

Independent's Reopening Plan

In the fall of 2020, Independent School will open to full capacity but will be limiting the number of activities to allow for continued distancing. This corresponds to the Governors Order: Non-congregate group size has increased from 10 to 50 people and OPI's Guidance of Scenario 3.

Safety and Logistics

The safety of students, staff, and families is paramount and one of the school district's guiding principles. In an effort to reduce the risk of disease transmission, Independent School needs a collective effort from each person in following all safety protocols. According to local health officials, the risk of spreading disease can be reduced by diligently engaging in three fundamental actions:

- Maintaining physical distance
- Masking
- Hand hygiene

Until further notice, Independent School will be operating in a "Restrictive Mode" of operation.

Restrictive Mode of Operation

Independent School will open August 26, 2020 in a restrictive mode of operation. To the greatest extent possible, students will be in cohorts to maximize physical distance and limit contact. Schools will not be holding large, unnecessary gatherings during the time of the restriction. Lunch schedules and locations may be altered to minimize the number of students in a collective area. Field trips and building access for guest speakers will be suspended during the restrictive mode of operation.

Face Coverings

Face coverings will be required of students and staff while in school, class, and when appropriate, during extra-curricular activities. It is strongly encouraged that face coverings be provided by families or individuals to maximize comfort and fit. When utilizing outdoor spaces, students and staff may remove face coverings provided physical distance can be maintained. Individuals who cannot wear a face covering due to a documented medical reason(s) will be required to follow physical distancing and hand hygiene protocols to ensure the safety of others and themselves. We will educate students about the use of face coverings. Grades K-2 may monitor the use of face coverings as needed to increase focus on learning.

Distancing

To the greatest extent possible, students and staff will practice physical distancing in classrooms, hallways, and other areas in school buildings, through restrictions on congregations and expediting transitional times. The CDC's Consideration for Schools (2020) recommends school and classroom space be maximized to allow for six feet of physical spacing when feasible, with desks/tables facing the same direction when feasible.

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is a simple, effective, and critical means in preventing the spread of disease. Evidence supports hand washing to be the most effective practice, thus it will be the highly encouraged method used in hand hygiene. When possible, hand hygiene will be creatively incorporate into lessons, and students and staff will be expected to follow hand hygiene protocols following recess/lunch, and other times as appropriate. When hand washing with soap and water is unavailable, the CDC's Consideration for Schools (2020) recommends

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using hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol for students and staff who can safely use it. To supplement hand hygiene, the school will be equipped with hand sanitizer stations throughout the buildings and if possible, in each classroom.

General Screening Protocols

Parents and staff will be provided information about COVID-19 symptoms. By sending their student(s) to school, parents/guardians are acknowledging their student(s) is/are not symptomatic." If staff report to work, they are affirming they are symptom free. If a student or staff member is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever, shortness of breath, and/or loss of taste/smell, vomiting or diarrhea, they should stay home, contact their health care provider, and their school.

School Response to COVID-19 Related Illness

These protocols supplement, not replace any state or local health and safety laws and regulations with which schools must comply.

- In the interest of safety for all and in alignment with guidance from the Yellowstone City-County Health Department and the Montana Office of Public Instruction, individuals who present with possible symptoms of COVID-19 while at school will be moved to the school designated area for isolation, to help prevent exposure. Being able to visually monitor a student is a priority. Clear barriers may be used in the area to block the spreading of illness via respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing (ill students will also be required to wear a face covering if able while in the isolation area), to minimize the student's direct contact with surfaces.
- A designated school staff member will contact families for student pick up; families will be strongly encouraged to contact their health care provider for further guidance. Following the pick up of the student, the designated area and restroom (if used) will be sanitized.

