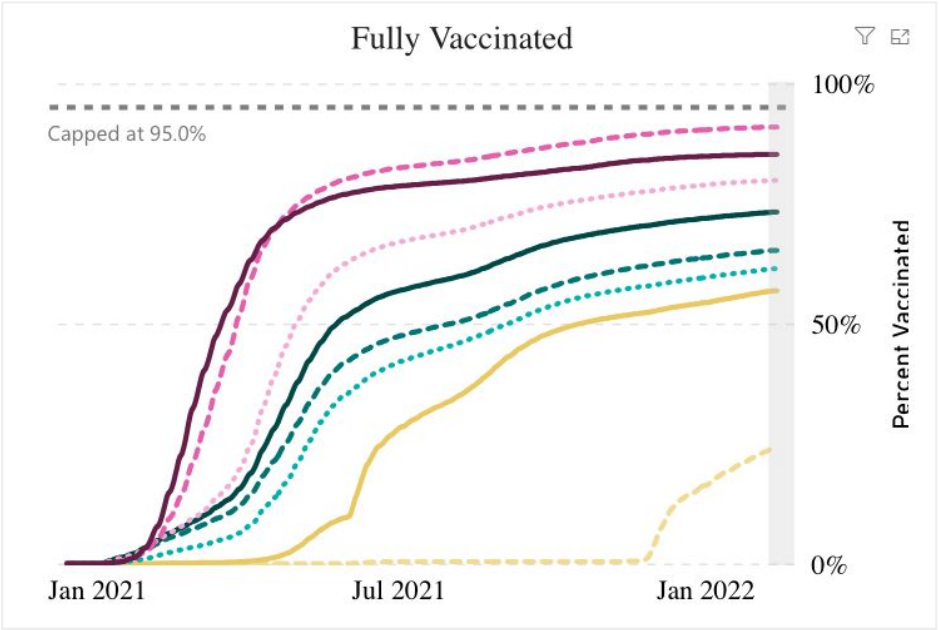
Source: https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#mis-national-surveillance; https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2780861; https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2787258

Vaccines help protect against severe disease and death, but too few children are vaccinated.

Fact: **Right now, child vaccination rates are low.**

Vaccination helps prevent serious acute infections in children. Vaccination rates must be improved.

- Less than 60% of students 12-17 years old are fully vaccinated.
- Less than 25% of students 5-11 years old are fully vaccinated.
- Racial and ethnic minority students are less likely to have had access to vaccines.
- The choice to be vaccinated is often not up to students.
- Children under 5 are not yet eligible for vaccination.



December 14, 2020 – February 13, 2022

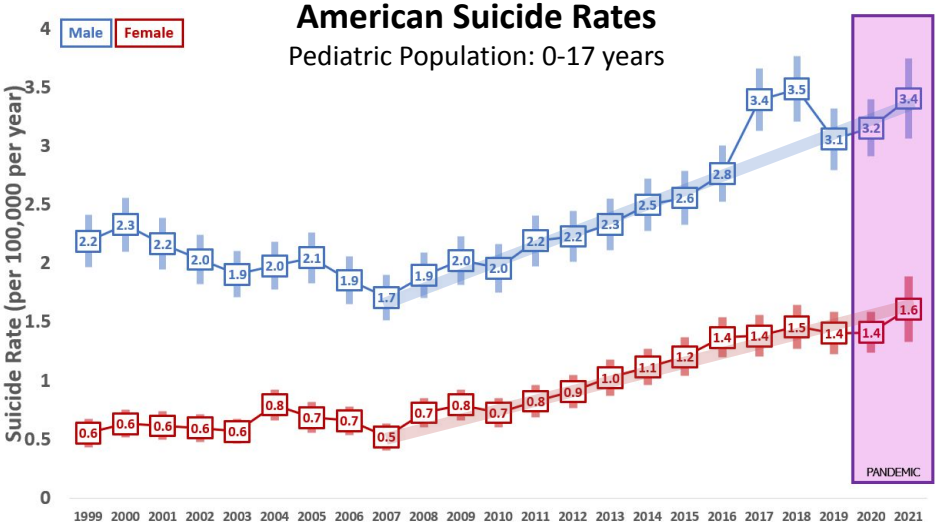
	5-11 yrs	12-17 yrs	18-24 yrs	25-39 yrs	40-49 yrs	50-64 yrs	65-74 yrs	75+ yrs
At Least One Dose	31.8%	66.9%	75.8%	78.2%	85.2%	91.8%	95.0%	95.0%
Fully Vaccinated	24.0%	56.8%	61.4%	65.2%	73.2%	79.8%	90.9%	85.2%

Note: fully vaccinated here means the original series only; the proportion of people with boosters is even lower.

Source: https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccination-demographics-trends

Reducing the spread and impact of COVID on children and their families is an important part of protecting their mental health.

