



# East Helena Public Schools

School District No. 9

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*“Success For All”*



REVISED December 2022

Public Comment and Board Review/adoption - January 9, 2023

## **East Helena District #9 Detailed Safe Return to School Plan**

Dear Community members and parents,

East Helena Public Schools have achieved openness in full collaboration with our affected communities, relying on and incorporating CDC guidance on hygiene, physical distancing, following state, county and local directives regarding the use of masks and, perhaps most importantly, honoring Montana’s extensive constitutional guarantees of transparency and opportunity for public input. Our schools have pulled together in our community to successfully operate full time, in person instruction since August 26, 2020 and we are well on our way to a successful post-pandemic future.

### **District School Start Up & Reopening Plan**

As demonstrated by the actions of the Board throughout the last 30 months, they have shown thoughtful attention to the input of teachers, staff, and community members. The board approved a reopening plan that was, and still, with revisions, remains center to the district operations.

On Monday, August 10, 2020 the School Board adopted the final plan for the start of the new school year. This plan, which was initially proposed on June 8, 2020, was approved as the starting point for the school district to create a direction that will change as we learn new information and practices to 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 administration the ability to change the plans quickly to adapt to the ever changing COVID 19 landscape. The Board acknowledged and 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.

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

- Under Phase II and Phase III, the schools opened on August 26, 2020 with in-person classroom instruction.
- Distance learning instruction was and will continue to be an option for some 6th - 12th grade students as appropriate and approved individually depending on attendance and participation 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 are optional for all students and staff, but may be required when medically fragile or immunocompromised students or staff are present.
- Students who elect to wear face masks are expected to provide their own preference of appropriate face masks 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 may, on occasion, conduct temperature checks of students as well as asking screening questions.
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**Students exhibiting flu like symptoms:**

- Students exhibiting flu-like symptoms that may or may not include an elevated temperature will be sent home.
- Staging areas for symptomatic or sick students are established at each school.
- If a student is found to have an elevated temperature or is exhibiting flu like symptoms, parents will be asked to pick up their student quickly.  
Parents are encouraged to consult with school nursing staff regarding safe return to school for students who were symptomatic.

**Grouping and Scheduling**

- There are currently no adjustments to grouping or scheduling of students

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

- Parents should continue to monitor student wellness to watch for symptoms of COVID 19 or other transmittable medical illnesses.
  - In particular, the school suggests checking each morning for a fever,
  - Having students sanitize or wash their hands before leaving for school and when returning home.

- 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 of flu, RSV or COVID 19, they may be asked to stay home from school.
- 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.

The district will offer COVID 19 at home test kits provided by the Montana DPHHS to staff and families.

**Transportation and Busing:**

- There are currently no adjustments to busing

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

- Building access restrictions have been lifted and regular use of buildings by outside groups is allowed.

**Large Gatherings and Assemblies:**

- There are no restrictions in place for assemblies or large student gatherings.

**Hallways/Lockers/Playgrounds**

There are currently no restrictions for hallways, lockers, playgrounds.

**Meals and Cafeteria**

- There are currently no cafeteria use or seating restrictions related to COVID 19 concerns..

**Organized Activities/Extracurricular**

- There are no restrictions in place for organized activities or extra curricular activities.
- Events may be live streamed online utilizing the NFHS Network, ZOOM, Facebook Live, or our own website for viewing after the event.

**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.

**Educational Delivery of Distance/Remote Learning**

- Limited full time remote learning opportunities may be available to students in grades 6-12 with a track record of successfully working remotely on a daily basis.

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
  - All options to access remote learning will require excellent participation and attendance to distance learning instruction.

**Should School Closure** be ordered by Governor Gianforte:

- Under the Governor's order the schools will send students home 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.

Our plan was created and approved by the Governor's office in 2020 and was developed utilizing information from the CDC and Montana DPHHS as guidance:

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

**MT-PEC** A Roadmap for Safely Reopening Montana's Public Schools Using Emergency School District Policies.

## **East Helena Public School District**

### **Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan**

Date of Original Adoption: March 26, 2020 Action Plan  
March 26, 2020 Adopted Policy 1900, 1901 & 3650  
April 27, 2020 Adopted Policies 1900 Covid-19 Series  
May 11, 2020 Adopted Final Reading Policies 1900 Series

Date Policies were Revised: May 28, 2020 Updated Policies 1900 Series  
June 8, 2020 Updated 2nd Reading of Updated Policies 1900  
Sept. 14, 2020 Policy 1900 Series Review

