

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

Date of Original Adoption: 4/27/20  
Date Plan was Previously Revised: 6/8/2021  
Date Plan was Previously Revised: 9/30/2022  
Date Plan was Last Revised 6/20/23

Date plan was last Revised 2/12/24

Dates Reviewed:

**March 2020 - June 2021 and Sept 2022**

1. The Circle 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
  - a. Although our district was authorized to remain closed, the district mobilized and began remote instruction during the timeframe when we were authorized to remain closed. Thereafter, the 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.
  - a. The school district reopened to in classroom teaching on May 7, 2020, and has remained open throughout the remainder of the 2019-20 school year and during the entirety of the 2020-21 school year. The only exception during this timeframe was for temporary closures of part or all of in classroom teaching pursuant to quarantine or isolation orders issued by our county department of health.
  - b. The district was open during all of the 2021-2022 school term with no closures due to the pandemic. During the school term, the existing plan and protocols were in place in the event that CDC, State, or local conditions and guidance required a response to move to remote learning.

3. The district developed a plan for reopening to in person instruction, with contingencies, and implemented that plan for the 2020-21 school year. The initial reopening plan provided and included 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, providing high quality learning opportunities to the students in our community in safe and effective learning environments.
  5. From the onset of the pandemic, the district 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 and continue to consider such feedback in developing and refining the School District's plans in response to any potential changes with new Covid variants and guidance.
6. **Safe Return to Schools and Continuity of Services Plan Contents:**

**March 2020-June 2021 and September 2022**

**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. 3/25/20
2. 4/27/20
3. 4/30/20
4. 7/20/20
5. 8/3/20
6. 8/10/20
7. 6/8/21
8. 9/29/2022
9. 6/20/23
10. 2/12/24

On July 20, 2023, the public was invited to attend a meeting to discuss the progress of any projects currently being implemented from the ESSER grant and plans for moving forward. Our invitation for public input included a general opportunity for the public to provide input and was provided to everyone interested, including:

1. Students; families; school and district administrators (including special education administrators); teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, our local union, and county health; and
2. 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.

Our initial invitation for public input and September 2022 invitation for public input included a general opportunity for the public to provide input and was provided to everyone interested, including:

3. Students; families; school and district administrators (including special education administrators); teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, our local union, and county health; and
4. 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.

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

1. A 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, Circle 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 the district's continuous 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 and 2021-2022 school fiscal years in a manner that met priorities and secured district funding providing an operational platform for considering long term innovations in the delivery of education services.

Circle School District implemented policy options facilitated collaboration between the Board of Trustees, administrative team, employees, parents, students, health officials, and community with protocols aligned with CDC, State and local guidance addressing how instruction was to be best 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.

At the onset of the pandemic, Circle School District reviewed, considered, and addressed numerous areas of operation in our reopening process and continues to monitor conditions that would interfere with current operations due to new variants. 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 Circle School District has remained in compliance with guidance and best practices provided by federal, state, or local health officials. The school district has continued to adapt and adjust our policies as new and updated guidance and best practices have become available.

Existing 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, the district focused on the health and safety of our students, staff, and community for delivery of learning and services to our students. The policies have allowed the district to adjust procedures and practices during different phases of the pandemic while remaining in compliance with guidance and best practices provided by federal, state, and local agencies.

School District will continue to utilize the policies noted below while engaging in a reevaluation processes ensuring 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:

Topic	School District Policy Reference	Description of Policy (All referenced polices can be found at the end of this document.)	Policy Adopted and Revised Date(s)
Universal and correct wearing of masks.	1905	<b>1905:</b> 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 <b>making optional</b> face coverings as personal protective equipment.	1. 4/27/20
Modifying facilities to allow for	1905; 1905P	<b>1905:</b> The School District has adopted the protocols outlined in this policy during the term of the declared	1.4/27/20

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 <b>students,</b> staff, volunteers, and visitors will maintain a three-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	
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		<p>standard.</p> <p><b>1905P:</b> The administrative team of the School District has adopted these procedures regarding symptoms of illness, physical distancing and work areas, physical barriers and guides, and ventilation 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.</p>	
Handwashing and respiratory etiquette.	1905; 1905P	<p><b>1905:</b> 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</p>	1. 4/27/20
		<p>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.</p> <p><b>1905P:</b> 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</p>	

		procedures supplement Policy 1905.	
Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation.	1905; 1905P	<p><b>1905:</b> 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, cleaning and disinfecting, temperature screening, vulnerable individuals, food preparation and meal service, and transportation services.</p> <p><b>1905P:</b> The administrative team of the School District has adopted these procedures regarding personnel cleaning and disinfecting, symptoms of illness, and ventilation 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.</p>	
Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments.	1905; 3417	<p><b>1905:</b> 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</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 4/27/20</li> <li>2. 1/15/07</li> </ol>
		<p>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, temperature screening, public awareness, and confidentiality.</p> <p><b>3417:</b> 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</p>	

		<p>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.</p>	
Diagnostic and screening testing.	1905	<p><b>1905:</b> 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.</p>	1. 4/27/20
Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities	3413	<p>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</p>	1. 8/11/15
		<p>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</p>	



		discriminate against a person based on the person's vaccination status.  <b>3413:</b> 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.	1908; 2162; 2162P	<b>1908:</b> 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.  <b>2162:</b> 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.  <b>2162P:</b> 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. 4/27/20 2. 10/2006 3. 10/2006
Coordination with State and local health officials.	1900; 1905; 1907; 3417	<b>1900:</b> 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	1. 4/27/20 2. 1/15/07
		students, staff and community members, human resource matters and budgetary matters. To ensure clarity and transparency, the board has organized all	

		<p>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.</p> <p><b>1905:</b> 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.</p> <p><b>1907:</b> 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.</p> <p><b>3417:</b> 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.</p>	
<p>How the district will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and</p>	<p>1906; 1906P; 2050</p>	<p><b>1906:</b> 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</p>	<p>1. 4/27/20</p>

<p>staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services.</p>		<p>school calendar to adjust the completion of the school year for particular grade levels and groups once students have satisfied the required number of applicable aggregate hours.</p> <p><b>The Circle Board</b> 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.</p>	
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**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 8, 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; and
2. 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.

In August of 2022, the district's prior leadership left and the District recognized that the *Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan* had not been updated and in consult with OPI has strived to update the plan and to provide meaningful consultation with members of the school community.

The district has and will continue to consider 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.

## **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 and district administrators (including special education administrators); teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions; and
2. 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 – Circle Public Schools adopted 1900 policies**

**Circle Public Schools website: <http://www.circleschools.org>**

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