



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on September 25, 2021

## **Kittitas County Marks a New Beginning of COVID Hysteria: Kids Coerced into Testing at School**

*Kittitas, Wash.*— In rural Kittitas County, Washington, school and public health officials are radio silent in the wake of an atrocity at the Kittitas Secondary School that potentially violated child and parent privacy rights, HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) rights, and Washington state laws of informed consent.

False reports from the Kittitas County Public Health Department on September 10 stated that an “uncontrolled COVID spread” threatened a 14-day closure of the Kittitas School District, whereupon radical teachers and administrators coerced a select group of students into mandatory COVID-19 testing on school property, with many children pressured to submit to testing without parent permission.



Kittitas, Washington / Photo by Annalisa Pesek

Pandemonium ensued at the school in the tight-knit, eastern Washington community, on Monday, September 13, just days after the Kittitas School Board of Education announced it would *not* be policing Governor Jay Inslee’s statewide mask mandate. Parents voiced their frustration at a recent board meeting on September 22, but as of this writing, the district has not updated its COVID policies nor publicly acknowledged the appalling actions of the Kittitas school staff and administration.

### **Students Segregated, Subjected to COVID Testing**

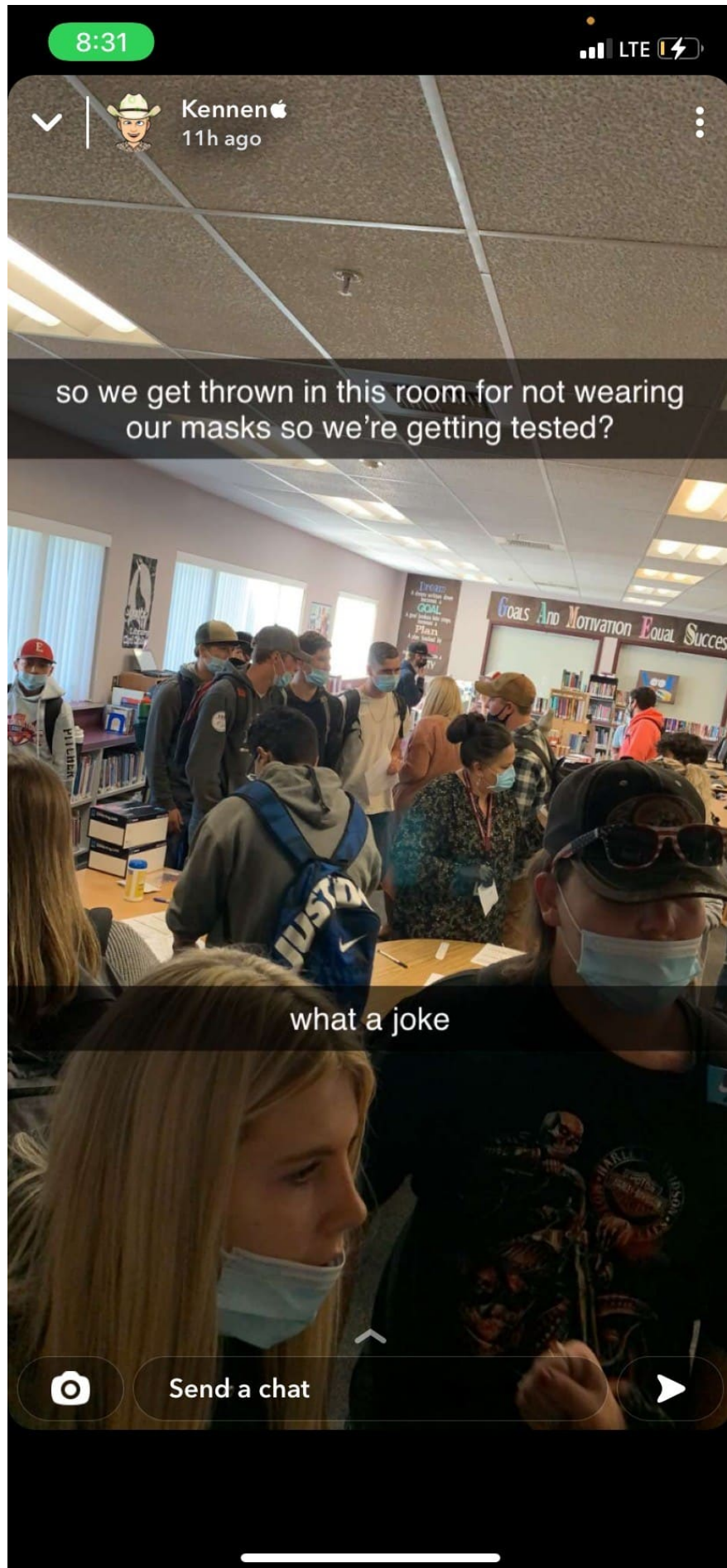
Upon entering the school building on Monday morning, students were greeted by Dean of Students Ryan Hastings, who drew from a special *list* to direct students either to the school library or to class. This mystery *list* of student names was previously compiled by school faculty and authorized by Kittitas School Superintendent Angela Von Essen.

