

MCPS COVID -19 Response Plan



Published August 14, 2020

Dear MCPS Community,

Thank you for your interest and questions related to the Missoula County Public Schools response to COVID-19 and our plans for restarting the 2020-21 school year. In developing this guidance document, we were focused on the safety and welfare of our students, staff and community. While we know there may be risks related to possible transmission of the COVID-19 virus, we are attempting to manage that risk with careful planning, both in our procedures and in our school schedule. I hope that this document provides you with relevant details and strategies related to how we intend to operate our schools in the coming months. After reading over this document, if you have additional questions regarding District or School protocols, I would encourage you to reach out to your school principal and/or my office.

- Rob Watson, MCPS Superintendent

We had many staff and volunteers involved in the creation of our restart plans. I would like to thank all those who gave up countless hours over the past few months to develop this guidance for our District. In addition to staff input, we also used guidance from four specific sources to develop the MCPS response to COVID-19. The sources are listed below:

- [Governor's Plan](#) for Reopening Safe and Healthy Schools for Montana
- [Office of Public Instruction](#), Reopening Montana Schools Guidance
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), COVID-19 Planning Considerations, Guidance for School Re-Entry
- [Montana Academy of Pediatrics](#), School Reopening Recommendations

Introduction

It is our intention to reopen our schools for in-person, face-to-face instruction for the 2020/21 school year. As we put together our plan for reopening our 18 school campuses, we want to share the guiding principles that inform our decisions:

- Our plan will be responsive to the physical and mental health and wellness of our students and staff.
- Working closely with our county health department, our plan will be based on the COVID-19 conditions in our community.
- Our plan will adhere to the guidelines and directives of the Governor, the Missoula City County Health Department, the Montana Office of Public Instruction, and the Centers for Disease Control.
- Our plan relies on flexibility, adaptation, and collaboration from students, families, staff, and the greater Missoula community.
- Seeley-Swan High School, Willard Alternative Learning High School Program and Jefferson Early Learning Center have smaller student populations and have been given

permission to adapt the protocols to their environment and/or deviate from District phasing plans for in-person instruction.

- The changing nature of the COVID-19 virus will mean that our plan will change and adapt to new guidance. This is a live document that will be updated as we receive additional guidance. We will continue to provide updates of our plan for our school Board, staff, students, and families.

Decision making around which phase we will be in for the start of the year and how we will make decision around movement between phases

It is important for us to monitor local COVID-19 data and make a decision regarding what is best for our District based on Missoula county data. We have been coordinating with the MCCHD and they have shared some relevant metrics to consider:

- new case counts,
- rate of transmission (AKA R-t), and
- incidence rates per 10000
- Other relevant data as it becomes available

Links that will be used to gather data:

- Missoula City County Health Department: [Epidemiology Page](#)
- University of Montana, [Center for Population Health Research](#)

We will use all available data to make the most appropriate decision for our District and our community. In addition to this important data, we will be receiving direct guidance from our county health department regarding the spread of COVID-19 within our community and the potential impacts on our schools. This information will guide administrative recommendation to our school board regarding the start of the year and the movement between phases. Our phased reopening may not be the same as the Governor's Phases. In other words, even if the State of MT moves to Phase 3 of their reopening schedule, MCPS may operate in a different phase. To see our phasing model along, please read more details in the [Phases of Reopening section of this Plan](#).

MCPS COVID-19 Leadership Team

Name	Title
Rob Watson	Superintendent
Russ Lodge	Assistant Superintendent
Pat McHugh	Executive Director of Business and Operation
David Rott	Executive Director of Human Resources
Dr. Elise Guest	Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Amy Shattuck	Federal Programs Director
Virginia Haines	Special Education Director
Rae Cooper	Technology Director, Principal MCPS Online Academy
Burley McWilliams	Operations Director
Hatton Littman	Communications Director
Brooke Krininger	Nursing Supervisor
KaCee Ballou	President, Missoula Educators Association
Sheri Postma	President, Merged Missoula Certified Employees Association

MCPS Board of Trustees

Jeffrey Avgeris	K-12 trustee, serving both the elementary and high school districts
Grace Decker	K-12 trustee, serving both the elementary and high school districts
Marcia Holland	Chair, High school trustee, representing the Hellgate High School District area
Diane Lorenzen	Vice Chair, K-12 trustee, serving both the elementary and high school districts
Vicki McDonald	K-12 trustee, serving both the elementary and high school districts
Koan Mercer	K-12 trustee, serving both the elementary and high school districts
Wilena Old Person	K-12 trustee, serving both the elementary and high school districts
Michael Smith	K-12 trustee, serving both the elementary and high school districts
Sharon Sterbis	High school trustee representing the K-8 districts of Bonner and Target Range
Jennifer Vogel	High School representing K-8 districts of Seeley Lake, Swan, Clinton, Sunset and Potomac
Ann Wake	High School trustee representing K-8 districts of Lolo, Woodman and DeSmet

