

Decision Matrix for the Consideration of Movement Between Return to Learn Plans

According to legislation, the Board is directed to weigh school and/or district closure as follows:

Sec. 14. SCHOOL DISTRICT CLOSURES DURING THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR.

For the school year beginning July 1, 2020, and ending June 30, 2021, if the governor proclaims a public health disaster pursuant to section 29C.6, the board of directors of a school district may authorize closure of the school district or any school district attendance center due to an outbreak of COVID-19 in the school district or any school district attendance center. School districts are encouraged to follow guidelines issued by the centers for disease control and prevention of the United States department of health and human services and the Iowa department of public health, and may consult with the local board of health when determining social distancing measures or authorizing a school closure.

The Board and school leaders are also directed “to the extent possible, provide in-person instruction for core academic subjects” [Sec. 18] and “unless explicitly authorized in a proclamation of a public health disaster emergency issued by the Governor... shall not take action to provide instruction primarily through remote-learning opportunities” [Sec. 15]. An important caveat is that “any instruction provided in accordance with a return-to-learn plan submitted by a school district or accredited nonpublic school to the department of education in response to a proclamation of a public health disaster emergency, issued by the governor pursuant to section 29C.6 and related to COVID-19, shall be deemed to meet the requirements of subsection 1, regardless of the nature, location, or medium of instruction if the return-to-learn plan contains the minimum number of days or hours as required by subsection 1. Any return-to-learn plan submitted by a school district or accredited nonpublic school must contain provisions for in-person instruction and provide that in-person instruction is the presumed method of instruction.

A review of the guidance provided by the Iowa Department of Education (IDOE), in cooperation with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) acknowledges the metrics of student absences and test positivity at the county level on a 14 day rolling average. In that model, consideration of permission for a move to fully online can begin to be considered at a 15% positivity rate and a 10% absenteeism rate among students, or an overall positivity rate at 20%.

As it relates to a school closure, the general guidance, outside of the COVID era, has been that a 10% student absence rate would lead to consideration of the temporary closure of a school. That is in line with the guidance from the IDOE and IDPH, although it is also tied to county positivity rate in this case, and has long been a practice in the state. In reviewing information from the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and the World Health Organization (WHO), student attendance rates are generally not observed as a data set for school or district closure.

In the current context, we believe that a difference in Average Daily Attendance (ADA) from the previous school year, at 10%, would be an indicator of a change in attendance attributed to COVID.

Guidelines for a school building or classroom to move to Off-site Continuous Learning based on student absenteeism:

A 10% percentage point increase in student absences, when compared to the 2019-20 Average Daily Attendance (ADA), will initiate a conversation about the closure of a school building, buildings or classrooms. The range of ADA for the schools in the district was 94-96% in 2019-20.

School Transmission	Return to Learn Model(s)
<p>None to Moderate</p> <p>0% - 9% percentage point increase in student absences when compared to the 2019-20 ADA rate for the individual school.</p>	<p>On-Site Model</p> <p>Current Model</p>
<p>Substantial</p> <p>10% or greater percentage point increase in student absences when compared to the 2019-20 ADA rate.</p>	<p>Off-site Continuous Learning Model</p> <p>Potential considerations in a potential move to fully online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exposures vs. voluntary self-quarantine - Types and numbers of non-COVID absences - Classrooms rather than the entire school - County positivity rate - Staff Considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of staff unable to teach - Ability to staff classrooms - Remote teaching - May lead to temporary, fully off-site continuous learning for one or more classrooms

Specifically, that would mean that a rate of ADA of 84%-86%, guided by the previous school building year data, would initiate a conversation regarding a possible school building closure.

We also know from both experience and resources such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the important role that schools play in society, beyond the core work of academic instruction. Examples of considerations for the priority of keeping schools open include:

- Behavioral Health/Emotional Support for Children and Adolescents,
- Food Insecurity,
- On-Site School-Based Health Services.

As a result of this review, a recommendation of 15% positivity rate for Polk and/or Dallas County, on a 14-day rolling average, a special Board Meeting may be considered. This meeting will include the review of data and a decision will be made regarding whether a school building or classroom will move to a fully Off-site Continuous Learning Environment.

Guidelines for a District Move to a Off-site Continuous Learning Model Based on Community Positivity Rate

A 15% or greater average of the 14 day, rolling positivity rate for Polk and/or Dallas County.

Community Transmission	Return to Learn Model(s)
Rolling average positivity rate of less than 15%	On-Site Model Hybrid Model
Rolling average positivity rate meets or exceeds 15%	Off-site Continuous Learning Model Consideration of district closure based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Age group being impacted in the data - New cases/100,000 county residents - County impacts (i.e. nursing home outbreak, for example) - Availability of Staff

The daily rate in Polk and/or Dallas County will be monitored and following the fifth day in a row of a rate below 15%, there will be a return to the district's current learning model.

As more information becomes available about COVID-19, this plan may be modified.