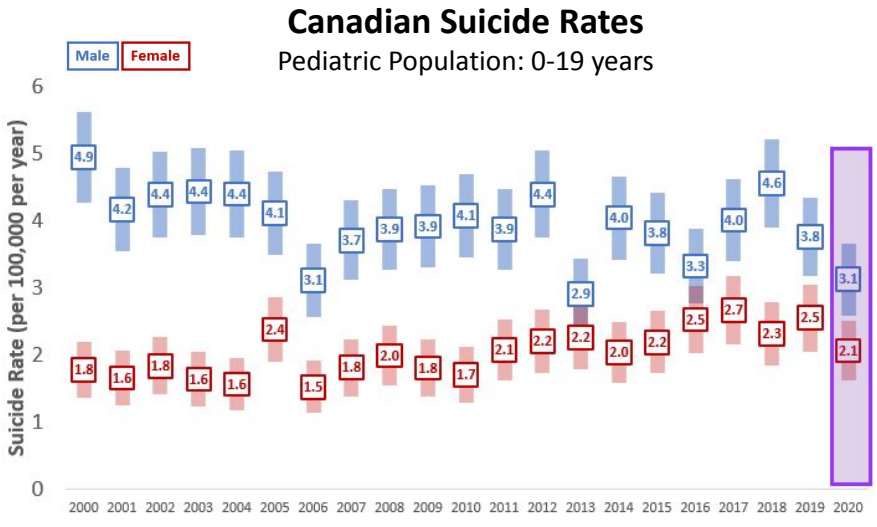
Fact: COVID-19 has been a stress on children and families, but it has **not caused a spike in child suicide rates**.



Suicide rates in the pediatric population have been increasing since 2007, and there was no rapid spike during the pandemic.

Note: for boys, suicides decreased during the pandemic compared to 2017-18. Overall, the rates during the pandemic followed the same pre-pandemic trends.

Source: CDC Wonder, 1999-2020; provisional estimates 2021, viz. by @tylerblack32



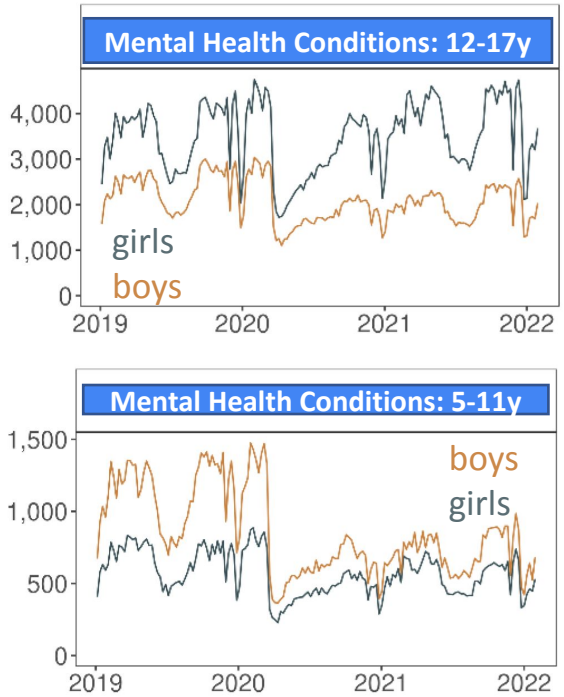
The Canadian rate of pediatric suicide in 2020 was the lowest rate in 7 years for boys, and 6 years for girls.

(Note: Use caution in comparing rates between countries, as the age groups differ. The rates for Canada would be about 35% lower at 0-17)

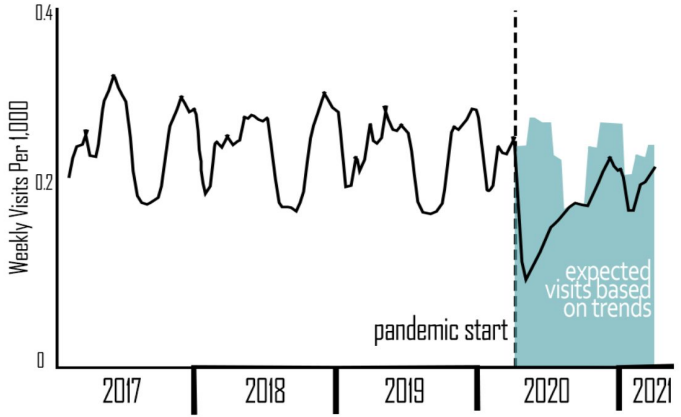
Source: Statistics Canada, 2000-2020, visualized by @tylerblack32

Fact: Emergency department visits for mental health problems **have not increased** during the pandemic.

