Schools: The new risks for 2022

As Secondary school results came out and the school year drew to a close, the education sector faced yet another wave of uncertainty leading in to 2022. With borders now largely open over the Christmas break and the Omicron variant outbreaks set to bring mask mandates back into daily life, schools will need to consider how they prepare for uncertainty once again in term one.

What could Australia learn from their international Education counterparts, who have faced much more serious large scale outbreaks in the US and UK ?

In a recent article for [KUOW Newsroom](#) in the US, Sharon Bogan a spokesperson for Public Health Seattle, cited lax protocols and "Inconsistent mask-wearing by students and staff was likely one of the many factors that contributed to the largest outbreaks" She pointed to low vaccination rates as another key factor: Only 8% of the 192 people confirmed infected at the two campuses were vaccinated. "What these large outbreaks show is that vaccination is a powerful tool," Bogan said. "They reinforce that Covid-19 can and will take hold and spread if we let down our guard and remove prevention steps that we know work."

In Washington [The Post](#) reported earlier this month that due to new Covid outbreaks in the D.C area, schools cancelled activities and went virtual again. "I am alarmed by the rising numbers across our schools," the system's CEO, Monica Goldson, wrote in an email to the community. "A two-day total last week consisted

of fewer than 100 cases. This week, we saw a high of 155 cases reported in a single day."

To prepare for this new reality here in Australia in 2022 and reduce the risk of super spreader outbreaks in schools, the consensus from US schools indicates that rather than 'soldiering on', it's important to respond quickly, which may mean a return to virtual learning or cutting the school term short if outbreaks occur. Along with this approach, identifying threats and gaps in current systems to improve protocols, understanding the vaccination status of staff and students in schools should play a key role in decision making.

A study released by the NHS in 2020 showed there was a disproportionate amount of young people in hospitals in the USA versus the United Kingdom. The strange thing is that the USA has more young people vaccinated by a significant margin than the UK. The secret is regular testing and protocols. Consistent with this message are aligned with the outbreaks experienced in Victoria where the worst school outbreaks have been linked to lack of Covid protocols. The Australian reported that Organisers of a school camp linked to Victoria's largest outbreak, say there should have been stricter mask and testing rules for kids.

With 5- to 12-year-olds becoming eligible for vaccination in the next few months, many schools don't have a way to manage the vaccination status of their staff and students.

"**vaxxvault**" an Australian based Covid vaccination and testing management solution was created by experts in health technology and was designed with these challenges in mind . It does what many company systems can't, it manages highly sensitive personal information privately and securely via secure digital records of staff and contractor vaccinations. By recording the vaccination status and testing of teams, not only does it provide a release from the administration burden of current testing methods, it allows HR to manage the risk of outbreaks within their organisation.

The solution offers fast, affordable, scalable technology to solve the complex and constantly evolving challenges of Covid. With leading edge functionality such as alerts, booster vaccination recording along with data led insights. It helps to facilitate better business decisions, such as where to focus on Covid compliance within your workforce and proactive risk analysis. Most importantly, the data is protected by the highest standards of encryption and is not exposed to the usual IT on premise vulnerabilities of many existing HR and OHS solutions.

To learn more, contact info@vaxxvault.com for a demo or visit www.vaxxvault.com