

COVID-19 Reopening Schools, Guidance Comparison Chart

Background information: During the first week of July, three guidance documents were released regarding the reopening of schools:

[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

The following chart was created by Missoula County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Robert Watson to compare some of the basic considerations from each of the guidance documents.

Sunburst Schools have modified parts of Dr. Watson's plan to better suit the needs of Sunburst Schools. We will use these guidelines in preparation for a safe reopening of school.

Safe School Topic	Governor's Plan	OPI's Plan	AAP Plan
<i>Basic Principles</i>	Noting the uniqueness of every school district in Montana, our goal for this document is not to be prescriptive, but to provide effective, flexible guidelines to all schools in hopes that we can safely resume in person instruction in the fall.	As we approach the beginning of the school year, we encourage school leaders to plan for multiple scenarios and consider the different consequences of each. Concurrently, we want to ensure, regardless of the scenario, when we re-engage with students that schools continue to take safety precautions to ensure the health of their students, staff, and greater community.	<p>The AAP strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school.</p> <p>The importance of in-person learning is well-documented, and there is already evidence of the negative impacts on children because of school closures in the spring of 2020.</p> <p>Policy makers should acknowledge that COVID-19 policies are intended to mitigate, not eliminate, risk. No single action or set of actions will completely eliminate the risk of transmission, but implementation of several coordinated interventions can greatly reduce that risk.</p>
<i>Phasing Model</i>	<i>Phase I, II, III</i> Reopening for school districts has been categorized into three phases that align with Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III of the Governor's Reopening the Big Sky	<i>Scenario 1,2,3,4</i> As COVID-19 impacts are fluid, we anticipate that multiple scenarios may occur when schools re-open in the fall of 2020 or may occur throughout the school year. Four scenarios are included as	General guidance given for all situations, not dependent on any particular phasing model.

	Plan.	guidance examples for you. Following state directives, individual districts in consultation with local health authorities should determine which scenarios best fit their local situations.	
<i>Phase 0, Scenario 1</i>	Stay at home order - no school	Buildings closed. All students remote learning model: This model will only occur if the state of Montana is under a complete stay-at-home order and/or school buildings are closed.	N/A
<i>Phase I, Scenario 2</i>	Stay at home lifted in order to allow for gradual re-opening while minimizing the spread of COVID-19 through strict social distancing and building safety protocols. Schools may re-open for in-person instruction depending upon the circumstances of their community.	A mixed model of traditional and off-site learning. A limited number of students will be present in the school building at one time, with remote learning occurring for all students not onsite. This will require a blended approach for the planning and delivery of learning opportunities for students.	N/A
<i>Phase II, Scenario 3</i>	School districts will open and continue to adhere to strict social distancing and building safety protocols. Limitations around large social gatherings remain in place.	There will be an increased capacity/number of students in the school building. This coincides with the governor's Phase 2, which increases permissible group size to 50 persons. Additionally, during this scenario schools will limit the number of activities to allow for continued physical distancing and will continue to provide remote learning opportunities for students who are not	General statement regarding capacity/number of students in school: Schools should weigh the benefits of strict adherence to a 6-foot spacing rule between students with the potential downside if remote learning is the only alternative. Strict adherence to a specific size of student groups (e.g., 10 per classroom, 15 per classroom, etc.) should be discouraged in favor of other risk mitigation strategies.

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<i>Phase III, Scenario 4</i>	This phase 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.	Near full capacity of attendance and operations in a traditional setting, with remote learning for students not onsite. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For ALL INDIVIDUALS there is no limit on group size, however, everyone should observe physical distancing and minimize contact time with others, and limit time spent in crowded environments. • VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS may still need to take precautions, and remote learning for students not onsite should be available. 	N/A
<i>Group Size</i>	Non-school setting: Phase I limits group size to 10 if social distancing is not possible. Under phase II group size is limited to 50 if social distancing is not possible. School Setting: Under Phase I and Phase II: Occupancy limits that follow local and state guidelines on classroom size and that allows for social distancing	Under Scenario 3, Phase II, Avoid GATHERING in groups of more than 50 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing. It is recommended to continue physical distance in gatherings of any size. Groups larger than 50 people should be canceled unless physical distancing can be maintained.	Strict adherence to a specific size of student groups (e.g., 10 per classroom, 15 per classroom, etc.) should be discouraged in favor of other risk mitigation strategies.
<i>Grouping & Scheduling</i>	Establish protocols for students to remain in the same groups or classroom, while teachers rotate, when practical.	Consider alternative schedules for class instruction. Keep students in same groups or classroom, with teachers rotating when practical.	The risk reduction of reducing class sizes may be outweighed by the challenge of doing so. Cohort classes to minimize crossover among children and adults. Have

