

Liberty Elementary School District

Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan

Date of Original Adoption: May 13, 2020

Date Plan was Last Revised: February 22, 2024

Next Regularly Scheduled Month for Consideration: July 15, 2024

The updated “Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan” and the required periodic updates to the Plan have been and will continue to be reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees and the results of the adopted updates to the “Plan” will be made available to the public for review as a routine component of the process. It is worth noting, that the district does not maintain a website, so communication with district stakeholders, specifically parents, and families is accomplished through the use of alternative forms of public notice including posting of anticipated Board action on proposed changes to the Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan every six (6) months; associated Board meeting minutes and related announcements from the Board notifying the community of any anticipated changes to the district’s response to on-going external conditions which require action by the Board of Trustees.

The District governing Board, administration, staff, students, and families have all actively participated in discussions related to the on-going operations of the school district throughout the past three years in order to ensure that the District was providing clear and consistent information, guidance and direction with respect to the Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan. Throughout the reporting period, the district has also provided advance public notice of its intentions regarding possible adjustments or revisions to the Plan through use of monthly public meetings, where stakeholders have been provided with opportunities to provide the Board with feedback regarding the School District’s ongoing plans; wherein the Board of Trustees and Administration carefully considered such feedback in developing and refining the School District’s plans throughout the last three and one half years..

History of the Safe Return to Schools and Continuity of Services Plan Contents:

*March 2020 - December 2021

Part I: Documentation supporting the ongoing efforts to promote Meaningful Consultation in Developing and Refining the School District’s plan from March 2020 through November 2023:

As indicated, the Board of Trustees and Administration have provided regular and routine notice of the requirements to update the plan and have invited public comment on potential adoption of possible revisions to the original Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan when anticipated, on a regular and routine basis since its original adoption in March 2020.

The invitation to the community impacted by the plan to provide public input has and continues to include a general opportunity for the public to provide comments which has been provided to all interested stakeholders, including:

1. Students, families, district administrators, teachers, school leaders, other area educators, school staff; and other interested community stakeholders.

Part II: Contents of The School District's plan for Safe Return to In-Person

Instruction and Continuity of Services:

Description of how the district will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff:

Following the lifting of the Stay-at-Home Order and subsequent reopening of the state on April 22, 2020, Liberty Elementary 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 initially 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. Adherence to policies has continued to provide guidance to the Board of Trustees from when they were initially adopted in 2020 until the present, 2024.

Liberty Elementary 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.

Liberty Elementary 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, telework, school closure orders, stay at home orders, symptom monitoring and isolation, travel quarantines, visitors, volunteers, Safe Return to Schools and Continuity of Services Plan for 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 Liberty Elementary 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.

Liberty Elementary School District has continued to follow the policies noted below while engaging in a quarterly reevaluation process to continue to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of our students, teachers, staff, and community through 2024.

2. The extent to which the district has adopted policies, and a description of any such policies, on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC:

Policy 1900; 1901; 1902; 1903; 1904; 1905; 1906; 1907; 1908; 1909

(All referenced polices can be found at the end of this document.)

Universal and correct wearing of masks.

Policy 1905: The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the safe and healthy delivery of education services provided to students on school property in accordance with Policy 1906, and a safe workplace when staff are present on school property in accordance with Policy 1909, and the safety, health and well-being of parents and community members. The supervising teacher, principal, superintendent or designated personnel are authorized to implement the protocols in coordination with state and local health officials.

The policy establishes regulations making optional face coverings as personal protective equipment.

1. August 28, 2020 – January 2024

Modifying facilities to allow for 1905; 1905P

Policy 1905: The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy during the term of the declared

1. August 28, 2020 – January 2024

Safe Return to Schools and Continuity of Services Plan physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding).

Public health emergency to ensure the safe and healthy delivery of education services provided to students on school property in accordance with Policy 1906, and a safe workplace when staff are

present on school property in accordance with Policy 1909, and the safety, health and well-being of parents and community members. The supervising teacher, principal, superintendent or designated.

Personnel are authorized to implement the protocols in coordination with state and local health officials.

The policy establishes regulations regarding physical distancing by requiring students, staff, volunteers, and visitors will maintain a six-foot distance between themselves and their colleagues and peers throughout the school day inside any school building, on school provided transportation, and on school property before and after school. Staff members will arrange classrooms and restructure courses, transportation services, and food service to meet this standard.

To the extent possible, elementary school courses will be delivered to the same group of students each day, and the same teachers will remain with the same group.

(Originally Adopted August 28, 2020)

Safe Return to Schools and Continuity of Services Plan personnel are authorized to implement the protocols in coordination with state and local health officials.

The policy establishes regulations regarding healthy hand hygiene behavior and symptoms of illness.

