



| Public School Proud |

November 30, 2020

Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices
Center for Disease Control and Prevention
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027

VIA Email

Dear Committee Members:

The undersigned organizations, with a combined membership of 10 million parents, families and educators, represent the pre-K-12 education community, write to emphasize the importance of fully re-opening our school buildings, safely, for in-person instruction. We believe that giving adults in the school system priority access to vaccinations is critical to meet that goal and the goal of generating trust in the vaccination program.

Specifically, we ask that you include school personnel, including teachers, specialist instructional support personnel, aides, food service and custodial workers, and principals—as a priority group for administration of the vaccines for the suppression of Covid-19. In the pre-K-12 public system we serve more than 50 million children, with more than 5 million teachers, administrators, specialists, and support personnel. As you know, public schools have been struggling to bring students back into the classroom and, in many places, school buildings have had to shut down again as Covid-19 has ravaged our communities, infecting over one million children.

These shutdowns profoundly affect our families as well as our local economies. Most parents either cannot work, are forced to work and leave children unattended, or are trying to juggle working from home with childcare. We know that student learning has declined, more children are now living in poverty, and too many students are dealing with mental health issues, food and housing insecurity, abuse or neglect, or sickness or death of loved ones. Our students need to come back to school safely, educators want to welcome them back, and no one should have to risk their health to make this a reality.

AASA, The School Superintendents Association

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

American Federation of Teachers

American School Counselor Association

Consortium for School Networking

Learning Forward

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Education Association

National PTA

National School Boards Association

National School Public Relations Association

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One additional consideration is that many people are suspicious of the concept of a vaccine. Some may recall past experiments by the government on unsuspecting populations of Americans. Others have been worried about vaccination programs and the impact it might have on their children, while others recall unintended consequences from medications. Communications on the vaccination program will be absolutely critical. When asked, Americans have a higher degree of trust of teachers and of schools than they do of other institutions. The education community could be a ‘trusted messenger’ to help ease anxieties and increase the trust factor.

If school personnel could be vaccinated early in the process, school buildings could even serve as vaccination centers for the general public, as schools are a centerpiece of almost every community and served important roles during the mass polio vaccinations. This could help a vaccination program reach its goals more quickly and effectively.

Thank you for your service to the nation. You are being tasked with making some difficult decisions, and we appreciate your willingness to review our suggestion. We hope to add useful information to your deliberations. Please contact us if you have further questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

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CoSN - Consortium for School Networking
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