



## Is It Time to Reopen Schools Yet?

Back in December, Joe Biden reiterated his call for most schools to reopen within his first 100 days in office. “I’m going to ask, and I know it’s going to be controversial with some of you, but I’m going to ask that we’re going to be able to open schools at the end of one hundred days,” Biden said to a group of 30 governors during a virtual call. “That’s going to take a lot of money, but we know how to do it.” Biden asked Congress earlier that month to provide the funding advocates of public education believe is necessary for schools to secure equipment and enact their safety plans. In order to meet his goal, most schools would have to resume in-person learning by the end of April.



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According to the most current data from Burbio’s School Opening Tracker, 64 percent of elementary- and middle-school students are already seeing some in-person instruction, and there are 21 states that opened all or almost all of their schools for five-day-a-week in-person learning. Still, there are nearly 19 million students where that is not the case.

### Got Money?

Congress listened to Biden, and produced the \$1.9 trillion COVID relief package, known as American Rescue Plan of 2021 (H.R. 1319). Yet for many American schoolchildren and their parents, the “a lot of money” that Biden claimed is so crucial for school reopening accounts for only five percent of the funding. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) analyzed the legislation when its initial version passed the House, which included \$128.5 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. Back in June 2020, when educators and leftist politicians tried to figure out the price of the “safe school reopening,” it was decided to be somewhere between \$158.1 billion and \$244.6 billion. During the previous year, the school system got \$113 billion thanks to the Trump administration, and those funds are still not fully used. Biden’s plan gives schools just \$6.4 billion this year. In the eyes of the teachers’ unions that were so outraged with Trump, Biden’s crumbs are welcome, but far from enough.

### Teachers’ Unions’ Opposition

Putting a fiscal issue aside, let’s first turn to s-c-i-e-n-c-e. The highest authority on that matter belongs to the CDC, which has become a sacred oracle for many Americans even though its predictions are as random as they are inconsistent. The prophecies of Dr. Fauci — his recommendations — often have more weight and importance for the Democrats than anything else. At least, it was like that during the Trump era. But times have changed.

Just recently, the CDC suggested that schools aren’t drivers of coronavirus infection, resonating with



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conclusions of the numerous studies conducted by their foreign colleagues: Britons, French, Germans, Australians, Canadians, and even Chinese. “There has been little evidence that schools have contributed meaningfully to increased community transmission,” the CDC announced. Despite that, the two largest and most influential teachers’ unions — the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA), which together comprise of 4.7 million members nationwide — still oppose immediate reopening, stating that the most important step to safety would be a complete vaccination of all teachers.

The AFT and NEA, which both endorsed Joe Biden during his 2020 presidential campaign, applauded the president’s executive order on school reopening, which required the Department of Education to provide “evidence-based guidance” to assist school reopening. The order said mitigation measures including cleaning, masking, proper ventilation, and testing were necessary. However, the order didn’t make a single mention of vaccinations. CDC director Dr. Rochelle Walensky confirmed that schools can reopen safely before educators are vaccinated, but the unions decided to ignore the CDC again.

The teachers’ unions have been opposing the school reopening all along, making more and more demands — often not even associated with COVID safety, such as defunding the police or providing Medicare for all — while suing those governors, usually Republican, who dared to reopen their schools. This comes as no surprise, as the teachers’ unions are close allies of the Democrats, and they promote the liberal agenda and support the Democrats every step of the way no matter how many times they theatrically cry that they “understand the importance of in-person education.” According to campaign watchdog Open Secrets, teachers’ unions have steadily amped up their political involvement: From 2004 to 2020, their donations grew from \$4.3 million to more than \$50 million. Even more than most labor unions, they are giving Democrats at least 98 percent of the funds they contributed to candidates and parties.

“Science is not the obstacle. Federal money is not the obstacle. The obstacle is a lack of willpower,” Senator Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said when speaking of reopening schools. “Not among students. Not among parents. Just among the rich, powerful unions that donate huge sums to Democrats and get a stranglehold over education in many communities.”

Just on Monday, Dr. Jill Biden seemed to echo her husband’s sponsors’ stance: “I’m here to tell you with the American Rescue Plan, help is here.... Even with your best efforts, students can’t come — they can’t come in every day, which means that their parents are still having to take time off work or figure out childcare solutions.” Of course, many parents have already lost their savings and businesses.

### **The Damage**

While working families are struggling, teachers’ unions and the Democrats are steadily destroying not just children’s social and emotional well being, but also the economy for generations to come. Economists warn that COVID-19 school closures and the disruptions in education will cost children future income — about \$55,000 over their lifetimes. Likewise, CNBC reports there is evidence that school closures will have a devastating impact on the economy for decades, as this generation of school children hit their prime earning years. The damage will be felt most acutely by the poorest in the land, further widening the gap of income inequality in the United States, something Democrats profess to care about. In 2045, when these students hit ages 29 to 39, their peak time for earning potential, those losses could reach nearly \$150 billion, adjusted for inflation.



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It seems as if, in setting up all sorts of obstacles to regular in-person education, Democrats are creating the basis for a fearful, obedient, dependable, and unintelligent society — their perfect electoral base. Those, who, perhaps, one day will gladly agree to cancel supposedly outdated institutions such as the Electoral College, or maybe do away with elections altogether. Why not?



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