

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATES K-12 SCHOOL GUIDANCE

SAN JOSE, CA – The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has updated its school guidance for grades K-12. The updated guidance places an emphasis on safely keeping California schools open for in-person instruction and is consistent with the current scientific evidence.

The statewide masking mandate is set to expire tonight at midnight. When students and staff return to school on Monday, March 14 masking will be strongly recommended. The transition from the State masking requirement to strongly recommended may cause anxiety, especially for individuals who are at higher risk for COVID-19 or live with someone who is at higher risk.

It is important to be aware that the CDPH strongly recommends the wearing of masks indoors in schools. As circumstances allow, the state may later shift its masking guidance from “strongly recommended” to “recommended” and to “optional.”

“Providing safe, uninterrupted, in-person instruction is key to the mental and physical health and development of our students and I am encouraged by the updates to the K-12 guidance,” said Dr. Mary Ann Dewan, County Superintendent of Schools.

In addition to the change in masking, the guidance puts emphasis on other risk mitigation strategies such as hand washing, staying home when feeling ill, proper ventilation, and routine COVID-19 testing.

The guidance also outlines a strong recommendation for masking for indoor extra-curricular school activities. Per the guidance, masks are strongly recommended indoors at all times for:

- teachers, referees, officials, coaches, and other support staff
- all spectators and observers
- **when participants are not actively practicing, conditioning, competing, or performing**
- while on the sidelines, in team meetings, and within locker rooms and weight rooms

- when actively practicing, conditioning, performing, or competing indoors, even during heavy exertion, as practicable
- individuals using instruments indoors that cannot be played with a mask (e.g., wind instruments) are strongly recommended to use bell coverings and maintain a minimum of 3 feet of physical distancing between participants. If masks are not worn (or bell covers are not used) due to heavy exertion, it is strongly recommended that individuals undergo screening testing at least once weekly, unless they had COVID-19 in the past 90 days. An FDA-authorized antigen test, PCR test, or pooled PCR test is acceptable for evaluation of an individual's COVID-19 status.

“Being able to participate in extracurricular activities is a fundamental part of a school experience,” stated Dr. Dewan. “We want to ensure that students, staff, and spectators are participating in a manner that keeps everyone safe.”

To review the complete updated CDPH school guidance, please visit <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2021-22-School-Year.aspx>

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About the Santa Clara County Office of Education

Working collaboratively with school and community partners, the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) is a regional service agency that provides instructional, business, and technology services to the 31 school districts of Santa Clara County. The County Office of Education directly serves students through special education programs, alternative schools, Head Start and State Preschool programs, migrant education, and Opportunity Youth Academy. The SCCOE also provides academic and fiscal oversight and monitoring to districts in addition to the 22 Santa Clara County Board of Education authorized charter schools.

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