“I got off the bus and was walking into the school when one of the staff told me to go into the library,” said high school junior Cheyenne Dean, who was among as many as 70 kids singled out that day and forced into the library to be tested for COVID-19.

Of the chaotic library scene, Dean recalled people from the health department were “handing out forms for us to fill out so we could get tested.”



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On September 13, as many as 70 students at Kittitas Secondary School were singled out and sent to the school library to be tested for COVID-19, with many students pressured to be tested without parental consent. Photo courtesy of Naleah Boguslawski

Dean's mother provided the required verbal consent for her daughter to be tested, but Dean reported that several of her peers were tested without parent permission. Dean suspected she was chosen for the *list* because she didn't wear a mask on the Thursday and Friday prior, though at that time the school superintendent and the school board had declared the district would not be policing the statewide mask mandate.

"Some students believe I should be thrown out of school if I don't wear a mask," Dean said, explaining that new school guidelines state that after two warnings of not wearing their masks properly, students will be expelled.

Yet on September 8, Superintendent Von Essen took to social media to state the school's position on the mask policy as thus:

"We are not sending our students home or singling them out for not wearing a face mask," she wrote.

Further, Von Essen told *The New American* that a recent parent survey showed "overwhelming" concern from parents who *did not* want their children wearing a mask all day. Yet the superintendent would take a dramatically different course of action in the days to come.

### **COVID Allows for Laws to be Broken**

Among the parents outraged that their child was segregated from the other kids and coerced into being tested, Warren Taylor said that his son "was asked if he had a permission form for the test from his parents. He did not. He was then handed a rapid COVID test kit, and instructed to perform the test on his own and fill out an information form to go with the test kit."

Upon learning of their son's experience, Warren and wife Marissa immediately informed school officials that they did not have permission to perform a test on their son, citing the (Revised Code of Washington) RCW 7.70.065, dealing with "Informed Consent," which protects him against unauthorized health procedures. Further, that the testing took place in a public setting, where students could see their peers' test results, violates HIPAA rights, asserted the Taylors.

Marissa, who is the director of the Respiratory Therapy Department at Yakima Memorial Hospital and works in a critical care setting with COVID patients, said the school was lucky she was 45 minutes away when she found out what had happened to her son.

I will not tolerate anyone touching my child ever without my permission, said Mrs. Taylor.

What went on in that school is unprecedented and should be punishable in my opinion.

Those people [school faculty and the superintendent] should be asked to step down and lose their jobs.

They violated human rights, she continued. They violated HIPAA, and they ruined my child's trust in the school district.

The Taylors are pursuing legal options "to ensure this type of rogue behavior doesn't happen again."

Following the incident, the couple issued a damning letter of concern to the entire school board and the superintendent, yet they received only a brief response from school board chairman Mike Lowe, who



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admitted “many things were learned Monday and corrections are being made,” suggesting the family’s questions be directed to the Kittitas County Commissioners office.

Testing, however, was sanctioned by the school officials, making Kittitas High School staff responsible for the outrageous incident.

In the aftermath of the mayhem, frustrated parents and concerned community members have begun to demand answers, claiming that the school has not only failed to acknowledge the illegality of the troubling incident but also has still not communicated with parents and the wider community about the alleged COVID outbreak, nor discussed the much-needed changes to COVID protocols going forward.

## **School, Health Officials Must Be Held Accountable**

The chaos unleashed at the school comes just days after the district made local headlines for being the first to balk at orders from Olympia, as the Kittitas School Board of Education announced on August 25 at a school board meeting that it would *not* be policing Governor Jay Inslee’s statewide mask mandate.

During the meeting, Superintendent Von Essen promised that “if a student came to school without a mask, the school would not turn the student away,” reported the local newspaper the [Daily Record](#).

Said Board Vice-Chairman Brian Stickney, “right now, the mandate is you have to wear it [the mask]. That’s the mandate but we don’t enforce, we’re not cops.”

