



ELK HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

Where Kids Come First...

March 11, 2022

Dear Parents:

Over the past two years, Kern County school districts have followed California Department of Public Health (CDPH) guidance and mandates to allow for full in-person instruction in the safest way possible. We appreciate your patience and cooperation as we have come through this pandemic together.

Governor Newsom and Dr. Mark Ghaly, California Health & Human Services Secretary, announced that with declining case rates and hospitalizations across the West, California, Oregon and Washington are moving together to update their masking guidance. After 11:59 p.m. on March 11, California will move from *mask mandates* to ***mask recommendations*** in schools. CDPH updated its [masking guidance](#) to reflect that after 11:59 p.m. on March 11, 2022, students and staff members in K-12 settings will be **strongly recommended**, but not required, to mask while indoors.

This guidance states: "After March 11, 2022, the universal masking requirement for K-12 and childcare settings will terminate. CDPH strongly recommends that individuals in these settings continue to mask in indoor settings when the universal masking requirement lifts." **Please note that this change does not take effect until after 11:59 p.m. on March 11, 2022. Masking is still required while indoors on school grounds and school facilities until that date. Thank you for your cooperation until March 13th when we may begin to implement this new guidance.**

We know that there are varied opinions about masking. Mask wearing is still strongly recommended and is an option for every student or staff member who wishes to wear one at any time. Our school has masks available for staff and students if requested. As we begin to transition from pandemic response into a new chapter where we can use more routine disease control tactics, it is important that we continue with some of the mitigation strategies we are all familiar with - monitoring symptoms, testing, high-quality ventilation systems, etc. - with a focus on personal responsibility and respect. Please be kind to each other and respect each other's decisions.

Respecting Personal Choice

- Parents and students now have personal choice for masking in schools with the expectation that individual choices are respected.
- One should not make assumptions regarding someone's beliefs or health status based upon their choice to wear or not wear a mask, nor should they comment on them.

Responsibility

- Students and staff should continue to remain home when sick.
- Students and staff are encouraged to take a COVID-19 test if exhibiting symptoms and/or if they have a known exposure to COVID-19.

Our school has always been in compliance with CalOSHA, and the Executive Order signed by the Governor aligns CalOSHA guidance with this updated CDPH guidance. With regard to masking, we will align with the CDPH school guidance and include voluntary (but strongly recommended) masking for staff and students, especially in common areas in our schools and facilities.

Thank you for your dedication as we continue to navigate what is hopefully a move forward out of the pandemic. We truly appreciate your patience and understanding as we take every step to preserve the health of our students and staff while keeping our community as safe and healthy as possible.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Touchstone
Superintendent/Principal

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