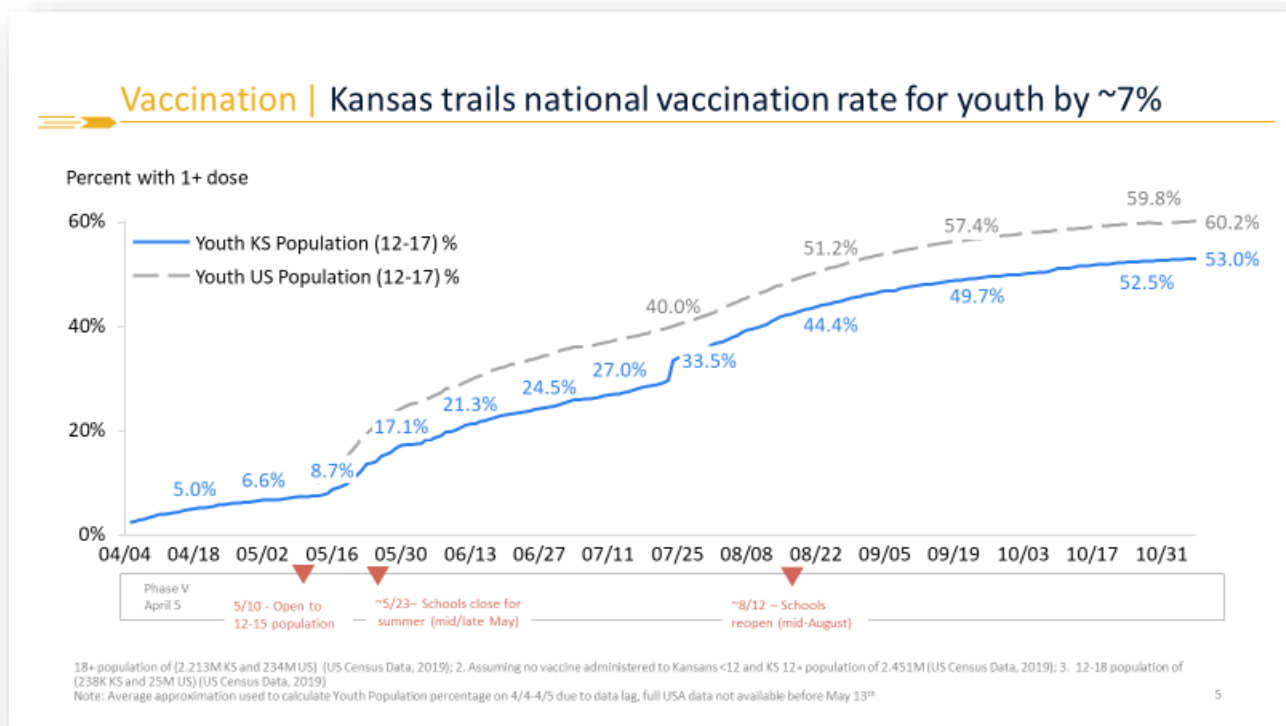


**SAFER CLASSROOMS WORKGROUP**  
**Weekly Report**  
**November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Dr. Jennifer Bacani-McKenney and Dr. Stephanie Kuhlmann, co-chairs of the Governor’s Safer Classrooms Workgroup, led the Workgroup discussion on the importance of using all tools in combating the virus, high vaccination demand and “addressing questions parents have on the COVID-19 vaccine,” vaccination clinics at schools for five-to-eleven-year-olds as well as how to keep momentum to vaccinate five-to-eleven-year-olds through the holidays.

