

4/28/20

GBMS Planning for Gradual Re-Opening: Phase One

Dear Great Beginnings Community-

I hope this letter finds you and your loved ones safe and healthy. I am so grateful to be part of this extraordinary community. In so many ways, our community has provided so much strength and stability during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the Micro-school, our students are navigating remote learning in unprecedented ways. In our Foothills and Springhill campuses, our staff are managing challenges none of us could have imagined just a few months ago.

And, thanks to our families and people in our community at large, Montana is making progress in addressing the many issues related to this emergency.

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GBMS Closure:

Great Beginnings remains closed to in-person, on-site instruction for the remainder of the school year (June 5th). Our school's Covid-19 Task Force met yesterday and voted unanimously to continue its current practices of online and remote instruction, social distancing requirements and other practices from now until the end of the school year, on June 5th.

We recognize Montana's accomplishment against this pandemic is fragile. We are just barely past the peak and, in order for the rate of infection to continue to decline, we must remain vigilant and careful. The vast majority of people remain susceptible to infection and the risk of a high infection rate returning is very real. To paraphrase the governor, we all need to act like our loved ones' lives depend on our actions, because they do.

PPP Loan:

The good news is that our school was one of the recipients of the Payroll Protection Plan loan issued through the SBA for businesses affected by Covid-19. A special thanks goes out to Kurt Buchel at Yellowstone Bank, and our accounting firm, Summers and McNea, for the tireless work they did behind the scenes to help our school qualify for this emergency loan.

As such, our school has been able to bring all of our teachers back on to the payroll until the end of the school year. We've been able to re-instate their full health insurance benefits, and return to normal levels for their wages, hours, benefits, and retirement match.

May/ June Remote Programming:

Microschool: Our Micro-school students will continue with their remote learning through the end of the school year.

For our Foothills and Springhill families: To "wrap-up" the school year, you'll be contacted by the teachers in your child's classroom about end-of-year conferences. Some classrooms are doing written reports, some are doing Zoom conferences, and others are doing a combination. Have a question?

Please reach out to Jamey McCormick, Assistant Head of School, and she'll help you with the conference process. jamey@gbmschool.org

As we transition into May, our school's overall goal of remote programming for May & June is to provide training for teachers for remote learning/ and to support our families and children. The real benefit is that our school is now able to provide May/ June remote programming at no cost to your families.

Starting next week, we are asking for each of our Foothills and Springhill teachers to create one activity for the entire school community per week (a Zoom meeting, a video, a take-home craft, a summer camp activity, etc.). This is not limited to your child's classroom, but will have a unified school theme for all children in all classrooms on all campuses. Some will be based around art, music, academics, movement, etc. We are going to have a staff meeting tomorrow to develop this structure. So, please stay tuned for our next remote programming update.

Summer Camp:

Great Beginnings is tentatively planning for a gradual re-opening for Summer Camp based on data available. The meeting to vote on whether to proceed with Summer Camp programming will be on Monday, May 18th, with a soft start-date for Monday, June 15th.

The American Camp Association is working diligently to provide resources for Summer Camp programs that align with Covid-19 data. <https://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/coronavirus-information-camps>

As such, our school is currently making plans for a June 15th Summer Camp start date, with the understanding that those plans may need to change based on the rate of infection in Gallatin County and the state. The goal is for all of us to implement our plans in such a manner that it helps us advance to a next step of progress and minimizes the need to retrench to isolation measures.

Our Covid-19 Task Force will meet on Monday, May 18th, to review the data on Summer Camp and make a programming decision at that time.

Montana Update:

Last week, Montana Governor Steve Bullock announced changes to the stay-at-home and travel directives, as part of a phased plan to gradually reopen the state. You can read [the full reopening plan](#) on the governor's website.

Schools Update:

Last night, the Bozeman School Board voted unanimously in favor of continuing remote learning for the remainder of the school year. <https://www.kbzk.com/news/local-news/bozeman-schools-vote-to-stay-closed-for-remainder-of-school-year-distance-learning-to-continue>

The Bozeman Public Schools has a webpage with Covid-19 updates. https://www.bsd7.org/district_news/covid-19_coronavirus_update_from_the_district

The Gallatin City-County Health Department continues to provide support for our school in understanding the Governor's Directive and how it applies to our community.

I've also attached a copy of the Superintendent's Letter for Schools to this email.

At GBMS:

Most of our teachers are working from home. When they come into our campuses, our current school plans include social distancing measures, limiting the number of employees in common areas, and keeping sick employees home. Employees are urged to use non-medical facemasks and, of course, continue to practice frequent handwashing and other hygiene best practices.

Also, GBMS will be working diligently in expanding appropriate educational signage in rooms, as well as providing personal sanitization stations to as many units as possible.

Thank you for your patience and your understanding. The sacrifices we have made so far have flattened the curve of this virus and I acknowledge that gain has come at a high price for many. Our shared resolve brought us to where we are today, and our continued commitment to caring for each other will carry us forward.

Sincerely,

Gennifre Hartman, on behalf of Great Beginnings

Parenting Resources:

- Age of Montessori: Virtual Town Hall #4: Protecting the Emotional Well-being of Your Child. April 28, 2020, 4:00PM MDT. https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_kKY6-6Z-RYOxp7VMcK-Jxg
- Love and Logic Offering Online Parenting Course for FREE
- <https://hip2save.com/2020/04/17/love-and-logic-is-offering-its-parenting-online-course-free-during-april/>

Information, FAQ on Phase One for All Residents, Businesses

- For general COVID-19 questions, information, and contacts, see the Gallatin City-County Health Department's main COVID page: <https://www.healthygallatin.org/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- For information on Governor Bullock's phased reopening, links to documents, FAQs and more: <https://www.healthygallatin.org/coronavirus-covid-19/reopening/>
- For specific questions about Phase One, see: <https://www.healthygallatin.org/coronavirus-covid-19/reopening/phase-one/>
- If you review the materials and still have questions, the Gallatin COVID Call Center is open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to answer questions by phone at 406-548-0123 or email at callcenter@readygallatin.com.

Metrics for Measuring Public Safety

- Health officer Matt Kelley repeatedly has stressed this goal: "A phased reopening that is timed and managed to allow businesses to operate while managing risk to public health and our healthcare system, reducing the possibility for a need to reintroduce restrictions in the future, and allowing a sustained economic recovery."
- To that end, on Friday Kelley held a news conference where he provided context and goals along with discussing specific metrics such as testing, contact tracing, medical supplies, timelines, and

other important indicators. You can watch it

here: <https://www.facebook.com/GallatinHealth/videos/669059340492307/>

- The Health Department also maintains a data dashboard that is updated by Noon daily: <https://gallatingis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/874037d189fd4598a3714e9e4f44f0ec>

What Remains the Same: Stay Safe, Social Distance, Do Your Part

- The virus remains dangerous and widespread, please keep employing these healthy habits to help slow the spread of COVID-19:
- Practice physical distancing (six feet!)
- Stay home when possible or if someone in your household is sick
- Wear a cloth mask when you go in public for things like trips to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities
- Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds; and clean and disinfect frequently used surfaces
- Avoid touching your face
- Anyone coming to or returning to Montana must self-quarantine for at least 14 days