



Texas school district shuts down after two teachers die from coronavirus



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Two teachers died within a week of one another from complications of COVID-19.

A Texas school district made the decision to close its five schools after two teachers died of complications related to COVID-19 in the same week.

The Connally Independent School District in Waco, Texas will stay closed until after Labor Day, reopening Tuesday, Sept. 7, the *Associated Press* reports.

Two junior high teachers died from the virus within a few days of one another. **Natalia Chansler**, 41, a sixth-grade social studies teacher at Connally Junior High School, died Saturday, Aug. 28. Not long after, the same high school lost their seventh-grade social studies teacher, **David McCormick**, 59.



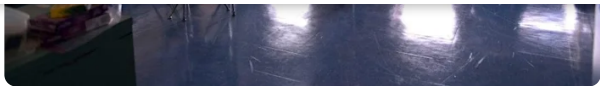
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(Photo by Michael Loccisano/Getty Images)

The school's Assistant Superintendent, **Jill Bottelberghe**, shared the sad news.

Bottelberghe did not reveal whether either teacher had been vaccinated against COVID-19. She also said the school had "not found any correlation" between the teachers' deaths.

"They were at two different grade levels even though they worked under the same content area, but we have recognized that there has been an increase in spread as far as throughout our student body at those two grade levels," Bottelberghe told *AP*.

Since classes began in August, there have been 51 confirmed COVID-19 cases. It's unclear whether they are related to the teachers' deaths.

Connally High School's football team, the Cadets, are still scheduled to play this Friday in spite of the shutdown.



(Photo by George Frey/Getty Images)

Superintendent **Wesley Holt** said in an emailed statement "that the closure and holiday break will provide those who are positive with the virus or exposed to others with the virus, the time to isolate and recover...This closure will also allow

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High School upon reopening. Staff, parents, and the local community will be offered shots.

COVID numbers in Texas are high, with an estimated daily average of 16,629 confirmed cases and 212 deaths. The Waco area is one of the state's epicenters, with 209 average cases per day, per the [New York Times](#).

Most school districts are currently not offering virtual learning as Texas did not fund the option to do so. School districts in the state that are offering remote learning are using federal funds to recoup lost revenue.

With limited virtual learning options, many parents expressed fear of a rise in cases in schools as the delta variant spreads.

Those fears were exacerbated when Texas made headlines over the summer following Gov. **Greg Abbott's** refusal to allow a mask mandate in schools.

Abbott followed with an executive order banning mask mandates in public school districts but the Supreme Court overruled him, allowing mandates to proceed. Some officials have been frustrated by Abbott's actions.

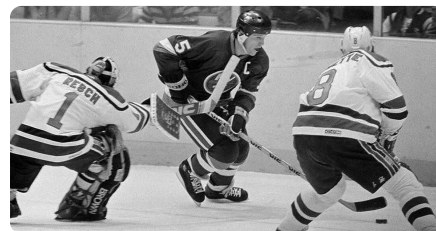
Harris County Attorney **Christian Menefee** said in a statement that the Abbott administration was "creating confusion" for the school districts, teachers, and students, [The Texas Tribune reported](#).

"If the Governor and the Attorney General cannot enforce the Governor's mask mandate ban, the folks making tough decisions for our schools and communities have the right to know that," Menefee said. "They shouldn't have to fear



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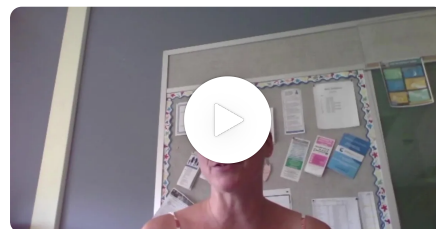
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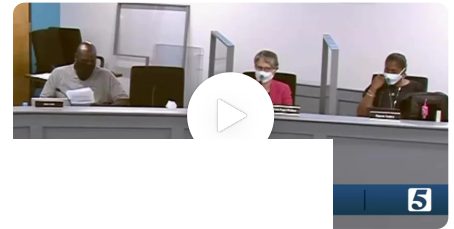


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"It is very devastating as far as the students, the staff, and the community as a whole," Assistant Superintendent Jill Bottelberghe said.

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