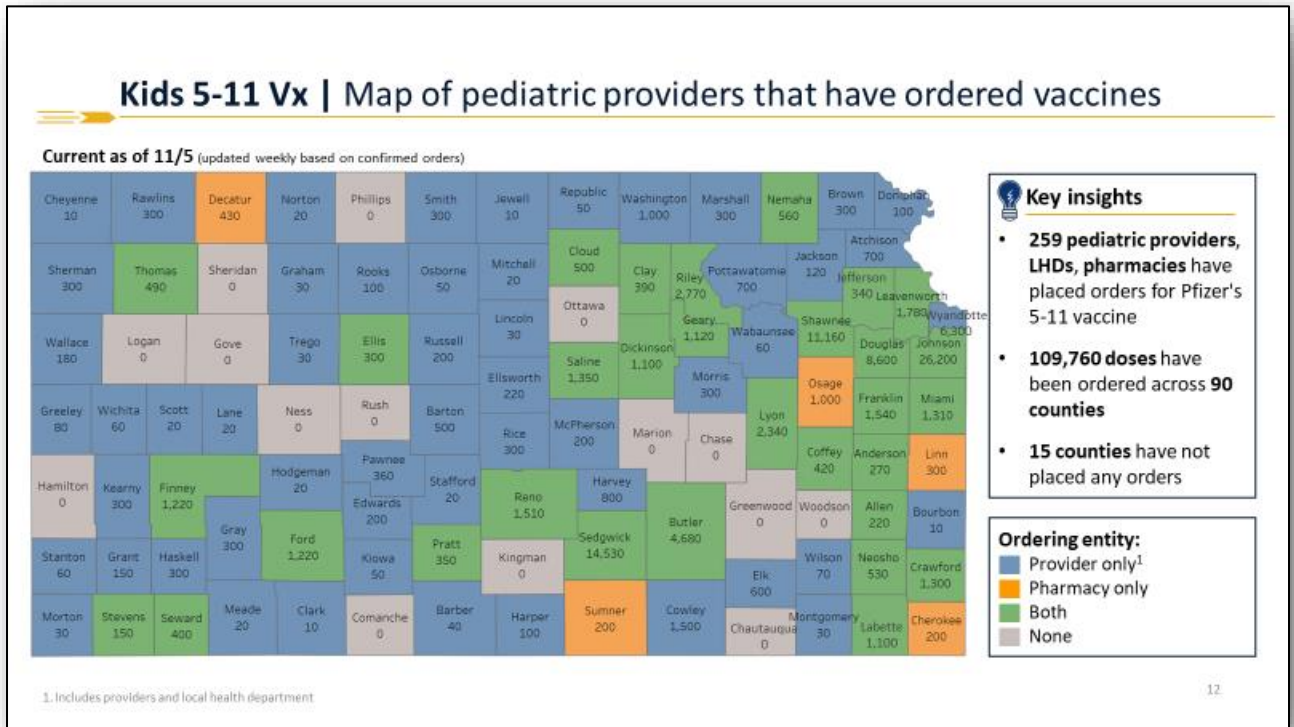


**COVID-19 school metrics summary**

The Workgroup reviewed the latest data pertaining to Kansas schoolchildren and discussed the importance of using the three key public health tools to keep schools safely open:

1. **Vaccination:** Kansas 12-17 youth vaccination rate (~53%) continues to trail the national eligible youth vaccination rate (~60%) by seven percentage points. The nation began vaccinating five-to-eleven-year-olds and as of 11/9, over 360,000 vaccinations had been administered; more details can be found [here](#). KDHE updated their FAQs to include information for five-to-eleven-year-olds vaccination, which can be found [here](#). KDHE also updated COVID-19 vaccine eligibility information for primary and booster series that can be accessed [here](#). The K-12 COVID-19 Dashboard continues to serve as an informative live tool

to understand vaccination rates across School Districts and can be accessed [here](#). As of 11/9, at least 259 pediatric providers, LHDs, and pharmacies have placed over 109,000 orders of the pediatric doses.