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Dear MCPS Community.](#)

[Introduction](#)

[PHASES OF REOPENING](#)

[BASIC OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL SCHOOL BUILDINGS: IN PERSON LEARNING](#)

[BEFORE AND AFTERSCHOOL CARE](#)

[COMMUNICATIONS WITH FAMILIES](#)

[COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES](#)

[MCPS ONLINE ACADEMY](#)

[PPE/ AND SANITATION SUPPLIES](#)

[STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION](#)

[TRAFFIC EDUCATION](#)

[VENTILATION SYSTEMS IN OUR BUILDINGS](#)

[MCPS Parent Responsibilities During COVID-19](#)

PHASES OF REOPENING

MCPS Return to School, Fall 2020, What you can expect.

State or Local Health Directives		Safety and Health Protocols*	On-site and/or Remote Learning
Phase 0 REMOTE LEARNING	Local or State Stay at home order	All school facilities are closed to the public	Full time remote learning at home.
Phase 1 HYBRID MODEL	Restricted local or state operations Limits on group size at 10-15, without social distancing, as per local or state order.	<p>Students and staff are monitored during the day for symptoms. Symptomatic individuals isolated & sent home. Health screening done at home.</p> <p>Handwashing and steps to limit germ transmission are pro-actively taught and dedicated time throughout the day</p> <p>Student groups will be kept together in static groups (AKA Cohort Groups) for contact tracing and limiting transmission</p> <p>Frequent sanitizing of surfaces and bathrooms</p> <p>Face coverings required for all students and staff; always while indoors and on buses. Required for outdoor groups when social distancing is not possible.</p> <p>No public visitors to schools</p>	<p>Blended Model of on-site and remote learning</p> <p>Learning will occur two days per week on-site with a shortened day schedule.*** The remaining three days per week occur remotely.</p> <p>Students will be divided into two groups alphabetically, students with last names beginning A-K will attend 2-days on-site and students with last names beginning L-Z will attend 2 different days on-site. (Keeping families together, even if last names differ)</p> <p>Families could choose 100% virtual learning through our MCPS Online Academy**</p> <p>In the event there is a confirmed case, either staff or student, there could be a short term school closure as recommended by MCCHD</p> <p>No extracurricular activities (K-8)</p> <p>Limited HS extracurricular activities.</p>

Phase 2 MODIFIED SCHOOL MODEL	<p>Modified local or state operations Limits on group size at 50, without social distancing, as per local or state order</p>	<p>Students and staff are monitored during the day for symptoms. Symptomatic individuals isolated & sent home. Health screening done at home.</p> <p>Handwashing and steps to limit germ transmission are pro-actively taught and dedicated time throughout the day</p> <p>Student groups will be kept together in static groups (AKA cohort groups) for contact tracing and limiting transmission</p> <p>Frequent sanitizing of surfaces and bathrooms</p> <p>Face coverings required for all students and staff; always while indoors and on buses. Require for outdoor groups when social distancing is not possible</p> <p>No public visitors to schools</p>	<p>Modified School Model</p> <p>On-site learning will return to every day for all students, with a shortened day schedule.***</p> <p>Near to full capacity in schools with modified operations and school activities (modified lunch or recess to limit large grouping)</p> <p>Modified school schedule, shortened day and block schedule to allow for static groupings of students and limit mixing of students</p> <p>Families could choose 100% virtual learning through our MCPS Online Academy**</p> <p>In the event there is a confirmed case, either staff or student, there could be a short term school closure as recommended by MCCHD</p> <p>Limited or modified extra-curricular activities in order to minimize mixing of groups</p>
Phase 3 TRADITIONAL SCHOOL MODEL	<p>Return to normal local or state operations There may be limits on group size</p>	<p>Handwashing and steps to limit germ transmission are pro-actively taught and dedicated time throughout the day</p> <p>Frequent sanitizing of surfaces and bathrooms</p> <p>Face coverings (TBD)</p> <p>Visitors will be allowed</p>	<p>Traditional School Model</p> <p>On-site learning will return to every day for all students, with a full schedule</p> <p>Students will rotate through schedules and routines as normal</p> <p>No restrictions on extra-curricular activities</p> <p>100% virtual learning available to some students based on personalized learning plan</p>

*This represents an overview of major protocols, there will be other mitigation strategies. Please see the [MCPS COVID-19 Response Plan on our website for a comprehensive list](#).

