



School District of the City of Iron Mountain

Jerome J. Sardina
Superintendent
sardinaj@imschools.org

217 Izzo Mariucci Way
Iron Mountain, MI 49801
(O) 906-779-2600

Dear Mountaineer Families,

We are very sorry to inform you that, once again, we will need to change direction regarding our current practice of not requiring students in grades K-6 to wear masks while in the classroom - a practice that has been in place since school began.

The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department Health Officer, Daren Deyaert has issued an Emergency Order pursuant to the Michigan Public Health Code, MCL 333.2451 and 333.2453, as well as R. 325.175(4), which is an administrative rule promulgated by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services pursuant to MCL 333.2226(d). To read more about the order, please click on this link: http://www.didhd.org/docs_pandemic_flu/maskorder.pdf. At this point, IMPS has been advised through legal counsel, that it isn't at our discretion as to whether we wear masks or not. The decision is statutorily assigned, and local and state health officials have authority to give mandates and directives that we are required to follow.

In addition, the mandate states, "This order is effective, Monday, September 20, 2021, and remains in effect until six weeks past the date the COVID-19 vaccine is authorized and available to persons aged five years through age eleven, or the CDC Transmission levels reach "low" or until further notice from the Health Officer."

Until further notice, students in grades K-6 will now be required to wear their masks while inside any enclosed building or structure of the institution. Likewise, all persons, regardless of vaccination status, providing service to any child in K-6, are required to properly wear a mask while inside any enclosed building or structure of the institution.

Please know that the number one priority of Iron Mountain Public Schools is the students and families of our community. We will comply with the current order issued by the Dickinson-Iron District Health Department as well as continue to consult with our legal counsel regarding these matters.

Currently, we are not offering any distance learning options allowing for students to stay home yet continue to stay connected virtually with their teachers. IMPS still holds to the value of in-person learning. However, we understand that we are in unprecedented times, and we need to consider learning options that will accommodate parent concerns throughout the continued COVID-19 situation. With this understanding, we are continually exploring the best ways to navigate these concerns while maintaining the integrity of our learning options. If there are any changes, please know that we will communicate any updates with our parents as soon as we are able.

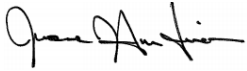
Please refer to the masking mandate by clicking on the link above for exceptions to the order. Also know that regardless of my personal opinions on this matter or the personal opinions within the School Board of Education, the administration and BOE work very hard to try and support the entire community- all parents, students, community partners, teachers, and staff- regardless of personal opinions. We try to strike a balance whenever we can, understanding we have a diverse community of opinions and suggestions on how to operate. Keep in mind, regardless of opinions on all the issues surrounding C-19, the school district has a duty to do its best to keep kids in school. This means we also have to do our best to keep the employees at work- Bus drivers, teachers, cooks, custodians, secretaries, administrators, and volunteers. Without all these dedicated people we would not be able to hold in-person school. I think we would all agree students have significant benefits academically, socially, and emotionally with in-person school. I also know the social and emotional consequences to having students in masks while at school. However, this is where we are trying to balance these complex issues. If we are forced to close school due to non-compliance with a mandate, I believe we would be in a much worse condition and our students and families would suffer more than they already have. Lastly, open schools also allow parents to return to work more easily, thus benefiting the suffering economy.

Lastly, IMPS has in the building offices and on our website a developmental condition mask waiver and a medical mask waiver form. Please refer to the order for specifics on obtaining and submitting a mask waiver. I will add the most important aspect of the requirements found in the order is the statement from the health department that reads the waiver must be “confirmed in writing from a Medical Doctor (MD) or a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) currently licensed to practice medicine in the State of Michigan.”

I know this letter will cause many emotions to stir within you. I am always available to help in any way that I can. I may not have the answer you are wanting to hear, but I will listen. I want to close by saying that every step of the way, as you can imagine, I have had hundreds if not thousands of conversations over the past two years with people in the community on all sides of this issue, and I have yet to speak or listen to someone speak who has been violent, rude, vulgar, unprofessional, or otherwise disrespectful. I cannot say enough about the Iron Mountain parents, staff, students, and community at large about how, when they approach the district, although emotional and very concerned, sometimes frightened, and rightfully so, everyone has kept conversations civil where we both can listen and talk. We may walk away disagreeing or angry, but we are working together. Considering the shape of our communities around this country, and the tearing apart of our relationships, this means more than words can express.

We appreciate your continued flexibility and understanding as we continue to navigate through these unprecedented times.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry Sardina". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "J" and "S".

Jerry Sardina
Superintendent