		Alter the bell schedule to limit the number of students in transit between classes at any one time. Realign a bell schedule to include times for hand washing/ sanitizing. School districts should create a unique plan that is appropriate for their school size. It is recommended that gatherings occur in shifts (recess, cafeteria and hallway passing).	teachers rotate instead of students when possible. Stagger class periods by cohort for movement between classrooms.
<i>Social / Physical Distancing</i>	<p>Under Phase I and Phase II, the school Health & Safety plan SHOULD consider strict social distancing; for example, rules for traffic flow in congregational spaces and occupancy limits that allows for social distancing.</p> <p>Under Phase I and Phase II, the school Health & Safety plan MAY consider methods of limiting the number of individuals in classrooms and other learning spaces.</p>	<p>Scenario 2 (Phase I) Students may alternate school days, prohibit congregation in hallways and lunchrooms, install physical barriers in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart, provide physical guides such as tape on floors or sidewalks.</p> <p>Scenario 3 (Phase II) Recommended to continue physical distancing in gatherings of any size. Continue to limit communal spaces such as cafeterias and playgrounds.</p>	There is a conflict between optimal academic and social / emotional learning in schools and strict adherence to current (CDC) physical distancing guidelines. In many school settings, 6 feet between students is not feasible without limiting the number of students. Evidence suggests that spacing as close as 3 feet may approach the benefits of 6 feet of space, particularly if students are wearing face coverings and are asymptomatic. Schools should weigh the benefits of strict adherence to a 6-foot spacing rule between students with the potential downside if remote learning is the only alternative.
<i>Face Coverings</i>	No specific requirement or recommendation for use of masks. "Provide masks for those present in the school building. The school Health & Safety plan should consider guidelines on the use of masks by all staff and/or	No specific requirement or recommendation, but restates CDC guidance. The CDC recommends cloth face coverings when physical distancing is not possible. This recommendation may be challenging for students	Yes for Adults and Middle/High School students. Maybe for elementary students. Although ideal, universal face covering use is not always possible in the school setting for many reasons. When developing policy regarding

	students.”	(especially younger students) to wear in all-day settings such as school. If schools require face coverings, they should provide instructions to students and staff on the proper use, removal, and cleaning of cloth face coverings.	the use of cloth face coverings by students or school staff, school districts and health advisors should consider whether the use of cloth face coverings is developmentally appropriate and feasible and whether the policy can be instituted safely. School staff and older students (middle or high school) may be able to wear cloth face coverings safely and consistently and should be encouraged to do so.
<i>Health Screening</i>	Under all phases: Process for monitoring student and staff for symptoms and history of exposure. No specific process defined. Monitor and screen any non-school staff, including parents, when entering school buildings.	No specific guidance regarding testing or health screening. Require anyone (student and staff) with COVID-19 symptoms to stay at home.	Recommended to be done at home, not at school. The list of symptoms of COVID-19 infection has grown since the start of the pandemic and the manifestations of COVID-19 infection in children, although similar, is often not the same as that for adults. School policies regarding temperature screening and temperature checks must balance the practicality of performing these screening procedures for large numbers of students and staff with the information known about how children manifest COVID-19 infection, the risk of transmission in schools... In lieu of temperature checks and symptom screening being performed after arrival to school, methods to allow parent report of temperature checks done at home may be considered.

<i>Testing for COVID-19</i>	No mention of testing	No mention of testing	Testing all students and/or staff: It is not clear that such testing would reduce the likelihood of spread within schools. It is important to recognize that virologic testing only shows whether a person is infected at that specific moment in time. Antibody (blood) testing: At the current time, serologic testing should not be used for individual decision-making and has no place in considerations for entrance to or exclusion from school.
<i>Bussing</i>	Clean buses after each route, Reduce bus loads to allow for adequate social distancing, assign seats to students on the bus.	Consider CDC guidance on pupil transportation. Schools should consider the need for more buses or alternative schedules to safely transport students. When physical distancing on buses is not possible, schools should consider cloth face masks and other mitigation strategies.	Encourage alternative models of transportation for students who have other options. Symptom screening at home. Assigned seating. When 6-ft distance cannot be maintained between students, face coverings should be worn. Minimize the number of people on the bus at one time, within reason. Have windows open if weather allows.
<i>Hallways / Lockers</i>	Create rules for traffic flow and congregational spaces (bathrooms, concession areas, hallways, etc.); establish methods of staggering the use of communal spaces and hallways and ensure regular cleaning. Clean all hallways, common areas, and the outside of lockers.	Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and children remain at least six feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating “one way routes” in hallways).	Consider creating 1-way halls to reduce close contact. Physical guides on floor or sidewalk for traffic flow. Stagger class periods by cohort for movement between classrooms. Eliminate use of lockers or assign by cohort to minimize mixing of students before/after school.
<i>Playgrounds</i>	Keep libraries, gyms, playgrounds off-limits unless they can be sanitized between groups.	Continue to limit communal spaces, such as cafeterias and playgrounds with shared playground equipment. If this is not	Enforcing physical distancing in an outside playground is difficult and may not be the most effective method of risk mitigation. Emphasis should