**MCPS Online Academy is a separate, 100% virtual program available to any student in Phase 1 or 2.

***Shortened schedules under Phase 2: K-5 8:30am-2:10pm; 6-8 8am-1:30pm; HS 10am-3:30pm

BASIC OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL SCHOOL BUILDINGS: IN PERSON LEARNING

BUS OPERATIONS

Based on the advice from Missoula City County Health Department (MCCHD) we will limit our bus capacity as much as possible. We will also maximize social distancing protocols for transportation as much as we are able, including the following:

- We will request parents to encourage students maintain a 6 foot distance from each other while waiting for the bus and while loading the bus
- We will establish seating charts and establish protocols to limit the interaction between students while loading and unloading the bus.
- We will direct siblings to share seats when needed

All students and the bus driver will wear a face covering while on the bus. Buses will be cleaned throughout the day and high touch surfaces cleaned between routes.

Our staggered start and ends times between K5, 6-8 and 9-12 under phase 1 and phase 2 allows us to lower the overall numbers on each bus by using extra buses to accommodate those routes that have higher numbers of students riding the bus.

We also encourage parents to consider transporting their students personally to limit student loads on buses whenever possible.

CLOTH FACE COVERINGS

In accordance with the Governor's directive, we will require students and staff to wear face coverings while on busses, inside our schools, office buildings and other worksites.

We will make exceptions for individuals who cannot wear masks due to medical or developmental reasons. Any consideration for an exception to the face covering rule may require appropriate medical or educational documentation. These exceptions will need to be documented through a formal accommodations process (504 or IEP) that will involve input from the student, parents and other relevant medical or educational professionals.

If students arrive without a face covering, we will provide one for the day, however we encourage families to provide their students with face coverings to ensure comfort and fit.

DAILY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Whenever we are in school, these are the start and end times, in Phase 1 (Hybrid Model) or Phase 2 (Modified Schedule).

This staggered schedule helps us to manage appropriate numbers and protocols on our busses as well as provides our staff time to plan and maintain cleaning protocols. We are currently working with a variety of community partners to provide after school childcare at each school.

We will remain on this shortened schedule until we move to Phase 3. We will likely not move to Phase 3 until the start of second semester in late January.

	Start Time	End Time
K5	8:30	2:10
MS	8:00	1:30
HS	10:00	3:30

EXCLUSION PROCEDURES FOR A POSITIVE COVID-19 CASE

For any student or staff with a positive COVID-19 test result, MCPS will closely follow the guidance from the Missoula City-County Health Department (MCCHD). This includes being isolated at home until there has been 24 with no symptoms AND 10 days since the last symptom. MCCHD will monitor the individual and release them to return to school.

For any student or staff that is considered a close contact (exposed) to a confirmed COVID-19 case, MCPS will follow the directives from the county health department. MCCHD will identify the close contacts, not the school. MCPS will cooperate with MCCHD to provide seating charts and contact information. Any individual who is identified as a close contact is required to quarantine for 14 days, regardless of symptoms or negative test. MCCHD will release the student or staff member to return to school.

[Missoula County Public Schools response to confirmed COVID-19, either staff or student](#)

ENTRY AND EXIT PROCEDURES

Each school will create entry and exit procedures for the building. These guidelines must be met at each building:

- Avoid any group of people in an area that is larger than 50
- Ensure that students and staff can practice 6 feet of physical distancing whenever possible as they enter an exit the building
- Everyone must wear a mask to enter the building (special exceptions allowed)
- Parents/visitors cannot enter the building until we reach Phase 3
- Staff members will be present at all open doors to ensure protocols
- All staff and guest teachers (substitute teachers or university student teachers/nurses) will be required to conduct a personal health screening upon entering the building each morning

Schools may use multiple entrances and exits in order to distribute students around the building and avoid large congregations of people.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

At K-5 and 6-8, under Phase 1 there will be no extracurricular activities, with the exception of those activities that provide after school childcare, for example Flagship or Campfire.

At K-5 and 6-8, under Phase 2, organized youth activities will be restricted to groups from within the school. In other words, activities or competitions that require mixing of students from different schools will not be permitted. At 6-8, intramural programs may still be allowed as long as students are competing against groups from within their school and cohorting of students is possible.

At 9-12, activities are governed by the Montana High School Association. Our schools will follow the approved MHSA schedule and guidelines for player safety. The final approval for any sporting events must be granted by the county health department. In Phase 1 or Phase 2, we are discouraging overnight trips and non-conference play, which generally requires longer travel.

