



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on July 12, 2021

## California Schools to Require Masks Regardless of Vaccination Status

Students and teachers in California will still need to wear masks while indoors at school, state officials announced Friday, July 9, despite the mounting evidence that [masks](#) hurt children's [health](#) and [don't prevent](#) the spread of the virus. The announcement also follows the update from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) saying that masks are not necessary for vaccinated students and school staff.

The CDC's [updated guidelines](#) released Friday emphasized in-person learning as a priority this fall. The guidance states, among other things:



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Cohorting can be used to limit the number of students, teachers, and staff who come in contact with each other, especially when it is challenging to maintain physical distancing, such as among young children, and particularly in areas of moderate-to-high transmission levels. The use of cohorting can limit the spread of COVID-19 between cohorts but should not replace other prevention measures within each group. Cohorting people who are fully vaccinated and people who are not fully vaccinated into separate cohorts is not recommended. It is a school's responsibility to ensure that cohorting is done in an equitable manner that does not perpetuate academic, racial, or other tracking, as described in the U.S. Department of Education [COVID-19 Handbook, Volume 1](#)....

In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors (e.g., participating in outdoor play, recess, and physical education activities). However, particularly in areas of [substantial to high transmission](#) levels, people who are not fully vaccinated are encouraged to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated. When physical education activities or recess are held indoors, it is particularly important for people who are not fully vaccinated to wear masks and maximize distance when possible.

The agency also said social distancing isn't required for vaccinated staff and students.

But since the vaccines for teachers or students are not mandatory yet (some California school districts are seriously [contemplating](#) such an option) and the CDC guidelines are not binding, the California Department of Public Health decided to take all-or-nothing approach and [will require](#) everyone in schools to mask up.

California Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly said in a statement that California uses a "science-based approach" and since the state's school facilities "can't accommodate physical



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distancing,” the department will align with the CDC by implementing what he called multiple layers of mitigation strategies, including continued masking and regular COVID testing.

Ghaly called masking “a simple and effective intervention that does not interfere with offering full in-person instruction.” “At the outset of the new year, students should be able to walk into school without worrying about whether they will feel different or singled out for being vaccinated or unvaccinated — treating all kids the same will support a calm and supportive school environment,” he said.

Before Ghaly’s statement, some Southern California school districts had indicated they were waiting for the California Department of Public Health guidance and would follow that, [according](#) to the *Orange County Register*.

“That’s who we’re mandated to follow. We’re definitely going to be reviewing all of the guidelines in-depth, then implementing them carefully,” said MaryRone Shell, spokesperson for Redlands Unified School District.

The Los Angeles Unified School District will do the same, so when in-person instruction for all students begins, masks will be required for “all students, staff and visitors” over age two at district sites and on buses, according to current rules. District spokeswoman Maria Garcia cheered the news because the update apparently makes the board’s job in “ensuring safe school reopening” easier. She says that since they will not ask anyone about their vaccination status, requiring everyone to wear masks is “pretty easy to enforce.” Garcia didn’t question mask effectiveness or the health risk masks could impose on children’s health.

Reportedly, the district’s recently approved contract with the United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) union also requires mask-wearing.

The UTLA, which insisted schools stay closed during 2020 and the spring semester of 2021 and which nominally represents more than 30,000 teachers in the country’s second largest school district, has approved a tentative agreement with the district for the summer session and the upcoming school year. Under the terms of the agreement, the district’s 1,000 schools, serving over 600,000 students, opened on June 23 for daily in-person instruction with mandatory masks and tests. [Reportedly](#), the school board approved the agreement, without any discussion, only one day before schools reopened.

Parents tried to [protest](#) a mask mandate forced by the union in the spring, arguing the district should follow COVID-19 guidance from the CDC, as well as the L.A. County Health Department — instead of the teachers’ union. Besides universal masking, the union kept introducing more and more evidently political [demands](#), such as defunding the police; introduction of a single-payer, government-provided healthcare; full funding for housing California’s homeless; a shutdown to publicly funded, privately operated charter schools; and a new set of programs to address systemic racism — all in exchange for teachers getting back to the classrooms. Despite the fact that children aged 0-17 have 99.96-percent COVID-19 [survival rate](#), putting them in masks that [deprive](#) them of oxygen apparently seemed like a logical idea to the union.

“Unions have the power to unilaterally threaten shutting down education at the slightest provocation, without regard to the wellbeing of the students they supposedly ‘serve,’” Tony Kinnett, the founder of the media website [Chalkboard Review](#), [said](#).

It comes as no surprise that homeschool applications in the state are nearly [triple](#) pre-pandemic levels. Now, California has just added another incentive for parents to consider as they prepare for a new school year.



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