

August 20, 2021

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Bandon, Brookings, Central Curry, Coos Bay, Coquille, Myrtle Point, North Bend, Port Orford-Langlois, Reedsport and South Coast ESD superintendents are asking for your help! The start of school is just around the corner and we are in a challenging situation that none of us wanted to be in. Due to sharp increases in cases of Covid across the state and Oregon hospital beds nearing capacity, Governor Brown has mandated that all school staff and students wear masks while indoors when school starts. Our communities and school boards have asked the Governor to return the mask requirement question to a local decision. Governor Brown is steadfast in her belief in the science and recommendations of the Oregon Health Authority's trained doctors and epidemiologists that the mask mandate will keep students from getting seriously ill or worse and prioritizes in person learning for all Oregon students.

Our focus and goals are the health and safety of our students, maximizing in-person learning time and reducing disruption as much as possible. As school leaders we and our staff are required to follow the mask mandate. We know that for many of you this is very unpopular. We also know for some of you it is a life line for you or your child. There is no perfect solution.

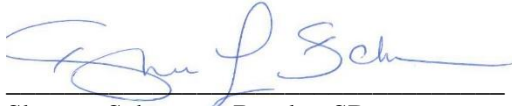
We know that some of you in our school community are considering the approach of sending your child to school with no mask, a mesh mask or instructing your child to remove the mask once in school. Here is where we need your help; we are asking you to please not do this. Actions such as this will not have an impact on the Governor or the mandate itself. Actions like this will likely disrupt the education of our students and set up adversarial situations within our communities and within our schools for a situation that our schools and staff did not create.

We have been asked on numerous occasions what will the Governor do if thousands of school children show up not wearing a mask? We believe the ultimate answer will be that she will shut down schools again and move everyone back to distance learning. As unappealing as masks are, we believe distance learning for every child is a far worse scenario for children and families. We know that for some of our families going back to masks is a deal breaker. We also know that some families are concerned about the unknown impacts on children of the delta variant. We support your right to make the choice that best addresses your concerns. If a family or student chooses to not wear a mask, the district will not be permitted to offer in person instruction for that student. Each school district on the south coast is committed to working with you to develop alternate learning opportunities for your child if you do not want your child to wear a mask while indoors or do not feel comfortable with in-person learning at this time.

The schools on the south coast will be giving students multiple mask breaks throughout the day. We know it is a lot to ask of our students to sit in a classroom with a mask on and we are making plans to get kids outside and unmasked often.

In order for us to open schools this September and keep them open, we are asking for your help. It is a big ask and we know that, but we need our families to please follow Governor Brown's indoor school mask mandate so that we can keep in person learning happening. If you wish to advocate for change in the current requirements, you can provide feedback directly to the Governor at: <https://www.oregon.gov/gov/Pages/share-your%20opinion.aspx>. You can also contact your local state representative and senator.

Respectfully,



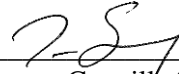
Shawna Schmerer, Bandon SD



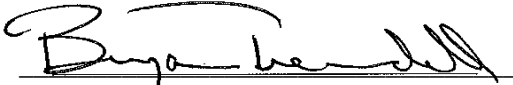
David Marshall, Brookings-Harbor SD



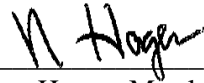
Eric Milburn, Central Curry SD



Tim Sweeney, Coquille SD



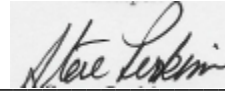
Bryan Trendell, Coos Bay SD



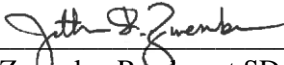
Nanette Hagen, Myrtle Point SD



Kevin Bogatin, North Bend SD



Steve Perkins, Port Orford-Langlois SD



Jon Zwemke, Reedsport SD



Charis McGaughy, South Coast ESD