Under Phase 1 and 2, activities at 9-12 that are not governed by MHSA should be limited to competitions and groupings within the school, rather than competitions that require travel or mixing with groups from outside of the school.

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

August 26th is the first day of school for in-person classes.

We will only host kindergarten, sixth grade, and ninth grade students on this day.

Note: These start and end times are for the first day only.

	Start Time A-K	End Time A-K	Start Time L - Z	End Time L - Z
Kindergarten	8:30	10:30	12:10	2:10
Sixth Grade	8:00	10:55	10:45	2:05
Ninth Grade	10:00	12:00	1:30	3:30

Food service will be available to all K, 6th and 9th graders on the first day.

Transportation services will not be available to K students on the first day of school.

Transportation services will be available to 6th and 9th grade students on the first day of school.

THE SECOND AND THIRD DAY OF SCHOOL

The second day of school, August 27th, will be a K-12 school day for all students with last names A-K. The third day of school, August 28th, will be a K-12 school day for all students with last names L-Z. Transportation services and food service will be available to all students.

Note: For families where children have different last names, all children within the family group can attend school on the day that matches the last name of the youngest sibling in the family, even if siblings are in different schools. For example, in a household with two siblings and the youngest sibling is in the L-Z group, but the oldest sibling is in the A-K group, both siblings could attend on the L-Z day. Any accommodations or requests for attendance on a day other than the defined alpha group should be discussed with the school principal.

Starting on the second day and continuing throughout the first semester, we will follow the staggered start and end schedule as defined below:

	Start Time	End Time
K5	8:30	2:10
MS	8:00	1:30
HS	10:00	3:30

SCHEDULE FOR WEEKS 2 - 4

During the second, third and fourth week of school, we will continue our Hybrid model where students attend in person 2 days per week and complete remote learning activities for the remaining days of the week. For consistency, we will ask students with last names A-K to attend on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and those students with last names L-Z to attend on Thursdays and Fridays.

Note: For families where children have different last names, all children within the family group can attend school on the day that matches the last name of the youngest sibling in the family, even if siblings are in different schools. For example, in a household with two siblings and the youngest sibling is in the L-Z group, but the oldest sibling is in the A-K group, both siblings could attend on the L-Z day. Any accommodations or requests for attendance on a day other than the defined alpha group should be discussed with the school principal.

Here is the schedule for the second, third and fourth week of school.

Week 2	
Aug 31	No School / Teacher prep/training
Sept 1 & 2	A-K In Person, L-Z Remote
Sept 3 & 4	L-Z In Person, A-K Remote
Week 3	
Sept 7	No School / Labor Day
Sept 8 & 9	A-K In Person, L-Z Remote
Sept 10 & 11	L-Z In Person, A-K Remote
Week 4	
Sept 14	No School / Teacher prep/training
Sept 15 & 16	A-K In Person, L-Z Remote
Sept 17 & 18	L-Z In Person, A-K Remote

We will follow the staggered start and end times for the school day.

	Start Time	End Time
K5	8:30	2:10
MS	8:00	1:30
HS	10:00	3:30

FOOD AND NUTRITION

All students, regardless of whether they are attending in person instruction, on remote learning days, or attending the MCPS Online Academy will have the opportunity to receive food services every school day. Regular meal prices, including free and reduced options, will apply.

For those students who are participating in remote learning or the MCPS Online Academy, they can access meals at any school building. It does not have to be their school of attendance, it can be the closest neighborhood MCPS school. We will provide grab and go lunches at the main office of each school building.

New this year, we are implementing a “Breakfast After the Bell” program at all K5 schools. This program will provide free breakfast for all students that they will eat in the classroom each morning.

GROUP SIZE

As of August 2020, the MCCHD has placed a limit on group size to 50, when physical distancing cannot be maintained. We have very few classes that are larger than 50. Those classes that are larger than 50, mostly music classes, will be split up or relocated to an area where they can maintain social distancing.

We cannot guarantee physical distancing in all situations, so we will limit the group size to less than 50, whenever we cannot physically distance. We will also require cloth face coverings in all situations.

Within our buildings, we will work to ensure students are physically distanced as much as possible throughout the school day. We have purchased plastic barriers to minimize respiratory droplet transmission for our elementary and middle school classrooms that use tables rather than desks.

Student groups will be kept together in static groups, also called cohort groups, to allow for contact tracing and to limit germ transmission.

