

Pass Creek School District #25

Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan

Date of Original Adoption: March 25, 2020
Date Plan was Last Revised: March 22, 2024
Next Regularly Scheduled Month for Consideration (At least quarterly): August
2021 Dates Reviewed: March 2020-May 2021

Summary: March 2020 - June 2021

The Pass Creek School District #25 was ordered to close to in person instruction on March 15, 2020, under an executive order issued by then-Governor Bullock. Districts were provided a two-week period of time during which they could remain fully closed to instruction of any kind while developing a plan for remote instruction required by the Governor.

Although the district was authorized to remain closed, it mobilized and began remote instruction during the timeframe when it was authorized to remain closed. Thereafter, the district continued pursuant to a reopening plan approved by the Governor beginning March 30, 2020.

On April 22, 2020, then-Governor Bullock lifted his Stay-at-Home Order and announced a Plan to Begin Phased Reopening of Montana. As part of that plan, effective May 7, 2020, all schools were provided the option to return to in-classroom teaching at the discretion of local school boards. The school district finished the 2019-20 school year in person.

During the 2020-21 school year, the means of operation included in-person instruction and offsite for at-risk students with health conditions. The district developed a plan for reopening in person, with contingencies, and implemented that plan for the 2020-21 school year. The reopening plan, details regarding which are provided on the following pages.

The district finished the 2020-21 school year strong, having provided high quality learning opportunities to the students in safe and effective learning environments. The district embraced a fundamental principle of providing extensive transparency to the community throughout the above timeframe. Meetings were given sufficient public notice and provided extensive opportunities for the community to provide feedback regarding the district's plans.

Safe Return to Schools and Continuity of Services Plan

Meetings were noticed, held, and solicited public comment on the evolving plans for a safe return to school and continuity of services on the following dates since March 2020:

1. March 25, 2020
2. May 28, 2020
3. August 12, 2020

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4. January 16, 2021

5. February 2, 2021
6. March 31, 2021
7. May 20, 2021

Meetings included a general opportunity for the public to provide input and was provided to everyone including students, families, school leaders, other educators, and school staff.

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Pass Creek School District #25

District Plan/Report to Make Up Lost Pupil-Instruction Time

Approved March 25, 2020

Summary

On March 15, 2020, Governor Steve Bullock through Executive Orders 2-2020 and 3-2020 declared that a state of emergency exists in Montana due to the global outbreak of COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus and issued a Directive directing the closure of all non residential public schools in Montana through March 27, 2020, and providing that all eligible schools continue to receive all state payments.

On March 19, 2020, Governor Bullock provided additional direction related to school closures, planning by schools and school districts in the event of future closure, the provision of services to students during closure, and state funding for schools. Pursuant to the Governor's March 19th directive, requirements for pupil instruction from Monday, March 16, through March 27, 2020, were waived and districts were to receive all state payments during this period as budgeted and appropriated by the Montana legislature.

The Governor further directed that districts were expected to use this two-week period to plan and implement ways to provide students with:

- 1) quality public education through remote learning;
- 2) school meals;
- 3) services to students with disabilities; and,
- 4) other services customarily provided to students in school, in the event there are school closures beyond March 27.

Districts were not required to provide pupil-instruction time during the two weeks through remote learning, though, where possible, it was strongly encouraged.

Moreover, the Governor's directive stated that in the event of closures beyond March 27, pursuant to a gubernatorial directive, a district will not be required to reschedule in person pupil-instruction time lost because of the closure if the board of trustees for the district approves the district's plan/report showing that it has:

- 1) made up the lost pupil-instruction time through remote learning;
- 2) provided for meals for students;
- 3) provided for services to students with disabilities; and,
- 4) provided other services customarily provided to students in school.

District Plan

Pursuant to the Governor's March 19th directive, on March 25, 2020, the Board of Trustees of Pass Creek School District #25 approved the following report/plan to address the four areas specified above:

1) Make up of lost pupil-instruction time through remote learning.

The District will provide student instruction comparable to on-site instructional hours through remote learning through use of the following structure. The District will ensure

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that educational services can be accessed by all students regardless of resources available at home.

- Certified staff will work off-site to provide instruction to students using the following mechanisms:
 - Textbooks/instructional guides.
 - Hard copy packets with assignments and materials.
- Certified staff will be on-site at designated times to coordinate the pick-up

and drop-off of materials and assignments to be completed by students at home. Student assignments will be communicated to parents by phone and email.