1905P: The administrative team of the School District has adopted these procedures regarding personnel cleaning and disinfecting, symptoms of illness, and water systems in accordance with Policy 1310 in order to implement Policy 1905 during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure a safe and healthy work and instructional setting. These procedures were developed in accordance with the latest available guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and in coordination with applicable state, tribal, and local health officials. These procedures supplement Policy 1905.

Policy 3417: In all proceedings related to this policy, the District will respect a student's right to privacy.

Although the District is required to provide educational services to all school-age children who reside within its boundaries, it may deny attendance at school to any child diagnosed as having a communicable disease that could make a child's attendance harmful to the welfare of other students.

The District will rely on advice of the public health and medical communities in assessing the risk of transmission of various communicable diseases to determine how best to protect the health of both students and staff. The District will manage common communicable diseases in accordance with Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services guidelines and communicable diseases control rules.

The District may temporarily exclude from school attendance a student who exhibits symptoms of a communicable disease that is readily transmitted in a school setting. The District may notify parents of other children attending a school that their children have been exposed to a communicable disease without identifying the particular student who has the disease.

Diagnostic and screening testing.

Policy 1905: The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the safe and healthy delivery of education services provided

to students on school property in accordance with Policy 1906, and a safe workplace when staff are present on school property in accordance with Policy 1909, and the safety, health and well-being of parents and community members. The supervising teacher, principal, superintendent, or designated personnel are authorized to implement the protocols in coordination with state and local health officials. The policy establishes regulations regarding symptoms of illness, and temperature screening.

Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities. Please note that House Bill 702 passed the 2021 Legislature and was signed into law effective May 14, 2021. New Section 1 of that law provides that it is an unlawful discriminatory practice for a governmental entity to refuse, withhold from, or deny to a person any local or state services, goods, facilities, advantages, privileges, licensing, educational opportunities, health care access, or employment opportunities based on the person's vaccination status. The law also provides it is unlawful for an

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Employer to refuse employment to a person, to bar a person from employment, or to discriminate against a person in compensation or in a term, condition, or privilege of employment based on the person's vaccination status. Finally, House Bill 702 provides it is unlawful for a public accommodation to exclude, limit, segregate, refuse to serve, or otherwise discriminate against a person based on the person's vaccination status.

3413: Upon initial enrollment, an immunization status form shall be completed by the student's parent or guardian. The certificate shall be made a part of the student's permanent record.

Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies.

Policies 1908; 2162; 2162P

Policy 1908: The Board of Trustees authorizes the supervising teacher or district administrator to provide Policy 1908F to families requesting to opt-out of onsite instruction at the school facility for the duration of the declared public health emergency. Students of families opting out of onsite instruction at the school facility shall receive offsite, online, and proficiency-based instruction, or any combination of the foregoing at the discretion of the School District in accordance with District Policy 1906. Students of families opting out of onsite delivery shall be treated the same as students instructed at the school facility for purposes of grading, discipline, and other educational rights.

Policy 2162: It is the intent of the District to ensure that students who are disabled within the definition of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are identified, evaluated, and provided with appropriate educational services. For those students who need or are believed to need special instruction and/or related services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the District shall establish and implement a system of procedural safeguards. 2162P: If the parent or legal guardian of a student who qualifies under Section 504 for special instruction or related services disagrees with a decision of the District with respect to: (1) the identification of the child as qualifying for Section 504; (2) the District's evaluation of the child; and/or (3) the educational placement of the child, the parents of the student are entitled to certain procedural safeguards. The student shall remain in his/her current placement until the matter has been resolved through the process set in the policy.

1. August 28, 2020 – January 2024

Coordination with State and local health officials.

1900; 1905; 1907; 3417

Policy 1900: In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board of Trustees has found it necessary to adopt temporary policies related to emergency school closures, the ongoing provision of educational services to students, meetings of the Board, gatherings on school property, health and safety of students, staff and community members, human resource matters and budgetary matters. To ensure clarity and transparency, the board has organized all emergency school policies into a temporary chapter.

School District Policies Numbered 1900-1999 are intended to govern during any emergency related to COVID-19 declared by the President, Congress, Montana Legislature, Governor, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, County Health Department or the Board of Trustees.

Policy 1905: The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the safe and healthy delivery of education services provided to students on school property in accordance with Policy 1906, and a safe workplace when staff are present on school property in accordance with Policy 1909, and the safety, health and well-being of parents and community members. The supervising teacher, principal, superintendent or designated personnel are authorized to implement the protocols in coordination with state and local health officials.

Policy 1907: The Board of Trustees is authorized to declare that a state of emergency exists within the community. A declaration issued by the Board of Trustees is distinct from any declaration in effect or previously issued by local, state or federal authorities.

Policy 3417: The District will manage common communicable diseases in accordance with Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services guidelines and communicable diseases control rules. When information is received by a staff member or a volunteer that a student is afflicted with a serious communicable disease, the staff member or volunteer will promptly notify a school nurse or other responsible person designated by the Board to determine appropriate measures to be taken to protect student and staff health and safety. A school nurse or other responsible person designated by the Board, after consultation with and on advice of public health officials, will determine which additional staff members, if any, have need to know of the affected student's condition.