INTENSIVE BLOCK SCHEDULE IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

In our middle and high schools, we will be using an intensive block schedule. Under this schedule students will only take two classes per day. By taking two classes at a time, students will spend about 2-3 hours per day on each class. They will also spend several weeks in these two classes before moving to the next set of classes. This will help us to reduce the number of times students change classes and mix in the hallways while they are at school. If we need to make a shift to full remote learning, we will continue to follow the two classes per day schedule. This will help students to focus on two classes at a time during remote learning, so they don't have to juggle too many teachers, deadlines, or skills and content. *Exact schedules including days and when class periods would switch will be shared by individual schools prior to the start of school.*

Here is an example of an intensive block schedule for a typical 9th grade student.

August 26 - September 18

AM Period 1: Math

PM Period 2: English

September 21 - October 16

AM Period 3: Social Studies

PM Period 4: Health Enhancement

October 19 - November 6

AM Period 5: Science

PM Period 6: Elective (EX: Music or Art)

Schedule repeats in Quarter 2. Semester ends on January 22nd.

GROUP AREAS

In general, we will restrict or limit the use of common areas like gyms, libraries and cafeterias. These types of common areas are difficult to disinfect between groups. There may be limited use of some of these areas when we can keep students in smaller groups and we can properly clean the area between groups. At K-5, lessons related to music, health enhancement, library and counseling will be taught in the regular classroom or outside if possible. Music and art rooms and gymnasiums at middle and high school will still be used. Using the intensive block schedule, we can limit these spaces to cohort groups throughout the day and properly clean these spaces between groups. We will limit group size for our larger music classes.

HANDWASHING AND SANITATION OF FREQUENTLY TOUCHED SURFACES

Students and staff will be frequently reminded about the importance of proper handwashing. We will also place no-touch hand sanitizer units throughout our buildings where sinks are not easily accessible.

We have developed a [cleaning protocol for all staff](#). We will complete frequent sanitizing of surfaces and bathrooms throughout our schools, office buildings, and worksites.

HEALTH SCREENINGS

Based on guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Missoula County Health Department, we will encourage health screenings for students to be completed at home rather than upon entry to the school. Conducting health screenings at the door of the school could create large groups and would impact school functions. In addition, recent guidance has stated that temperature screening may be ineffective for certain age groups.

Students showing symptoms will be screened at the office or isolated location within the school.

Parents will be provided with [this guide to conduct screenings at home](#).

Staff and other adults will be screened upon arrival at school.

All students and staff will be monitored throughout the day for symptoms and will be isolated and sent home if symptomatic.

UNIVERSAL TESTING FOR COVID-19

Universal testing is listed as an unsubstantiated practice by the Montana Academy of Pediatrics because of the limited value gained from the results. In addition MCCHD does not recommend antibody testing at this time, due to lack of confidence in the current testing process.

MCPS will not be conducting any universal or antibody testing at this time. Circumstances or improved testing processes may change in the future and MCPS will reassess this decision.

ISOLATION OF SICK STUDENTS

Each school will create a location for isolating sick students in accordance with CDC and MCCHD recommendations. Sick students will be kept out of the main office area and we will ensure that ill students are spaced far apart from each other as they wait to be picked up from school.

LARGE SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

While we are in Phase 0 - Phase 2, schools will find virtual alternatives for all large group activities or events that bring people into the school like:

- Open houses
- Back to school nights
- Parent teacher conferences
- Assemblies
- Performances
- PTA/Booster meetings/events

The Montana High School Association governs many of the activities at the 9-12 level. We will follow their guidance regarding sporting events and schedules. The MCCHD will have final approval on the organization and protocols around sporting events in our community. More information regarding these types of events will be shared by the Activities Directors at each high school.

LOCKERS

In order to avoid hallway gatherings, where students would be cramped and within six feet of each other, grade 6-12 students **will not** use lockers. With the intensive block schedule and only having two subjects each day, students will not have as many books to carry and store each day. The use of cubbies and lockers at K-5 will be managed by the teachers and principal.

LUNCH PERIODS

Under Phase 1 and Phase 2 food service will be made available to all students, but service will look much different. At most schools, food service will be Grab and Go or meals will be delivered to the classroom.

Breakfast will be a Grab and Go model at middle school and high school. At K5 schools, MCPS will provide a breakfast in the classroom, which will be free for all K5 students.

Due to the shortened school day, the lunch period will be shorter, 30 mins at all levels K-12. At K-8 students will likely be eating in their classroom or other space where cohort groups can be

maintained. Breaks will be given for restroom and passing between classes if needed.

At 9-12, due to space considerations, grades 9 and 10 will remain on campus for lunch, while grades 11 and 12 will be allowed to leave campus for lunch. This decision will be reassessed at the end of 1st semester. Principals will work out lunch delivery models so that students can maintain smaller groups.

Grab and Go meals will be available for pick up at all schools for any student who is on remote learning or participating in the MCPS Online Academy.

