



Return-to-Learn: Reopening Iowa’s Schools Safely and Responsibly

Purpose

This guidance was written by the Iowa Department of Education (Department) in consultation with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and is intended to help districts (1) determine when to use each of the Return-to-Learn models they have planned for during the 2020-2021 school year, and (2) handle potential and/or confirmed cases of COVID-19 in schools. This guidance should be read in conjunction with prior guidance on [Return-to-Learn supports](#), [Senate File 2310](#), and [Reopening Guidance](#). Please consult the Department’s [Return-to-Learn Google site](#) for the latest supports for schools. In addition, always refer to the latest information from IDPH on their [COVID-19 site](#).

Which of my approved Return-to-Learn models should I use?

The health, safety, and well-being of students, teachers, staff and their families is the most important consideration in determining whether temporary transitions to alternate learning models or school closures are necessary. The Iowa Departments of Education and Public Health, and local public health officials, will assist schools and districts with transitions based on the following criteria and conditions in their respective communities. The following table summarizes the levels of community transmission schools may observe and, for each, suggested mitigation strategies that align with current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and IDPH guidance, and appropriate Return-to-Learn models.

| Community Transmission | Suggested Strategies | Return-to-Learn Model(s) |
|--|--|--|
| <p>None to Minimal</p> <p>0-5% positivity in county on average over the past 14 days</p> <p><i>* Healthcare resources remain stable</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay home if you are sick or exposed to someone confirmed to have COVID-19 Practice frequent hand-washing Stay 6 feet from others as much as possible Use face coverings when able to do so safely and correctly Maintain frequent cleaning schedule using EPA-approved cleaning products Monitor absenteeism among teachers, staff, and students | <p>On-Site Learning following DOE, IDPH and CDC guidance.</p> <p>Hybrid Learning as necessary based on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent or guardian preference Student quarantine |

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| Community Transmission | Suggested Strategies | Return-to-Learn Model(s) |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Minimal to Moderate</p> <p>6-14% positivity in a county on average over the past 14 days</p> <p><i>* Healthcare resources remain stable</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue above strategies • Reduce group events/gatherings • Limit inter-school interactions • Ensure student and staff groupings/cohorts are as static as possible and that interactions among groups of students and staff are limited | <p>On-Site Learning following DOE, IDPH and CDC guidance.</p> <p>Hybrid Learning as necessary based on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent or guardian preference • Student quarantine |
| <p>Substantial Controlled</p> <p>15-20% positivity in a county on average over the past 14 days AND 10% absenteeism among students expected for in-person learning</p> <p><i>* Healthcare resources remain stable</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue above strategies • Consider regular health checks for any on-site students/staff if feasible • Cancel school events/gatherings • Close communal spaces (e.g., cafeterias, media centers) | <p>Hybrid Learning as necessary based on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent or guardian preference • Student quarantine <p>Temporary Continuous/Remote Learning for an entire school building or district for up to 14 days may be requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please contact the Department of Education by submitting your information via the CASA system. • Only the Departments of Education and Public Health can make the determination and provide temporary authorization to move to 100% online or remote learning. |
| <p>Substantial Uncontrolled</p> <p>>20% positivity in a county on average over the past 14 days with healthcare resource capacity concerns</p> | <p>State and local education and public health officials should work closely together to make decisions on school operations.</p> | <p>Temporary Continuous/Remote Learning for an entire school building or district for up to 14 days may be requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please contact the Department of Education by submitting your information via the CASA system. • Only the Departments of Education and Public Health can make this determination and provide temporary authorization to move to 100% online or remote learning. |

*Your local public health department uses data to determine the level of community transmission. Most districts in Iowa are in 2-4 counties, so it is important to know which public health departments you work with and how to contact them. The highest positivity rate in any county that a district is a part of should be considered.

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