Explained Board Chairman Lowe, “when we think about mandates and what else is going on, don’t just think about masks and vaccines. Think about what else they are going to mandate us to do to teach your kids in the future, and holding funding over our head.”

But then ...

Tipped off to the school’s refusal to enforce the mask mandate, Kittitas Public Health Officer Mark Larson publicly threatened to shut down the Kittitas school for 14 days, alleging an “uncontrolled spread of COVID-19” within the district on Friday, September 10.

However, neither Larson nor other health department officials could provide details of the outbreak, instead referring all public inquiries to be filed through public records requests.

Larson attributed the so-called outbreak to the first days of school, when “30 percent of students were not wearing masks,” according to a statement to the school. Yet per the [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC), symptoms of COVID-19 only begin to appear two to three days after a known exposure.

Larson has zero data to support his metrics, which simply do not allow for enough time for any child who attended school on September 9-10 to have developed COVID symptoms, let alone constitute an “uncontrolled spread” of the virus.

Notably, the Kittitas County Public Health Department’s September 10 announcement reporting *18 cases of COVID-19 within the district* has since been removed from the agency’s website.

Moreover, questions that have to be asked are: If the health department knew of an outbreak before or upon school starting, why did they not notify the community? Why did the health department fail to inform the school who would then alert parents of the outbreak? And why would only a select group of students be singled out, discriminated against, and required to test, and not all students and staff if the outbreak was indeed widespread?

The CDC has reported that vaccinated people can still catch and transmit the virus, but at the Kittitas



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school, vaccinated students appear to have been exempt from testing.

Faced with the threat of a school closure, Superintendent Von Essen may have considered Larson's recommendations, which included:

- Full closure of school for 14 days, shortened to seven if all students and staff test at seven days.
- Send home all children and staff who refuse to mask.
- All unvaccinated students and staff quarantine for 14 days or seven days, with proof of a negative COVID test.

However, the school district proceeded with a plan of its own. In compiling the *list*, the superintendent, in concert with the board and school faculty, seemed to select only "mask offending" students to test for the alleged outbreak. But even that decision was not consistent, as several students who wore masks were forced into the library for the testing session. As was the case for the Taylor child, who wore his mask consistently from the beginning of the school opening but was still placed on the *list*.

### **Superintendent Spearheads Discriminatory "List"**

When *The New American* requested the criteria qualifying a student for inclusion on the discriminatory *list*, Von Essen refused to comment.

On Saturday, September 11, Von Essen had emailed parents about Larson's threats, informing them the school board held an emergency meeting the night before to discuss the matter. According to Von Essen, at this meeting, faculty members discussed creating the *list* to include the names of students who were not masked Thursday or Friday, though on the *list* were several students with whom *The New American* spoke who said they always wore masks.

Von Essen's weekend email to parents of the entire student body appeared to strike a drastically different tone from previous emails. She explained that "Dr. Larson agreed to our request to keep our schools open, as long as the District enforces the face mask mandate and tests students that did not wear a face mask on the first two days of school for COVID."

She went on to say that these select students to be tested must have "the parent or guardian's consent. Those students must be tested [both] on Monday and Thursday [and produce] a negative test result to stay in school."

The email included a link to a consent form and stated that "the Rapid Test [would be] offered at the schools at no cost to the families," adding that "the administration will be available at each school to collect the consent forms and test students before they enter the building."

Unfortunately, many families said they did not receive the email. It is not clear if the email was sent to all district families or only those who had made the *list*. Outraged parents are demanding to know how were these students selected and by whom? The answers thus far seem sparse and subjective.

"Staff who refused to comply with the mask mandate would face disciplinary action," said Von Essen.

### **Students Subjected to the Rapid Test**

Kittitas students subjected to testing were provided the Rapid Test, or PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test, which consists of a sample swab of DNA that is run through cycles of amplification to achieve results. These tests have been widely criticized for providing a high rate of false positives, with even the CDC recognizing the flaws of the tests and recommending the FDA transition to another form of testing by December.



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According to the FDA, PCR tests provide only 41 percent accuracy in non-symptomatic people. To ensure accurate results, the PCR test must be run at an amplification of 17, yet often cycles are increased to twice that amount, lessening the accuracy by as much as 80 percent, depending on the cycle run.