American Mental Health ER Visits
Pediatric Population: 5-17 years



Canadian Mental Health ER Visits
Pediatric Population: 3-17 years

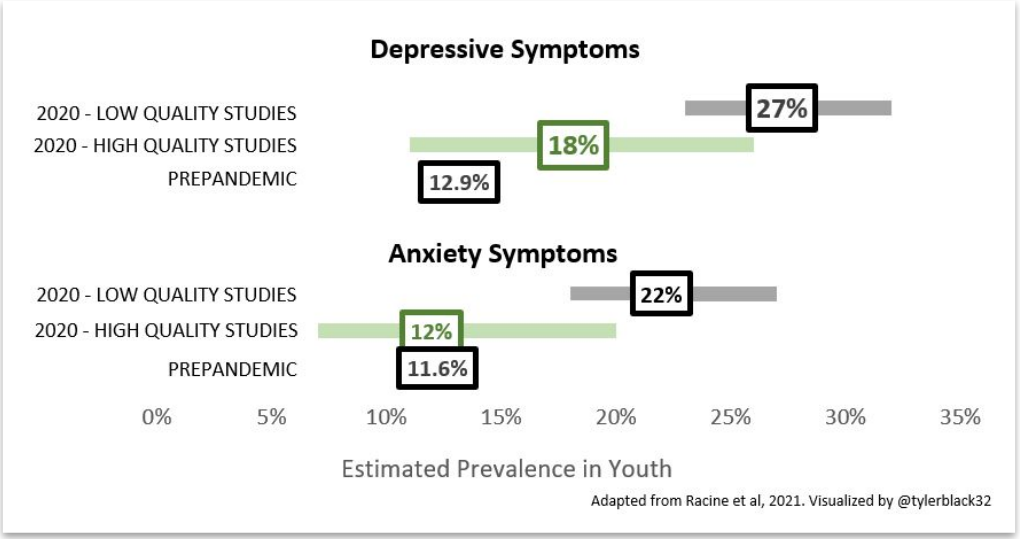


Both American Emergency Departments (National Syndromic Surveillance Program) and Canadian Emergency Departments (Ontario) have shown no increase in emergency visits for mental health-related concerns. Some subgroups have shown increases (girls with eating disorders), while some groups have shown decreases (boys for all reasons, girls with bipolar disorder).

Sources: Radhakrishnan L, et al. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. ePub: 18 February 2022. Saunders NR, et al. JAMA pediatrics. 2022:e216298.

Fact: While distress in children has undeniably risen, **mental health impacts have been mixed**.

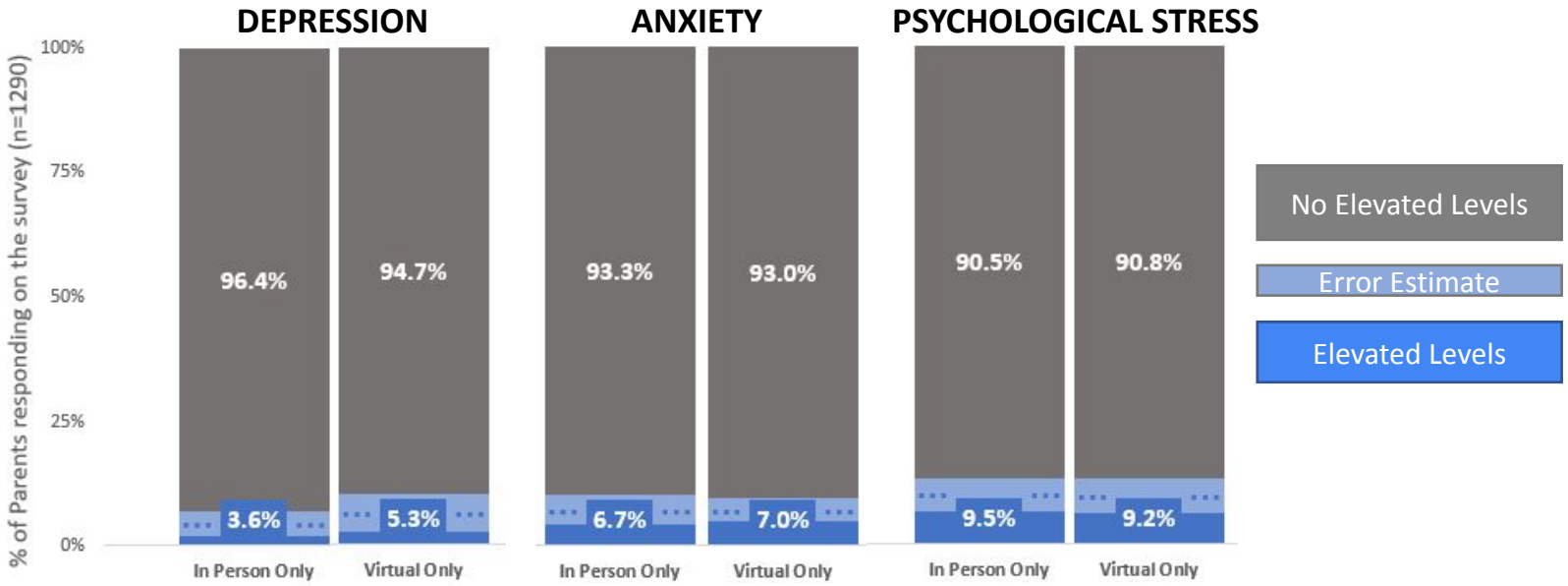
- While many early studies show high levels of anxiety & depressive symptoms ("doubling"), these studies were mostly of *low quality.* Typically *higher quality studies* show a smaller effect.[1]
- Better, longitudinal studies provide even more detailed information. Surveys of the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States have shown both increases and decreases in mental health impacts. [2]



Sources: [1] Racine, N., et al (2021). Global prevalence of depressive and anxiety symptoms in children and adolescents during COVID-19: a meta-analysis. *JAMA pediatrics*, *175*(11), 1142-1150. [2] Chadi, N., et al (2022). COVID-19 and the impacts on youth mental health: Emerging evidence from longitudinal studies. Canadian Journal of Public Health, 1-9.

