



MONTANA SCHOOL *for the Deaf & the Blind*

Reopening Plan for 2021 – 22 School Year

Last Update: November 22, 2021

Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan

Date of Original Adoption: Original Document *Reopening Plan for 2021-21 School Year* adopted July 22, 2020

Date of Initial 1900 Policy Adoption: January 15, 2021

Date Plan was Last Revised: November 18, 2022

Next Regularly Scheduled Month for Consideration (At least quarterly): January 2022

March 2020 - June 2021

1. The Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind was ordered to close to in person instruction on March 15, 2020, under an executive order issued by then Governor Bullock. Districts were provided a two week period of time during which they could remain fully closed to instruction of any kind while developing a plan for remote instruction required by the Governor.
 - a) Although our district was authorized to remain closed, we quickly mobilized and began remote instruction during the timeframe when we were authorized to remain closed. Thereafter, our district continued pursuant to a reopening plan approved by the Governor beginning March 30, 2020. Please refer to our preferred MSDB Original E-Learning Plan on our Website.
2. On April 22, 2020, then-Governor Bullock lifted his Stay at Home Order, and Announced a Plan to Begin Phased Reopening of Montana. As part of that plan, effective May 7, 2020, all schools were provided the option to return to in classroom teaching at the discretion of local school boards.
 - a) Our school district finished the 2020-21 school year through remote instruction. During the 2020-21 school year, our means of operation included in person.
3. Our district developed a plan for reopening to in person instruction, with contingencies, and we implemented that plan for the 2020-21 school year. The reopening plan, details regarding which are provided below, included adoption of various model policies provided by the Montana School Boards Association under its 1900 Series, including model policies aligned with CDC guidance regarding mitigation strategies to limit exposure to and transmission of COVID-19 in school settings.
4. Our district is finishing the 2020-21 school year strong, having provided high quality learning opportunities to the students in our community in safe and effective learning environments.
5. We embraced a fundamental principle of providing extensive transparency to our community throughout the above timeframe. We publicly noticed, conducted online surveys, email correspondence, and provided extensive opportunities for our community to provide us with feedback regarding the School District's plans and we carefully considered such feedback in developing and refining the School District's plans throughout the last 14-15 months.

Safe Return to Schools and Continuity of Services Plan Contents:

March 2020-June 2021

Part I: Documentation of Meaningful Consultation in Developing and Refining the School District's plan from March 2020 Through June 2021:

We noticed, held, and invited public comment on our evolving plans for a safe return to school and continuity of services on the following dates since March 2020:

1. August 6, 2020 via Google Form to Develop Original Reopening Plan
2. February 1, 2021 via Facebook to Confirm 1900 Policy Series
3. August 24, 2021 via Email to Provide Input on ESSER Plan

Our invitation for public input included a general opportunity for the public to provide input and was provided to everyone interested, including:

1. Students; families; school and district administrators (including special education administrators); teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions; and
2. Tribes; civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations); stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.

Part II: Contents of The School District's plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services:

1. A description of how the district will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff:

Following the lifting of the Stay-at-Home Order and subsequent reopening of the state on April 22, 2020, MSDB utilized the Montana Public Education Center Roadmap for Safely Reopening Montana's Public Schools Using Emergency School District Policies and accompanying MTSBA Model Emergency Policies. Utilizing these resources supported our district's continued service to students with transparency and accountability while ensuring the operations of the school district reflected the circumstances in our community.

The policies ensured our Board of Public Education and school leaders honored the following priorities: quality instruction to students; a healthy and safe setting for students, staff, and the community; needed support of teachers and staff; and responsible financial and operational procedures. The policies provided an actionable plan for completing the 2020-2021 school fiscal year in a manner that met these priorities and secured district funding while providing an operational platform for considering long term innovations in the delivery of education services.