Date Plan was Last Revised: December 14, 2021

Next Regularly Scheduled Month for Consideration: June 14, 2022:

#### Dates Reviewed:

1. March 26, 2020
2. April 1, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM
3. April 9, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM
4. April 23, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM
5. April 27, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM Adopted Policies 1900 Series
6. May 11, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM Adopted final Reading 1900's
7. May 28, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM 1900's Updates
8. June 8, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM 1900's Updates 2nd Reading
9. June 8, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Planning
10. July 13, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Planning
11. August 10, 2020 - Posted & accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Planning
12. Sept. 14, 2020 - Posted & accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Review
13. Sept. 14, 2020 - Posted & accessible via ZOOM Policy 1900 Series Review
14. Oct. 12, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Update
15. Nov. 9, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Update
16. Dec. 14, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Update
17. Jan. 11, 2021 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Update
18. Feb. 8, 2021 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Update
19. March 8, 2021 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Update
20. March 8, 2021 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Revised Policy 1905
21. April 12, 2021 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Update
22. April 12, 2021 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Revised Policy 1905
23. May 10, 2021 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Update
24. May 17, 2021 - Posted & accessible via ZOOM Mask Order Revision - 1905

25. May 19, 2021 - Posted & accessible via ZOOM Mask Order Final Policy 1905
26. May 27, 2021 - Posted & accessible via ZOOM Working Conditions 1905 EHEA
27. June 14, 2021 - Posted & accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Planning
28. March 14, 2022 - Posted & accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Planning
29. January 9, 2023 - Regular school board review with public comment -Posted & accessible via ZOOM

### **March 2020 - June 2021**

The East Helena School District 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.

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.

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.

Our school district finished the 2020-21 school year through remote instruction. During the 2020-21 school year, our means of operation included cohort protections for In-person instruction and also a hybrid model of offsite remote learning participation in classroom instruction.

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.

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.

We embraced a fundamental principle of providing extensive transparency to our community throughout the above timeframe. We publicly noticed, held meetings regarding, 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. March 26, 2020
2. April 1, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM
3. April 9, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM
4. April 23, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM
5. April 27, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM Adopted Policies 1900 Series
6. May 11, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM Adopted final Reading 1900's
7. May 28, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM 1900's Updates
8. June 8, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM 1900's Updates 2nd Reading
9. June 8, 2020 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Planning
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23. May 10, 2021 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Update
24. May 17, 2021 - Posted & accessible via ZOOM Mask Order Revision - 1905
25. May 19, 2021 - Posted & accessible via ZOOM Mask Order Final Policy 1905
26. May 27, 2021 - Posted & accessible via ZOOM Working Conditions 1905 EHEA
27. June 14, 2021 - Posted & accessible via ZOOM School Re-Opening Planning

28. January 10, 2022 - TBA Posted and accessible via ZOOM - Re-opening revision review
29. March 14, 2022 - Posted and accessible via ZOOM - Re-opening revision review
30. January 9, 2023 - Regular school board review with public comment -Posted & accessible via ZOOM

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

East Helena Public School District provided in-person instruction to a majority of its students during the 2020-2021 school year and thereby is recognized to have safely reopened and provided continuity of services to its students and is recognized to have engaged in meaningful consultation with stakeholders in the course of 28 public meetings. East Helena Public Schools (EHPS) has committed to periodic review and, as necessary, revision of our plans.

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

Following the lifting of the Stay-at-Home Order and subsequent reopening of the state on April 22, 2020, East Helena Public School District 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 Trustees 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.

East Helena Public School District implemented policy options that facilitated collaboration between the Board of Trustees, 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.

East Helena Public School District 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, 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 East Helena Public School District 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.

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 months of 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 14, 2021 and this latest revision will be reviewed in a public meeting on January 10, 2022 that included not just a notice of opportunity for public input but which specifically invited meaningful consultation with and input from students; families; school and district administrators; special education administrators; teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions as demonstrated at multiple Board meetings.

East Helena Public Schools has and will continue to consider 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.

East Helena Public School District will continue to follow the policies of the Board of Trustees available on the [Website](#) while engaging in reevaluation processes to continue to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of our students, teachers, staff, and community through 2024.

#### **Appendix – East Helena Public School District**

[EHPS website URL](#)

[EHPS school district's adopted 1900 policies in their entirety](#)

**MT-PEC *A Roadmap for Safely Reopening Montana's Public Schools Using Emergency School District Policies.***