

Wheatland Union High School District

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Nicole Newman, Superintendent



California Department of Public Health

Attn: Dr. Tomas Aragon, Director & State Public Health Officer Tomas.Aragon@cdph.ca.gov

Mr. Jake Hanson, California Conference of Local Health Officers Jake.Hanson@cdph.ca.gov

Dr. Rohan Radhaskrishna, Office of Health Equity Rohan.Radhaskrishna@cdph.ca.gov

PO Box 997377, MS 0500

Sacramento, CA 95899-7377

June 25, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Wheatland Union High School District Board of Trustees, I am writing today to urge your department to change its guidance mandating masks for students and staff in public schools.

There are a number of reasons why we believe allowing students and staff to go without masks is the best and safest course of action. Among those reasons is the emotional impact that the pandemic has had on our students. It is axiomatic in schools that following traumatic events, returning to normal routines quickly is necessary and most beneficial for the students' emotional health. We are doing everything possible to help support students physical and psychological healing in planning for a "normal" start to the upcoming school year. Continuing to mandate masks creates a constant reminder to the students of the fear and uncertainty they experienced during the peak of the pandemic. It does not, obviously, help us support them in returning to normal, and comforting, routines.

We have resisted strong community pressure to ignore some unpopular CDPH guidance. We took a firm stance because, while we could measure the impacts of the physical safety practices, we could not quantify how those measures affected our students' emotional health. However, it is now clear that sufficient data exists to say, with some certainty, that the negative emotional influences of continually reminding students of the pandemic, is becoming nearly as detrimental as the physical dangers associated with a COVID – 19 infection. In short, the skyrocketing rates of suicidal ideation, and students seeking counseling, call for a different approach.

Throughout this pandemic, we have tried our best to implement CDPH guidance to slow the spread of the virus. Our mantra has been that we, "follow the science" to keep our students, staff and community safe. At this point, with numbers of vaccinated individuals climbing constantly, and particularly because young children are not as susceptible to infection or transmission, it seems counter intuitive to require ongoing masking. For this, and the other reasons detailed above, we respectfully request that you change the guidance to allow our students and staff to be mask-free as much as possible in school.

Educationally yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicole Newman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Nicole Newman, Superintendent