



July 23, 2021

Dear SUSD Families:

As shared in the July 13, 2021 communication to you, we will provide an update next week on our updated COVID protocols and mitigation strategies that are consistent with Arizona statutes and guidance from the Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH). We anticipate the update to be available no later than Thursday, July 29. However, we have received a number of inquiries, comments, and concerns regarding masks and decided to send this in advance of our full COVID protocol update.

Beginning on May 14, 2021, SUSD communicated that masks will be optional for the upcoming school year. While some have urged us to consider mandating them for those who are not yet eligible for the vaccine, state law prohibits any school district from implementing a mask mandate as a condition of participating in in-person instruction. Consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and MCDPH, the district is strongly recommending that those who are not vaccinated wear masks while indoors.

However, there is an order by the CDC that requires masks to be worn on public transportation. This order supersedes state law and must be followed by the school district. There was a specific question regarding whether it applied to school buses, and as you will see below, the CDC confirmed that the order applies to school buses, whether they are operated by the district or by a private provider. SUSD will be complying with this federal requirement. Students who choose to ride the bus, along with SUSD bus drivers, will be required to wear masks while *on the bus*. Students are not required to wear masks while waiting at a bus stop or after they disembark, and drivers are not required to wear masks if no students are on the bus.

Sincerely,

SUSD Administration

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<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/face-masks-public-transportation.html>

Excerpts from the FAQ document found on the CDC website:

Are masks required on school buses?

Yes, passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses, including on buses operated by public and private school systems, subject to the exclusions and exemptions in CDC's Order. Operators of school buses should refer to the U. S. Department of Education's [COVID-19 Handbook](#) for additional guidance.

Do personnel operating passenger-carrying conveyances need to wear a mask at all times while on the conveyance?

Personnel operating passenger-carrying conveyances (e.g., crew members, drivers, conductors), must wear a mask while indoors on the conveyance, unless the person operating the conveyance is the only person on

the conveyance, or the conveyance is operated by a team who all live in the same household and are the only people on the conveyance.

If the conveyance has outdoor areas, wearing a mask is not required outdoors. However, CDC [continues to recommend](#) people who are not [fully vaccinated](#) wear a mask in these areas to protect themselves and others. Additionally, operators of conveyances (i.e., employers), at their discretion, may require personnel operating conveyances to wear masks in outdoor areas of the conveyance.

Why is a mask requirement still needed?

Public transportation conveyances and transportation hubs are locations where large numbers of people may gather, and physical distancing can be difficult. Furthermore, many people need to take public transportation for their livelihoods. Personnel operating the conveyance and passengers (including young children) might be unvaccinated, and some on board might be at increased risk of severe illness (including some who might not be protected by vaccination because of weakened immune systems). Such people may not have the option to disembark or relocate to another area of the conveyance, such as on an airplane during flight or a bus or train while it is in motion. Transportation hubs are also places where people depart to different geographic locations, both across the United States and around the world. Therefore, an exposure in a transportation hub can have consequences to many destination communities if people become infected after they travel.

CDC will no longer require people to wear a mask in outdoor areas of conveyances and transportation hubs because of the lower risk of transmission outdoors; however, CDC [continues to recommend](#) people who are not [fully vaccinated](#) wear a mask in these areas to protect themselves and others.

Correct and consistent use of masks in indoor areas on public transportation conveyances and indoor areas of transportation hubs will protect travelers and workers, enable safe and responsible travel during the pandemic, and help to reduce the spread of COVID-19.