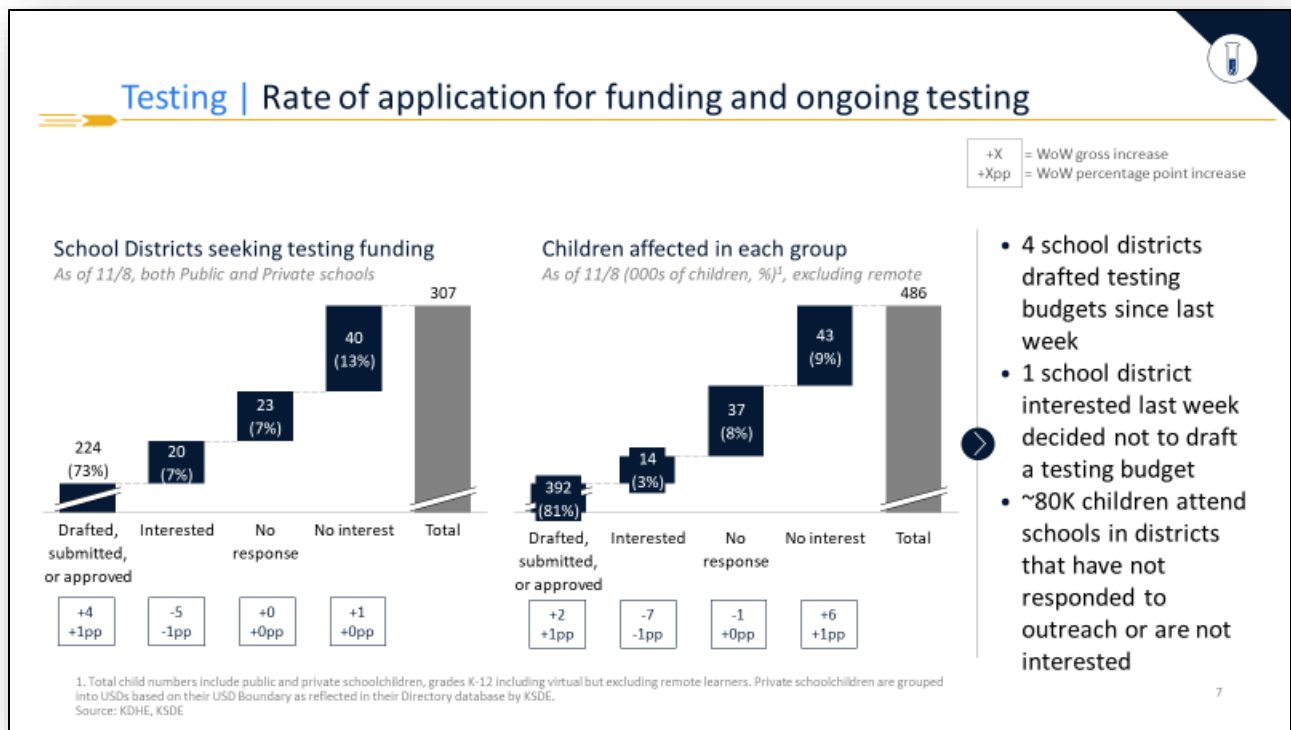
- Testing:** Since last week, four additional School Districts submitted budgets for testing, bringing the total number of Districts that have drafted, submitted, or approved for testing funding to 224. 81% of Kansan students attend school in Districts that have drafted, submitted, or been approved for testing budgets. 17% of Kansan students attend school where no response has been received or where the District has expressed no interest in testing funding for students. As of this week, 150 School Districts are reporting testing results to KDHE, and 501 positive tests were reported across 100 Districts. This compares to 449 positive tests reported last week across 84 Districts.
- Masking:** 251 School Districts / private schools responded to KDHE's outreach on masking policies, a decrease of 1 response. 47% of Districts are implementing a policy of encouraging but not requiring masks (24% of Kansan students); 16% of School Districts have a mask requirement for all students (56% of students); 15% of School Districts have no mask policy (6% of students). 18% of Districts have not yet responded to the survey (7% of students).