		possible, stagger use, and disinfect between uses. Outdoor areas, like playgrounds, generally require normal routine cleaning but do not require disinfection. (Source: CDC)	be placed on cohorting students and limiting the size of groups participating in playground time. Outdoor transmission of virus is known to be much lower than indoor transmission.
<i>Meals / Cafeteria</i>	Establish procedures for restricting the use of cafeterias and other congregate settings, and serving meals in alternate settings such as classrooms	Consider remote meal service options that maximize safety and physical distancing, such as grab and go breakfasts and lunches. No self-serve stations or buffets. Staff wear masks and gloves while interacting with individuals. Establish hours of operation that allow for facility occupancy that meets physical distancing requirements. Develop traffic flow patterns and seating arrangements for each venue. Adopt school breakfast in the classroom strategies for lunch. Designate entrances for those leaving campus for lunch.	Consider having students cohorted, potentially in their classrooms, especially if students remain in their classroom throughout the day. Create separate lunch periods to minimize the number of students in the cafeteria at one time. Utilize additional spaces for lunch/break times. Utilize outdoor spaces when possible. Wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after eating.
<i>Visitors & Adult Protocols</i>	The Health & Safety plan may include processes for identifying and restricting non-essential visitors or volunteers.	No specific restrictions for adults and/or visitors.	Given what is known about transmission dynamics, adults and adult staff within schools should attempt to maintain a distance of 6 feet from other persons as much as possible, particularly around other adult staff. Physical distancing by and among adults is strongly recommended, and meetings and curriculum planning should take place virtually if possible. In addition, other strategies to increase adult-

			adult physical distance in time and space should be implemented. Parents should, in general, be discouraged from entering the school building. Physical barriers, such as plexiglass, should be considered in reception areas and employee workspaces where the environment does not accommodate physical distancing, and congregating in shared spaces, such as staff lounge areas, should be discouraged.
<i>Organized Activities / Extracurricular</i>	<p>Lowest Risk: Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family members.</p> <p>Increasing Risk: Team-based practice.</p> <p>More Risk: Within-team competition.</p> <p>Even More Risk: Full competition between teams from the same local geographic area.</p> <p>Highest Risk: Full competition between teams from different geographic areas.</p>	<p>Organized youth activities should avoid gathering in groups of more than 50 people in circumstances that do not readily allow for appropriate physical distancing.</p> <p>Pursue options to convene sporting events and participation in sports activities in ways that minimize the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to players, families, coaches, and communities. Limit gatherings, events, and extracurricular activities to those who can maintain physical distancing, and support proper hand hygiene.</p> <p>See Guidance from: National Federation on HS Sports</p>	<p>It is likely that sporting events, practices, and conditioning sessions will be limited in many locations. Preparticipation evaluations (health screening) should be conducted in alignment with the AAP Preparticipation Physical Evaluation Monograph.</p>

Return to Campus--Action Plan 2020

As we put together our plan for reopening school, our guiding principles are:

1. Our plan will be responsive to the physical and mental health and wellness of our students and staff.
2. Our plan will be based on the COVID-19 outbreak conditions in Sunburst, Toole County, and surrounding counties.
3. Our plan will attempt to adhere to the guidelines and directives of the Governor, the Toole County Health Department, and the Montana Office of Public Instruction.
4. Our plan relies on flexibility, adaptation, and collaboration from students, families, staff, and the Sunburst community.
5. The changing nature of the COVID-19 virus will mean that our plan will change and adapt to new guidance.

Definition of Terms

Phase 0: Governor's stay at home order. Schools are ordered to close to face to face instruction.

Phase I: Governor lifts the stay at home order to allow for gradual re-opening while minimizing the spread of COVID-19 through strict social distancing and building safety protocols. Schools may re-open for in-person instruction depending upon the circumstances of their community.

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 III: eases most restrictions, but will require a "new normal" for schools to monitor public health indicators and adjust strategies to mitigate community spread.

High Risk: Local cases rising, community spread, many additional cases daily, possible staff or student exposure.