2) Provide for meals for students.

The District does not offer a school nutrition program. The District may notify families of their ability to utilize school nutrition programs of neighboring districts as needed.

3) Provide for services to students with disabilities.

The District will ensure that students with an IEP or Section 504 Plan continue to receive educational and related services permitting them to make progress toward individual goals. Services for students with disabilities will be provided in coordination with the Gallatin-Madison Special Education Cooperative using the following strategies:

- Co-Op staff will provide special education and related services to students remotely using the following mechanisms:
 - On-line instructional websites.
 - Video chats/tutoring/teleconferencing using online platforms Google Hangout.
 - Textbooks/instructional guides.
 - Hard copy packets of materials.
- In collaboration with parents, Co-Op staff will devise schedules to include dedicated times for providing supplemental instruction and related services to students with disabilities via on-line platforms.

4) Provide other services customarily provided to students in school. The District has implemented the following strategies to ensure that students receive services similar to those provided as if pupils were being educated on-site:

- Specialist staff will work off-site to provide instruction to students using the following mechanisms:
 - Video chats/tutoring through online platforms YouTube, Google Hangout and Google Classroom.
 - Textbooks/instructional guides.
 - Hard copy packets of materials.

Checklist

During the implementation of the District's Plan/Report, the District reviewed the following processes/mechanisms to ensure compliance with the Governor's March 19th directive as well as ongoing collaboration with stakeholders and effective communication with the community, staff, parents, and students:

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- ✓ On March 25, 2020, the Board of Trustees of Pass Creek School District #20 made a Declaration of Unforeseen Emergency pursuant to 20-9-801 through 20- 9-806, MCA.
- ✓ At a properly noticed meeting, the Board of Trustees reviewed this Plan, engaged in dialogue and deliberation regarding the same, and approved this Plan.
- ✓ The administrative staff has assisted in coordinating meetings with parents and certified and classified staff while maintaining social-distancing, self-isolation, and

- other guidance as provided by the CDC and State and local health officials.
- ✓ Certified and classified staff participated in the development and implementation of this Plan.
- ✓ All parents/guardians of students have been informed of the Plan for the continuity of educational and other services to their children.
- ✓ The District has maintained regular contact with the community to meet the needs of students and families and to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on the community, staff, parents and students.
- ✓ The District has taken measures to ensure that all communications relating to the provision of programs and services for students and families are accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- ✓ The District has reviewed COVID-19 basic information provided by the CDC.
- ✓ The District has established a point of contact with local and state health authorities to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on their community. ✓ The District has received COVID-19 fact sheets from the CDC available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/share-facts-h.pdf> for dissemination to parents, students, and staff as needed.
- ✓ The District has received information on common preventative measures for COVID-19 prevention for dissemination to parents, students, and staff as needed, including:
 - Washing hands with soap for at least 20 seconds.
 - Avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Covering coughs and sneezes with tissues and throwing away tissues.
 - Avoiding contact with others when sick.
- ✓ The District has and will continue to comply with FERPA in reference to any student who may be identified as having COVID-19.
- ✓ The District has and will continue to comply with HIPAA Privacy laws in reference to any staff member who may be identified as having COVID-19. ✓ The District has taken safety measures to comply with CDC guidelines on social distancing (6-feet of distance between individuals), limiting large groups of individuals from being together, and provided disinfectant wipes, etc. to regularly sanitize surfaces within the school, including but not limited to: door handles/knobs, restrooms, surfaces and electronic devices shared by staff and others, etc.
- ✓ The District has adequately equipped maintenance and cleaning staff with personal protective equipment gloves and gowns that are appropriate for the cleaning products used and to minimize having contact with potentially contaminated surfaces.

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- ✓ The District has a cleaning schedule that is updated as needed. ✓ The District has educated all staff to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 in case they become exposed to the virus themselves.
- ✓ The District has cancelled school-sponsored events/travel of students and staff.
- ✓ The District has a process in place for regular review of and refinement of this Plan to ensure it continues to meet the needs of its students.
- ✓ The Board of Trustees will review and approve any updates to this Plan for submission to the Governor's Office as necessary.

Adoption

The District's Plan/Report was approved by a vote of the Pass Creek School District

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Frequently Asked Questions – COVID 19 and Schools

What can families and staff do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the school setting?

