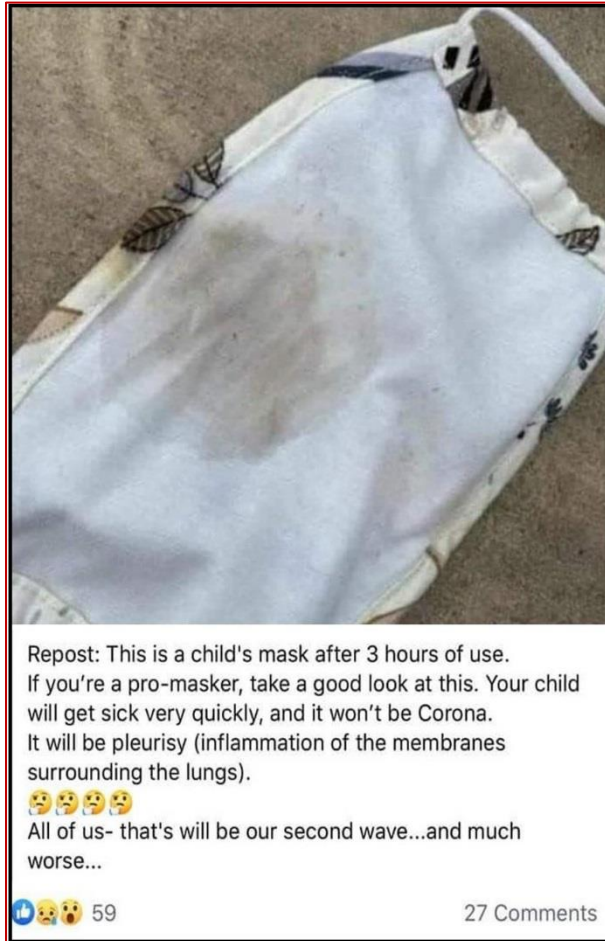


‘LABOR DAY BUMP’

State cases hit record; numbers rise in schools



Daily Inter Lake and Associated Press

Newly confirmed coronavirus cases in Montana spiked to another record on Thursday and health officials reported that the number of infections tied to schools had more than doubled in just a week.

The state health department reported 333 new confirmed cases of the respiratory virus, topping the previous single-day record set last Friday.

The number of schools with cases associated with them rose from 58 last week to 121 this week. All but four of the schools have reported new cases in the past two weeks.

Almost 500 infections in total have been tied to schools since classes widely resumed in late August. That includes about 200 cases at universities and about 200 in K-12 schools.

There are about 147,000 K-12 students in Montana. The data does not include schools with 10 or fewer students.

The latest state data shows that Flathead High School has 20 total cases associated with the school, the highest total in the state among high schools. The 20 total includes 17 students and three staff.

Flathead High School Principal Michele Paine is among those in quarantine after a relative, whom she lives with, tested positive for COVID-19.

A message sent to Flathead High students and parents notes that the new cases are associated with a “Labor Day weekend bump.” “The health department has been pleased with our classroom spacing, mask wearing diligence, and cleaning processes,” the message stated. “This results in fewer close contacts being identified for our positive cases in classrooms. We continue to look for ways to improve and refine our current system.”

State data shows Kalispell Middle School with six total cases.

A message sent to KMS students and parents noted that staff are “currently operating under the guidelines of ‘hope for the best, but be prepared to go remote.’” The state data showed Glacier High School with three total cases. Schools across the state have adopted a variety of approaches to handling the virus, from full-time in-person classes, to remote learning and a mix of the two.

In Bozeman, more than 100 parents and students protested outside a school auditorium Wednesday in support of a return to full-time in-person learning. The Bozeman school board voted earlier this week to continue with two days of in-person school and three of remote learning. “Each family should be able to look at their risk level and make their own decision,” Molly Ogle whose children are in the sixth and 11th grades, told the Bozeman Daily Chronicle. The overall spike in cases in recent weeks was driven by schools reopening, Labor Day weekend gatherings and the virus’ continued spread through facilities such as nursing homes and jails, state epidemiologist Stacey Anderson recently said.



Child's dirty mask picture added. The Daily Inter Lake and Associated Press would never show you a true picture of what our children are being forced to endure! - Admin