Moderate Risk: Local cases stabilize, may or may not have community spread, daily case count is low or zero.

Low Risk: Zero active cases in the community, no community spread.

***The Risk level will be determined by the Sunburst Superintendent in consultation with the Toole County Health Department.**

Phase 0 refers to the Governor's Phase 0, stay at home order where schools were ordered to close. Should Sunburst Schools need to revert to at-home learning at any time during the 2020-2021 school year, the following plan provides a road map to ensure students continue to receive a robust and quality education. The decision to revert to at-home learning may come from a state-level order, county-level order, or school board decision, and may not correspond to the Governor's Phase order. The Toole County Health Department or the school board may require school closure in the event that Toole County or the surrounding region is at **high risk of transmission** or the school sees one or more positive cases among students or staff. If a classroom or the district must close without warning due to one or more positive cases, Phase 0 plans will immediately go into effect.

Preparation for Phase 0

Teacher Preparation: Because a stay at home order can occur without warning, the staff will participate in professional development to prepare. The school district will provide professional development to help with remote learning. Instruction will be individualized based on teachers' strengths and weaknesses.

Student Preparation: Students in all grades will receive instruction on use of Chromebooks/Laptops starting from the first day of school. Instruction and expectations will be targeted to the student's developmental level but will include skills to help ease the transition to remote learning.

Parent Preparation: The district will try to provide all families with the appropriate resources to access their student's online learning.

Learning Tools

In the event of a closure the district will try provide devices to enable student's access to remote learning. Each device is equipped with a filtering tool and the district may at its discretion check student usage to ensure it is in compliance with the district's Acceptable Use of Technology Policy.

Students may also be sent home with textbooks and workbooks as appropriate.

Expectations for Teachers

Should a stay at home order go into effect, teachers will be expected to work from their classrooms on site Monday through Friday as their contracted hours. In a situation where a classroom or the district is closed teachers may work from home until notified by district administration that their building has been deep cleaned and sanitized.

Fridays will serve as records days and an opportunity for teacher collaboration and professional development.

At all grade levels, students will complete all assigned work within the deadlines established by the individual teacher.

Expectations for Students and Families

Students are expected to complete all assignments provided by their teachers in a timely fashion. We recognize that at home learning is not the ideal and that factors such as work schedules, lack of child care, and other stressors can make it difficult to keep up with at home schooling. However, in order for students to grow academically, consistency is required. The district will work with families in these extenuating circumstances but also expects families to work with the district. Frequent, two way communication will help prevent misunderstandings.

Attendance

Attendance will be taken daily by each teacher and be recorded on student progress reports.

Grading

All students will receive letter grades as determined by the teacher.

Students that do not demonstrate proficiency through completed school work and assessments may not be promoted to the next grade. Promotion to the next grade is at the discretion of the principal in collaboration with the classroom teacher and the Sunburst Superintendent of Schools. Parent input will be sought before making a recommendation to retain a student.

Schedule

There will be a set schedule to follow in the event of a prolonged closure.

Sunburst Schools Reopening Action Plan

Phase I refers to the Governor's Phase I plan, while Phase II refers to the Governor's Phase II plan. The decision to implement more intensive health and safety protocols may come from a state-level order, county-level order, or school board decision, and may not correspond to the details laid out in the Governor's Phase order. The Toole County Health Department or the school board may require more intensive health and safety protocols in the event that Sunburst, Toole County or the surrounding region is at **high risk of transmission** of Covid-19. Based on conditions in the Toole County communities as of August 5, 2020, the **risk level is moderate**. The school district will implement the health and safety protocols outlined below.

Less intensive health and safety protocols may be implemented in the event that Toole County or the surrounding region is at **moderate** or **low risk** of transmission of Covid-19.

School District Meetings, Events, and Visitors

The Sunburst School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this procedure document to govern during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the safety of staff and students. The Sunburst Administration and Staff are authorized to implement the procedures in coordination with state and local health officials.

The Superintendent may authorize School District physical meetings and events when the event is deemed essential to district operations. Physical meetings and events shall not be held without prior authorization of the Superintendent.

All Attendees at physical meetings and events held on school property in an outdoor area shall be required to honor the applicable health and safety protocols outlined by district procedures including, but not limited to social/physical distancing and mask usage.

Social/Physical meetings and events held indoors shall be limited according to current state or local guidance or School District policy/procedure. All attendees are required to honor the health and safety protocols outlined by district procedures.

Visitors and Volunteers

Parents, visitors and volunteers will be required to wear a mask in the school buildings. Parents, guardians or caregivers picking up students will do so at the school office only. Please contact the school prior to your arrival and we will have your student ready for you.