There were 46 active outbreaks in KS schools as of this week; this compares to 54 active outbreaks last week and 56 outbreaks the week before. Looking at outbreak-related cases per 100,000 students, School Districts with mask requirements had 33 outbreak cases per 100,000 as of last week; School Districts with masks encouraged or no mask policies had more than 8x the number of outbreak cases per 100,000 students, at 269 cases per 100,000 students.

**Why this matters and what this means:**

Less than a week after the CDC's approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for five-to-eleven-year-olds, the vaccine is widely available throughout Kansas. Families have the option to seek the vaccine through various

channels including school vaccination clinics, LHDs, pediatric / family practice providers and pharmacies. The continual increase in Districts applying for testing funding indicates that the early success of testing in Districts that opted-in early is attracting other schools to the program. School Districts not yet involved in the program are encouraged to reach out to the Workgroup members and / or KDHE project specialists to facilitate testing programs, which can save schooldays for kids who would otherwise be sent home due to exposure. Again, fewer Districts reporting positive tests this week indicates the success of preventive measures being employed by schools to limit the chance of a large-scale outbreak; the number of outbreak cases per capita remains lower at schools where masks are required for students. The [KDHE K-12 COVID-19 Dashboard](#) continues to be a useful tool for parents, educators, health providers, and other child advocates to understand the state of COVID-19 in their School District.



## View from Schools

Four School Districts drafted their applications for funding and one District removed interest, reversing a prior response; responses to outreach on masking policies saw one fewer response from District that had no Masking Policy. Dr. Randy Watson encouraged school officials, parents, and community members to continue in their efforts to keep kids safe. He highlighted that there is a sense of fatigue in the fight against COVID-19 but an understanding among Kansans that a persistence of efforts in testing, masking, and distancing are needed.

### Topics discussed:

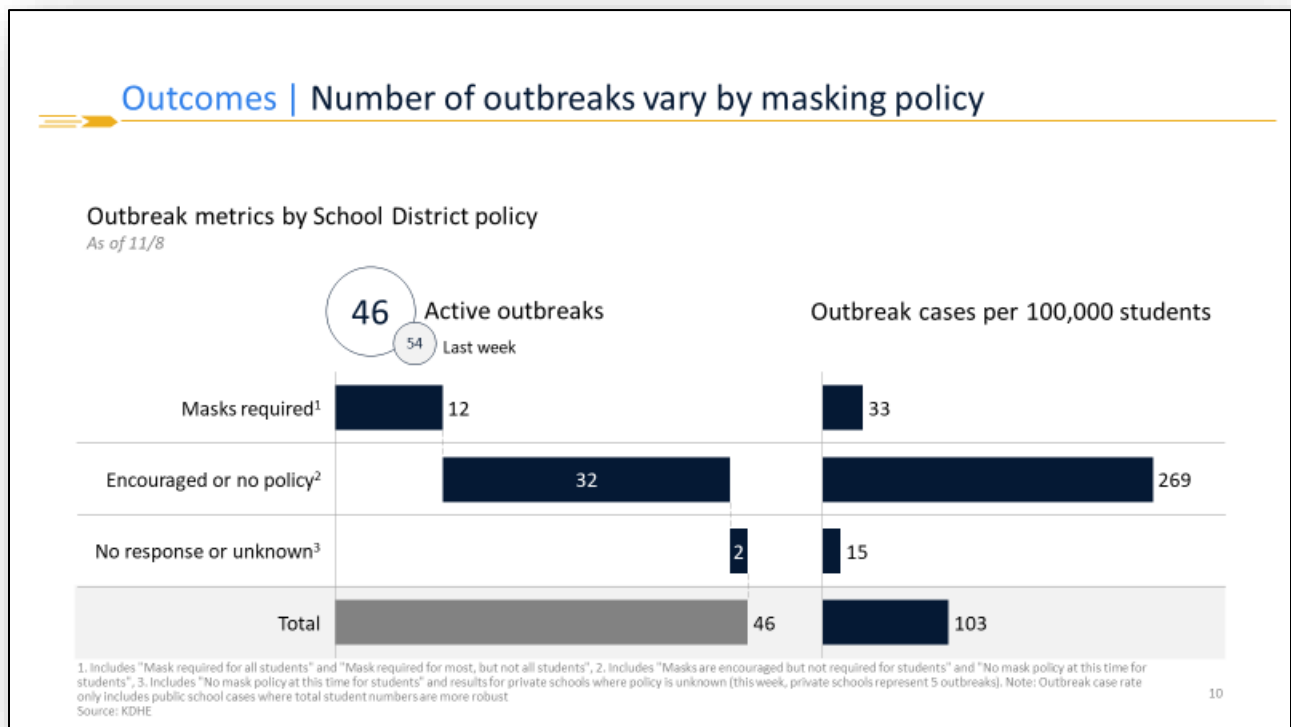
- Dr. Randy Watson reiterated that vaccination remains the top measure to protect children from COVID-19 and he expected the number of Districts that are masking to drop. Providers on the call urged schools, parents, and community members to stay on course and recognize that these efforts are what