MSDB implemented policy options that facilitated collaboration between the Board of Education, administrative team, employees, parents, students, health officials, and community as we established protocols aligned with CDC guidance addressing how instruction was to be delivered to students; how gatherings and events would take place on school property; how the health and safety of staff and students would be protected and preserved while schools were open; and how financial and operational functions of the school district would continue during the period of public health emergency.

MSDB reviewed, considered, and addressed numerous areas of operation in our reopening process. On the topic of school district policy and procedures, the district considered emergency policies and procedures, adoption and amendment of policies, suspension of policies, and administrative procedures. To support students' academic, mental, social and emotional success, the district considered alternative grading, counseling, extended school year, student instruction proficiency determinations and declarations, support for particularly vulnerable students, transportation services, access to internet for students, food preparation and service, summer school and additional student instruction resources. To ensure the health and safety of students, teachers, and staff, the district considered cleaning and disinfection, community use of facilities, county board of health orders, diagnosis and confidentiality, hand washing and related hygiene protocols, telework, school closure orders, stay at home orders, symptom monitoring and isolation, travel quarantines, visitors, volunteers, vulnerable individuals, masks and personal protective equipment, and physical distancing.

Following the Roadmap for Safely Reopening Montana's Public Schools Using Emergency School District Policies ensured MSDB has remained in compliance with guidance and best practices provided by federal, state, or local health officials. Our school district has continued to adapt and adjust our policies as new and updated guidance and best practices have become available.

Further, the policies provide options for consideration through input from our board of trustees, administrative team, employees, parents, students health officials, and community as collaborative partners as we have worked our way through ever evolving changes due to the pandemic. By considering

all possible perspectives and factors when making the decisions to adopt or adjust a policy, or to implement a policy, we focused on the health and safety of our students, staff, and community for delivery of learning and services to our students. The policies have enabled us to adjust our procedures and practices during different phases in compliance with guidance and best practices provided by federal, state, and local agencies.

MSDB will continue to follow the policies noted below while engaging in a quarterly reevaluation process to continue to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of our students, teachers, staff, and community through 2024.

2. The extent to which the district has adopted policies, and a description of any such policies, on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC:

Topic	School District Policy Reference	Description of Policy (All referenced policies can be found at the end of this document)	Policy Adopted and Revised Dates
Universal and correct wearing of masks.	1905	1905: The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the safe and healthy delivery of education services provided to students on school property in accordance with Policy 1906. The supervising teacher, principal, superintendent or designated personnel are authorized to implement the protocols in coordination with state and local health officials. The policy establishes regulations that pertain to face coverings as personal protective equipment.	1. 1/15/21 2. 6/24/21 3. 11/18/21
Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding).	1905	1905: The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the safe and healthy delivery of education services provided to students on school property in accordance with Policy 1906. The supervising teacher, principal, superintendent or designated personnel are authorized to implement the protocols in coordination with state and local health officials. The policy establishes regulations regarding physical distancing by requiring students, staff, volunteers, and visitors will maintain a six-foot distance between themselves and their colleagues and peers throughout the school day inside any school building, on school provided transportation, and on school property before and after school. Staff members will arrange	1. 1/15/21 2. 6/24/21

		classrooms and restructure courses, transportation services, and food service to meet this standard.	
Handwashing and respiratory etiquette.	1905	1905: The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the safe and healthy delivery of education services provided to students on school property in accordance with Policy 1906. The supervising teacher, principal, superintendent or designated personnel are authorized to implement the protocols in coordination with state and local health officials. The policy establishes regulations regarding healthy hand hygiene behavior and symptoms of illness.	1. 1/15/21 2. 6/24/21
Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation.	1905	1905: The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the safe and healthy delivery of education services provided to students on school property in accordance with Policy 1906. The supervising teacher, principal, superintendent or designated personnel are authorized to implement the protocols in coordination with state and local health officials. The policy establishes regulations regarding symptoms of illness, cleaning and disinfecting, temperature screening, vulnerable individuals, food preparation and meal service, and transportation services	1. 1/15/21 2. 6/24/21
Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments.	1905; 3417	1905: The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the safe and healthy delivery of education services provided to students on school property in accordance with Policy 1906. The supervising teacher, principal, superintendent or designated personnel are authorized to implement the protocols in coordination with state and local health officials. The policy establishes regulations regarding symptoms of illness, temperature screening, public awareness, and confidentiality. 3417: In all proceedings related to this policy, the District will respect a student’s right to privacy. Although the District is required to provide educational services to all school-age children who reside within its boundaries, it may deny attendance at school to any child diagnosed as	<u>1905</u> 1. 1/15/21 2. 6/24/21 <u>3417</u> 1. 10/28/94

