

Garfield-Palouse

600 East Alder Street
Palouse, WA 99161-8780
Phone: (509) 878-1921



Cooperative Schools

810 N 3rd Street
Garfield, WA 99130
Phone: (509) 635-1331

August 2, 2021

Dear Garfield-Palouse Parents!

On Wednesday, July 28th, Governor Inslee announced that ***masks will be required*** to be worn in all Washington public schools; by all students, staff, and visitors regardless of vaccination status. The Department of Health later that afternoon then released their initial reopening guidance ([K-12 schools requirements 2021-2022 \(wa.gov\)](https://www.wa.gov/k-12-schools-requirements-2021-2022)) for K-12 schools in Washington. The purpose of this letter is to provide you information on our reopening and plans for our return.

While we understand the frustrations surrounding the lack of ability to make these important decisions at the district level, the Department of Health and Governor's Office has made it abundantly clear that ***masks will be worn again this year***. The mask rule will be similar to last year with a couple modifications:

- All staff will wear masks inside the building when students are present.
- All students, grades PK-12 will wear masks inside the building.
- Students and staff will not have to wear masks during physical activities in PE class, at recess, or during class activities held outside.

As for extracurricular and co-curricular activities, we will update you when the WIAA releases their guidance, but for now will treat these activities as an extension of the classroom and therefore when outside masks will not be required.

Our students, staff, and communities did very well last year and their diligence and support allowed us to remain open all year with very little cause for concern. After an "open" summer, we understand it will be very difficult, confusing, and disappointing to have to return to masking when school starts.

As Superintendents, we strongly believe that this should be a local decision made by our communities. While many were hoping and planning on a less restrictive return this fall, the Governor's office, the Department of Health, Labor and Industries, and OSPI have made it clear that ***Ignoring this mandate is not an option*** for us as a district. The consequences to districts, boards, administration, and staff are real and severe if the mandate is not followed. ***Garfield-Palouse will be following the mandate of masks in schools*** and thank you for your continued support.

As this is a mandate, passed down to districts, the ONLY offices with decision-making power are the Governor's Office and Department of Health.

"Local community members will always have the right to bring their grievances to their elected leaders, but in the case of these public health measures, they are not local decisions. Local boards of directors have broad discretion on the details of instructional delivery. They are not empowered, however, to override the legal authority of public health officers or the Governor in times of a public health emergency."

~ Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction

If you'd like to reach out to the offices who make the decisions regarding the mask mandate, you may contact them at:

Governor's Office

- **Online Form:** <https://www.governor.wa.gov/contact/contact/contacting-governors-office>
- **Phone:** [360-902-4111](tel:360-902-4111)
- **Write:** Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA [98504-0002](tel:360-902-0002)

Rep. Joe Schmick *9th District*
Olympia Office
426B Legislative Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504
(253) 275-1425

Rep. Mary Dye *9th District*
Olympia Office
432 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504
(564) 888-2380

Washington State Department of Health:

- Online form: <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/opinio/s?s=DOHFeedback>
- Call: [1-800-525-0127](tel:1-800-525-0127)

As a district, we look forward to the start of every school year and this is no exception. The school calendar and schedules are posted to the website and please visit often for updated information.

Other information

Online

This past year Garfield and Palouse offered online or hybrid course offerings to students. We will not be offering an online option for students and families this year, rather we will only offer an in-person option. If a student wishes to do an all online program, that student will have to be withdrawn and either enroll in an online program that the family has sought out (and will have to pay for), or declare home school status.

Facility Use

We value our partnership with community organizations and recognize that last year took its toll on activities. The weight room in Palouse will remain open for use, and facilities open to community using DOH guidance. Please contact the school for specific guidance on gym and facility use.

Attestations

Students, Staff, and Visitors are still required to fill out attestations upon entering the building. Staff will conduct attestations for students as monitored last year. Visitors please check-in with the office to complete attestation.

As always, we greatly appreciate the support of our communities and look forward to working with you and your student's in the coming year. Enjoy the remainder of your summer, be safe, and please contact us with questions you may have.

Mike Jones
Superintendent, Palouse

Zane Wells
Superintendent, Garfield