keep kids in schools and safe. They acknowledged that it is not easy, but we need to continue our efforts against COVID-19.

- Kimber Kasitz, the Director of Health for Wichita Public Schools, commented on the positive impact masking has had in Wichita Public Schools in reducing the number of cases. She also noted how well students have adjusted to wearing a mask during the day and understand why it is important. She did mention that schools are not the only location where students can get infected with COVID-19 and schools' efforts are part of the equation to keep kids safe.
- Kimber Kasitz overviewed the Wichita Public Schools plan to host mass testing clinics for five-to-eleven-year-olds, as well as 12+ age groups, November 11-13. She offered help and learnings to any other schools interested in establishing their own vaccination clinics and encouraged them to reach out to her and/or their LHDs.

**Why this matters and what this means:**

- The Workgroup members encouraged parents to get their children vaccinated as other measures, such as masking or testing, may reduce in certain schools. Although, those mitigating measures have consistently proven to reduce cases and negative outcomes for students.
- Schools are crucial in helping families access the vaccine through mass vaccination clinics. Schools are encouraged to set up their own vaccination clinics and to reach out to KDHE/LHDs for support as needed. They can also contact Kimber Kasitz for best practices when establishing a clinic.
- The vaccine will be a particularly useful tool for curbing infection through the holiday season; as travel and in-person gatherings increase, the vaccine is the most effective way to protect family members of all ages and mitigate the risk of outbreaks in schools following the holidays.



## View from health care providers

The Workgroup members from the medical community discussed the robust demand for the five-to-eleven-year-old vaccine in Kansas (and nationally), discussed strategies to continue the demand once the initial wave of vaccinations occur, the roles providers play in helping parents make an informed decision and discussed key questions parents have around five-to-eleven-year-old vaccinations.

### Topics discussed:

- Dr. Jennifer Bacani-McKenney shared that Children’s Mercy Hospital is booked through November for appointments for five-to-eleven-year-old vaccinations. She also highlighted the excitement in her community and on social media about getting children vaccinated. Information on the demand for vaccination appointments for Children’s Mercy can be found [here](#).
- Dr. Stephanie Kuhlmann shared a personal anecdote that she had to wait a few days to find an appointment for her child; once she was able to secure one, the process was a major success.
- Dr. Kristie Clark shared that as of November 10<sup>th</sup>, over 360,000 five-to-eleven-year-old have received one dose of the vaccine. She noted in Kansas providers are well equipped to obtain the vaccine because of the ordering process set up by KDHE. She encouraged pediatricians / family medicine providers to reach out to KAAP and KAFP for assistance as needed.
- Members discussed their expectations of a drop in demand but discussed the role providers will play in helping to inform parents who are unsure. Providers are dedicated to supplying information / answering parents’ questions and will respect the choice to vaccinate or not. Agonistic to what is chosen, providers will deliver the best care they can to keep children and the community safe.
- Dr. Jennifer Bacani-McKenney answered select questions from “Addressing Parent Questions About Youth COVID Vaccines”, emphasizing the importance for parents to seek answers to these key questions. The handout is online in three languages; English version found [here](#), Spanish version found [here](#), and Vietnamese version found [here](#).

## Vaccination | Select questions from: 'Addressing Parent Questions About Youth COVID Vaccines'

### Parent questions

Are the COVID vaccines **SAFE** for children?

Do children even **NEED** the COVID vaccine?

What are the vaccine **SIDE EFFECTS** in children?

What about the association of the vaccine with the heart condition **MYOCARDITIS**?

Does the vaccine alter my child's **DNA**?

**WHERE** can I get a vaccine for my child?

### Key points to communicate in responses



No vaccine related serious safety events reported in clinical trials with children 5-11 years old



COVID-related hospitalizations, deaths, and transmission occur in the 5-11 years age group



May experience side effects like other childhood vaccinations (i.e. injection site pain, tiredness, rash)



Cases of vaccine associated Myocarditis are very rare and have had full recovery with no deaths



It is biologically impossible for the mRNA vaccine to alter or insert itself into human DNA



Your child's doctor's office, retail pharmacies, local health departments, and some schools

Source: Kansas COVID Workgroup for Kids; Adopted from Center for Disease Control and Prevention and Your Local Epidemiologist (Dr. Katelyn Jetellina, MPH, PhD)

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### Why this matters and what this means:

- Providers are excited by the initial demand for five-to-eleven-year-old vaccinations. It is a huge step to keep kids and schools safe. They recognize work needs to be done to continue the demand and momentum amongst parents for this age group.
- KDHE's ability to enable single dose ordering gives providers more flexibility to order and administer vaccines to five-to-eleven-year-olds.
- The Workgroup encouraged adults, kids, and parents to connect with their providers to continue educating themselves. The Workgroup members noted excitement around the vaccine as well as the questions parents have. Parents can seek information from schools, LHDs, KDHE and providers to gain answers and comfort in the vaccine.

### Updates from last week:

They discussed the success from the first week of vaccinations, highlighting the smaller doses and reduction in side effects. The Workgroup reiterated the roles schools and providers will play in children vaccination efforts, deep diving into the efforts in Wichita Public Schools. The Workgroup discussed the implications of allowing single dose ordering and how they will increase provider engagement and ability to vaccinate.

