

Good Evening,

As many of you know, OUSD started the school year by stating that OUSD will strongly encourage all students and staff to comply with CDC/CDPH guidance, including use of masks. At the same time we stated that district staff would not be placed in the compromising position of taking enforcement actions that involved excluding students from OUSD education.

Since the start of school we have experienced significant new factors and we have received new information that impacts the District's discretion on this matter. We have received numerous and significant expressions of concern. We want to avoid distractions and focus our energy on keeping kids in school. Most importantly, we want to ensure a safe, healthy, and welcoming school environment. Recent issues include:

- Numerous complaints from employees to Cal/OSHA about enforcing the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) mask mandate. Cal/OSHA regulations require us to enforce masking in our workplaces.
- We have also received new and more explicit guidance from CDPH sent to all school districts on August 23, 2021.
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Requirement-for-Universal-Masking-Indoors-at-k-12-Schools.aspx>. This guidance letter is very explicit and clarifies previous guidance that was ambiguous about enforcement of mask mandates. This guidance letter directs us not just to have a policy requiring masks, but requires us to enforce this mask mandate as a condition of school operations. It details numerous consequences of noncompliance, which present significant potential liability and fiscal issues. OUSD's primary mission is to provide an excellent and enriching education to our youth. Fiscal challenges posed by asserting discretion in mask enforcement harm the OUSD's duty to safeguard our financial resources and as responsible stewards of your tax dollars, we need to focus resources on education.
- We have also been contacted by concerned employees who are asserting their right to work in a safe environment consistent with the Cal/OSHA regulations and the CDPH mask mandates. Their voices and the California safety regulations are also important to ensure a healthy working environment.
- We have also received voluminous requests for public records related to this issue, which are requiring time and resources to respond to.
- We have been contacted by Glenn County Department of Health through the Glenn County Office of Education about following the mask mandate.
- In consultation with legal counsel, we are moving forward to ensure that our practices align with the ever-changing requirements imposed on schools.
- We appreciate and respect the many differing views that have been expressed regarding face coverings in our schools. However, the responsible course is to adjust our practices as we receive new information and directives from CDPH.
- Please understand that CDPH guidance has the force of law and we must follow all directives, including guidance related to mask requirements in school settings.

Due to these reasons stated above, we will adjust to follow the updated CDPH mask guidance of August 23. **Starting on Monday, August 30th, 2021, all students and staff will be required to wear a mask while indoors.** Masks are optional outdoors for all K-12 school settings. Please see the following guidance for more information.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/K-12-Guidance-2021-22-School-Year.aspx>

We will continue to plan intensively to use this year to address learning lost during the pandemic. We will be gathering data about learning loss, and implementing plans for helping students get back on track academically.

Our schools are prepared to support students who are struggling emotionally from the stresses related to COVID – 19. We have extra staff on board, programs in place, and resources to help our students recover from those issues.

Our final area of emphasis will focus on communicating more with our parents and the community. We want to re-engage parents in our schools and the education of their students.

Sincerely,

Victor Perry
Assistant Superintendent