



# EAST HELENA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School District No. 9

P.O. Box 1280 \* East Helena, MT. 59635

Superintendent/ Administration Office (406) 227-7700

Eastgate Elementary School (406) 227-7770 \* Prickly Pear Elementary (406) 227-7720

Radley Elementary School (406) 227-7710 \* East Valley Middle School (406) 227-7740

East Helena High School (406) 227-7730

*"Success For All"*



August 10, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians:

COVID-19 continues to affect nearly every aspect of how our families, businesses, and schools go about their daily work. Many of us at the East Helena Public School District have been gathering the past few months to develop a plan for how our schools can provide a safe and secure setting for students to learn. The enclosed plan builds upon all that we learned last spring when, with your help, our teachers and students quickly moved to home-based instruction.

East Helena Public Schools, District #9 serves students with transparency and accountability to ensure as many people as possible have a voice in the school's operations. The dialogue between school leaders and citizens has helped make sure our students learn in a manner that reflects the circumstances in our community. Our goal to resume instruction and operations at our schools relies on the following priorities: a healthy and safe setting for students, staff, and the community; helpful support of teachers and staff; and responsible financial and operational procedures. We intend to meet this goal by upholding these priorities.

This plan is the work of the board of trustees, administrative team, employees, parents, students, state and local health officials, and community members all collaborating to identify how instruction will be delivered to students; how gatherings and events will take place on school property if and when appropriate; how the health and safety of staff and students will be protected and preserved while schools are open; and how financial and operational functions of the school district will continue during this public health emergency. School leaders have considered all available options and perspectives to make decisions that reflect the circumstances in our community.

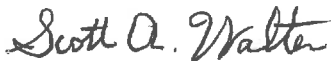
By listening to these voices, we have implemented measures throughout the District to promote a safe and healthy setting for learning, teaching, and working. Our District's plan relies on the practical application of scientific information to transform instruction, cleaning and disinfecting, transportation, food services, and activities. The District has implemented physical distancing, created cohorts of small groupings, decreased physical by reconfiguring classrooms and gathering spaces, developed school arrival and departure procedures including temperature checks; installed sanitizing stations, hygiene signs, barriers and other measures to assist with individual protection; and purchased material and supplies to implement all aspects of the plan. Further, the District requires students, visitors, staff, and teachers to wear a mask while in indoor campus environments.

We are confident these and other proactive measures outlined in the plan will meet our shared goal of returning to student learning in the school. While not our intention to revert to instruction away from the schools, the School District understands that even with our best prevention

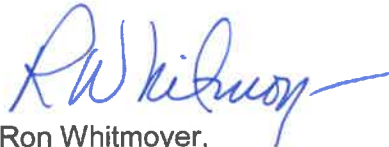
efforts, it is possible that there may be an outbreak of this highly contagious virus in our community. To prepare for this possibility, the District has developed a dynamic home-based instruction program in the event the schools are required to close for any period of time. This program will also be available to students during a period of instruction in the school if a family needs a home-based instruction accommodation. If you would like more information about how to request home-based instruction, please send an email to the address noted below.

Our School District is innovative, agile, and ready to get back to school. We've worked to think of everything to make sure the students can come back to their classrooms, work with their teachers, and enjoy their friends. If there is something you think we have missed or if you have questions, please let us know by sending an email to [rwhitmoyer@ehps.k12.mt.us](mailto:rwhitmoyer@ehps.k12.mt.us). Our School District remains committed to maintaining timely and relevant communications with staff, families and the community as this new school year begins. With your help, your students' enthusiasm, and our teachers' leadership, we'll meet this challenge and have a successful school year.

Sincerely,



Scott Walter,  
School Board Chair



Ron Whitmoyer,  
East Helena Superintendent

## ***Adopted Draft District School Start Up Plan***

Dear Parents and community members,

On Monday, August 10, 2020 the School Board adopted the draft plan for the start of the new school year. This plan was approved as the starting point for the school district to create a direction that will change according to new information and practices that improve safety. Each school will have its own unique issues and practices in providing safety minded protocols, in general however, the district will implement safety measures as stated here to minimize the spread of all contagions, but targeted at the COVID 19 pathogen.

Please be aware that though these plans are adopted by the Trustees, that the School Board allowed us the ability to change the plans quickly to adapt to the ever changing COVID 19 landscape. The Board acknowledged advocated for the need for flexibility and understanding. Please be patient and take great care to do your part to make this workable and protective of the health and safety of our students and staff.