### Topics discussed:

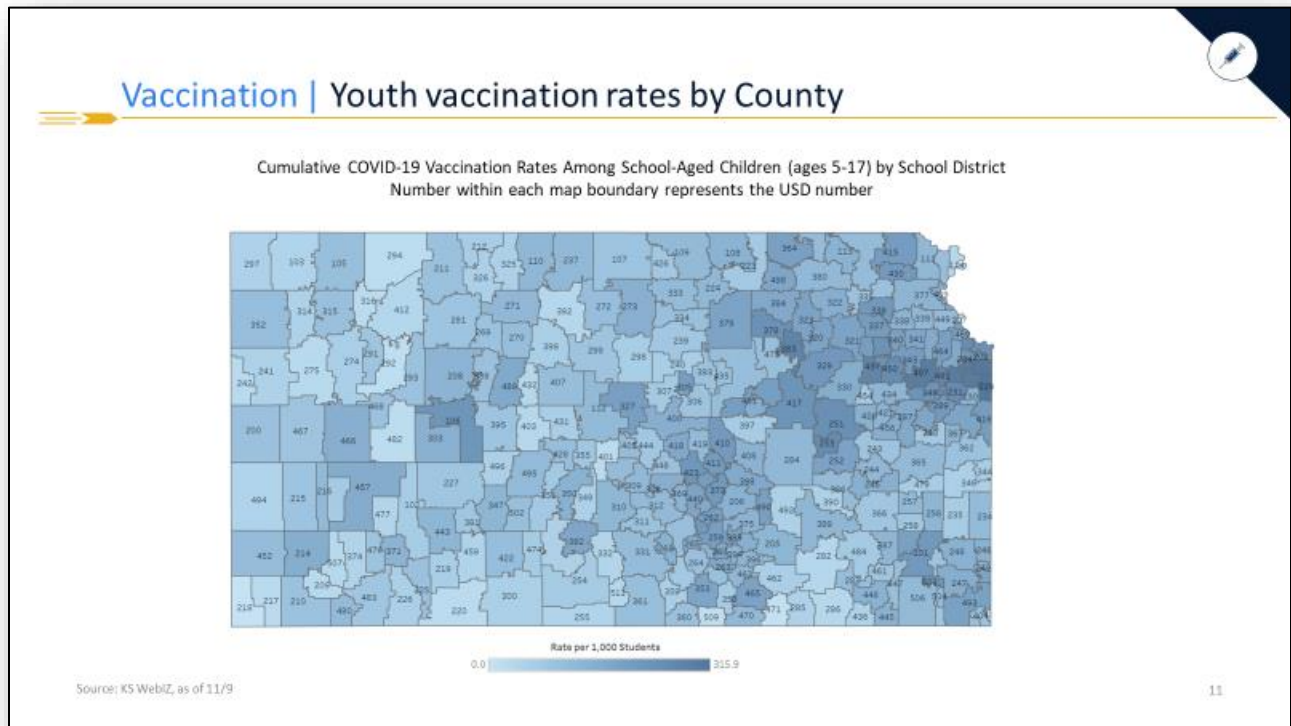
- Providers gave input on the efficacy and safety of the newly approved pediatric dose for five-to-eleven-year-olds, noting the empirical success of the initial 360,000+ vaccinations.
- Members reemphasized the importance of connecting with one's healthcare provider to get trusted information about the vaccine.



- The Workgroup thanked KDHE's efforts to enable single dose ordering, helping engage more providers and offering the vaccine throughout the state.

**Why this matters and what this means:**

- The results of the Pfizer-BioNTech trials on children and initial vaccinations for the five-to-eleven-year-old age group give additional confidence to the benefits of receiving the vaccine.
- With over 250 pediatric vaccinators with doses, parents can obtain a vaccine for their child through various channels.



The Safer Classrooms Workgroup will meet next on November 17, 2021. The meeting will be livestreamed on the Governor's YouTube channel. Viewers are encouraged to submit topics they would like for the Workgroup to discuss through the Kansas COVID Workgroup for Kids (KCWK) at [kansasCOVIDworkgroup4kids@gmail.com](mailto:kansasCOVIDworkgroup4kids@gmail.com).

**Workgroup members:**

- |                                     |                                    |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Stephanie Kuhlmann, MD</i>       | <i>Rhonda Hutchison, BSN, RN</i>   |
| <i>Jennifer Bacani-McKenney, MD</i> | <i>Kimber Kasitz, BSN, RN</i>      |
| <i>Jen Brull, MD</i>                | <i>Vernon Mills, MD</i>            |
| <i>G.A. Buie</i>                    | <i>Kelli Netson, Ph.D</i>          |
| <i>Lindsay Byrnes, MD, MPH</i>      | <i>Kevin Riemann</i>               |
| <i>Kristie Clark, MD</i>            | <i>Manuel Solano, MD</i>           |
| <i>Allen Greiner, MD, MPH</i>       | <i>Margaret Thompson, RN, ARNP</i> |
| <i>Dena Hubbard, MD</i>             | <i>Randy Watson, Ed.D, MS</i>      |

