



Waukee Community School District Decision Matrix for the Consideration of Movement Between Return to Learn Plans

The Waukee Community School District (WCSD) Board of Education takes seriously its role in the implementation of SF 2310. According to that 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.

As such, it seems clear the Waukee Community School District must have board-approved Return to Learn plans, that the first point of focus is to have school in-person, and a move to a fully online environment should be done by the Board, guided by a number of resources. Beyond that, guided by data, information, and local board decision-making, the hours of classroom instruction are expected to count “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”. The board-approved plans contain those required hours.

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 building transition ***and a move to a fully online learning environment***, the general guidance, outside of the COVID era, has been that a 10% student absence rate would lead to consideration of the temporary transition 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.

We have observed in our experiences to date that county positivity rates as high as 15%, or more, have not resulted in student attendance declines at the levels noted here. However, when they have reached 20%, or more, it has impacted student attendance to the point of moving schools to fully online. As importantly, it has impacted staffing patterns and our ability to keep our schools open. 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.

That said, experience would indicate that this is an important way to think about the potential for school building transition ***and a move to a fully online learning environment***. In the current context, we believe that a difference in Average Daily Attendance (ADA) from the previous school year, at, ***or above***, 10%, would be an indicator of a change in attendance attributed to COVID.

CLASSROOM, GRADE LEVEL, BUILDING

Guidelines for a Classroom, Grade Level, Team ,or School Building, to Move to Continuous Learning (Online) Model Based on Student Absenteeism

A 10% percentage point increase, ***or more***, in student absences, when compared to the 2019-20 Average Daily Attendance (ADA), will trigger a conversation about the ***transition*** of a school or schools ***to completely online***. The range of ADA for the schools in the district was 94-96% in 2019-20.

School Transmission	Return to Learn Model(s)
None to Moderate	On-Site Model
0% - 9% percentage point increase in student absences when compared to the 2019-20 ADA rate for the individual school.	Hybrid Model

<p>Substantial</p> <p>10% or greater percentage point increase in student absences when compared to the 2019-20 ADA rate.</p>	<p>Hybrid Model</p> <p>Continuous Learning (online) 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 or grade levels rather than the entire school, and the impact on the ability to provide services to all students in a school - County positivity rate - Staff Considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to staff classrooms, including the fill rate of substitute teachers and classroom associates - Ability to provide instruction in classrooms or grade levels when approximately 30% or more of the students are in isolation and/or quarantine - May lead to temporary, fully online for one or more classrooms
--	--

Specifically, that would mean that a rate of ADA of 84%-86%, guided by the previous school year data, would trigger a school **transition** conversation. **An additional consideration is that the school would be below the 2019-20 ADA rate for three consecutive days before consideration is given to move to a fully online environment.**

If a school is transitioned to being fully online, consideration would be given to return to school after 14 calendar days away from school. That being said, this timeline could be impacted by a consideration such as availability of staff. If, for example, a school moves to fully online, partially impacted by staffing, the length of time in an online environment may be shorter or longer than 14 calendar days.

During the transition to fully online, our School Improvement Leaders and Principals have been meeting to discuss the data and to consider additional solutions to remaining in the hybrid model in the future. One of the things that happens in the data, especially at the elementary level, is the uneven distribution of absences due to isolation and quarantine.

In a school that is at, or near, 84% ADA, there are likely to be a few classrooms with 30% or more of the students online due to isolation and/or quarantine. Conversely, there will be several classrooms, often the majority, with a few or even no students who are absent for those reasons.

Because we have a better sense for how absences work, we are considering the following:

WCSD Guidelines for a Classroom/Grade Level/Team to Move to Continuous Learning Model

- A more than 30% absentee rate in one or more classrooms would trigger a conversation to determine the most effective learning environment. Many factors will be included in determining whether or not a change will happen in a classroom learning environment.

In accordance with SF 2310, local Boards are encouraged to review other sources of information in addressing the potential move to a fully online environment. In doing so, rates of positivity were investigated. A recommendation from Dr. Robert Redfield, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicated that the number to transition to fully online should be considered at 5% and further describes that number is in line with the WHO. Those same sentiments were echoed by Dr. Deborah Birx, Coronavirus Response Coordinator for the White House Coronavirus Task Force. Dr. Eli Perencevich, Professor of Epidemiology at the University of Iowa indicates a rate of 5% should be considered, and perhaps a rate as low as 3%. Dr. Jerome Adams, the Surgeon General of the United States, indicates that a positivity rate of 10% should be the considered rate for school or district closure. No other observed rates were found that are like those that are being promoted by the IDOE or IDPH at a 15% positivity rate in conjunction with increased student absences, or 20% overall.

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,
- Students with Disabilities including Special Education,
- Food Insecurity,
- On-Site School-Based Health Services.

In addition, due to concerns related to various types of abuse that are likely unknown and unreported, it is important that students are connected with people who care about them and who are also mandatory reporters.

Beyond this information, we considered our local circumstances. A message was sent out to all Waukee Community School District staff members asking what accommodations they would need to engage in their work in the current environment. We are working to provide appropriate accommodations for those staff members who requested one and we largely are able to honor

these accommodations. In addition, we have access to quality health care in our region. Our schools are modern, and we are engaging in an HVAC study to optimize air exchange in our schools. We also use high-quality filters and change them regularly. Finally, our cleaning protocols are intentional and we have instituted mitigation efforts that exceed those described by the Iowa Department of Education.

Another important consideration is that, guided by our recent survey results, the families of almost 80% of our students desire to send their child/ren to a brick and mortar school in the context of our current **transmission positivity** rate which is just under 7%, and has been under 10% for more than 2 months.

As a result of this review, a recommendation of 10% positivity rate for Dallas County, on a 14-day rolling average, will trigger a special Board Meeting. This meeting will include the review of data and a decision will be made regarding whether the district will move to a fully online learning environment.

DISTRICT: Guidelines for a District Move to a Continuous Learning (Online) Model Based on Community Positivity Rate

A 10% or greater average of the 14 day, rolling positivity rate for Dallas County.

Community Transmission	Return to Learn Model(s)
Rolling average positivity rate of less than 10%	On-Site Model Hybrid Model
Rolling average positivity rate meets or exceeds 10%	Hybrid Model Continuous Learning (online) Model Consideration of district <i>transition to a fully online model</i> based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Age group being impacted in the data- New cases/100,000 county residents- <i>New cases/100,000 in WCSD Schools</i>- County impacts (i.e. nursing home outbreak, for example)- Availability of Staff - <i>with a review of fill rates for substitute teachers as well as staff attendance</i>- <i>Number of schools impacted</i>

If the district is transitioned to being fully online, consideration would be given to return to school after 14 calendar days away from school. This timeline could be impacted by

something like the availability of staff. If, for example, the district moves to fully online, partially impacted by staffing, the length of time in an online environment may be shorter or longer than 14 calendar days.

As more information becomes available about COVID-19, this plan may be modified accordingly. ***The edits here reflect changes made in December, 2020.***

It is important to keep in mind the important role that our family and community members play in keeping us in the in-person and hybrid models. Wearing face coverings in public, practicing physical distancing, frequent, correct hand washing, minimizing your time out in public, limiting the number of people you interact with, and staying home when you are sick. Thank you for all you are doing in this regard as well as for your ongoing support!