

Gov. Brown will require masks in Oregon K-12 schools for 2021-22



McNary students show up for their first day of in-person school on April 13. FILE PHOTO, Keizertimes

Salem-Keizer students and educators returning to classrooms in the fall will have to wear a mask indoors, Gov. Kate Brown said Thursday, July 29.

The governor directed the Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Department of Education to create a

rule requiring masks inside K-12 schools for the 2021-22 school year, citing the wider spread of the more contagious Delta variant of the virus.

"The science and data are clear: the Delta variant is in our communities, and it is more contagious," Brown said

in a prepared statement. "My priority is to ensure our kids are able to safely return to full-time in-person learning this fall, five days per week and with minimal disruptions. With many children still ineligible to be vaccinated,

masks are an effective way to help keep our kids safe in the classroom, the learning environment we know serves them best."

Brown's decision comes after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended all students, staff and visitors at K-12 schools wear masks, even if vaccinated against COVID-19.

Salem-Keizer School District administrators had not yet made a decision about mask-wearing in the fall prior to Brown's announcement. Other health protocols, such as requiring physical distancing, remain up to individual districts as school resumes in the fall.

Oregon schools that fail to enforce mask-wearing rules for employees and students could be fined up to \$500 per day, the Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Health Authority said Tuesday, Aug. 3.

Teachers could also face penalties for working unmasked, the agency said, though it did not detail specific sanctions.

The mask rule goes into effect on Thursday, Aug. 12.

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