Fact: **Most evidence shows that there are minimal impacts of remote learning on children's mental health.**

A CDC Survey of Parents revealed few differences between how parents saw their children's symptoms of depression, anxiety, and psychological stress between different forms of schooling during the early pandemic.



Source: Verlenden JV, et al. Association of Children's Mode of School Instruction with Child and Parent Experiences and Well-Being During the COVID-19 Pandemic — COVID Experiences Survey, United States, October 8–November 13, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2021;70:369–376.

Fact: **Masks do not lead to learning loss in students.**

Concern: There have been unsubstantiated claims that masks make it more difficult for students to learn or read emotions. There is no evidence to support these claims.

- There is no empirical evidence showing that masks interfere with student learning and social-emotional development.
- Based on a review of available literature, The South Carolina Department of Health concluded “No data regarding the impact of mask wearing on children’s academic development or performance was identified during a thorough scientific literature review.
- Experts agree, including the AAP, who notes, “Masks will not affect your child's ability to focus or learn in school.” Schools should support any students who are struggling with learning during this pandemic.

> “Kids are able to determine the emotion that someone is likely to feel even when they’re wearing a face mask.”
>
> - Dr. Ashley Ruba, Developmental Psychologist

Source: https://scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Science-on-Mask-Use-in-K-12-Schools_8.20.21_FINAL.pdf; https://newrepublic.com/article/165306/face-masks-dont-harm-kids-development; https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7008e4.htm https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Mask-Mythbusters.aspx

Fact: **COVID-19 itself has devastating impacts on experiences of death and dying on children**

Concern: Some claim that any mental distress experienced by students during the pandemic is due to protections, like masking and remote school. This ignores the impact of the pandemic itself on students' lives.

- A study using data to April 2021 estimated that globally, 1,134,000 children lost a primary caregiver (at least one parent or *custodial* grandparent), and 1,562,000 children lost at least one primary or secondary caregiver. In the United States alone, 113,000 children were estimated to have lost a primary caregiver by April 2021.
- Currently over 200,000 children in the U.S. have lost a primary caregiver.
- 35% of family members of patients who had ICU-level acute respiratory distress experienced PTSD-related symptoms 90 days later.

"The part that I keep going back to is likely the best way to protect our kids' mental health is to have less people dying by COVID."

-Dr. Tyler Black, ER Mental Health Physician & Researcher

Source: Lancet. 2021 Jul 31;398(10298):391-402. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(21)01253-8. Epub 2021 Jul 21. JAMA. 2022 Feb 18 (published online) doi: 10.1001/jama.2022.2017; https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/148/6/e2021053760/183446/COVID-19-Associated-Orphanhood-and-Caregiver-Death; https://www.newsweek.com/covid-orphans-over-200000-children-lost-parent-caregiver-1675856

High quality masks, especially when universally used, limit transmission.

Fact: **Masks reduce COVID-19 spread.**

Concern: Some argue that masks should be abandoned as a protection strategy, claiming there is no evidence of the benefits of masks

- Lab testing shows masks reduce exposure to potentially infectious aerosols

Sources: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7007e1.htm; https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/118/49/e2110117118.full.pdf; https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/01/20/n95-mask-effectiveness/

Fact: **Masks reduce COVID-19 spread.**

- As indicated in the summary table to the right, real-world studies using various designs show masks reduce COVID transmission across many settings.

- A large randomized controlled trial (RCT) in Bangladesh showed masks reduced transmission in the community. Specifically, they found surgical masks were more effective than cloth masks, but did not examine higher-quality masks.

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Table. Studies of the Effect of Mask Wearing on SARS-CoV-2 Infection Risk[a]

Source	Location	Population studied	Intervention	Outcome
Hendrix et al	Hair salon in Springfield, Missouri	139 Patrons at a salon with 2 infected and symptomatic stylists	Universal mask wearing in salon (by local ordinance and company policy)	No COVID-19 infections among 67 patrons who were available for follow-up
Payne et al	USS Theodore Roosevelt, Guam	382 US Navy service members	Self-reported mask wearing	Mask wearing reduced risk of infection by 70% (unadjusted odds ratio, 0.30 [95% CI, 0.17-0.52])
Wang Y et al	Households in Beijing, China	124 Households of diagnosed cases comprising 335 people	Self-reported mask wearing by index cases or ≥1 household member prior to index case's diagnosis	Mask wearing reduced risk of secondary infection by 79% (adjusted odds ratio, 0.21 [95% CI, 0.06-0.79])
Doung-ngern et al	Bangkok, Thailand	839 Close contacts of 211 index cases	Self-reported mask wearing by contact at time of high-risk exposure to case	Always having used a mask reduced infection risk by 77% (adjusted odds ratio, 0.23 [95% CI, 0.09-0.60])
Gallaway et al	Arizona	State population	Mandatory mask wearing in public	Temporal association between institution of mask wearing policy and subsequent decline in new diagnoses
Rader et al	US	374 021 Persons who completed web-based surveys	Self-reported mask wearing in grocery stores and in the homes of family or friends	A 10% increase in mask wearing tripled the likelihood of stopping community transmission (adjusted odds ratio, 3.53 [95% CI, 2.03-6.43])
Wang X et al	Boston, Massachusetts	9850 Health care workers (HCWs)	Universal masking of HCWs and patients in the Mass General Brigham health care system	Estimated weekly decline in new diagnoses among HCWs of 3.4% after full implementation of the mask wearing policy
Mitze et al	Jena (Thuringia), Germany	City population aged ≥15 y	Mandatory mask wearing in public spaces (eg, public transport, shops)	Estimated daily decline in new diagnoses of 1.32% after implementation of the mask mandate
Van Dyke et al	Kansas	State population	Mandatory mask wearing in public spaces	Estimated case rate per 100 000 persons decreased by 0.08 in counties with mask mandates but increased by 0.11 in those without
Lyu and Wehby	15 US states and Washington, DC	State populations	Mandatory mask wearing in public	Estimated overall initial daily decline in new diagnoses of 0.9% grew to 2.0% at 21 days following mandates
Karaivanov et al	Canada	Country population	Mandatory mask wearing indoors	Estimated weekly 25%-40% decline in new diagnoses following mask mandates

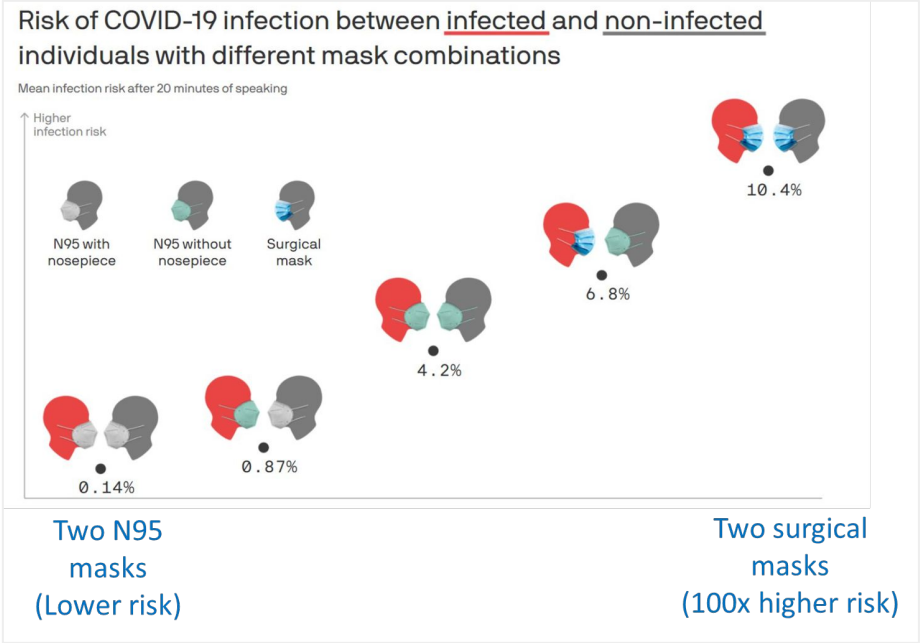
[a] See the Supplement for the complete table.

Sources: https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abi9069; https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2776536; https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2788457; https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/01/20/n95-mask-effectiveness/; https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abi9069; https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/01/15/1073273768/n95-mask-respirator-cdc

Fact: **Universal Masking reduces the amount of COVID in the air.**

Concern: Some are calling for “one-way” masking, requiring only those who are vulnerable or concerned about COVID-19 to wear masks.

- High-quality, well-fitting masks protect both the person wearing them and those around them; together, the protection is much stronger.
- **Universal masking avoids stigmatizing children** with high-risk conditions or those trying to protect their family or other household members.



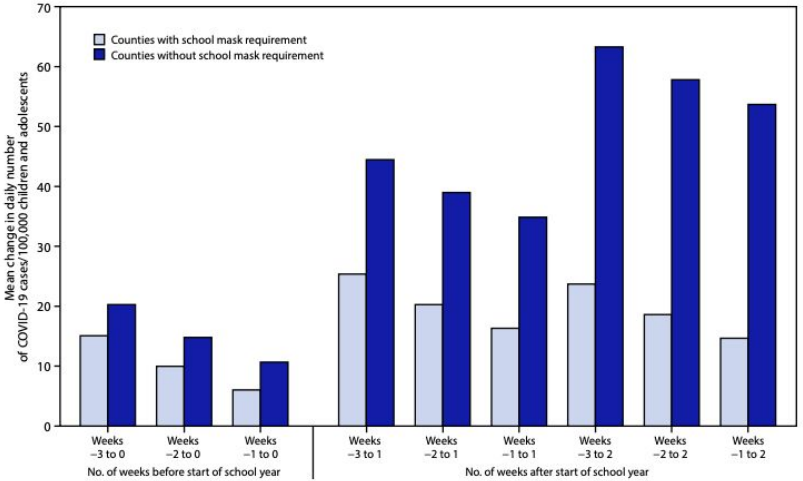
Source: https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/118/49/e2110117118.full.pdf; https://bmcmedicine.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12916-019-1271-3; https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6135094/; https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/mm7106e1.htm

