Twitter Thread by Sarah Allen



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For months, but especially after the new CDC school recs came out, supporters of reopening all schools now have been peddling the idea that schools across the country have been open all year successfully. This argument is used to push for ALL schools to be opened now.

A long ■

Though some schools in the U.S. are open & doing well with safety protocols, many places used as examples of opening success have profoundly unsafe schools & are neglecting covid safety. Some have been lucky not to have outbreaks and other issues--it's not that they're safe.

In the last few weeks, I've been in touch with teachers in Ohio, Florida, Texas, Wisconsin, New Jersey, Utah, and Pennsylvania.

(Thanks to @eduwonkette_jen @GeoRebekah and @saribethrose for the threads and forums that have helped me meet SO MANY teachers this year).

I collected the accounts of dozens of teachers. Obviously, this isn't an exhaustive list and it isn't a study! It's what teachers on the ground in some states are experiencing. And it's easy to see why so many in our profession are so frightened this year.

Here's the list:

There are currently open schools in the US that are being hailed as "successful" that have:

■■no safety protocols at all besides contact cleaning, in some districts
■■some districts with no mask mandate
■■classes in windowless rooms, some with full classes of 20-30

■■dozens of cases at a time but no changes in (poor) safety protocols
■■no contact tracing or quarantining of close contacts at all
■■teachers who have to pay for all masks and cleaning supplies for their classrooms because the school/district won't

■■cases and spread that aren't reported to anyone
■■teachers who are threatened not to tell anyone about cases and spread
■■teachers who have been asked to come back early from quarantine when sick with covid
■■ventilation that was condemned decades ago

■■districts that threw out closure thresholds when they were reached, to keep schools open
teachers who have been threatened with retaliation for asking for PPE, ventilation and/or physical distancing
■■administrators shame mask-wearing staff for "fear-mongering"

■■teachers who were asked to teach remotely when sick with covid
■■teachers who got covid at school & brought it home to vulnerable family
■■teachers who were forced to quit because the school wouldn't accommodate their medical conditions (including cancer and heart conditions)

■■covid denier and mask denier administrators who are in charge of all covid safety decisions in the school(s)
■■teachers who were told not to do anything to memorialize colleagues who died of covid bc it could upset families

NO ONE is coming to help the staff in these schools, and others like them across the country.@CDCgov recommendations (which don't need to be followed at all anyway) don't mean anything to many politicians and many school districts. There's no one REQUIRING school safety.

But many school staff are in schools NOW, some very unsafely. What can be done to help these school staff, with so little support for making schools safer?

School staff vaccinations might be the best answer.

Not a perfect answer, not without issues, but it would help overlooked teachers already in schools be there more safely, and it could also help educators in schools that haven't reopened yet be in schools more safely too.

And the fact is, we don't have many options.

@bhrenton has a great thread on educator vaccination, below. It mentions a really interesting idea of @JReinerMD that some of the soon-to-be-approved J&J vaccine, that only requires one shot, could be reserved for educators when production shoots up.
https://t.co/99Vlxn8VOK

> Vaccinating all teachers and safely reopening schools in April: @JReinerMD posted this tweet earlier in the day on the idea to use the first batch of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to vaccinate all teachers. Short thread on the numbers and science:https://t.co/o9NvDc4gxy pic.twitter.com/oCEg7vL80z
>
> — Benjy Renton (@bhrenton) February 16, 2021

School staff in the 21 states that aren't prioritizing teacher vax (& staff in priority states having a hard time getting vaccinated soon) could be fully vaccinated by the end of March & safer in even unsafe schools by April. This could help some schools reopen more safely too.

The CDC made sure nothing could stop schools from being open if people want them to be. Safety protocols are optional. Ventilation is ignored. They made sure to say teacher vaccinations aren't a requirement to opening too.

Teachers are regarded so poorly in this country.

With so much stacked against school safety and teachers, it's heartening to see growing interest in school staff vaccinations (@POTUS @DrLeanaWen @ashishkjha @CT_Bergstrom among others).

Now we just need a real plan.