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Eleven Colorado schools comply with state law banning American Indian mascots

A dozen schools have until June 1 to get in line with the law



William Woody, Special to The Denver Post

The cafeteria inside Montrose High School sits empty last summer. Centennial Middle School in Montrose was deemed to be in compliance with a new state law forbidding the use of American Indians as mascots. Two other schools in the district, Johnson Elementary and Montrose High, have until June 1 to comply with the law.

By **JOHN AGUILAR** | jaguilar@denverpost.com | The Denver Post
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Eleven Colorado schools — ranging in location from the metro area to the Eastern Plains to the San Luis Valley — were deemed on Thursday to be in compliance with a 2021 state law [that prohibits public schools from using American Indians as mascots](#).

The Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, led by Lt. Gov. Dianne Primavera, debated the status of 23 schools across 13 school districts that feature names and mascots like Warriors, Braves and Indians, which are considered culturally disrespectful.

The Sanford School District, 25 miles south of Alamosa, is changing its mascot to the Thundering Mustangs from the Indians. Frederick High School, north of Denver, [changed the name of its mascot](#) from the Warriors to the Golden Eagles last fall.

They were removed from the non-compliance list Thursday.

That leaves 12 schools in the state, including Lamar High School (Savages) and Arickaree Elementary School (Indians), still out of compliance with SB21-116, which was signed into law last summer. They have [until June 1 to get right with the law](#) or face a monthly \$25,000 fine.

Just last month, the Yuma School District Board of Education [voted unanimously to drop the name “Indians”](#) as its mascot but was unable to come up with a substitute, opting to simply use Yuma for all sports team monikers. Despite that move, the commission on Thursday did not take the eastern plains district off the non-compliance list.

The commission also kept three schools in the Elbert County School District, southeast of Denver, on the list despite the district saying it has a letter from the Kiowa tribe giving its blessing to the use of the “Indian” name.

A tribe can give its approval for schools to use Native American imagery for their mascots if it feels the partnership would foster education, goodwill and cultural understanding. Littleton Public Schools reached such an agreement with the Arapaho Nation in 1993 to continue using its Arapahoe Warrior moniker. Strasburg School District did the same with representatives of the Northern Arapaho Tribe.

The schools removed from the list Thursday were: Campo Elementary School, Campo Junior/Senior High School, Community Prep School in Colorado Springs, Central High School in the Mesa Valley School District, Centennial Middle School in the Montrose County School District, Avondale Elementary School in the Pueblo County Rural 70 School District, Sanford Elementary School, Sanford Junior/Senior High School, Frederick High School in the St. Vrain Valley School District, Weldon Valley PK-6, and Weldon Valley Junior/Senior High School.

The schools remaining on the list are: Arickaree Elementary School, Arickaree Undivided High School, Kiowa Elementary School, Kiowa Middle School, Kiowa High School, Lamar High School, Montrose's Johnson Elementary School and Montrose High School, Mountain Valley School in Saguache, and Yuma's Kenneth P. Morris Elementary School, Yuma Middle School and Yuma High School.