**Inequitable Discrepancies= Inequitable Outcomes**

In his March 2021 amending proclamation, Governor Inslee stated, “…it is feared that the lack of in-person learning and other school-based supports may result in gaps in students’ learning and development that may last a lifetime”. The performing arts provide school-based supports for some of our most diverse and underserved populations. At a time when our state recognizes the fragile mental health of our students, we urge the Department of Health to recognize that students singing in a concert, playing an instrument, or performing a play or musical are no less valued than the students involved in sports. Just as the state has made it possible for young athletes to fully participate in their chosen activity unmasked, young artists must be given equitable access to their activities of choice. If cheerleaders can yell unmasked indoors, wrestlers can wrestle unmasked, there is no logical reason an actor cannot say lines, a singer sing notes and a musician play an instrument under similar guidance.

Performing artists deserve equitable consideration of their extracurricular activities. The current guidance provides detailed consideration for student athletes but not for extracurricular performing artists. Performing arts programs deserve the equal consideration for rehearsal and performances that sports are given for practice and competitions. In the attached chart, current guidance is laid side by side with a column summarizing the obvious inequities. On behalf of theater teachers, directors, and other performing arts teachers throughout the state of Washington, we respectfully ask the Washington State Department of Health to revise the guidelines for Performing Arts to more accurately reflect the consideration given to Sporting Activities.
Thank you, in advance for your time. We look forward to changes to the guidance as soon as possible.

Comparison of sporting activities guidance to extracurricular performing arts guidance

WA State Department of Health K-12 Guidance released August 10, 2021

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**COMPARISON OF SPORTING ACTIVITIES GUIDANCE VS. EXTRACURRICULAR PERFORMING ARTS GUIDANCE – Side by Side comparison:**

[SPORTING ACTIVITIES, FITNESS AND TRAINING GUIDANCE](https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/820-201-SportsFitnessGuidance.pdf)

\*Please note that, unlike [previous guidance](https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/COVID19%20Performing%20Arts%20Theater%20Sector%20Guidance.pdf), there is NO Performing Arts guidance document linked in the [K-12 Requirements 2021-2022](https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/820-105-K12Schools2021-2022.pdf)

GUIDANCE BEGINS ON P. 13. Please note – “Sporting Activities” includes 3 pages of guidance while Extracurricular Performing Arts Performances and Activities includes just 7 bullet points for all aspects of guidance.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MASKING GUIDANCE** | **INEQUITABLE DISCREPENCIES** |
| **SPORTING ACTIVITIES****(Copied from p.14-15)**  | **PERFORMING ARTS** **(Copied from p.17)** |
| Mask Requirements for Sporting Activities* **Universal masking is required by all athletes, coaches, athletic trainers, and support personnel when in weight rooms, regardless of vaccination status.** Weight rooms are high-risk indoor settings. They are often poorly ventilated, crowded and used by athletes from sports of multiple contact levels, as well as PE students. Practice physical distancing to the degree possible.
* **Masks are not required for athletes while competing in low-contact or moderate- contact sports indoors, regardless of vaccination status.** Masks are encouraged when practicing indoors. Universal masking is required indoors when not practicing or competing. Contact risk levels for individual sports are referenced in DOH’s [Guidance](https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/820-201-SportsFitnessGuidance.pdf) [for Sports and Fitness Activities](https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/820-201-SportsFitnessGuidance.pdf).
* **Masks are not required for fully vaccinated athletes competing in high-contact indoor sports. Masks are not required for unvaccinated athletes competing in high-contact indoor sports if they participate in screening testing.** Masks are encouraged when practicing indoors. **Universal masking is required indoors when not practicing or competing.** Contact risk levels for individual sports are referenced in DOH’s [Guidance](https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/820-201-SportsFitnessGuidance.pdf) [for Sports and Fitness Activities](https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/820-201-SportsFitnessGuidance.pdf).

o Indoor basketball, wrestling, and water polo are high-contact sports and require screening testing of unvaccinated individuals in order to participate. See the section on Screening Testing for Sporting Activities below.o Cheer is a high aerosol-generating activity. Fully vaccinated cheerleaders do not have to wear a mask when practicing, performing or competing. Unvaccinated cheerleaders do not have to wear a mask when practicing, performing or competing if they participate in screening testing. Universal masking of cheerleaders is required indoors when not practicing, performing or competing.o High contact indoor athletes who are engaging in practices off-season must either: Practice universal masking at all times, regardless of vaccination status; or Initiate the screening testing protocol of unvaccinated athletes to allow the removal of masks by all athletes, vaccinated and unvaccinated, while practicing. Masks must be worn at all other times when not practicing, regardless of vaccination status.* **Masks are not required for outdoor sports of any contact level** but are recommended in settings where unvaccinated athletes, coaches, athletic trainers and/or support personnel are in close proximity, such as standing on the sidelines, in a huddle, or sitting in a dugout.
* All coaches, athletic trainers, and other support personnel involved with sporting activities must wear face coverings indoors in K-12 settings, regardless of vaccination status.
* Referees who are fully vaccinated do not have to wear face coverings indoors when actively officiating and running (e.g., basketball). When they are not running, masks are required (e.g., talking with coaches, between quarters). Unvaccinated referees must wear face coverings at all times when they are officiating, unless they participate in screening testing.
* Masking is required universally for all spectators attending indoor K-12 sporting activities, regardless of vaccination status. Audience members should be seated in “family units” and those small groups should be spaced at least 3 feet apart.
 | Extracurricular Performing Arts Performances and ActivitiesPerformances* For performances, audience members should be seated in “family units” and those small groups should be spaced at least 3 feet apart. All audience members must wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status.
* Universal masking is required during performances for participants, including appropriate face coverings and bell covers on woodwind and brass instruments.
 | 1. ***No masking required******for athletes*** *competing in low or moderate contact sports.* ***Universal masking required for performers.***
2. ***No masks required*** *for fully vaccinated participants of indoor high contact sports. No allowance given for fully vaccinated performers performing indoors.*
3. ***Competition is considered*** *for all sports while no consideration of theater/concerts performances is recognized. Public performances ARE young artists forms of “competition” and are NO LESS valuable than a sports competition.*
4. *Cheerleading is noted as a high aerosol generating activity; is allowed to be an unmasked activity INDOORS and is given clear guidance for fully vaccinated and unvaccinated participants.* ***No such consideration given for singers, actors, or musicians*** *performing indoors****.***
5. *Screening/Testing information is given for “high contact” indoor sports. No such guidance or allowance is provided for Performing Arts students. For example, can unvaccinated students in a show/concert get tested just like the athletes?*
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***Summary:***

*Not only has DOH taken the time to consider the various aspects of individual sports, but they have also created categories and risk levels for each category. Absolutely no consideration is shown to the variety of performance types or risk levels for each. 2 bullet points are the only guidance given to cover concerts, plays, musicals all of which provide “competition” opportunities for artists the same way athletes are provided opportunities for competition.*

*Performing artists deserve equitable consideration for their extracurricular activities.*