



SAN MATEO
COUNTY
OFFICE OF
EDUCATION

Excellence and Equity in Education

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Masks Strongly Recommended in San Mateo County Schools Starting March 12th

San Mateo County, CA — On Monday, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) released [updated masking guidance](#) for schools. Under the new guidance, the universal masking requirement for K-12 and Childcare settings will terminate on March 11, 2022. As of March 12, CDPH will shift its guidance to a **strong recommendation** that students, teachers, and others continue to mask while indoors in school settings. San Mateo County Health has aligned itself with the CDPH guidance and confirmed that once the statewide requirement ends, masks will be strongly recommended in all public and private schools in the county.

Masks have played an important role in making schools safe places for students to learn and adults to work. According to research cited by CDPH, “the masking requirement in California schools has allowed us to keep schools open when compared to other parts of the country. California accounts for roughly 12% of all U.S. students, but accounted for only 1% of COVID-19 related school closures during the Omicron surge. Nationally during the Delta surge in July and August 2021, jurisdictions without mask requirements in schools experienced larger increases in pediatric case rates, and school outbreaks were 3.5 times more likely in areas without school mask requirements.”

The change in masking guidance reflects CDPH’s approach to rolling back safety measures now that COVID-19 conditions have improved across the state. According to CDPH, these decisions are based on science and data, including case and hospitalization rates. As conditions continue to improve, CDPH will move to less restrictive guidance. If the state experiences another spike, then CDPH could pivot back to requiring masks in schools and elsewhere.

Cal/OSHA also updated its guidance yesterday and no longer requires – but strongly recommends – masks to be worn by unvaccinated workers indoors, helping alleviate possible confusion between student and staff guidance.

Throughout the pandemic, San Mateo County educators have prioritized student and staff health and safety. They have repeatedly adapted to changing guidance and collaborated closely with public health officials to ensure they understand and are able to implement various safety layers, including testing, contact tracing, and health screening. This has not been easy, but our county’s educators have consistently made in-person learning, following public health guidance, a priority.

“As they have done throughout the pandemic, San Mateo County schools will continue to do their best to follow California’s public health guidance, which at this point is to continue with indoor masking until the CDPH recommends otherwise,” shared San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools Nancy Magee. “I trust our school communities will also continue to prioritize teaching and learning despite the shifting protocols. We’re already looking ahead and planning for May graduations where we can truly celebrate the resilience of our young people and the educators who have supported them throughout this pandemic.”

The San Mateo County Office of Education is committed to ensuring excellence and equity in education by inspiring students, investing in teachers, invigorating leaders, and involving communities.