

**Geraldine School District**  
**Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan**

Date of Original Adoption of Policies: April 24, 2020  
Plan Revisions: February 11, 2021, December 17, 2021

**March 2020 - June 2021**

1. The Geraldine School District 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 our district was authorized to remain closed, we quickly mobilized and began remote instruction during the timeframe when we were authorized to remain closed. Thereafter, our district continued pursuant to a reopening plan approved by the Governor beginning March 30, 2020.
2. 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.

Our school district remained in remote teaching on May 7, 2020, for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year.  
We reopened on August 26, 2020 providing social distancing and additional cleaning and safety provisions. Following local county health guidance, we were able to operate mask-free while providing safe distancing for teachers and students and all employees. We remained mask free until Chouteau County exceeded the county count of 4 confirmed cases. We provided in person instruction for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year. The only exception during this timeframe was for a temporary closure pursuant to quarantine or isolation orders issued by our county department of health.
3. Our district developed a plan for reopening to in person instruction, with contingencies, and we implemented that plan for the 2020-21 school year. The reopening plan, details regarding which are provided below, included adoption of various model policies provided by the Montana School Boards Association under its 1900 Series, including model policies aligned with CDC guidance regarding mitigation strategies to limit exposure to and transmission of COVID-19 in school settings.
4. Our district finished the 2020-21 school year strong, having provided high quality learning opportunities to the students in our community in safe and effective learning environments.
5. We embraced a fundamental principle of providing extensive transparency to our community throughout the above timeframe. We publicly noticed, held meetings

regarding, and provided extensive opportunities for our community to provide us with feedback regarding the School District's plans and we carefully considered such feedback in developing and refining the School District's plans throughout the last 14-15 months.

## **Safe Return to Schools and Continuity of Services Plan Contents:**

### **March 2020-June 2021**

#### **Part I: Documentation of Meaningful Consultation in Developing and Refining the School District's plan from March 2020 Through June 2021:**

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

1. March 20, 2020
2. March 27, 2020
3. April 9, 2020
4. April 24, 2020
5. May 14, 2020
6. August 24, 2020

Our invitation for public input included a general opportunity for the public to provide input and was provided to everyone interested, including:

Students; families; school district administrator, teachers, community members and county health officers and all school District Trustees.

#### **Part II: Contents of The School District's plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services:**

Following the lifting of the Stay-at-Home Order and subsequent reopening of the state on April 22, 2020, Geraldine 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 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.

Geraldine School District implemented policy options that facilitated collaboration between the Board of Trustees, Superintendent, 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.

Geraldine 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, 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 Geraldine 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, Superintendent, 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.

Geraldine School District will continue 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.

MTSBA Policies that have been adopted and modified are as follows:  
From the 1900 Series Policies: 1901, 1903, 1903F, 1904, 1905, 1907, 1910, 1910F, 1911, 1912 were all adopted. Please see the Geraldine School website for a complete copy of each policy and the individualized school adopted RETURN TO SCHOOL and STAY IN SCHOOL PLANS.

## **June 2021**

### **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 plan for purposes of the ARP Act, revised the School District’s plan at a meeting held on **June 10, 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 district administrator

We have considered the input of all affected parties and have carefully deliberated regarding the best possible means by which our district can provide safe effective learning environments for each of our students.

The School District plan was revised on August 25th, 2021.

## **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 special meeting of the board of trustees throughout the 2021-24 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 district administrator, teachers and all staff members and Board Trustees.

We have considered the input of all affected parties and have carefully deliberated regarding the best possible means by which our district can provide safe effective learning environments for each of our students.

**Appendix – To view the school district’s adopted 1900 policies in their entirety, see the District Policy Manual at <https://geraldine.k12.mt.us/District>**

**MT-PEC *A Roadmap for Safely Reopening Montana’s Public Schools Using Emergency School District Policies.***