OUTDOOR SPACES/PLAYGROUNDS/ RECESS

Outdoor spaces and playgrounds can provide needed respite from extended time indoors. MCPS will allow for limited use of playgrounds and outdoor spaces, as defined by school principal. Emphasis will be placed on cohorting student groups and limiting numbers outside at any one time. Some playground equipment may have to be restricted. The use of cloth face coverings will be required outside, specifically when social distancing cannot be maintained.

SHARING OF SUPPLIES

Students **will not** share classroom supplies whenever possible. If students must share certain supplies or tools, those will be sanitized prior to the next use and students will be directed to wash their hands before and after use.

VISITORS OR VOLUNTEERS: NOT ALLOWED IN SCHOOLS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY UNTIL WE REACH PHASE 3

Under Phase 1 and Phase 2, no outside visitors will be allowed at school. This includes parent or community volunteers. Guest speakers, university recruiters and others will be encouraged to participate with our students in a virtual format.

Programs that require student and community member interaction will be done in a virtual format as much as possible.

Exceptions may be made for university students who are participating in an approved field experience, such as student teaching and student nursing.

Expectations will also be made for parents who may be attending a prearranged meeting at the school for educational or other program reason. However, these meetings should be done in a virtual format if possible.

This means that the following common guests in our school will not occur until we reach Phase 3:

- Parents walking their students to their classrooms, dropping off items, etc.
- Classroom volunteers
- Coffee Cart volunteers
- Booster volunteers

BEFORE AND AFTERSCHOOL CARE

At K-8, we are developing before and after school care programs with several providers from the Missoula community. These providers will follow the same safety guidelines and protocols that have been developed for our schools. It is intended that students would be able to stay at their school for after school care. This would allow for continued use of cohort groups and limit the mixing of students between schools. Specific program and sign up information will be shared by each school.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH FAMILIES

We will share weekly messages from the Superintendent and each school Principal with important updates about our COVID-19 plan.

Please reference this language in our [Missoula County Public Schools response to confirmed COVID-19, either staff or student](#) document:

Will we message the other students or staff in the school when we have a confirmed case?

- Depending on the number of students or staff involved, there may be a need to send a general message to other families or staff in the class or in the school.
 - Any messaging will protect the confidentiality of the student or staff member involved.
 - If a message is needed, we will work directly with the county health department to produce the message in a timely manner.
 - Parents will be notified directly from the county health department if your student is considered to be a close contact of a confirmed case.
-

COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

All of our 18 schools and the MCPS Online Academy students will have counseling support for social and emotional learning as well as course planning toward graduation requirements. We are still working out details about how MCPS Online Academy students will access individual mental health resources.

MCPS ONLINE ACADEMY

The MCPS Online Academy is our 100% virtual, online K-12 school dedicated to supporting our staff and students who cannot return to face to face learning due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The MCPS Online Academy will be available to students while we are in Phase 0 - 2 of our phased reopening

plan. The Online Academy may also be available to certain students who qualify due to significant health or educational issues once we reach Phase 3 of our reopening plan.

K-12 students will be taught by MCPS educators, however, they may not be a teacher who is a member of your student's home school. Students will maintain enrollment and placement in their home school. They will not lose their seat in their home school if they decide to enroll in the online academy.

The MCPS Online Academy will be a trusting learning environment for students and staff, with a focus maintaining connections between students and teachers, even while socially distanced and online.

Registration for the MCPS Online Academy is open from Wednesday, August 12th - Wednesday September 2nd. Please [visit our website](#) for details and link to registration.

We will attempt to accommodate students who start in the in-person model and decide later that they would like to move to the 100% virtual model on a case-by-case basis. Due to the complexity of moving in and out of the intensive block schedule that will be used in our in-person model, we are asking students that choose the online academy to commit to the entire semester.

PPE/ AND SANITATION SUPPLIES

Schools are being provided with a collection of cleaning, personal hygiene, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies at the beginning of the year by the MCPS Operations Department.

These COVID related cleaning, personal hygiene, and PPE supplies are funded by the District allocation of CARES Act dollars or they have been provided by the State of Montana from their strategic stockpile of Personal Protective Equipment.

Each school will be stocked with:

- Student Masks
 - Adult Masks
 - Hand Sanitizer
 - PPE for isolation rooms
 - Gloves
 - Sanitizing wipes
 - Spray bottles and approved cleaning products
-

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Staff will be working in collaboration with families to support the needs of your students. We may have to approach IEP's and 504's with a slightly different lens, but we will do this as a team with parents and students. Staff may request a meeting early in the fall to work with you to develop a plan for approaching learning in a way that supports services identified in your student's IEP or 504 plan. We may meet to amend your student's IEP or 504 plan. Staff will work alongside you to help support your student's education.

