

Elsie Arntzen, Superintendent

PO Box 202501  
Helena, MT 59620-2501  
406.444.5643  
In-State Toll-free: 1.888.231.9393  
TTY Users: 406.444.0235  
opi.mt.gov

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  
STATE OF MONTANA

Putting Montana Students First **A+**



**DATE: August 20, 2020**

**TO: Governor Steve Bullock**

**FROM: Superintendent Elsie Arntzen**

**RE: Mask Directive Changes**

Governor Bullock,

It is my understanding that your office has provided additional information to certain school boards and districts regarding your recent unilateral mask mandate, but not to others. Although I have not received any of this from you or your office, much of the information provided seems to conflict with your initial directive, which only creates more confusion and uncertainty as we begin to safely reopen schools next week.

Your education policy advisor has informed others that students seated at desks and socially distanced will not be required to wear masks. In addition, your office let a select group know that teachers in front of the classroom who are at least six feet away also are not required to wear masks. These are significant changes that need to be widely communicated to all Montanans instead of quietly decided in the Governor's office and disseminated only to a few individuals.

While I am encouraged that you seem to be somewhat heeding my requests for local control in this decision-making, much of the ill-timed guidance coming from your office is contradictory and inconsistent at best. Now is not the time for conflicting information as our teachers and students safely return to school.

Our parents and students deserve timely and consistent information as soon as possible as we look to reopen our classrooms. As a fellow statewide officeholder and the official elected to lead our Montana public education system, I reiterate my desire to collaborate with you to best serve our schools. However, I am unable to do so when my office is unaware of the last-minute changes you are making to your statewide mask mandate.

I ask that you please provide me, along with parents and our local communities, any updated information related to your implementation of the mask mandate in schools. Going forward, it is my sincere hope that you will collaborate and provide timely information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elsie Arntzen".

Elsie Arntzen  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

CC: Deputy Superintendent [Tim Johnson](#), 406-444-3449