



May 1, 2020

COVID-19 Updates

Below is a timeline of actions taken by the OPI with regards to the COVID-19 outbreak:

- February 28: OPI and DPHHS send a guidance [letter](#) to schools
- March 3: The Governor creates Montana's Coronavirus Task Force which includes OPI and OPI meeting with the Governor's staff to urge the Governor to waive per-pupil-instruction hours if schools have to close
- March 12: OPI sends updated [guidance](#) to schools and briefs the Board of Public Education
- March 13: OPI hosts a statewide [conference call](#) with district superintendents
- March 15: Superintendent Arntzen has a phone conversation with the Governor regarding school closures; the Governor announced statewide school closures and OPI issued a [statement](#). OPI COVID-19 [webpage](#) launched
- March 17: OPI hosts a second statewide call with local superintendents and submits [formal waiver requests](#) to the Governor to waive per-pupil-instruction hours and allow for flexibility in pupil transportation for the delivery of remote nutrition and education services. OPI also submitted requests to the Board of Public Education and U.S. Department of Education to waive required standardized testing.
- March 20: OPI hosts third call with local superintendents
- March 23: Superintendent Arntzen has a phone conversation with U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to discuss federal flexibility and waivers. OPI launches a remote learning course on the Teacher Learning Hub.
- March 24: OPI and MUS [announce](#) free offerings of ACT this fall, Superintendent Arntzen submits statewide [op-ed](#). Hosts fourth call with local supts.
- March 25: Call with Assistant Secretary Mark Schultz regarding special education
- March 31: Call with Deputy Secretary of Education and neighboring state chiefs

- April 2: OPI [releases](#) federal CARES Act estimates for Montana school and hosts a fifth statewide conference call with local superintendents
- April 7: OPI [announces](#) the securing of 11 USDA school nutrition waivers as well as guidance on safely preparing and delivering alternative school meals and educational materials
- April 9: OPI sends CARES Act funding and year-end flexibility [requests](#) to the Governor
- April 10: OPI, BPE, MT-PEC offer [guidance](#) on graduation ceremonies and the remainder of the school year.
- April 16: Zoom meeting with Montana PTA chapters
- April 23: OPI hosts a 6th call with local superintendents to discuss the remainder of the school year, the Governor's new directive, and distribution of CARES Act dollars.
- April 29: OPI hosts a call with Montana Legislators to provide COVID-19 education updates, OPI responses, and CARES Act info.
- April 30: OPI hosts a call with American Indian Legislators to discuss unique issues to American Indian students and schools.

Summary:

- OPI secures 11 USDA school food waivers
- OPI secures testing waivers from the Board of Public Education and U.S. Department of Education
- OPI requests 4 waivers from the Governor for local flexibility
- OPI launches a COVID-19 webpage and email address
- OPI launches a Teacher Learning Hub course to assist with distance learning
- OPI hosts 5 statewide conference calls with county and district superintendents, 1 with local PTAs, and 1 with tribal education leaders
- OPI participates numerous calls with the Congressional delegation, federal, state, and local officials as well as weekly conversations with statewide education advocacy groups which include rural and small schools

- OPI specialists have created webinars and resources for specific content areas including finance, special education, school nutrition, career & technical education, licensure, accreditation, content standards, data & technology security, federal programs, health & safety, Indian education, assessment.
- OPI issues dozens of press releases and media interviews
- Daily/weekly calls with statewide education associations and the Council of Chief State School Officers and briefings from the White House, Bureau of Indian Education, and Montana Coronavirus task force.
- OPI is proud of our employees over 90% of which are working remotely to still serve schools and put Montana students first