### **Phase II EHPS School openings** under the current Governor's Order:

- Under Phase II the schools will open on August 26th with in-person classroom instruction.
- Distance learning instruction will be an option for some students as appropriate and approved using the **Distance Learning Application Form**.
- Current planning is subject to change from the school district or by order of the Governor or County Health Department.

### **Student expectations and limitations:**

- Face masks will be required of all students and staff in most settings when optimal social distancing cannot occur or when medically fragile or immunocompromised students or staff are present.
- Students are expected to provide their own preference of appropriate face mask as part of their regular school supplies.
- Teachers will work with students to routinely and regularly wash their hands or use hand sanitizer in the classrooms.
- Teachers and other staff will conduct temperature checks of all students daily along with asking screening questions.
- Students will be asked to use their own school supplies and not "share" as has been the practice in the past.

### **Students exhibiting flu like symptoms will:**

- Students exhibiting flu-like symptoms that may or may not include a temp of 100.4 or higher will be sent home.
- Staging areas for symptomatic or sick students are established at each school.
- Parents will be asked to pick up their student quickly that is found to have a temperature over 100.4 degrees or exhibiting symptoms. [Link to Symptoms](#).
- The student should not return to school until they have been cleared by the school nurse who will be in contact with the County Health Department.

## **Grouping and Scheduling**

- Students will be assigned to a “cohort” or team of 2 teachers in the elementary schools
- High school and middle school students will use an extended period block schedule to minimize contact with other students.
- High School and Middle School students will go immediately to their morning block class instead of gathering in homerooms.
- All Students will be assigned entrance doors by cohort and asked to social distance when entering and exiting the buildings.
- Physical distancing for all students will occur whenever possible and appropriate to the activity.
- All students will be dismissed on a staggered system from the buildings.
- Many hallways, when feasible, are being marked for directional traffic.
- Some student events, where adequate physical spacing between seats and rows can be maintained, may occur in limited situations.

## **Parents are asked to take precautionary steps to ensure student and staff safety:**

- Parents should closely monitor student wellness to watch for symptoms of COVID 19. [Link to Symptoms.](#)
  - In particular checking each morning for a fever of 100.4 or higher
  - Having students sanitize or wash their hands before leaving for school.
  - Question your child about how they feel before they leave for school.
  - Keep your child at home if they are sick or exhibiting symptoms of an illness.
- If a student exhibits symptoms or has been potentially exposed to COVID 19, then they must stay home from school and they should seek medical attention.
- The student may not return to school until they have been cleared by a medical professional and/or the County Health Department.
- If you, or your medical professional, believe that your child may be exhibiting symptoms or had exposure to COVID 19, you should also contact the L & C County Health Department Nurse at 457-8900.

## **Transportation and Busing:**

- Parents are being encouraged to transport students to and from school whenever possible to decrease the number of riders on buses.
- Unfortunately the shuttle bus option for students before and after school has been discontinued due to crowding and limiting close contact in large groups.
- As staff and time allow, a walking shuttle group may be an option at the end of the school day between Radley and Eatgate.
- Only students assigned to a bus route will be allowed on a bus.
- Buses are being limited to 24 family groups per bus.
  - Families of children will be required to sit in one seat on the bus.
  - Single students without siblings will be assigned to one seat.
  - Students will be required to wear masks
  - Students will be screened at the door of the bus with questions about how they are feeling before being allowed to enter the bus.
- Parents should wait at the bus stop until the bus pulls away with your child in case there is evidence of exposure to COVID or the student has been declined transportation due to symptoms of illness.
- Students who refuse to wear a mask on the bus will not be allowed to ride.

**Access to the buildings** by parents and other adults will be limited:

- In order to protect our medically fragile and immunocompromised students and staff members limited access to the buildings will be maintained.
- Under the current Phase II scenario parents and other visitors will be expected to remain at the office area and not allowed in the hallways beyond the office
- Parents and visitors are expected to wear a mask while in the building, immediately upon entering and throughout being present in the building.

**Large Gatherings and Assemblies:**

- Assemblies, open houses, performances have all been postponed or cancelled as a result of Phase II restrictions. Once we feel it is safe or we move to Phase III these restrictions may change.
- The cafeteria will be only used by individual cohorts in assigned areas or as social distancing allows.
- Lunch will be served in individual classrooms or cohorts.
- When space allows, cohorts may be allowed an assigned playground area for morning recess, lunch recess, afternoon recess, or instruction as space and scheduling make possible.
- Students arriving in the morning are being asked to head to their classrooms upon arrival after 7:55 am or as soon after as the school doors open.
- There will not be supervision on the playgrounds and parents and students are asked to not arrive at school prior to the school doors opening.
- Some student events, where adequate physical spacing between seats and rows can be maintained, may occur in limited situations.

