

**Somers District #29**  
**Safe Return to Schools and Continuity of Services Plan**  
**COVID 19 Summary 2020-2021 School Year**

Our original “Safe Return to School” plan was developed over the summer of 2020 by a district-wide team including parents, office staff, teachers, counselors, the school nurse, principals, superintendent, and trustees. The plan was approved by the Board of Trustees at their August 17, 2020 meeting.

Throughout the 2020-21 school year the superintendent met regularly with the Northwest Montana Association of School Superintendents to review the best available guidance from the Center for Disease Control, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and our local health officer. All of the procedures described below were developed in accordance with their guidance, and in coordination with applicable state and local health officials.

**Universal and correct wearing of masks**

Lakeside Elementary and Somers Middle School re-opened to students on September 8, 2020. Masks were universally required for all persons on campus and on the bus. Expectations for wearing masks were explicitly taught and reinforced throughout the school year.

**Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing**

Lakeside Elementary and Somers Middle School developed and followed guidelines for re-opening grouping and group size, and physical distancing.

At Lakeside Elementary classes were self-contained. Differentiation was practiced within this setting without walk to read or math. Specials were taught in the classroom setting. Breakfast and lunch was distributed and eaten in the classroom. Recesses were by individual grade level and properly distanced. Students who showed signs of illness went to a designated location to receive support until their parent could pick them up.

At Somers Middle School students reported to their homeroom upon arrival. If eating breakfast they would grab and go. Students attended 7 class periods. Before leaving a classroom students sanitized their desk and chair. Lunch was served to groups of less than 50 at a time. All tables were sanitized/disinfected between uses. All classrooms adhered to specific seating charts every day throughout the entire period. Passing periods were staggered and there were no bathroom breaks during passing. There were no PACE/QUIL/Clubs and no Nutrition Break (replaced by in class snack). Students picked up a Chromebook for the day in Homeroom, and returned it before dismissal. During return all computers were sanitized and plugged in. Dismissal times were staggered by grade level.

Lockers were only accessed at the beginning of day, lunch and end of day. There were lunch carts at each door for those who bring a cold lunch. Student’s binders were kept in each classroom. The only items that moved from class to class were their Chromebook, a book and pencil/pen pouches.

District wide only students and staff were allowed in the buildings.

### **Handwashing and respiratory etiquette**

At Lakeside students washed/sanitized their hands every hour, after recess, and before eating snack/breakfast/lunch. Additional hand washing stations were provided to facilitate this.

At the middle school students washed/sanitized their hands upon entry of every class and before eating snack/breakfast/lunch.

District wide, Montana Behavior Initiative (MBI) expectations were explicitly taught and included safety procedures such as hand washing, wearing PPE properly, and cleaning procedures of space and PPE, etc.

### **Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation**

Custodial staff increased sanitation/disinfection of frequently touched surfaces. HVAC filters were upgraded and replaced more frequently.

### **Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments.**

Administrators supported County Health personnel in contact tracing, and later took over the process after being trained and deputized by the Health Department.

Accommodations were provided for students and staff who were required to quarantine or isolate.

### **Diagnostic screening and testing**

Parents were tasked with screening their children for symptoms of illness each day before sending them to school. Children who showed any of the following symptoms were kept at home – fever (of 100.4 or higher) or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and/or diarrhea. Parents were expected to have a plan for childcare that enabled a student to be picked up within an hour of a phone call if they became symptomatic while at school.

The School Nurse position for the district was expanded to full-time to support office staff in assessing student ailments.

### **Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities**

As soon as vaccinations became available the district shared information with families and staff regarding how to get vaccinated. This information was shared regularly.

District Policy 3413 – Student Immunization was modified to comply with the changes made during the 2021 General Legislative session. The new language includes: “This policy does not apply to or govern vaccinations against COVID-19. The Board does not require immunization against COVID-19 in order to enroll in the District in accordance with Montana law. District officials shall not inquire about the COVID-19 vaccination status of students, employees, or visitors. District officials shall not make decisions regarding access to District services for students, employees, or visitors based upon an individual’s COVID-19 vaccination status. Students enrolled in dual credit courses in accordance with

District policies may be subject to distinct immunization requirements of the applicable post-secondary institution.”

