



December 9, 2022

Superintendent's Message: Illness Prevention and Return to School Testing

Dear Parents, Guardians and Staff,

The countdown to winter break has begun! We would like to end this semester with high attendance, which means we need to take precautions to prevent or minimize illness.

Masking is strongly recommended

Wear well-fitted masks in indoor public spaces, including school classrooms, offices and auditoriums. Masks are a great way to slow the spread of all respiratory viruses, not just COVID. Masks are strongly recommended by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) for ages two and up. Here is a recent study reflecting the effectiveness of masking: [Lifting Universal Masking in Schools — Covid-19 Incidence among Students and Staff | NEJM](#)

Stay home if sick

As a reminder, we ask that if your child(ren) are sick, please keep them home. This includes staff members, as well. Many respiratory illnesses are circulating in LA County, including COVID-19, RSV, and influenza, and even if you test negative for COVID-19, everyone should stay home if they have any symptoms of respiratory illness, including, fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, congestion and/or runny nose. As a reminder, in addition to the common symptoms of respiratory illness, COVID-19 symptoms may also include new loss of taste or smell, nausea or vomiting, and/or diarrhea.

Winter break

As a reminder, all SMMUSD schools will be closed for winter break starting on Dec. 17, with elementary students returning to school on Jan. 3 and secondary students returning on Jan. 4.

We know for many of our families the end of the year holidays is a time of joyous celebrations full of loved ones and family time. With this in mind, SMMUSD wants to ensure we take all the proper return-from-break safety measures and start the new year safe and healthy. The LACDPH has provided an info sheet to help parents keep their kids healthy this winter:

[English](#) / [Spanish](#)

Return from winter break testing

Your school site will be sending multiple free at-home COVID-19 test kits with each student so they are able to test prior to returning to school. Please have your student test if they develop any symptoms of illness over break. **Very important: please have your student test the evening before or morning of their return to school.** Watch for instructions from your principal regarding distribution and ensure your student tests upon return. Staff, please test, too.

We are seeing a spike in cases throughout the District and this increase is projected to continue in Los Angeles County for the next few weeks. This LA Times article dated Dec. 7, 2022 describes what is going on: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-12-07/why-is-covid-surge-signals-danger>

Free COVID19 and flu vaccines are available to children and adults. Schedule at: <https://www.myturn.ca.gov/> or contact your medical provider.

We thank you for your ongoing efforts to keep our school communities safe.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent