

Subject: Changes to Statewide School Mask Requirements

Dear Highland Community,

I am writing to share updated information about the mask requirements in our schools.

On Monday, February 28, 2022, Governor Jay Inslee announced an update to the statewide indoor mask requirement for Washington state, including in our K–12 schools, which is now scheduled to end at the **end of the day on Friday, March 11, 2022**. Once the statewide requirement is lifted, masks will be encouraged in our school buildings, but not required. Masks will still be required on school buses per a federal mandate that requires masks to be worn on all forms of public transportation.

Until Saturday, March 12, masks will continue to be required for all students, staff, and visitors in all Highland School District buildings. Masks will continue to be provided for those who do not have them, and students who will not wear masks will be sent home. Highland School District and our Board of Directors do not have local control over this matter. We are legally required to follow the Governor's directive, which currently requires masks in school buildings.

Once the statewide mask requirement lifts, without a new requirement from our local health department, masks will become optional in our school buildings.

Students will have the choice to wear a mask at school, with the expectation that others' choices will be respected. One should not make assumptions regarding someone's beliefs or health status, nor should they comment on them. Our district will not tolerate bullying of any kind for those who choose to continue wearing masks.

For young children, please let teachers know your wishes and they will do their best to reinforce them. Our educators will discuss the change with students in a developmentally appropriate manner, including how to respect others' personal choice. If your child(ren) expresses any anxiety, please feel free to reach out to our school counselors or psychologists for support.

We thank you for your continued flexibility as we navigate this pandemic together. We understand that DOH will be sending out updated guidance around tracing, distancing, testing, quarantining, accommodations, and masking on school buses within the next few days. That updated guidance will be shared and communicated as it becomes available, and we will adjust accordingly.

Mark Anderson