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

Remote Learning was made available for those who did not wish to return to in-person instruction. The District provided training for students and parents in how to use Google Classroom and other tools. Parents and students signed an agreement regarding acceptable technology use and etiquette. A Chromebook was provided for each remote student. Teachers were available online and by phone from 8:00-3:30, and responded to emails within 24 hours. There were real time meetings with students at least twice per week. Instruction in Reading/Language Arts, Math and Counseling were provided for students in Kindergarten through Fourth Grade. Students in grades 5-8 also had Science and Social Studies, and optional Physical Education and Art. Middle School students attended real time Zoom classes.

The District provided a free appropriate public education and necessary related services to all students with disabilities residing in the District as required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The District maintains membership in the Flathead Special Education Cooperative to support our efforts on behalf of students with special needs.

### **Coordination with State and local health officials**

District leadership met regularly with state and local health officials throughout the 2020-21 school year. Recommendations from the County Health Officer were closely followed.

### **How the district will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services**

Our safe return plan was reviewed regularly by the administrative team. It was discussed at staff meetings and modified as needed. It was also discussed at Board meetings.

The District has hired 3 Additional teachers to address students' academic needs. We also hired a full-time School Nurse. In the fall of 2021 the District began offering School Based Health Services through Logan Health. They will offer medical services, behavioral health, and prevention and health education. Staff will also have access to the School Based Health Services. Staff also participates in a wellness program offered by our health insurance provider.

In light of current levels of COVID cases in Flathead County, the increase in pediatric cases, and the greater transmissibility of the Delta strain, the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Superintendent recommended to the Board of Trustees that masks be required for everyone for the first six weeks of the school year. Based on feedback from the public the Board voted to make masks optional and strongly recommended.

## **Safe Return to Schools Plan 2021-2022**

### **LES Operations**

The Lakeside Elementary team is unified in providing safety and high quality instruction to students. The following plan was developed from the safe return to schools plan from the 2020-2021 school year. Our work focused on three questions.

1. How do we provide a flexible, safe environment for our students with face to face instruction?
2. How do we limit quarantines?
3. How do we keep from shutting down and going remote like what happened in April of 2020?

The plan is to revisit this plan throughout the year because we know plans need to change to best meet the needs of our students. We don't have specific timelines for when, but do have intentions to meet as needed to discuss this plan and make changes.

### **Family Night Events -**

- LES Staff feels some events are possible and some events are not possible at this time (e.g. Harvest lunch is not possible at this time). Our goal is to hold every possible event we can for our students and families, but we need time and flexibility to assess each event closer to the time of the event (e.g, Kindergarten Donuts for Dads in January).
- LES has put each event we plan to hold on the school calendar in hopes we can hold it. We will assess the possibility of having these events about 4-6 weeks prior to the event occurring. We will then communicate the outcome of that event to families so parents can make plans to attend if it is happening.

### **September 7th, 2021 -**

- Please join us on the first day of school. School starts at 8:16AM. Come join us in the school to drop off school supplies in your student's classroom, take a quick photo and enjoy that first day of school tradition of dropping your student off at their classroom.

- Per vote at the September 2, 2021 school board meeting, masks or face shields will be strongly recommended while in the school building.
- Social distancing and watching 15 minute cumulative close contacts is also encouraged.

### **Overall Safety Measures -**

- Regular handwashing
- Teach respiratory etiquette
- Utilize hand sanitizer
- Use of PPE, such as cleaning supplies to clean surfaces
- Seating charts for all necessary areas (kept up to date)
- Teaching, modeling and implementation of social distancing
- Implementation of 15 minute cumulative close contacts
- Parents screen for symptoms before children come to school

### **Arrival -**

- School starts at 8:16AM. For the first day of school parents will be able to walk their children into the school to help them drop off their school supplies. Parents will need to follow the 15 minute close contact and social distancing rules.