**Hallways/Lockers/Playgrounds**

- Hallway traffic will be one way whenever possible.
- Student Lockers are not being offered, so a sturdy backpack is being suggested as part of the school supply list in middle school and high school.
- Procedural expectations will be taught within the content classes to accommodate physical distancing and safe practices.
- When space and time allows, cohorts may be allowed an assigned playground area for morning recess, lunch recess, and afternoon recess.
- Physical exercise and recess time will be coordinated when possible by teachers in cohort groups.

**Meals and Cafeteria**

- Student meals will be served in cohort classrooms.
- Special effort is being made to provide variety and nutritious hot and cold meals to students in the classroom.
- Routines and procedural expectations will be taught to accommodate physical distancing and safe practices.
- Students and staff will be required to wear face coverings during the classroom serving time and during preparation.
- Staff will maintain cleanliness of tables and seats between meal periods. Students and staff will maintain food allergy awareness and protocols
- Transition to service in the cafeteria will take place as safe practices can facilitate individual service.

### **Organized Activities/Extracurricular**

- The District will post signs and floor markings to encourage physical distancing and safety precautions.
- The District will limit the occupancy of events to follow current State or County Health Officials guidelines.
- Events may be staggered, offered with limited viewership, or canceled. The District may require attendance sheets or seating charts for events to assist with contact tracing. The District may require Health Screening for all those in attendance. Face masks and coverings may be required for all those in attendance, depending on the event and venue. Coaches, supervisors and building facilitators are responsible for securing and then disposing of health screening forms, when applicable, for the length of time designated by health officials. Hand sanitizing stations will be available at events. Students, faculty, staff, and approved visitors should follow the expectations of the District which promote healthy habits and reduce the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus within our community.
- Organizations and groups using the facility will be limited and require special approval of the superintendent or designee. All organizations will be required to follow District expectations and safety guidelines. Although we are not sanctioned under the Montana High School Association, we will utilize their safety practices if we decide to offer athletics this school year. More information will be available as updated. <https://www.mhsa.org/covid>.

### **Educational Delivery of Face to Face Learning**

- The District will provide face-to-face learning in a traditional school setting with the modifications, protocols and requirements put into place for student/staff safety.
- The accommodations and remediation for students who need support is being addressed in preparation for school reopening.
- The expectations of our classroom teachers have been adjusted in order to provide the best educational experience possible given the current circumstances.

### **Educational Delivery of Distance/Remote Learning**

- We will make arrangements to provide full time remote opportunities to students and families who require this model of instruction and will utilize district emergency COVID-19 Board Policy 1908 as a guide. Because of the staffing needs for remote learning, students and families are asked to make a quarter/trimester or semester long commitment to this endeavor.
- EHPS has established a protocol for enrolling in remote learning that includes:
  - Parents must complete a remote learning request form to receive permission for students to participate in off-site instruction;
  - This contract will need to be signed along with expectations outlined for parents and students;
  - Grades may be altered and be assigned for remote learning courses as pass/fail based on proficiency learning criteria
  - If a student has an active 504 Plan or IEP, the district will help determine if the accommodations and support can be delivered remotely or will need to be modified.

**Should Phase I** be ordered by the Governor:

- Under Phase I the schools will send students home to immediately to begin Distance Learning
- Limited Chromebook or iPad checkout can occur with an application and certification that there is good internet access at home
  - School hours will be observed for Distance Learning instruction and access to staff
  - A more rigorous and high performance instructional system will be instituted using Google Classroom as the base platform.
  - Student assessment and grading will be ongoing and based upon proficiency in accomplishing the goals of the school district adopted curriculum.
- Limited student access to schools will continue for the highest need students on a case by case basis.

**Should Phase III** be ordered by the Governor:

- Under Phase III the schools will transition quickly to full time attendance and begin to phase out Distance Learning.

Our plan was created utilizing the following plans as guidance:

Office of Public Instruction <http://opi.mt.gov/Re-opening-Schools>

Governor's Plan

<https://covid19.mt.gov/Portals/223/Documents/Education%20Final.pdf>

Academy of Pediatricians

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novelcoronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinicalguidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-person-education-in-schools/>

CDC Reopening Schools

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/reopening-schools.html>