### **Students Speak Out**

According to high school junior Tucker Newcomb, who self-administered three Rapid Tests in the library, of which the first two came back “faintly positive” and the third was negative, “when a school board member picked up my test, she turned and looked to the superintendent (who had her back turned) and asked if I was clear. With no response she said to herself, ‘yes,’ and told me to go to class. Later that day I started getting [COVID] symptoms, which grew continually worse.”

High school senior Karmia Boguslawski said she wore a mask to school on Monday and was not originally sent to the library but was called to the school office later in the afternoon and asked to take a test. The healthy 17-year-old has refused to take a COVID test, and as a result has not returned to school for more than a week. “I emailed my teachers and said I will be out for 14 days,” she said. “I told them I will not be taking the COVID test, here are the reasons why.” Boguslawski said she feels targeted by the school but is unsure why they have chosen to single her out, as she has not been outspoken against COVID mandates. Prior to this incident, she had been a dutiful rule follower.

Multiple attempts were made via email and in person to speak with Kittitas Secondary School Principal Heather Burfiend and School Secretary Kathryn Goodrich, as well as other school faculty and school board members. Secretary Goodrich adamantly refused to answer questions in person.

### **Coming to a School Near You**

“What happened here could easily happen somewhere else,” reminded Malisa Eggers, who urged a group of concerned parents and citizens gathering for an emergency meeting on Sunday, September 19, to share their experiences and brainstorm potential alternative approaches to schooling for their children, following the incident on Monday.

Eggers, an Ellensburg resident and grandmother of seven, also the founder of the Facebook and Telegram group “Hands Off Our Kids,” decided to take action upon learning about the incident, and with parent Naleah Boguslawski, organized Sunday’s meeting. She said she hoped to provide a forum for parents and concerned citizens to come together and voice their concerns.

“Part of why the spotlight is on this town,” said Eggers, “is that Kittitas was one of the very first schools in the state to say they were not going to enforce the mask mandate.” Now it appears that the town has been made a target.

“Other schools that could have done the very same thing [testing the kids for COVID],” said Eggers, “well it hasn’t happened.” Or not that we know of.

The goal of Sunday’s meeting was to share information, as most of the parents present had little to no communication with the school.

Richard Hink, a father of four, who is running for town mayor, told the group that his child was not at the school on Monday. Supposedly his son was one of the “18 cases” reported by the health department, which Hink claims was the result of testing the middle and high school football teams before the school was in session.

“I still question [the test results],” said Hink, “because the person who administered the tests, the



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athletic director, himself tested positive, but he was the one who tested all the athletes. The person doing the testing is the one who tested positive to initiate the testing in the first place!"

Hink explained that he has been "emailing the superintendent daily," reading to the group from an email dated September 14, in which Superintendent Von Essen states that the school board directed her to "tell the teachers to keep a list" of students who had not worn their masks and who would need to be tested on Monday. Hink has since filed multiple public records requests with the school to obtain more details about the decision to test select students.

The absurd behavior of the Kittitas school officials and their conduct surrounding COVID testing should make all parents with kids in the government-run schools wary of the competence of the people at the helm of these institutions. Furthermore, questions all Americans should be asking are how is this testing data being tracked, and for what purpose?

On August 24, the Washington State Board of Health said it would continue to uphold an emergency ruling for coronavirus reporting, requiring doctors, healthcare facilities, labs, and local health jurisdictions to report all testing data to the U.S. State Department of Health. This seems to indicate that testing data is indeed being tracked and compiled in a national database.

## **What Next?**

Certainly, the Kittitas school staff and the Kittitas School Board members, along with the public health department officials, have acted hastily and irrationally enough to create a fire storm that otherwise may have gone unnoticed. Weekend emails coupled with a clandestine and predetermined *list* make this incident particularly heinous. The community, in a seemingly conservative area of liberal Washington State, stands as a poignant example of the undermining of parental rights in public education. Parents with children in the public schools need to be aware of any and all possible dangers and consider pulling their kids out for good.

Noteworthy is that most Washington school buildings are closed to parents and visitors during the school day, so students could be discriminated against based on so-called "improper" mask wearing and pressured into testing behind closed doors, subsequently impacting their ability to remain in school.

So as students and staff move into the fall and winter seasons, COVID hysteria, conspiring staff members, and public health power plays promise to be both prevalent and extreme. Parents in this small town and in towns and cities across America now face difficult decisions: whether to pull their kids out completely and/or pursue litigation against the agencies and school faculty who put their children at risk while violating multiple state and federal laws. Either way, Kittitas parents are demanding something be done to hold these elected officials responsible.



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