Special Education/504 Services

Phase 1, Hybrid Model: (Current School Re-Opening Plan)

Special education services and supports including Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Orientation & Mobility, Deaf/Hard of Hearing services, Visual impairment supports, etc., and 504 plan accommodations will be available to students in person. Students will receive services in person on the days they attend school (AA or BB). Special education staff will work with classroom teachers and families to develop a learning plan for the remote learning days keeping in mind the supports and services identified in the student's IEP. 504 plan accommodations will continue to be available for students in a remote learning environment.

Phase 2, Modified Schedule Model:

Special education services and supports including Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Orientation & Mobility, Deaf/Hard of Hearing services, Visual impairment supports, etc., and 504 plan accommodations will be available to students in person. IEP and 504 service delivery will look more traditional under Phase 2 with students on campuses each school day.

Phase 0, Remote Only Model:

If we find ourselves in Phase 0 (all remote learning), families will be contacted by their student's case manager. Special education staff will work with classroom teachers and families to develop a learning plan, to prioritize goals for the remote learning environment, and to identify how students will access instruction. Progress will continue to be monitored. 504 plan accommodations will continue to be available for students in a remote learning environment.

Missoula Online Academy:

If a family chooses the Missoula Online Academy for the first semester, your student's IEP team will convene as soon as possible to plan for what services and supports may look like.

Evaluations/Meetings

The district will comply with IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act) and ARM (Administrative Rules of Montana) Special Education rules and regulations during all Phases of learning for MCPS students.

- **Evaluation process**

Initial evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services and supports is an extensive process requiring close proximity assessments and classroom observation.

In-person assessment provides the highest probability for valid results and safety protocols will be followed by all involved. Staff, students/children and parents involved in the assessment process will utilize safety precautions including: face masks (exception for children younger than 5 or individuals with medical or disability related issues), gloves, use of plexiglass barriers, and frequent hand washing. All testing materials will be sanitized/disinfected before and after each use.

Re-evaluation process may allow for more flexibility in the required assessments and how they are administered depending on the disability category and/or the circumstances for the re-evaluation. Determination of assessment need will be made on an individual basis. Staff, students/children and parents involved in the re-evaluation assessment process will utilize safety precautions including: face masks (exception for children younger than 5 or individuals with medical or disability related issues), gloves, use of plexiglass barriers, and frequent hand washing. All testing materials will be sanitized/disinfected before and after each use.

- **IEP/504 Meetings**

IEP/504 Meetings will be held using a virtual format whenever possible. If an in-person meeting is necessary due to accessibility issues the meeting will be held using social distancing and masks will be required of all participants.

All special education and related services will be delivered with the safety of students, staff and families in mind. We do recognize that students have individual needs which may have staff in close proximity or practicing hands-on to deliver those services. Staff and students will practice proper safety protocols including use of face masks (exception for children younger than 5 or individuals with medical or disability related issues), students and staff will practice frequent hand washing, social distancing will be practiced whenever applicable

Homebound Services

Homebound services continue to be available for eligible students. All homebound services will be delivered using a virtual format. Any question about homebound services continuing or being a consideration due to your student having an acute health issue should be directed to your student's building principal.

Health and Nursing Services

The school nurse (RN Case Manager) assigned to each school is listed on [our website](#). Each RN Case Manager is assigned to more than one school. You may contact them for general health related concerns or questions or COVID-19 specific questions.

TRAFFIC EDUCATION

MCPS is happy to report that the Traffic Education classes are back underway. However, due to COVID-19 shutdowns, we are working on creating more classes to meet the demand. We know this makes planning difficult. If/When we are able to offer additional Traffic Education classes, you will find them by clicking on this link. We suggest that you periodically check the [Traffic Education page on our website](#) for information and for a link to updated classes.

VENTILATION SYSTEMS IN OUR BUILDINGS

We will conduct an assessment of all ventilation systems in each school building. Staff will receive guidance regarding the proper use of ventilation systems. MCPS is also currently exploring enhancements to our ventilation systems that are specifically related to COVID-19 protection. We will be installing these enhancements pending supply of materials and availability of installation contractor. Each principal has been provided with documentation related to the proper use of the ventilation systems within their buildings as well as specifics related to how air movement is accomplished within the system.

Based on guidance from our county health office, we will discourage the use of portable fans or filtering systems that operate with a fan. It has been shown that virus transmission can increase when fans are used in an enclosed space as the fan has the effect of further spreading the droplet or airborne particles.

