

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Face Covering Guidelines for the Start of the School Year

El Dorado Union High School District Community,

We are very excited to welcome our students and staff back to our schools for full in person instruction in the 2021-2022 school year. As you may know, the State of California has released requirements for student masking in indoor classrooms this fall. On Tuesday of this week the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC), due to surging COVID-19 numbers, changed their guidance to recommend masking indoors as well. Both the CDC and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) agree that masks are not required to be worn outdoors by either students or staff.

Although the California Department of Public Health has put in place a requirement for students and staff to wear face coverings in classrooms, it has put the duty on local school districts to enforce the requirement. We realize that many people in our community are concerned about this requirement, with some agreeing and some disagreeing with students continuing to be required to wear masks indoors.

The El Dorado Union High School District acknowledges that we are to require students and staff, subject to certain exemptions, to wear masks indoors to remain consistent with the CDPH requirements, and will be counseling students and staff about the importance of safety protocols to continue to keep our schools safe for everyone. This is particularly important given the recent resurgence of COVID-19 in our County and State due to the Delta variant. However, the State passed legislation in 2020 that forbids school districts from suspending students for defiance in situations such as this. As such, the District is left with no statutory ability to suspend students for not wearing face coverings as required by the State. In a community like ours, deeply divided on face coverings, we have an extremely difficult task in front of us with limited tools to enforce. The District will make reasonable efforts to enforce this State guidance.

While we know that many in our community have differing views on masking it is important to recognize that some individuals and/or their family members may have high levels of vulnerability to the COVID-19 virus. Thus, we need to come together as a community to take care of one another. The District asks for your help to make certain we keep our schools safe, and we will for our part continue to take major precautions including cleaning rooms daily, using our COVID-19 killing reverse ionization units in our ventilation systems, and requiring that anyone with illness symptoms consistent with COVID-19 stays home unless a negative COVID test confirms they are free from the virus. Rapid COVID-19 testing kits are now available on each campus free of charge. Our online school program and Independent Study Program have capacity. Please reach out immediately to your school administration if you desire one of these programs.

In addition, each school has available a large number of N-95 masks, the same ones worn by health workers in COVID-19 areas of hospitals that protect the wearer from COVID-19. These are available for any students and adults on campus who desire to ensure they are protected. High school aged students have access to the COVID-19 vaccines and we encourage each family to have conversations on the strategies they feel appropriate to keep everyone safe.

We want everyone to know that each individual needs to take the virus seriously and take actions to ensure that they, their families and community are protected. The District is legally required to comply with the Department of Public Health, to the extent that such guidance can be understood and effectively implemented. We do want to point out that CDPH also continues to require that we contact trace and place students in quarantine if they are exposed. We are still awaiting final guidance on quarantines, athletics, band, choir and performing arts. We will share that information as guidance becomes available.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in this difficult time. We are truly excited about returning as much as possible to a normal school year, as we offer full in person instruction on all of our campuses.