How the district will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and

1906; 1906P; 2050

Policy 1906: The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy to govern during the term of the declared public health emergency to ensure the delivery of education services to students onsite at the school, offsite at other locations using available resources including but not limited to online methods.

The supervising teacher, principal, superintendent, or designated personnel are authorized to implement this policy. The Board of Trustees may revise the Safe Return to Schools and Continuity of Services Plan to address staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services.

The Board of Trustees authorizes instruction of students at the school facility in a manner that satisfies the aggregate number of instructional hours outlined in the School District's adopted or revised calendar for a school year affected by a public health emergency.

The Board of Trustees authorizes offsite and online instruction of students in a manner that satisfies the aggregate number of instructional hours outlined in the School District's adopted or revised calendar for a school year affected by a public health emergency.

Offsite and online delivery methods shall include a complete range of educational services offered by the School District and shall comply with the requirements of applicable statutes. Students completing course work through an offsite or online instructional setting shall be treated in and have their hours of instruction calculated in the same manner as students attending an onsite institutional setting.

The Board of Trustees authorizes proficiency-based ANB calculation in situations when a student demonstrates proficiency in a course area as determined by the Board of Trustees using district assessments consistent with the School District's adopted Plan of Action, District Policy 1005FE, or other measures approved by the Board of Trustees during the course of a school year affected by a public health emergency.

The Board of Trustees authorizes a summer program of instructional offerings for the purpose of remediation of credit, maintenance of skills, and enrichment. All classes offered for credit must meet minimum state requirements for accreditation and may be delivered at the school or at another offsite location. Remediation credit courses shall be offered, grades 9-12, in accordance with District advancement requirements. Credit course offerings must be approved by the Board of Trustees

In accordance with District Policy 2011, Section 20-1-301, MCA, and any applicable collective bargaining agreement covering the employment of affected employees, the Board of Trustees may establish a school calendar with an earlier start date and a later end date from nonemergency school years to ensure students receive the minimum number of aggregate instructional hours.

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Students shall receive services in accordance with the applicable Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 Plan based on methods and locations agreed upon and documented by the applicable team to meet the student's needs and goals. Students shall have access to regular school counseling services whether their instruction is provided in an onsite, offsite, or online setting. Staff shall promptly report any suspected student distress or concern to their supervisor for review and referral. Students receiving instruction in an offsite setting are governed by the staff obligation to report suspected child abuse or neglect. This policy in no way limits or adjusts the School District's obligations to homeless students or students in foster care. Applicable District policies serving these students, or this population of students remain in full effect.

Policy 1906P: Proficiency or satisfying aggregate hours of instruction can be achieved through an on-site, offsite, or blended learning model as outlined in Policy 1906. Best practices will assist districts in facilitating quality learning for each student regardless of background or circumstance. Best practices include but are not limited to, planning and communication, clear expectations, differentiated instruction and learning models, and flexible demonstrations of learning.

The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy to ensure the delivery of education services to students onsite at the school, offsite at other locations using available resources.

The District administration or designated personnel are authorized to implement this policy

June 2021 – January 2024

Part III – Updated Compliance for the District’s Previously Adopted Plan for the Safe Return to In-person Instruction and Continuity of Services:

Section 2001(i)(3) of the ARP Act states that a school district that developed a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services prior to the date of enactment of the ARP Act will be deemed to have met the requirement to develop a plan under section 2001(i)(1) as long as the plan meets the statutory requirements (i.e., is publicly available on the LEA's website and was developed after the LEA sought and took into account public comment).

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 extensive public comment. Further, we have, as part of the organization of the School District’s Safe Return to Schools and Continuity of Services Plan for purposes of the ARP Act, revised the School District’s plan at a meeting held on June 24, 2021 that included not just a notice of opportunity for public input but which specifically invited meaningful consultation with and input from:

1. Students; families; school and district administrators (including special education administrators); teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions; stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.

The Board of Trustees, administration and support staff have considered the input of all affected parties and have carefully deliberated regarding the best possible means by which the Liberty district can continue to provide safe effective learning environments for each of our students, staff, teachers and administrators.

June 2021 - September 30, 2024

Part IV – Schedule for Future Review and Updates:

Consideration of this Safe Return to Schools and Continuity of Services Plan shall be added as a standing agenda item on each regular and or special meetings of the Board of Trustees throughout the 2021-2024 school years. The agenda item shall, at a minimum, include notice of any changes to the plan recommended by the administration with an invitation for input, notice of opportunity for public input, and consultation with:

1. Students; families; school and district administrators (including special education administrators); teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions; and civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations); stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.

Appendix – Attach school district’s adopted 1900 policies in their entirety.