



## COVID UPDATE 2022-03-13

Dear Harmony Families

On Thursday the Harmony USD Board considered updates to the COVID safety plan discussed during the parent forum on Wednesday March 9. The board adopted revisions to the COVID safety plan which included a threshold for shifting from an indoor mask requirement to a strong recommendation when the case count dropped below 20 cases per 100k. 20 cases per 100k is a threshold that is lower than what had been quoted earlier and was in due to new information from the Sonoma County Public Health Department that 20 cases per 100k was a more appropriate threshold to reintroduce masking requirements in classrooms.

Our old protocols will expire at the end of the day on Friday March 18<sup>th</sup>. That means that for the next week March 14-March 18, MASKING IS STILL REQUIRED INDOORS.

This next week will allow parents the time to discuss these changes with their children to help them understand their parent's personal directions for masking indoors and discuss the importance of welcoming and including peers regardless of how they choose to handle masking indoors. So too, the school nurse and other support staff will be speaking with students this week to build a supportive culture and ensure that students will be comfortable with their own actions and those of their peers. Important in all of this is ensuring that students are not stigmatized, one way or the other, regarding their choice to continue or to discontinue indoor masking.

When we return from spring break on March 28<sup>th</sup>, the new protocols governing indoor masking will be in place. This means that (except for choir and music) masking will be optional, though strongly recommended, for indoor settings.

Along with the change for indoor masking comes change to the quarantine guidance from the County: When students are exposed in indoors settings, even without masks, they will NOT be required to conduct a home quarantine. However, masks will be required for all students in an exposed class for 5 days following the exposure and will return to recommended but optional masking after a negative test. This will greatly reduce the amount of lost instruction time due to the old quarantine model but does present some elevated risk for an outbreak, which is why we will have mandatory indoor masking for a 5-day peak-incubation period following an exposure.

Please remember that if the case count reverses direction and we find ourselves in another COVID surge, we will return to requiring masking indoors. During the last surge we came close to emergency closure for lack of staff. We can avoid closures and lost instructional time by ensuring we don't have outbreaks.

I would like to thank Faculty and Staff for their incredible resiliency, the COVID Advisory Committee for their thoughtfulness and expertise, and for the Board for the challenging task of weighing the many important needs that rest at the heart of our policies and protocols.

I look forward to seeing you this week as we prepare for the change from "required" to "recommended" indoor masking after spring break.

Sincerely,

Matthew Morgan  
Superintendent - Principal