Building Cleaning and Disinfecting

Independent School has been deep cleaned and disinfected over the summer and continues to be cleaned and disinfected daily as it is used. Custodial staffing will be adjusted to perform increased routine cleaning and disinfection during the school day per the recommendation from the CDC's Considerations for Schools (2020) to increase cleaning and disinfecting for frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, desks, handrails and light switches. All classrooms and restrooms will be disinfected at least twice per day when school is in session. To facilitate the increased disinfecting process, each classroom will have disinfectant for staff to use as needed.

Facility Enhancements and Modifications

Plexiglas shields will be installed in all of the main office to provide transparent barriers as appropriate. Additional barriers may be used in areas such as counseling offices, school isolation areas, and in classrooms as needed for small group learning instruction. Water bottle filling stations have been installed. Drinking fountains cannot be disabled without voiding manufacturer's warranty. Drinking fountain use will be discouraged. Students may fill their personal water bottles under adult supervision.

Classroom Modifications

Following the CDC's Consideration for Schools (2020), classroom configuration will be utilized to maximize space, ideally six feet, between desks, with student seats facing the same direction whenever possible. To increase space, to the greatest extent possible, non-essential classroom furniture, props, etc.. will be removed from classrooms. Items within classrooms that cannot be

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sanitized/disinfected will be removed. Teachers will be encouraged to utilize outdoor space for class as weather permits.

Signage

Highly visible, standardized signage compliant with CDC, state, and local standards will be used throughout school buildings. Signage will reinforce physical distancing, wearing face coverings, and hand hygiene.

Nutrition Services

Breakfast delivered to classrooms:

Breakfast will be delivered by kitchen staff to the classroom in breakfast totes. Meals will be placed on a table inside the classroom to provide contactless delivery. A supervising adult will record, on a class roster, the meal each student selects. Kitchen staff will pick up breakfast totes and lunch order forms.

Lunch:

The lunch menu will consist of an entrée, fruit, vegetable, and milk. The first week of school lunches will be delivered to the classroom. The supervising adult will distribute sack lunches to students in the classroom. Kitchen staff will supply large garbage bags in each hallway.

Lunch will be served to students in a single line allowing for physical distancing and sanitizing in-between cohorts. Students will travel as a cohort to the cafeteria where they will form a line outside of the serving area. The supervising adult will scan the students' barcodes and control the flow of students entering the serving area to ensure physical distancing. Students will be given an entrée and the required serving of fruits, vegetables, and milk. There will be no self-service items. Meals will be placed on the counter for contactless pick up.

Students will either eat in the cafeteria seated to allow for physical distancing, return to the classroom, or other available areas to consume the meal, dependent upon administrative directive.

Outdoor Space/Playground

The use of school property outdoor space for instruction, weather permitting is highly encouraged to maximize the ability for physical distancing. Playgrounds will be open for use during the school day, with students using good hand hygiene upon reentering the classroom.

Visitors/Volunteers

Visitor access to school buildings will be limited. Volunteers performing essential duties to support student learning will be allowed in the building at a later date, still to be determined.

Arrival/Dismissal/Student and Staff Movement

To support physical distancing efforts, the use of multiple points for entry and exit, without jeopardizing school safety, will be encouraged. Upon arriving at school, students will be directed to their designated area and/or point of entry as identified by building administration.

At the conclusion of the school day, student dismissal may be staggered with multiple points of egress as feasible. To assist the school district, it is imperative that families transporting their child make arrangements to limit congregation. Parents may not park and pick up their children after school.

Transportation

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In following recommendations from the Governor's Plan for Reopening Safe and Health Schools for Montana (2020), the Montana Office of Public Instruction's Reopening Montana Schools Guidance (2020), and First Student's safety protocols, the following are guidelines for school transportation services:

- Parents/guardians will need to conduct the daily screening protocols before having their student(s) ride the school bus. If a student is exhibiting any of the symptoms, please keep him or her home.
- All bus students and drivers must wear face coverings during transportation.
- All students will have assigned seating and must sit in the assigned seat daily unless the driver directs them otherwise. Any concerns about the assigned seating needs to be addressed with the school bus driver.
- Bus drivers have been instructed to seat one (1) student per seat if possible. If it is not possible to assign one (1) student per seat, Bus drivers have been instructed to seat siblings together first before assigning students from their cohort.
- First Student will be responsible for the cleaning and disinfection of all school buses.
- Parents who have health and safety concerns about their student(s) riding the school bus are encouraged to transport their student(s) to and from school whenever possible.
- No visitors will be allowed on the bus. Students must be on the assigned route to ride.

