



Santa Ana Unified School District

Jerry Almendarez
Superintendent of Schools

March 4, 2022

Dear SAUSD Community,

On February 28, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced (Executive Order N-5-22), the state will end requiring indoor masking for schools across California after March 11, 2022. Due to the decline in COVID-19 case rates and hospitalizations, indoor masking will be strongly recommended in schools. Districts could create masking guidelines based on local conditions, and in consultation with local health agencies, the governor stated.

New masking policy for Santa Ana Unified School District

Effective on Monday, March 14, 2022, indoor masking across all Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD) schools and sites will shift from required to highly recommended for all students, staff, and community members. There will be no distinction between vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals in this new District protocol. This decision will align the District with the latest guidance from the California Department for Public Health, and with the other districts across Orange County.

SAUSD and local health experts reviewed the Santa Ana community's latest COVID-19 data, which shows a consistent and significant drop in positivity rates in recent weeks. In addition, the positivity rates of students and staff tested weekly at SAUSD schools and sites is far lower than community, county and state averages. Local hospitalization rates are also now below recommended thresholds.

It is important to note that families may choose to continue to mask as recommended by the state. Additionally, the District will continue to protect the most vulnerable populations with all available resources, including children not eligible for vaccinations, and those with compromised immune systems.

The safety of students, staff, and the overall community has remained the top priority in SAUSD since the onset of COVID-19. This priority will continue as we move forward in the next phase of this pandemic. All decisions on health and safety will remain data-driven and guided by science. In the meantime, masking is still required for all SAUSD students and staff during all indoor activities through March 11.

Masking as personal choice

As mentioned previously, any individual can continue wearing masks at any point at SAUSD schools and other sites regardless of new masking guidelines if it's their preference to do so. The District will continue to provide masks upon request at all sites.

The District also encourages all individuals to be mindful of personal choices of others who may make determinations on mask wearing based on their unique circumstances, preferences, or health conditions in their households.

Ongoing safety protocols

Weekly COVID-19 testing will continue to be provided to all students and staff on the regular schedule for all schools and sites. Additionally, free weekly testing and vaccination opportunities for community members will continue at designated District sites. Regular testing of students, staff, and community members remains as

1601 East Chestnut Avenue, Santa Ana, CA 92701-6322 (714) 558-5501

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Rigo Rodriguez, Ph.D., President • Carolyn Torres, Vice President
Alfonso Alvarez, Ed.D., Clerk • Valerie Amezcua, Member • John Palacio, Member

one of the most effective tools in this pandemic. Finally, the District strongly encourages any individual who feels sick, or has any symptoms associated with COVID-19, to stay and remain home until they recover.

Questions regarding masking or other safety concerns can be directed to the Credentialed School Nurse (RN) or Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) on the school campus. Families and staff can also contact the SAUSD COVID Task Force at 714-480-5282 or CovidTaskForce@saUSD.us

Thank you again for your continued support over these past two years. Our ability to maintain safe and nurturing learning environments in our schools is a result of the strong partnerships with our staff, families and our community. We will continue to provide any new information as it becomes available.