There are a number of actions we can all take every day to reduce the risk of catching the disease or spreading it to others. First, we need all families to monitor for COVID-19 symptoms every day and keep students home if they are sick. As part of your morning routine, ask your child about whether they are experiencing any of the [common symptoms listed by the CDC listed below](#). Conduct a temperature check prior to leaving for school. Students and staff should not come to school if they are feeling ill.

The following checklist includes symptoms to watch for and consult your health care provider about:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Headache

- Muscle aches
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- New loss of taste or smell
- New runny nose or congestion
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat

This list is subject to change as new symptoms of COVID-19 are identified. Students with symptoms should not attend school and parents should consult their healthcare provider regarding their return to school.

It is important to note that not all students with COVID-19 will show clear symptoms, and not all students with symptoms have COVID-19. This is one of the reasons the disease is so difficult to contain, and also why it is important that we all continue to take other precautions.

Those additional precautions that we need all staff and students to practice includes washing their hands frequently and thoroughly and to avoid touching their face. Simple hand soap can render the virus harmless if a person washes thoroughly.

We also need students and staff to comply with social distancing procedures and local public health rules requiring use of face covering inside schools.

While social distancing inside a school will be challenging and imperfect, efforts to do so are designed to limit the number of students or staff exposed if someone inside the school becomes ill with COVID-19. Our shared willingness to make these social distancing measures effective will have a direct impact on the need to isolate or quarantine students or staff if the disease is detected inside the school.

What happens if someone gets sick in school?

Staff and kids with symptoms will be separated from well students using a designated isolation area. Parent/guardian emergency contact will be contacted and are expected to pick up their child promptly.

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It will be important to have updated local contacts listed with the school so that your child can be picked up if necessary.

Individuals with COVID-19 signs or symptoms will be referred to a healthcare provider for evaluation on whether testing is needed.

What symptoms should require a student or staff to be sent home?

If someone has a fever of 100.4 or higher, a dry and persistent cough, shortness of breath or other symptoms identified by the CDC, schools staff should call parents to take the child home.

Many children who test positive for COVID-19 have very mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. It is also important to remember that some children will become ill from influenza, strep, the common cold, or a host of other causes. This will make the coming school year difficult and stressful for some families.

It is crucial to remember: Not everyone with symptoms has COVID and not everyone with COVID has obvious symptoms. This is another reason that diligent social distancing, hand washing, and surface disinfection are important.

What happens when someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19 is inside a school building?

In most instances, a single case of COVID-19 in a school would not warrant closing the entire school. Community spread and how much contact the person with COVID-19 had with others, as well as when such contact took place, will be considered.

These variables will also be considered when determining how long a school, or part of the school, stays closed if closure is necessary. If the spread of COVID-19 within a school is higher than in the community, or if the school is the source of an outbreak, administrators will work with local health officials to determine if temporarily closing the school building is necessary.

When a case is identified, Gallatin City-County Health Department (GCCHD) will work with schools staff to assess exposure (who the person had contact with, for how long, and in what context). The health department and schools staff will communicate to parents when a case is detected in a school, and will work to identify other students or staff who may be close contacts with the known case. (The current definition of a close contact is a person who has been within 6 feet of another person for 15 minutes or more.)

In assessing exposure and identifying close contacts, public health nurses will take into account with whom the case patient had close contact. If available they will assess seating charts and take into consideration the ages of students involved and the systems set up in the school to minimize disease transmission.

If a student or staff member is identified as a close contact with someone who has COVID-19, health department nurses or staff will contact those staff members or the parents/guardians of children involved. Health department nurses will work with families to help them understand their exposure, possible symptoms to monitor, and possible referrals to health care providers to assess symptoms and

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determine if testing is necessary. In some cases, public health nurses may refer a student or staff directly to a testing center for testing.

Gallatin City-County Health Department will follow guidance from the CDC in determining who needs to be placed in isolation or quarantine. Isolation is the term that refers to separating someone who is sick with COVID-19. Quarantine is the term for someone who was exposed to someone who has the disease, and is at higher risk to develop and spread the disease themselves. Anyone with a laboratory confirmed case of the disease will be required to isolate until they are no longer contagious, typically 10 days from the onset of symptoms.

What is contact tracing and what will that look like in a school/district?

Contact tracing is the means by which COVID-19 infections and exposures are identified, subsequently notified, and ultimately isolated or quarantined to reduce spread of the virus. Contact tracing is a fundamental public health practice that is used to stop the spread of many infectious diseases, including COVID-19. Contact tracing consists of a series of interviews, performed by public health nurses and workers, which are designed to identify close contacts of a student or staff member that tested positive for COVID-19. Close contacts are defined as having been within six feet of an infected individual for more than 15 minutes.