Technology

Equipment

When possible, technology equipment should not be shared between students. When sharing of devices is unavoidable, it is strongly recommended that equipment is cleaned/disinfected between each use, see below Device Cleaning protocol. Minimal exchange and contact sharing should be practiced at all times. When practical, each student should be assigned a device to be used only by that student.

Device Cleaning

For cleaning of electronic devices including touch screens and keypads:

- Per the CDC's Detailed Disinfection Guidance (2020), and Apple and HP manufacturers, the use of alcohol-based cleaners containing at least 70% alcohol is recommended. A mix of 70% isopropyl alcohol/30% water is appropriate. Approved cleaners are antibacterial (Clorox type) wipes and disinfectant which is currently being used in schools as a disinfectant by our custodial staff.
- Do NOT spray the cleaner/disinfectant directly on the electronic device. Instead moisten a microfiber or soft, lint free cloth with the cleaning solution and gently wipe the item. Do NOT use abrasive cloths, towels, paper towels, or similar items or unapproved cleaning solutions.
- Avoid getting moisture into any openings on the device.

Instructional Models

Traditional Learning Model

The Traditional Learning Model is in-person instruction that follows the normal school day with the approved school district curriculum within each school building. Safety protocols will be implemented per local, state, and CDC guidelines. Students will be grouped in "cohorts" to the best of the school's ability. Class routines, bell schedules, lunch service, and other daily school operations may be altered in an effort to enhance physical distancing.

• COVID Shutdown

If the impact of the pandemic forces a classroom or school/district-wide shutdown, students and teachers will transition to a virtual learning platform for a specified time as determined by local

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health officials. Students will be issued an electronic device and other necessary materials to continue learning. It is suggested that Grades K-3 will use Class Dojo (third grade will transition to Google Classroom by the end of the school year) and grades 3-6 will use Google Classroom for delivery of instruction.

Virtual classes may also require using meeting modalities such as Google Meet. All student and staff learning and teaching expectations, as outlined within the Remote Learning Model, will be instituted for the duration of the shutdown. Once the shutdown is lifted, students and staff will transition back to the Traditional Learning Model instruction within the school building.

• Grading

Grading procedures will be followed as normal, as outlined in school handbooks. Should a COVID-19 shutdown occur, all grading procedures will remain in place.

• Assessment Information

District, state, and federal assessments will be administered as normal, in person, on our school campus. District adopted disinfecting procedures will be followed before and after the use of each electronic device (if used).

Remote Learning Model

The Remote Learning Model will be a learning platform supported by Independent.

• Registration Process

Parents may register for online learning through Independent School.

• Attendance

Student attendance in the Remote Learning Model is as important as attendance in a traditional instructional setting. A structured schedule will be developed by the remote learning administrator and teacher, with class attendance being taken daily by teachers. Should a student be absent from instruction, the parent/guardian will be required to report the absence.

• Grading

Independent School will follow its existing grading procedures at all levels in the Remote Learning Model.

• Assessment Information

Depending on the grade level, students will be required to participate in online benchmark assessments, such as aimsweb PLUS and NWEA MAP. In addition, due to specific testing protocols, test security, and limitations of the assessment systems, remote learning students may need to make arrangements to participate in state and federal mandated scheduled assessments (such as Smarter Balanced) in person.

Technology Devices

Students approved for Remote Learning may check out a technology device from the school. Upon the completion of the school year, the device needs to be returned to the school. More information regarding the check out/in process will be available. Families are responsible for any damage to the device and will be charged accordingly.