		having a communicable disease that could make a child's attendance harmful to the welfare of other students. The District will rely on advice of the public health and medical communities in assessing the risk of transmission of various communicable diseases to determine how best to protect the health of both students and staff. The District will manage common communicable diseases in accordance with Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services guidelines and communicable diseases control rules. The District may temporarily exclude from school attendance a student who exhibits symptoms of a communicable disease that is readily transmitted in a school setting. The District may notify parents of other children attending a school that their children have been exposed to a communicable disease without identifying the particular student who has the disease	
Diagnostic and screening testing.	1905	1905: The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the safe and healthy delivery of education services provided to students on school property in accordance with Policy 1906. The supervising teacher, principal, superintendent or designated personnel are authorized to implement the protocols in coordination with state and local health officials. The policy establishes regulations regarding symptoms of illness, and temperature screening.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1/15/21 2. 6/24/21
Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities	3413	Please note that House Bill 702 passed the 2021 Legislature and was signed into law effective May 14, 2021. New Section 1 of that law provides that it is an unlawful discriminatory practice for a governmental entity to refuse, withhold from, or deny to a person any local or state services, goods, facilities, advantages, privileges, licensing, educational opportunities, health care access, or employment opportunities based on the person's vaccination status. The law also provides it is unlawful for an employer to refuse employment to a person, to bar a person from employment, or to discriminate against a person in compensation or in a term, condition, or privilege of employment based on the person's vaccination status. Finally, House Bill 702 provides it is unlawful for a public	<u>3413</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1/10/03

		<p>accommodation to exclude, limit, segregate, and refuse to serve, or otherwise discriminate against a person based on the person's vaccination status.</p> <p>3413: Upon initial enrollment, an immunization status form shall be completed by the student's parent or guardian. The certificate shall be made a part of the student's permanent record.</p>	
<p>Coordination with State and local health officials.</p>	<p>1900; 1905; 1907; 3417</p>	<p>1900: In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board of Education has found it necessary to adopt temporary policies related to emergency school closures, the ongoing provision of educational services to students, meetings of the Board, gatherings on school property, health and safety of students, staff and community members, human resource matters and budgetary matters. To ensure clarity and transparency, the board has organized all emergency school policies into a temporary chapter. School District Policies Numbered 1900-1999 are intended to govern during any emergency related to COVID-19 declared by the President, Congress, Montana Legislature, Governor, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, County Health Department or the Board of Trustees.</p> <p>1905: The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the safe and healthy delivery of education services provided to students on school property in accordance with Policy 1906. The supervising teacher, principal, superintendent or designated personnel are authorized to implement the protocols in coordination with state and local health officials.</p> <p>1907: The Board of Trustees is authorized to declare that a state of emergency exists within the community. A declaration issued by the Board of Trustees is distinct from any declaration in effect or previously issued by local, state or federal authorities.</p> <p>3417: The District will manage common communicable diseases in accordance with Montana Department of Public Health and Human</p>	<p><u>1900</u> 1. 1/15/21</p> <p><u>1905</u> 1. 1/15/21 2. 6/24/21</p> <p><u>1907</u> 1. 1/15/21</p> <p><u>3417</u> 1. 10/28/94</p>

