****

**RETURN TO SCHOOL**

PREPARING FOR A SAFE RETURN TO OUR MONTANA SDA SCHOOLS

2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

It is the intention of the Montana Conference to reopen schools for in-person, face-to-face instruction for the 2020-2021 school year. The goal is to do so in a safe manner with the health and wellbeing of the school community as the highest priority.

Governor Bullock’s Reopening Plan was designed to provide guidance as to how school districts can operate in each of the different phases.

PHASE I

Lifts the stay at home order to allow for gradual re-opening while minimizing the spread of COVID19 through strict social distancing and building safety protocols. Schools may re-open for in-person instruction depending upon the circumstances of their community. For those students unable to attend in-person, school districts should continue to provide a manner of remote learning.

PHASE II

School districts will open and to continue to adhere to strict social distancing and building safety protocols. Limitations around large social gatherings remain in place. Phase II refers to groups of less than 50 in attendance.

PHASE III

Eases most restrictions, but still encourages social distancing and limitations on large social gatherings to allow the economy to strategically reopen while continuing to prioritize public health. While this phase will facilitate a return to a “new normal” for schools and communities, it will be equally important to continue to monitor public health indicators and adjust strategies to mitigate community spread.

The following guidelines are based on Montana being in Phase II under Governor Bullock’s phased Reopening Plan.

**RISK MITIGATION**

We will use and adjust a variety of approaches as directed by

* The Governor’s directives for the State of Montana
* Individual Montana county health departments
* North Pacific Union Conference (NPUC)
* Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Guidelines and mandates provided by these organizations will be followed as appropriate to the local SDA school in order to slow the transmission and risk of COVID-19.

These guidelines will include, but may not be limited to:

**EDUCATION**

Students will have education on how to wash hands, cover their coughs, general use of hand sanitizer and face coverings. Students will have education on safe personal habits and shared classroom space. Teachers should set a good example with hygiene, distancing and PPE.

**HEALTH PRECAUTIONS**

Students will be expected to maintain personal preventive measures including:

Washing hands with soap/water for at least 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer (60% + alcohol-based).

* Coughing or sneezing into the elbow (if tissue is not available)
* Staying at home from school when feeling sick. Fever free for 24 full hours without medication.
* Periodic temperature checks will be given to all students.

**SIGNAGE**

Campus-wide signage and ground markings will be placed in high traffic locations. Signage will communicate measures to slow the spread of infection.

**SELF-ISOLATION**

Prior to school beginning, students who have had COVID-19 symptoms, or have tested positive, or may have been exposed to the virus, will be expected to self- isolate at home before coming to school. Students testing positive for COVID-19 are to self-isolate for their doctor-prescribed length of time.

**CLASSROOM/WORKSPACE**

Whenever feasible, increased physical distance (ideally, six feet) should be practiced between students and students and teacher. Classroom layouts may be modified to accommodate distancing measures. Traffic flow in classrooms and on the school campus will be created with consideration of distancing and general needs. When adequate social distancing is not feasible, the best practice approach will be implemented. This may include, face coverings, plexi- glass barriers, or shields.

**FACE COVERINGS**

The wearing of face coverings will be followed according to current mandates by county, state, or country. Face coverings should always be clean and in good condition.

**CLEANING AND DISINFECTION**

“In an unprecedented crisis there are no pre-cooked answers, all we can offer is the best process.” (Risk Management Facility Cleaning Considerations webinar)

The teacher will be responsible for maintaining a clean, disinfected environment where the students are working. When cleaning, it is recommended to wear disposable gloves. Frequent disinfecting of door handles, desks, and other common spaces will be maintained by the teacher. The recommendation from Adventist Risk Management is that the classroom should be cleaned before school starts, and again mid-day. Frequently touched surfaces should also be cleaned. At the end of the day another cleaning should take place. Items such as pillows, stuffed animals and rugs that cannot be effectively cleaned should be stored and not used.

The CDC has a list of cleaning products that are recommended to be used when cleaning, and disinfecting. Please refer to this list when deciding which products to use. Use items on the list or check your items list of ingredients and see if it matches the CDC recommendations.

Pay close attention to the products instructions. Some products need to stay on a surface for up to 10 minutes before wiping away to ensure things have been disinfected. There are usually two directions on a product- one for cleaning and another for use when disinfecting.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

**SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

Students will have their own personal school products (pencils, glue sticks, scissors, markers etc) and will not share with other students. Any type of school products such as lab materials or STEM products will be cleaned and disinfected.

If possible, students should have their own technology device assigned to them that no one else uses. If this is not possible, sanitizing between student use is required.

**FOOD SERVICE (HOT LUNCH)**

During Phase 2 there will be no hot lunches served on campus. If parents want to celebrate a birthday no food items may be brought to school or given out. Other methods of celebration will be encouraged. Students will stay at their own desks for lunch or outside distancing themselves during good weather.

**VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS**

Visits by guests to the school will be limited. If a visit to the school is necessary, visitors should first do a self-screening for COVID-19 symptoms and then respect all school health and safety practices and signage.

**FACILITY MANAGEMENT**

Airflow and good ventilation is important for a classroom environment. Fans should not be considered to increase the flow, but instead open windows. A good air flush is recommended at the beginning of each day and again when leaving in the evening. Keep windows open for as much of the day as comfortably possible.  Keep heating and air ducts clean. Assess the availability of your system to increase the percentage of the filter. Air conditioners can be used if the filters have been changed. Consider purchasing a portable room cleaner for high use areas or a self-contained classroom. If the school has been closed for an extended period, flush out water systems and clean the facility. Continue to look at the local level for any changes in mandates and guidelines that affect the facility management.

**OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**

Students will have outdoor recess, and outdoor class activities will be encouraged. Safety precautions will be established. School activities and travel related school activities will resume in compliance with limitations on crowd/group size, activity type, and health protocols.

**SPORTS**

It is anticipated that student access to sports will include the same health precautions used during the school day.

**IN CASE OF A POSITIVE COVID-19 TEST**

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the head teacher will enlist the advice from the County Health Department. Each case will be handled uniquely as each case has varying factors.

**SICK STAFF AND STUDENTS**

Students or staff experiencing symptoms of illnesses are to stay at home. Students that become ill while at school will be isolated and parents will be expected to take the child home in a timely manner.