School Board Meetings

High Risk: School board meetings will be conducted using Google meets. **Moderate** and **Low Risk:** School board meetings may be conducted in person, adhering to social distancing guidelines and mask usage as required by local or state order.

Enforcement

Visitors to any school building or any attendee at a meeting or event authorized by the board of trustees, in accordance with district procedures, who fail to honor the directives of School

District officials shall be asked to correct their conduct or leave the meeting or event in accordance with District procedure/policy.

Health and Safety

Health Checks

Parents are encouraged not to send their students to school while sick. The school district may conduct health monitoring that may include a temperature check as well as visual assessment for obvious signs of illness. If a temperature of 100.4 or above is registered the school will isolate the student and call the parents to come and get their student.

Symptoms of Illness

Students and staff who are ill, feeling ill, diagnosed as ill, and/or otherwise demonstrating symptoms of illness must not come to school or work. Students who have a fever or are exhibiting other signs of illness must be isolated in the school sick room until such time as parents or caregiver may arrive at the school to retrieve the ill student. All surfaces and areas should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected once the student has vacated the area by staff. Students may engage in distance learning during the period of illness and/or be permitted to make up work in accordance with district procedures. Staff members will be provided access to leave in accordance with district procedures.

Parents, guardians, or caregivers of students who are ill, feeling ill, diagnosed as ill, and/or otherwise demonstrating symptoms of illness must not be present at the school for any reason, including but not limited to events or gatherings and / or to drop off/pick up students except as provided by school district procedures. To avoid exposing others to illness, parents, and/or caregivers who are ill must make arrangements with others to transport students to school if at all practicable. If not practicable, parents, guardians, and /or caregivers must not leave their vehicle during pickup or drop off at school or the bus stop.

Social / Physical Distancing

Grouping and Scheduling

Drop off and pick up of students, either at school or the bus stop, will be completed in a manner that limits direct contact between parents, staff members, and other family groups. Parents and staff are expected to adhere to social/physical distancing recommendations outside the school building and at the bus stop.

High Risk and **Moderate Risk**: Efforts will be made to allow for social distancing and masks where appropriate. Hand sanitizer will be available at all main entrances of the school buildings.

Lunch times will be staggered where possible, and recess will be with the cohort group whenever possible.

Low Risk Students will be seated six feet apart in assigned seats within the classroom where possible. During small groups or 1:1 instruction when physical distancing is not possible, mask usage will be optional unless required by state or local order.

Students will resume whole school recess to allow social interaction between cohort groups.

Lunch

High Risk and Moderate Risk

Students will be sent in cohort groups, and will need to wear masks according to the Face Covering Section of this document. The high school and junior high will eat at the high school in the groups at staggered times. The elementary will eat at the elementary in the groups at staggered times.

Low Risk

All students will eat at the elementary school.

Face Coverings

High Risk and Moderate Risk

Face coverings are defined as masks, buffs, or similar. By order of Governor Bullock (August 12, 2020), face coverings must be used by all individuals in an indoor setting regardless of physical distancing if Toole County has 4 or more active cases.

Low Risk

Face coverings will be optional, but encouraged for staff and students to wear during operating school hours.

Each staff member and student will be provided with a cloth facemask. It will be up to the families to wash them frequently.

Bussing

High Risk and Moderate Risk

Students will be assigned seats on the school bus. Face coverings will be followed as stated in the Face Covering section.

Low Risk

Students K-12 will encouraged to wear masks on the bus.

Cleaning, Sanitation, and Ventilation

Staff will sanitize all bathrooms, desks, chairs, handrails, microwaves, and frequently touched

areas daily. Students and staff will be responsible for additional sanitation and sterilization within their personal work area or classroom throughout the school day, including after eating lunch. Each classroom will be equipped with sanitizing spray and clean clothes for regular sanitation. If available, sanitizing wipes will be provided.

Teachers will open windows when feasible to provide additional ventilation.

Academic

School will occur on site with modifications to the daily schedule to limit interaction between student groups. Students will remain in cohort groups throughout the day as much as feasible for contact tracing and limiting germ transmission. In certain instances, two cohorts may be grouped for a class with physical distancing measures in place.

Students who are required to quarantine due to Covid-19 diagnosis or exposure will be moved directly to distance learning and/or permitted to make up missed work in accordance with district policy/procedures. They will be permitted to return to school only when cleared by the Toole County Health Department and the school receives notification of clearance.

Students who are medically vulnerable or live in homes with medically vulnerable individuals may opt to continue distance learning. Families may request distance learning for students living with medically vulnerable individuals.