What will happen if my child is in contact with someone who has COVID-19?

The CDC currently recommends that close contacts of known cases (those who have been within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) be quarantined at home to ensure they do not develop and spread the disease. This quarantine period lasts for 14 days from the person's last known exposure to the person who has the disease.

Identifying close contacts will also take into account the ages of students because different ages interact in different ways. In some cases, it may be necessary to quarantine entire classrooms in order to contain spread of the disease.

In some cases, students identified as close contacts may be asked to have a COVID-19 test, especially if they have symptoms. If the test comes back positive for COVID-19, the Health Department will contact the parent/guardian and work with them to help connect to health care services or social supports.

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, when can they return to school?

That will depend on a number of factors, including how they are doing recuperating from the disease. In general, and with some exceptions, students and staff who are diagnosed with COVID-19 through a lab test and who do not have a fever or worsening symptoms should be able to go back to school 10 days after the onset of symptoms. Ten days from the onset of symptoms is the period of time when someone who has the disease is most likely to spread it to others.

A public health nurse from Gallatin City-County Health Department will work with parents directly and will determine when a child is no longer contagious and can go back to school.

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If a student or staff member is identified as a close contact and placed in quarantine, when can they go back to school?

Children with a known close contact with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days from their last contact with that case and until return to school is approved by the local health department in accordance with the CDC guidance. This period of time is recommended by the CDC because it is the period during which someone who has been exposed may develop the disease and pass it on to others.

A public health nurse from Gallatin City-County Health Department will work with families directly and will determine when a child can go back to school.

If a student or staff member is identified as a close contact and then have a negative COVID-19 test, can they go back to school immediately?

No. In order to protect others in the school, CDC recommends that all students or staff who have been identified as close contacts stay at home for 14 days from their last exposure. That's because even if someone tests negative immediately after an exposure, the virus typically take varying lengths of time to make someone sick. It is possible that someone who tests negative for active disease is still carrying the virus and could develop the disease at a later date. The test cannot predict if you will develop the disease at a later date.

If a student in quarantine feels fine, why can't they go back to school?

One of the hardest things about COVID-19 is that people who are exposed to the disease may not develop the disease for up to 14 days. During that time, called an "incubation period", they may be

carrying the virus and could develop the disease at any time and pass it on to others.

It is also possible that people, especially children, may develop the disease and pass it on to others before they develop symptoms. This is what makes the virus hard to control and why we ask people who have been exposed and are most likely to develop the disease to stay at home until they are no longer at risk to spread the disease.

Will I be notified if my child is not a close contact?

A health department public health nurse or other staff will be in contact with parents of all students identified as a close contact and work with those families to answer questions and provide resources. In addition, the schools and the health department will communicate to parents and staff when cases inside a school are identified and keep the updated on efforts to limit disease spread.

However, it will not be possible for schools or public health staff to contact parents of every student who is not a close contact. Parents who are concerned their child may have been exposed can call the school or the health department.

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If a student or staff is wearing a face covering do they still need to stay in quarantine?

Yes. While the CDC recommends face coverings as an important way to reduce disease transmission, current guidance advises infection control measures (including isolation and quarantine) for anyone who is a close contact with a known case, whether they are wearing a face covering or not.

Face coverings are a tool to help reduce spread of the disease through droplets exhaled by people when they talk, sneeze, or cough. But face coverings do not offer 100% protection and do not remove all risk. That's why it is so important for all students and staff to stay home if they are sick, keep six feet from others when feasible, and wash their hands frequently and thoroughly.

What is the value of face coverings?

Face coverings are an important strategy to reduce transmission of the COVID-19, primarily by reducing the spread of infection from the wearer to those around. The Gallatin City-County Board of Health has approved an emergency health rule applicable to all schools in Gallatin County requiring the use of face coverings for all adults and children in grades 6-12 whenever social distancing cannot be achieved. Older children, such as those in middle and high school, are likely to be able to follow guidance regarding proper mask usage. Thus, the use of face coverings can provide an additional layer of protection against the spread of infection. It is also recommended that children wear face coverings while riding a bus or shared transportation.

I have heard that most children get mild symptoms and recover well if they contract COVID-19? Is this true, and if so why are we making such a big deal about this?

