



Waukeee Community School District

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

The Waukeee 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 Waukeee 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 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.

That said, experience would indicate that this is an important way to think about the potential for school 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.

WCSD Guidelines for a School to Move to Continuous Learning (Online) Model Based on Student Absenteeism

A 10% percentage point increase in student absences, when compared to the 2019-20 Average Daily Attendance (ADA), will trigger a conversation about the closure of a school or schools. 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 0% - 9% percentage point increase in student absences when compared to the 2019-20 ADA rate for the individual school.	On-Site Model Hybrid Model
Substantial 10% or greater percentage point increase in student absences when compared to the 2019-20 ADA rate.	Continuous Learning (online) Model Potential considerations in a potential move to fully online: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exposures vs. voluntary self-quarantine - Types and numbers of non-COVID absences

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classrooms rather than the entire school - County positivity rate - Staff Considerations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability to staff classrooms - May lead to temporary, fully online for one or more classrooms
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Specifically, that would mean that a rate of ADA of 84%-86%, guided by the previous school year data, would trigger a school closure conversation.

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 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.

WCSD 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%	Continuous Learning (online) 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 Dallas County will be monitored and following the fifth day in a row of a rate below 10%, there will be a return to hybrid and fully in person models.

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

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!