



# CDC head: Vaccinating teachers 'not a prerequisite' for safe school reopening

BY PETER SULLIVAN - 02/03/21 12:34 PM EST

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Rochelle Walensky emphasized Wednesday that vaccinating teachers is not required for safely reopening schools, citing data from her agency to say it is possible to return to in-person classes as long as other precautions are taken.

"Vaccination of teachers is not a prerequisite for safe reopening of schools," Walensky said during a press briefing.

She added that while a CDC advisory committee has put teachers in the "1B" category for getting vaccines — the second priority group for vaccination — "I also want to be clear that there is increasing data to suggest that schools can safely reopen and that ... safe reopening does not suggest that teachers need to be vaccinated in order to reopen safely."

The comments come as a fierce debate plays out over returning students to in-person learning.

Some teachers unions are calling for teachers to be vaccinated before they return to school.

Republicans [have seized](#) on the issue to argue the Biden administration is not following the science, and is instead caving to their political allies, by not urging an immediate return to in-person classes.

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“Apparently Big Labor’s talking points have already displaced Dr. Fauci as the White House’s go-to source,” Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.) said on the Senate floor Wednesday.

The White House argues that more funding is needed to allow schools to safely reopen.

“President Biden has been very clear that he wants schools to reopen, and actually to stay open, and that means that every school has the equipment and the resources to open safely,” Jeff Zients, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, added after Walensky’s comments during the press briefing.

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“Congress has to do its part to make sure that we can safely reopen schools and keep them open,” he added, calling for Congress to pass Biden’s coronavirus response plan, which includes an additional \$170 billion for items like testing in schools, better ventilation and allowing for smaller class sizes.

Republicans point out Congress already passed \$82 billion for schools in the package approved in December.

The CDC [said in](#) an article last week there is “little evidence” of widespread coronavirus transmission in schools if proper precautions like universal masking, spreading students out and ensuring proper ventilation are taken.

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