Via PNAS article by @BagheriMos
(Graphic: Axiso; reminded by @PeteUK7)

Fact: **Masks mandates have been associated with decreased rates of COVID-19.**

- Multiple studies comparing cases before and after states implemented mask mandates show that masks mandates work.
- A CDC study found increases in pediatric COVID-19 case rates during the start of the 2021–22 school year were smaller in U.S. counties with school mask requirements than in those without school mask requirements.
- Data-driven mask mandates can be turned on and off depending on local factors including COVID positivity rates, vaccination, and other factors.
- Data-driven mask mandates **are especially important in communities of color** where many children live in multigenerational and densely populated households.

FIGURE. Mean county-level change in daily number of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 children and adolescents aged <18 years in counties (N = 520) with and without school mask requirements* before and after the start of the 2021–22 school year — United States, July 1–September 4, 2021



* Among 520 counties, 198 (38%) had a school mask requirement and 322 (62%) did not have a school mask requirement.

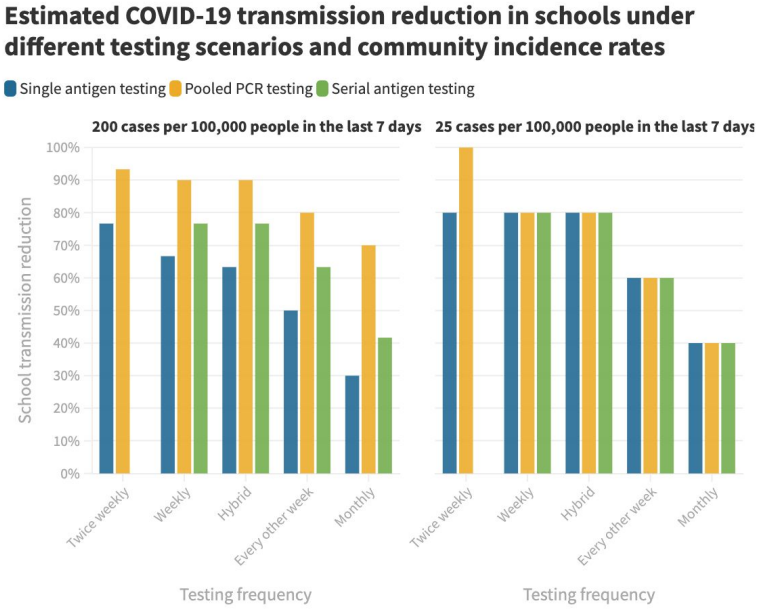
Source: https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00818; https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7010e3.htm; https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/21546014/mask-mandates-coronavirus-covid-19; https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/pdfs/mm7039e3-H.pdf; hhttps://www.vumc.org/health-policy/news-events/tennessee-areas-without-mask-requirements-have-higher-death-toll-capita; https://missouriindependent.com/2021/12/01/missouri-health-department-found-mask-mandates-work-but-didnt-make-findings-public/; https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/pdfs/mm7039e3-H.pdf

Testing helps keep schools safer and informs decision making.

Fact: **Weekly screening can help keep schools safer.**

Concern: Some suggest schools should no longer test students and staff for COVID-19.

- Routine school screening and properly implemented test-to-stay programs are effective ways to help prevent outbreaks in schools.
- For instance, testing in Los Angeles Public Schools before returning after winter break found >65,000 positive students and staff, who could have otherwise brought COVID-19 into schools.
- Regular testing also helps school leaders make informed decisions about how and when to change protections.
- School testing can increase access to testing for lower-income households, who may not be able to afford at-home test kits.



Source: D. Vohra *et al*/Mathematica 2021

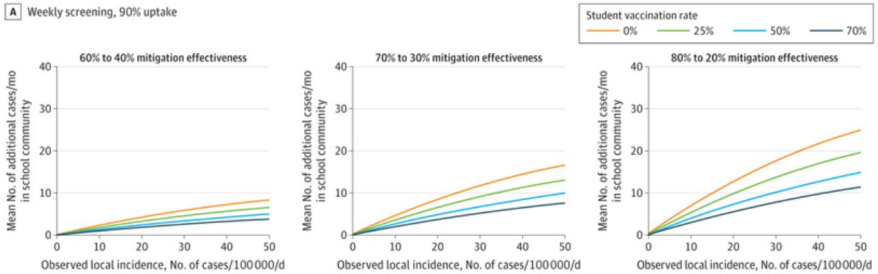
Sources: https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s1217-Test-To-Stay.html; https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/doi/10.1542/peds.2021-055727/184750/A-Test-to-Stay-Modified-Quarantine-Program-for; https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.01.27.21250388v1.full; https://www.cbsnews.com/news/los-angeles-schools-covid-students-teachers-employees/ https://www.sciencenews.org/article/covid-testing-school-works-coronavirus-pandemic-reopening; https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7035e2.htm