Virtual Conferencing

Google Meet is available for use between teacher and student. Teachers will be able to host video conference classes/meetings; however, students will not. Students are only able to join meetings as a participant. All enrolled Independent students receive a Google account, which will be needed to join a meeting.

Student Support Services and Special Education

General Expectations - Special Education Classrooms

Accommodations will be made based on the student's disability in regards to face coverings, physical distancing, and hand hygiene.

Instructional Models

Special Education and 504 Services - Traditional Learning Model

Special Education students, in all programs including preschool, participating in the Traditional Learning Model will follow the normal expectations of the school, teacher and classroom. It is recognized that there may be barriers which prevent some students from complying with all the guidelines or completing learning activities on a daily basis. Each student's individual need will be addressed by the IEP or 504 team.

Special Education and 504 Services - Remote Learning Model

Special educators and service providers will continue to create meaningful lessons and activities, as well as provide support to all students with disabilities. Students enrolled in specialized classrooms will continue in their educational programming to the maximum extent possible via remote learning.

IEPs for students with disabilities and those with 504 Plans will continue to be implemented through Remote Learning Plans (RLP). Remote Learning teams will work with parents to develop a RLP based on each student's IEP goals, instructional accommodations, supplemental aids and services, and transition plans. The RLP will be developed through a process of prioritizing goals conducive to being delivered in the virtual environment, including ways the student could access instruction and how progress would be monitored. Some students with related services (speech/language pathology, occupational therapy, social work, etc.) may receive direct services from a special educator or service provider through tele-intervention. For students requiring accommodations, adaptive computer software may be provided.

IEP/504 Meetings

Whenever possible, regardless of which learning model a student is enrolled, it is recommended to continue holding IEP/504 meetings virtually. It is necessary to allow for in-person IEP/504 meetings if this is more accessible for parents.

Child Find

Child Find screening meetings are best in-person as the child needs to be present to allow for the screening and initial observation to help inform the decision-making about whether testing is needed or not. Recommended safety protocols will be in place: all participants will wear a face covering (the only exception will be for the child if he or she is too young, or the disability prohibits use of face covering), use of a space large enough for physical distancing, any materials used will be collected and disinfected, and all surfaces will be disinfected before and after the meeting

Regulatory Mandates and Compliance Guidelines Assessments

Assessments for the purposes of initial eligibility and re-evaluation that were delayed due to the school closure will be completed in a manner that is consistent with the health and safety needs for students and staff.

Testing/Screening: Psychological, Speech, Hearing, Health, Vision

Initial psychological testing requires approximately 50 hours of 1:1 close proximity assessment and classroom observation to complete. Speech, hearing, vision and health also require 1:1

and physical contact with the student. An in-person setting, following safety protocols, is the preferred method. For students who are unable to be assessed in-person, other alternatives, i.e. surveys, telephone conferences or virtual video, will be considered for use in collecting data.

With safety precautions such as face coverings, gloves, barriers where needed, and with parent consent and a signed waiver in place, psychological, speech, hearing and health 1:1 assessments are available to students. All testing materials will be sanitized/disinfected before and after each student assessment. The student must be able to wear a face covering provided it does not interfere with the assessment or the student's disability, and the student must wash hands prior to the assessment. If a parent/guardian is needed to assist in the assessment, he or she must wear a mask and wash hands prior to assisting. Staff will wear a face covering and wash hands prior to administering the assessment.

No eligibility decision will be made without the full evaluation process and information available to make a determination.

Additional digital options for transition assessments as well as more technology for special education students will be provided.

Related Services

Related service providers include staff such as speech/language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, social workers, vision, hearing, and nursing staff. Typical services often require hands-on therapeutic intervention and close proximity with students. These service providers will utilize proper safety protocols, including face coverings, gloves, and barriers. Students will need to wear a face covering, as long as it does not interfere with the disability or skills being addressed and use proper hand hygiene. They will also provide as much therapy as possible in the classroom, reducing the need to occupy additional spaces.