		Services guidelines and communicable diseases control rules. When information is received by a staff member or a volunteer that a student is afflicted with a serious communicable disease, the staff member or volunteer will promptly notify a school nurse or other responsible person designated by the Board to determine appropriate measures to be taken to protect student and staff health and safety. A school nurse or other responsible person designated by the Board, after consultation with and on advice of public health officials, will determine which additional staff members, if any, have need to know of the affected student's condition.	
How the district will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services.	1906	<p>1906: The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy to govern during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the delivery of education services to students onsite at the school, offsite at other locations using available resources including but not limited to online methods. The supervising teacher, principal, superintendent or designated personnel are authorized to implement this policy. The Board of Education may revise the school calendar to adjust the completion of the school year for particular grade levels and groups once students have satisfied the required number of applicable aggregate hours.</p> <p>The Board of Education authorizes offsite and online instruction of students in a manner that satisfies the aggregate number of instructional hours outlined in the School District's adopted or revised calendar for a school year affected by a public health emergency. Offsite and online delivery methods shall include a complete range of educational services offered by the School District and shall comply with the requirements of applicable statutes. Students completing course work through an offsite or online instructional setting shall be treated in and have their hours of instruction calculated in the same manner as students attending an onsite institutional setting.</p>	<u>1906</u> 1. 1/15/21 2. 6/24/21
How will the district take into consideration employees ability	1909	Governs personnel matters related to leave, compensation, payroll, evaluation, discipline, and assignment of duties during the public health	<u>1909</u> 1. 11/18/21

to telework due to COVID?		emergency while recognizing the rights of collective bargaining units.	
How will the district help provide paid leave for staff when no federal or state leave is available to employees?	1910	Creates the leave options available to staff under district policy and collective bargaining agreements, MOUs, while recognizing federal authority, if applicable.	<u>1910</u> 1. 11/18/21

June 2021

Part III – Updated Compliance for the District’s Previously Adopted Plan for the Safe Return to In-person Instruction and Continuity of Services:

Section 2001(i)(3) of the ARP Act states that a school district that developed a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services prior to the date of enactment of the ARP Act will be deemed to have met the requirement to develop a plan under section 2001(i)(1) as long as the plan meets the statutory requirements (i.e., is publicly available on the LEA's website and was developed after the LEA sought and took into account public comment).

The School District’s plan meets the requirements of Section 2001(i)(1) and (i)(2) of the ARP Act. The School District’s plan is available on our website and, as noted above, was developed through a process that included extensive public comment. Further, we have, as part of the organization of the School District’s plan for purposes of the ARP Act, revised the School District’s plan at a meeting held on June 24, 2021 that included not just a notice of opportunity for public input but which specifically invited meaningful consultation with and input from:

1. Students; families; school and district administrators (including special education administrators); teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions; and
2. Tribes; civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations); stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students. We have considered the input of all affected parties and have carefully deliberated regarding the best possible means by which our district can provide safe effective learning environments for each of our students.

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June 2021 - September 30, 2024

Part IV – Schedule for Future Review and Updates:

Consideration of this Safe Return to Schools and Continuity of Services Plan shall be added as a standing agenda item on each regular and special meeting of the board of trustees throughout the 2021-24 school years. The agenda item shall, at a minimum, include notice of any changes to the plan recommended by the administration with an invitation for input, notice of opportunity for public input, and consultation with:

1. Students; families; school and district administrators (including special education administrators); teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions; and
2. Tribes; civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations); stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.

Appendix – School district’s adopted 1900 policies in their entirety. Policies can also be found at <https://www.msdbmustangs.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/MSDB1900PolicySeries.pdf>

November 18, 2021 Updated Policy 1905, Approved Policies 1909 and 1910

BOPE Meeting in Missoula

Input Requested on November meeting Recommendations

- Staff Survey on suggestions via email invitation November 2, 2021 (Reminder Provided November 9, 2021) and recorded via a Google Form. Survey closed November 16, 2021.
- Parent Survey on suggestions via email invitation November 3, 2021 (Reminder Provided November 9, 2021) and recorded via a Google Form. Survey closed November 16, 2021.
- Google Survey posted on November 3, 2021 on MSDB Facebook Page.