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Pritzker's COVID-19 War on Your Schoolchildren *and* What's Coming Next

For more than two years, claiming “emergency powers,” Pritzker locked our children out of their classrooms and kept them at home for months on end.

They stared at flickering computer screens as if they were actually learning something.

Kids had to wear masks. They couldn't see their friends. After-school clubs were banned. Extracurricular activities where children could pursue their interests or try out new skills were illegal.

Sports and team try-outs? Forget it. Proms and homecomings? Cancelled. Friday night meeting friends after the game? Not possible. Seniors wanting to display their strengths to college scouts in hopes of athletic scholarships? Sitting at home – their once-in-a-lifetime opportunity gone with the Pritzker wind.

When Pritzker deemed it safe for children to finally return to the classroom, they had to sit six feet or three feet (it's hard to tell) apart behind ridiculous plastic shields or in their own pods. Face masks on!

Some three million kids were ordered around as if their parents' wishes didn't matter. In fact, they didn't. Parents finally had to organize—to plead with or file lawsuits against their own local school boards for a return to sanity. “Sanity” meant what the U.S. Government's own data showed: school children are at close-to-zero risk of being harmed by COVID-19.

Let's look briefly at the science that Pritzker reminds us that he followed. I quote the Pew Charitable Trust: “COVID Harmed Kids' Mental Health—And Schools Are Feeling It.”

After more than 18 months of school closures and social isolation, the nation's more than 50 million public school children* are mostly back at their desks. But two months into the fall semester, teachers and students already are saying they need a break.

The grief, anxiety and depression children have experienced during the pandemic is welling over into classrooms and hallways, resulting in crying and disruptive behavior in many younger kids and increased violence and bullying among adolescents. For many other children, who keep their sadness and fear inside, the pressures of school have become too great.

* <https://educationdata.org/k12-enrollment-statistics>

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, emergency department visits for suspected suicide attempts among adolescents jumped 31% in 2020*, compared with 2019. In February and March of this year, emergency department visits for suspected suicide attempts were 51% higher among girls aged 12-17 than during the same period in 2019.**

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children's Hospital Association called the damage caused by the Pritzker-like confinement "a national emergency." Significantly, they warned that youth of color have been disproportionately impacted.

Pritzker and his political party claim to be the only ones who fight for the "disproportionately impacted." Yet, when it came to the children he locked out of school, he displayed no sign that he cared about them or that he was even aware of the impact his policies had on them.

All this research was available in November 2021, yet Pritzker ignored it. Months later, he was still in court to affirm his power to mask the children. Thankfully, the Illinois Supreme Court finally slapped down his

* <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7024e1.htm>

** <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/11/08/COVID-harmed-kids-mental-health-and-schools-are-feeling-it>

mandate after a blizzard of lawsuits by Republicans, for example those of downstate Illinois Attorney General candidate Tom Devore, which ended Pritzker's mask mandate.

Let's not forget how Pritzker's mandates boxed in parents. If you are a parent of schoolchildren, the memory of how the governor disrupted your life on such a personal level will linger for years. Not in my memory has any government official so directly and negatively affected the lives of so many people.

When both parents were working or a single parent was struggling on his or her own, families were especially tested. Should you quit your job to stay at home with the kids? Or hire a caregiver you can't afford? Talk about a choice that is no choice at all.

Too many tragedies can be hung on Pritzker to list here. But here's one especially heartbreaking result of his hubris.

Experts attribute the dramatic increases in child suicide, attempted suicide, and self-harm to the pandemic's insidious restrictions, not the pandemic itself. These increases have been seen in pre-teen children as well as teens. This puts to rest Pritzker's tiresome claims that he's always "followed the science." He kept the children in chains even though science quickly confirmed that COVID posed almost no risk to healthy children.

As everyone soon found out, COVID-19 was primarily a threat to the elderly. Adults caught it, yes,

and some suffered worse symptoms, ending up in hospitals, and some died. But almost 95 percent of those who died had other serious medical issues like cancer, diabetes, heart disease, or pre-existing respiratory diseases. Very few children have any of these issues because they are generally not old enough to have them. Those that did could certainly have had accommodations made for them.

Then why did Pritzker, and like-minded Democrat governors, target *all* children to such a punishing, overwrought, and unnecessary degree that has led to years of lost learning and mental health issues? Were they just honestly mistaken? We later learned that the entire basis for continuing school lockdowns and remote learning (which was not really learning at all) was a favor to education unions, based on “research” given to the Biden administration.

For most school personnel, apart from teachers working at home, the policy became a two-year paid vacation.

The impact on children has been horrendous, so horrendous in fact that many mothers across the nation have revolted. They formed alliances, opened Facebook groups, organized meetings, confronted politicians. Pritzker has managed to accomplish something unique: what he’s done to millions of Illinois children has turned moderate Democrats and Independents against his Democratic Party.

That's especially remarkable for suburban women who have long been reliable Democratic voters, because that party had the reputation of being "the education party." Recent polls say that has now all changed.

Many Illinois parents were moved, for the first time in their lives, to get involved politically, as individuals and in groups. Some parents responded by setting up tutoring groups. Others transferred their children to Catholic or other religious or private schools. Others turned to home schooling and home-school cooperative organizations.

They say they've had enough, that this time, they'll vote the other way – some perhaps for the first time. This flies in the face of given wisdom that suburban women are the Democratic Party's immovable backbone.

It all sounds familiar to me.

At one point in my life I decided that I, too, had had enough. I made the difficult choice to break ranks with my own party. I decided to vote based on commonsense and not party loyalty. In some cases, I even voted for a non-Democratic candidate that I did not agree with on some issues because the Democrat on the ballot was a new Democratic Party progressive radical.

It's not just the damage done to children that has so many reconsidering their usual vote. It's also the entire

Illinois economy that Pritzker has strangled, as major employers leave Illinois, as taxes keep increasing, as violent crime threatens almost everyone now. More on all that in the chapters to come.

Now, about that promise in this chapter's title: what's "next" in Illinois public schools if the Pritzker Democrats stay in power?

Laws in effect this coming school year include *mandating* that all public schools must allow boys who identify as girls into female bathrooms and locker rooms as well as on different sex sports teams. The harm imposed on our girls' sports will be enormous. The violation of their privacy will be unforgivable.

Also, get ready for sex education classes starting in first grade that will emphasize non-traditional sexual practices to children who have not even reached the age of puberty. This is happening in Illinois, a state where reading, writing, and arithmetic scores show that *often more than half* of students do not perform at grade level.

And yet, Democrat politicians are taking time away from essential basic education to teach age-*in*appropriate sex "education." It makes no sense.

Without the strong foundation in reading and math that must happen in the early grades for our children to be eventually prepared for either college or training in a trade like nursing (math required!) or handling documents in a small business (strong reading and

writing skills required!), wasting time on early-grade sex education is a threat to our children's futures.

Pritzker's war on children is unconscionable.

Its full consequences are yet to be observed, but we have already seen drastic damage. Democrats and Independents who are honest with themselves will see this and take action.