IEP/504 teams will determine how related services will be delivered for students enrolled in the Remote Learning Model. Use of tele-therapy in conjunction with students who are in in-person sessions may be used to provide services to students working on similar goals.

Health and Nursing Services

In conjunction with the CDC's Consideration for Schools (2020), and the Yellowstone City-County Health Department, the health services department will follow the recommendations to the best of their ability:

- Identify special population students and staff who require specialized Personal Protective Equipment (face shields, gloves, etc.) due to the need for closer proximity. Special population students include, but are not limited to: those who display high risk behaviors; that may spit or bite; students who are deaf and hard of hearing; students accessing interventions and services; and students with sensory impairments.
- Training on the proper use of PPE will be provided to staff and students.
- Establish protocol for medication administration.
- In coordination with the Yellowstone County Health Department, develop a flowchart regarding how to support individuals presenting COVID-19 symptoms. Including procedures on isolation and exclusion from school buildings, as well as appropriate processes for return.
- In coordination with the Yellowstone County Health Department, establish protocols regarding contact tracing, and train school nurses/administrators on the protocols.
- Notify appropriate health officials if student/staff is COVID-19 positive and follow appropriate notification or closure guidance.
- Promote self-quarantine and social isolation from others if suspected exposure to COVID-19 or receipt of positive testing results for COVID-19.

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- Require health service staff to wear PPE (mask/face shield) when working with all students.
- Maintain a “clean” work area for school nurses, office staff, and well-students needing to utilize the School Nurse office for treatments, medications, injuries, or other care.

Counseling Services

Traditional Learning Model

Counselors will be available as normal to serve students and deliver required district curriculum.

Remote Learning Model

A counselor(s) will be available to serve students enrolled in the Remote Learning Model, as well as deliver required district curriculum throughout the school year. Student expectations of participation and services will mirror the Traditional Learning Model, but in a virtual format such as Google Meet. Given the nature of remote learning, students in need of 1:1 or small group services will be at scheduled times, or by virtual appointment during the school day.

Extended Day Program

The Extended Day Program will utilize cohort groups and social distancing to the greatest extent possible. Face coverings will be required of students and staff while in the Extended Day Program. It is strongly encouraged that face coverings be provided by families or individuals to maximize comfort and fit. When utilizing outdoor spaces, students and staff may remove face coverings provided physical distance can be maintained. The Extended Day Program will utilize outdoor space for activities and play as weather permits.

Employee Relations

Employees should do a daily self screening based on the following questions as outlined from RiverStone Health.

Have you had a new onset of any of the following symptoms that are not explained by another known medical condition?

- cough
- fever or feverish feeling
- chills
- muscle aches
- headache
- sore throat
- loss in taste or smell
- vomiting or diarrhea
- tested for COVID-19 within the past 14 days?

If YES to any of the above, the employee should remain home and follow up with their physician.

** It is the responsibility of the employee to report symptoms or exposure to their supervising administrator within 24 hours. If it is determined that the employee needs to complete a COVID-19 test, the employee cannot return to work until test results are confirmed (negative or positive); this process can take 3 to 7+ days per the State Lab's capabilities.

STAFF EXPOSURE PROTOCOL

Below are exposure definitions from RiverStone Health. Public health protocols will be followed for direct or close contact exposures

Direct Contact: A person can be exposed to COVID-19 when one has been in direct contact with the secretions (droplets) of someone who has COVID-19 (being coughed or sneezed on, kissing, sharing utensils, etc.).

Close Contact: For COVID-19, a close contact is defined as anyone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before the person began feeling sick until the time the patient was isolated.

American's with Disabilities Act (ADA)

There may be reasonable accommodations that could offer protection to an individual whose disability puts him at greater risk from COVID-19 and who therefore requests such actions to eliminate possible exposure.

If you have a disability or a family member with a serious health condition who cannot risk exposure to COVID-19, please contact Sheila Chouinard, principal.

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