How to Make Data-Driven Decisions to Change COVID Protections

A recent modeling study found that widespread weekly screening can allow schools to safely remove other layers of protection - if community cases are appropriately low:

“Screening of asymptomatic students, educators, and staff may be another tool to support more permissive off-ramps when unmasking is strongly desired. Weekly screening decreased the additional modeled cases associated with mitigation relaxation compared with only diagnostic testing (Figure 4A), approximately doubling the local incidence thresholds for removing other mitigation measures (eTable 4 in the Supplement), but schools need to weigh the cost of screening against these benefits. Weekly screening after unmasking may also provide valuable information about the consequences of this change in an individual school.”

Figure 4. Weekly Screening and Vaccine Effectiveness Sensitivity Analyses for the Mean Number of Additional Cases Over 30 Days in the Immediate School Community Associated With Reductions in Mitigation Effectiveness in the Simulated Elementary School Setting



Source: https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2789005

The U.S. public supports protections in schools.

Fact: **Polls find most Americans want to protect themselves and their community.**

Concern: Some promote the idea that Americans are done with the pandemic and don't want protections in schools.

National polls consistently show that American parents are worried about COVID-19 and want their children's school to be safe.

The following are initiatives some localities are taking to respond to the outbreak of the omicron variant of COVID-19. Do you support or oppose the following initiatives taking effect in your community? Requiring students to wear masks in schools

Support	2983	68%
Oppose	1150	26%
Don't know/ No opinion	277	6%

Thinking about the impact COVID-19 is having/will have on your child(ren)'s schooling, how concerned are you, if at all, about each of the following? My child(ren) being exposed to COVID-19 while attending school in-person (N=941)

Concerned	626	67%
Not concerned	259	28%
No opinion / not applicable	56	6%

The following are initiatives some localities are taking to respond to the outbreak of the omicron variant of COVID-19. Do you support or oppose the following initiatives taking effect in your community? Requiring masks to be worn in public places

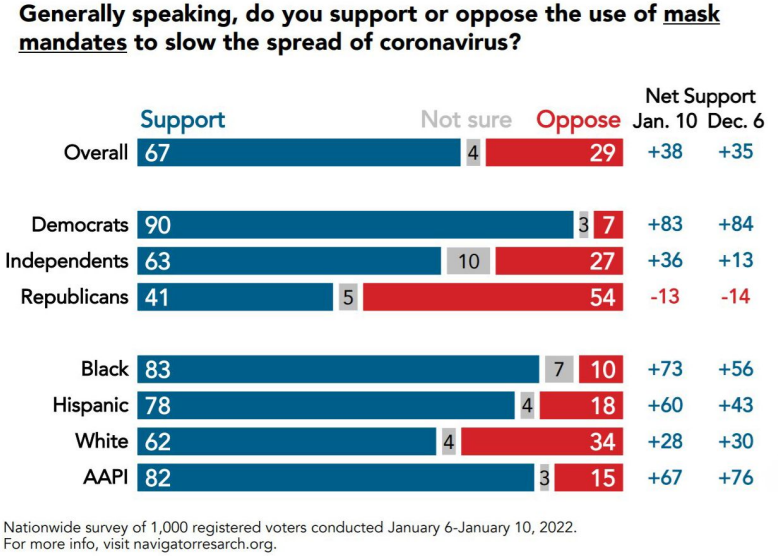
Support	3061	69%
Oppose	1135	26%
Don't know/ No opinion	215	5%

Source: https://assets.morningconsult.com/wp-uploads/2022/01/24150429/2201068_topline_PARTNERSHIP_COVID_SURVEY_Adults_v1_SH-1.pdf

Fact: **A majority of Americans support mask mandates, and support has remained strong over time.**

- Polling
  - Morning Consult (late Nov 2021): 72%
  - Ipsos/Axios (Dec 2021): 64%
  - NYT/Morning Consult (Jan 2022): 69%
  - Ipsos/Axios (Jan 2022): 67%
  - Navigator (Jan 2022): 67%
  - Ipos/Axios (Feb 2022): 62%

- Communities of color consistently show strong support for mask mandates



Source: https://morningconsult.com/2021/11/30/covid-omicron-variant-polling-data/
https://assets.morningconsult.com/wp-uploads/2022/01/24150429/2201068_topline_PARTNERSHIP_COVID_SURVEY_Adults_v1_SH-1.pdf
https://navigatorresearch.org/omicron-surge-raises-serious-worries-about-economic-disruption/
https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2022-02/Topline_Axios_Ipsos%20W62%20FINAL.pdf

