

Drea O'Donnell
Superintendent
Curriculum Director
406-373-5461

Janice Ripley
Business Manager/Clerk
406-373-5461

Macey Ferguson
Asst. Clerk/Activities Clerk
406-373-5461

Shepherd School District #37

**7842 Shepherd Road
PO Box 8
Shepherd, MT 59079-0008**

Autumn Arlian
Elementary Principal
406-373-5516
FAX 406-373-5076

Rich Hash
Middle School Principal
Athletic Director
406-373-5873
FAX 406-373-5648

Kenneth Poepping
High School Principal
406-373-5300
FAX 406-373-5342

July 23, 2020

Dear Shepherd students and families,

I hope this letter finds you all healthy and enjoying the last part of summer break. As the new school year approaches, our Shepherd team consisting of the school board, administrators and teachers have spent the last week or two planning what it will look like for students as we start school in August. Please keep in mind, as we approach August 19th (the first day of school), we may see changes to our plan as things evolve in our local area and state. Our overall goal throughout the entire process was to plan for a reopening that will ensure all students have a safe, rigorous environment to learn. We worked hard to come up with a plan that addresses a healthy and safe setting for students, staff, and the community. We created a plan based off of many things we learned from last spring and items we needed to consider this fall in order to keep our schools open.

As of right now, we are currently in Phase 2 for Montana. In a previous letter, we stated there would be 2 options for Phase 2. We are moving forward with Plan B: open with full capacity with limited activities and have precautionary measures in place. Please remember there may be times when an emergency closure could take place at any time during Plan B if needed.

We want to thank you for all your time and feedback in completing our online survey on your family's thoughts on sending your child(ren) back to school. We had over 375 families respond. The majority of our families (91.5%) are planning on sending their student(s) back to school in August.

We will address as much information as possible to make sure you get all the information. There is also an attachment with all the items broken down for you in a friendly version to read. We will be making a few changes to our transportation this year. Pick up times will be 10 minutes later each morning to allow for social distancing when students arrive in the mornings— information will be sent out on these new times. Please look for these in our yearly newsletter and they will be sent out through email as well. In order to get all our students to school who ride a bus, without taking out the bus routes within three miles of the school, we will be requiring students to wear a mask while on the bus. Without this requirement, we would only be able to transport around 80% of our students.

We have put into place some new requirements to help maintain social distancing. Hallway transition times will be alter so fewer students are in the hallways at one time. Classes will stagger release times to accommodate social distancing. There will be no large group or whole school assemblies that cannot accommodate for social distancing. Adjustments will be made to accommodate for playground social distancing by rotating spaces where students can play. We will use the most area in a classroom from wall to wall as possible for seating. Desks will be used in every classroom where available instead of tables.

We will increase our hygiene measures to help ensure student safety. Masks will be required on buses and indoors ONLY under the Governor's orders. Once those restrictions are removed masks will be optional to be worn by staff and students. We will be providing each student and staff member with Shepherd mask. Staff and students will be



asked to use hand sanitizer each time they enter a classroom. We will allow more opportunities for students to be able to wash their hands during the day prior to breakfast, lunch and snack times as well as after recess.

We will have measures in place to take temperatures of our staff and students. Temperatures of elementary students will be taken as they get off the bus or as they enter the building. We are asking that students are not dropped off until 8am. Temperatures of MS/HS students will be taken as they enter the buildings. If a student has a high temperature, the nurse will recheck the student and if it is still high then parents will be called and required to come and pick up their child. We will be asking families to personally monitor their health. **More than ever we need families and staff to help us by choosing to do the right thing by staying home when they are sick.**

We will be changing lunch and breakfast so that fewer students are in the cafeterias at one time. As of right now, we have restrictions that require us to change how we serve our meals. Once school starts, meals will no longer be FREE to everyone. Families will go back to regular lunch charges. We will still have free and reduced pricing for those who qualify BUT new paperwork must be filled out.

Fall sports will begin practices as regularly scheduled. MHSA will be sending out their guidelines next week. We will make any changes necessary when those guidelines and recommendations come out. For students at Shepherd Schools to participate in fall sports, they must attend school on site. Temperatures of coaches and athletes will be taken prior to practice, games/meets and loading of buses. We will be setting up camera systems in our HS gym and football field so that family members can watch games from home.

There will be no open house this year. Students will bring their supplies the first day. Kindergarteners and new students may have a parent take them to their classrooms as long as they are wearing a mask. There will be no sharing of supplies. Each child will be required to have their own set of supplies. We can help those families that need supplies. Please contact the building principals or your child's teacher to get help with supplies.

County Health guidance states that they consider a person in close contact if they are within 6ft or less for a period of 15+ minutes. The County Health does not want schools contacting families to do the contact tracing. Riverstone/UHC will do the tracing. We will not be responsible for contact tracing at our school district but will help out in any way with Riverstone Health as long as we are within rights of our families. Due to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), we are not allowed to let the community know who has tested positive or negative to COVID. Please note there may be times when you think more information needs to be shared with you but due to privacy laws we are not allowed.

We will be conducting a Facebook live video with an update as well as an opportunity for community members to type in their questions on August 3rd at 4:00PM. If you have questions you would like answered you can send them to me or any building principal or just type them in as we conduct the Facebook live presentation. We will have a section on our website under **School Reopening Plan 20-21** where we will post answers to frequently asked questions and update them regularly.

I want each of you to know this plan is a work in progress. We know each family has their own unique situation. We ask that you discuss this over with your family. If you feel there is a medical issue where you would like your child(ren) to have the option to do online distant learning, that will be available. I will be sending out a letter at the beginning of next week with a form you will need to fill out and return in order to have you student do online learning. This commitment will need to be made to have your child(ren) be in online status only while we are in Phase 2. Once we are in Phase 3, you can then choose to send them back to onsite instruction. Students will not be allowed to go back and forth.



If you have questions please email them in or wait for the Facebook live update to get the most up to date answers. Please remember we are making plans in the best interest of everyone; staff, students and community, in mind. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we open up this fall and navigate through the process.

Sincerely,

Drea O'Donnell
Superintendent