Thankfully, it is true that many children who contract the disease have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. It is also true that it is exceedingly rare for a child to become hospitalized or die from COVID-19. However, there have been rare serious cases in children and some children do seem to develop long term health effects from the virus.

But the main reason we are taking such careful precautions about this disease is to limit spread within

our community to protect those who are more likely to get seriously ill. We know that the disease is more dangerous for people over the age of 60 and people with underlying health conditions (such as diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, obesity, heart and lung conditions, or compromised immune systems). And because the virus that causes COVID-19 is new to human beings, we know that few people have built up immunity to the disease. These factors make it especially important to do all we can to contain spread of the disease through measures such as those summarized in this document.

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A RESOURCE FOR HEALTHY LIVING FROM THE
GALLATIN CITY-COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

HUMAN SERVICES • 406.582.3100, hs@gallatin.mt.gov
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH • 406.582.3120, ehs@gallatin.mt.gov
WIC • 406.582.3115, wic@gallatin.mt.gov

healthygallatin.org

Date: August 12, 2020

To: Families and Staff at Pass Creek School District

From: Matt Kelley, MPH, Health Officer, Gallatin City-County Health Department

Subject: Returning to School During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear families, staff, and Pass Creek School community:

As the beginning of the new school year approaches, we want to use this opportunity to share with you information about plans to return to classroom instruction during the 2020-2021 school year, and planning that is happening to do all we can to keep students, staff, and the community as safe as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

First and foremost, we feel it is important to acknowledge the challenges and uncertainty involved with bringing students back into classrooms during the pandemic. We also want to acknowledge that our efforts this fall and winter to have in-person classes may be extremely challenging for students, educators, and families. We are aware that many have strong feelings about whether and how to conduct in-person classes.

As we move into the school year, we are also asking for your help. While we may not all agree on everything during the coming year, what is certain is that we need your understanding, flexibility, and shared commitment to the education of our children in order to have the best chance to have a safe and successful school year. This pandemic has filled our lives with uncertainty and disruption. Our shared goal is to give our children the best school experience possible. To do that we need parents, staff, administrators, and the community to work together, to listen to one another, and to understand that our shared work will be difficult and is not guaranteed to succeed.

Gallatin City-County Health Department (GCCHD) – the lead local public health agency in Gallatin County – is committed to supporting schools that seek to have in-person classes during the

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coming year. The GCCHD staff has been working with school officials for weeks to plan and prepare to have classes in an environment that none of us has ever experienced before. We do not fully understand the virus that causes COVID-19, and we do not fully understand how it spreads. This uncertainty makes our shared work even more complicated and difficult. Simply stated, there is no established rule book for how to run a school during a pandemic. But we are committed to working with you to do our best to make it work.

Accompanying this letter, you will find a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document that seeks to explain our current planning for dealing with COVID-19 during the coming year. It is important that you understand that we are planning for the day when we detect a confirmed case of the disease in our schools. It is likely that we will have cases. Our goal, when that happens, will be to communicate promptly and proactively with all families to keep you aware of the situation and our efforts to disrupt spread of the disease.

You should also know that a single case of COVID-19 in a school will not necessarily result in closure of the entire school. Temporary school closures during the coming year are possible, especially if we see evidence that the virus is spreading inside the school to a degree that is greater than what we are seeing in the community, or if the school becomes a source of infection in the community. Even so, it is also possible that we will detect cases and work to limit spread while keeping the school open.

If a case is detected in your school, public health nurses and staff from the health department will work promptly and collaboratively with school staff to limit risk of disease spread. This work will include the need to require students or staff who have the disease to stay home, and may require quarantine for those who are identified as close contacts. We will work throughout the year to limit contact between students and staff in order to reduce the risk of disease spread. This work will mean that our school days will be different, and our students and staff will

interact differently. To maximize our chances of success we will re-focus efforts to encourage frequent hand washing and surface disinfection, social distancing whenever possible, and implementation of local health rules requiring most students, staff, and parents to wear face coverings for most of the school day.

Even as we share this information with you now, please know that our work together may change and our approaches may shift as we learn more about the virus, as our local epidemiology changes, and as we learn more from our own practices and that of other schools. What will not change is our commitment to communicate with families and staff and to keep you updated if we see cases or if we change practices.

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Finally, we want to thank everyone who has worked collaboratively with us to plan and prepare for the year ahead. We cannot do this without your help, your flexibility, and your shared commitment to the education of our children.

Best regards,

Matt Kelley