Conclusion

Conclusion

- COVID-19 remains a serious health threat to our students, their school staff, and their communities.
- Reducing COVID-19 protections in schools should be done when community case rates are low and vaccination rates are high*, **in collaboration with and in consideration of the most vulnerable members of the community**.
- Schools should have a plan in place to assess whether changing protections result in increases in case rates and a plan to return protections when community rates increase again.
- We have tools – including high-quality masks, affordable ventilation options, testing and quarantine – to keep schools safer. We must advocate for their increased funding and use, as well as for structural improvements around better pay and sick leave, access to testing, long-term ventilation upgrades (in our schools and our communities), ongoing protections for vulnerable students and staff, and accommodations for students with Long COVID.
- We have tools - from the fields of neuroscience, developmental psychology, and education - to address instructional loss and provide enrichment experiences to support students and help them develop additional skills to meet their benchmarks. We must trust our educators in doing their job and support our learning communities.
- We can work together towards a new normal which addresses and combats the pre-existing disparities with which we entered this pandemic. By working for safer schools and communities, we can build a new normal which puts the lives of those most vulnerable – low income people, immunocompromised and disabled, Indigenous, Black and Latinx, among others – first.

*This model provides guidance for when to change school protections, depending community rates and the goals of the district - preventing more cases and/or preventing hospitalizations; it is important to consider that class size, vaccination rates, and other assumptions in the model when applying to actual school districts. https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2789005

Additional Resources

Clean Air & Masks:

- https://cleanaircrew.org/
- Masks Nerd Mask Resources: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eE2BERAvRzs28kG87ft3a27FS9-gHvdC
- https://www.projectn95.org/
- https://www.nytimes.com/article/covid-masks.html

School Guidances & Tools:

- AAP Guidance for Schools
- https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2789005
- https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2021-22-School-Year.aspx
- https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/fa/sf/iaq.asp

Public Health:

- Public health is what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK218215/#ddd00011
- FAQ on aerosols and protecting yourself from COVID-19 https://tinyurl.com/FAQ-aerosols
- Open Letter: Public Health Researchers and Practitioners Urge Elected Officials To Reevaluate The End of School Mask Mandates

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the many public health experts, advocates, and grassroots organizations who have helped to edit, review, and distribute the #UrgencyofEquity toolkit. Some are listed below:

Dr. Maneesha Agarwal
Dr. Ida Bergstrom
Dr. Tyler Black
Dr. Uché Blackstock
Dr. Oni Blackstock
Dr. Virginia Buysse
Megan Carmilani
Dr. Esther Choo
JD Davids
Dr. Megan Fitzgerald
Dr. Lakshmi Ganapathi
Dr. Joshua Garoon
Dr. Gregg Gonsalves
Dr. Tiffany Green
Dr. Lara Jirmanus
Lisa McCorkell
Dr. Kimberly Prather
Dr. Maria Pyra
Dr. Julia Raifman
Dr. Sonali Rajan
Dr. Ashley Ruba
Dr. Stella Safo
Dr. Kaliris Salas-Ramirez
Dr. Tara Smith
Dr. Kim Sue
Dr. Zoey Thill
Dr. Lucky Tran

People's CDC
#VaxPlusCoalition
Press NYC
Marked By COVID
Advancing Health Equity
Health Justice
Just Equity for Health
The HUUB
Alliance for Quality Education
National Network for Long COVID
Justice
COVID-19 Longhauler Advocacy Project
Long COVID Families
Strategies for High Impact
Patient-led Research Collaborative

If you would like to sign on as an individual or an organization, please use this form: join.urgencyofequity.org

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ASPIRA CEO Statement at CPS Board Meeting
Wednesday, February 23, 2022

Good Morning President Del Valle, Members of the Board, and CEO Martinez,

I am Fernando Grillo and serve as CEO of ASPIRA.

Thank you for your dedicated service to the students and families of our great city.

I would like to thank CPS leadership for leading a collaborative, transparent conversation between our ASPIRA and North River Elementary school's community of school leaders, students, and parents.

Today, ASPIRA is here in support of the collocation of the North River Elementary School and ASPIRA's Haugan Middle School. Last year as ASPIRA's CEO, I publicly stated before this Board, and I reiterate today, that ASPIRA supports a new facility for North River Elementary School. I am on record that all children in Chicago Public Schools deserve to learn in a quality facility that offers the same amenities as the building on Leland Avenue has afforded our ASPIRA students. For ASPIRA, it is vital to continue serving our students and community with the academic instruction, enrichment programs that support violence prevention and workforce development programs we currently offer.

ASPIRA is thankful for the ongoing respectful dialogue between our two school communities continues and fully anticipates that our discussion will result in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which will be equitable and provides the opportunity for both campuses to flourish and grow; and for ASPIRA to continue delivering our programs to students, ASPIRA, North River Elementary School, and those living in our Albany Park community without risk of losing funding for programs specifically funded to provide services and support in that community area.

Thank you for your continued collaboration, ASPIRA looks forward to welcoming our new neighbors from North River Elementary School for the 2022 and 2023 school year. This concludes my statement.