Links:

- American Academy of Pediatrics:
<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>
- School Schedule Impacts on Transmission:
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midatlantic/pdf/ReopeningPASchools.pdf>
- Rt Live: <https://rt.live/>
- Healthline Rate of Transmission:
<https://www.healthline.com/health/r-nought-reproduction-number>

- State of Montana DPHHS COVID-19 Info:
<https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt/demographics>
- Missoula City-County Health Department COVID-19 Website:
<https://www.missoulacounty.us/government/health/health-department/emergency-preparedness/coronavirus>
- Missoula City-County Mental Health & Behavioral Resource Guide:
https://missoulacounty.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/administration/CommProj/Comm/Media%20Relations/Media%20Releases_Public%20File/JIC%20Website%20Documents/MHBH%20Resource%20Guide%20-%20FINAL%20-%2004.29.2020.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=ujmntc
- Governor Bullock's Plan:
<https://covid19.mt.gov/Portals/223/Documents/Education%20Final.pdf?ver=2020-07-02-123418-013>
- Office of Public Instruction Reopening Montana Schools Guidance:
<http://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/COVID-19/Reopening%20MT%20Schools%20Guidance-Final.pdf?ver=2020-07-02-114033-897>
- CDC:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Fschoools-childcare%2Fschoools-decision-tool.html
- Edutopia COVID-19 Impact on Students' Academic and Mental Well-Being:
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/covid-19s-impact-students-academic-and-mental-well-being>
- Annenberg Brown University: Projecting the potential impacts of COVID-19 school closures on academic achievement: <https://www.edworkingpapers.com/ai20-226>
- Jama Pediatrics – Coronavirus Disease 2019 and Mental Health for Children and Adolescents: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2764730>
- Advice from an Astronaut:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/21/opinion/scott-kelly-coronavirus-isolation.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>
- BrainPop – Help Talking With Your Kids About COVID-19:
<https://www.mcpsmt.org/Page/15100>
- CDC Advice for Talking to Children About COVID-19:
<https://www.mcpsmt.org/Page/15100>
- University of Montana Modeling Website: <https://cel.health.umt.edu/covid19/>
- Missoula City-County Health Department: COVID-19 Epidemiology Infor for Missoula County:
<https://www.missoulacounty.us/government/health/health-department/emergency-preparedness/covid-19-epidemiology>

MCPS Parent Responsibilities During COVID-19

As the parent/guardian of a student attending Missoula County Public Schools, your cooperation, support, and attention to the following information is of utmost importance for the safety of all.

Daily responsibility:

- ***Take your student's temperature and screen for COVID-19 symptoms at home every day ([See At Home COVID-19 Screening card](#)).
- **Do NOT send your student to school if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 as described on the screening card!** Please communicate to the school office the reason for your child's absence.
- If your child arrives at school with symptoms of illness, you will be contacted immediately to pick them up.
- Please ensure that your child wears a clean face covering to school **every day**. If your child has a health condition or other medical concern that prevents them from being able to wear a face mask, please communicate your concern with the school administrator and the school nurse. Cases will be evaluated on an individual basis and documentation from your child's Health Care Provider may be requested.
- Frequently remind your child to:
 - 1) Wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water and use hand sanitizer often
 - 2) Avoid touching their mouth, nose or face
 - 3) Practice proper coughing and sneezing etiquette (into elbow or tissue)

What will happen if my child becomes ill while at school?

Your child will be required to remain in a supervised designated isolation area until your arrival.

- You will be called to immediately pick up your child from school.
- Your child will NOT be allowed to ride the bus home.
- Please ensure that the school has the most up to date contact information for yourself and other emergency contacts at all times. If you will be unavailable to pick up your child in a timely manner due to your work or other commitments please develop a backup plan and communicate that plan with your child's school.

How soon will my child be allowed to return to school if he/she becomes ill?

- Your child must remain home until symptoms of illness have resolved.
- Your child must be without a fever for 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medications).

What will happen if my child has a positive COVID-19 test result?

- Please follow the direction of your child's health care provider and the Missoula City County Health Department (MCCHD).
- Your child will be allowed to return to school only after the required isolation time has ended, symptoms have resolved, and your child has been cleared by MCCHD to do so. Please

provide the school with documentation from the MCCHD stating that it is safe for your child to return to school. The school reserves the right to send your child home if such documentation is not provided.

What will happen if my child is exposed to someone at school with a positive COVID-19 result?

- You will be contacted by the county health department and provided with instruction regarding quarantine requirements.

Please consider following this comprehensive checklist from the CDC as you prepare your student for school.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/Back-to-School-Planning-for-In-Person-CIasses.pdf>