On non first days of school our systems will be as follow:

- Please arrive no earlier than 8:05 to school.
- All students will go to the playground for arrival.
- Parents, please say your goodbyes from the front of the building or side of the school by the gym. School staff will greet students at key points along the way to the playground.
- Late arriving students will enter through the front of the school and be marked tardy to class.

### **Recess -**

- Students will go outside and play as they traditionally did pre-COVID.
- Recess staff will monitor students who are playing games that are in close contact for extended periods and encourage social distancing as needed.
- Staff will monitor progress of COVID and revisit this plan if needed.
- All staff will monitor close contacts.

- An alternative recess will be made available if there are concerns for student safety. Parents can talk with the classroom teacher, the front office, or the Principal to make this request.
- Teachers will hold a morning meeting going over the new recess expectations. This will be taught and retaught as needed through the remainder of the school year.
- Students at LES Recess we are:
  - Safe - I follow the playground rules  
I socially distance to keep myself and others safe
  - Respectful (Kind) - I respect individual choices
  - Responsible - I follow directions the first time given
  - Ready to learn - I will pick up all my things from the playground and be ready to enter my classroom on time.

#### **Classroom Instruction -**

- **The General Classroom**
  - Teachers will have autonomy to set their classrooms up in pods or rows.
  - Shared supplies (meaning supplies are stored together in the classroom and if they are needed they are taken, like a general store)
  - Classes will start self-contained in a Workshop Model, but we will revisit the model regularly to see if a switch can be made as the year progresses and whether a grade level chooses to do so (aka grade level teaching autonomy)
- **Title Services**
  - Students who receive Title services will be socially distanced appropriately.
- **Specialist Classroom**
  - Specialists will be in their classrooms.
    - PE will be outside as much as possible (weather and air quality permitting) at the beginning of the school year. If they are inside they will practice social distancing.
  - 6 ft social distancing will be implemented.
  - Classroom teachers will provide seating charts to specialists so seating charts remain consistent in both areas.

#### **Cafeteria -**

- Students will socially distance in the lunch line.
- Students will have a seating chart in the cafeteria and seats will be labeled.

- Lunch will be staggered by grade.
- As many tables will be put out as needed to increase distancing.

#### **Dismissal -**

- Students will be dismissed from the school from the bus loop.
- Parents, please socially distance in the front of the school while you wait for your child.
- The school day ends at 3:16. Buses will depart at 3:20. Please be here by 3:20 to pick your child up from school.

#### **Volunteers -**

- Yes, we want parents to volunteer! Please fill out a form with Cara in the front office. If you have already done this you do not need to do it again. Then you will let the teacher know you would like to volunteer. You and the teacher will agree on a time and task.
- Volunteers will need to do a health check (are you feeling ill?) the day of volunteering. If you're sick please wait until you're feeling better to come in.
- Classroom party volunteers are limited to one at this time.
- Volunteers will also stay in one class and need to not bring small children with them when they volunteer.

## **Safe Return to Schools Plan 2021-2022**

### **SMS Operations**

#### **Masks**

Strongly recommended

Recess: Masks optional

PE: Same as last year, teacher discretion if socially distanced.

Masks will be required on the buses

## **Before School**

@ 8:00 students will be allowed to go outside for morning recess

Breakfast available in cafeteria (less than 15 minutes)

Para's will be on the playground with kids

## **Nutrition Break**

10:04-10:10

5/6 on the playground walking laps

7/8 in the parking lot walking laps

If a break is needed in the afternoon for 5/6 it will be at the teacher's discretion.

## **Lunch**

Students will be able to pick their seats the first day. We will record them and let them switch every 4 weeks. Lunch should go faster as they do not have to individually package and serve this year.

## **End of Day**

Students will not return to homerooms at the end of the day. They will get their things and head to the buses.

## **Buses and Pick Up**

Buses will continue to pick up students in the same location as last year.

Parent pick up will be in the lower parking lot.

## **Field Trips**

We will continue to plan field trips while taking our safe schools plan into consideration.

## **Hats**

No hats this year in the building (we are preparing them for high school)