



Return to Learn Update (June 25, 2020)

Within the past week, we have received competing recommendations from two entities that we look to for guidance.

Today, the Iowa Department of Education (DE) released [guidance for reopening schools](#). Within that guidance, the DE cited the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendation that schools do not need to screen students and staff upon entering the building. They also said that requiring face coverings for all staff and students is not recommended.

Earlier this week, we received [guidance from the Story County Health Board of Directors](#) that recommended that wearing masks should be required of staff, temperature screening protocols should be put in place, as well as implement social distancing standards.

We know that there are a lot of questions about what school will look like in the fall. Given the unprecedented spring that we just navigated together and the continued uncertainty around the coronavirus, this is very understandable. *Will we be able to return to school at full capacity? Will students be required to wear masks? What safety procedures will be in place? What happens if we are not able to return?* The list goes on and on and on as it should.

On Monday, we will be providing an overview of our *Return to Learn Plan* to the school board of directors and we will then share a summary of that plan with our community. To recap, in April when Governor Reynolds announced that schools would close for the remainder of the school year, they also announced that school districts would be required to complete a *Return to Learn Plan* due by July 1st to the Department of Education (DE). Those plans must include contingencies for the following

- A full return to school (On-Site Delivery),
- If school is closed again (Required Continuous Learning)
- Combination of the two if only a certain percentage of students can attend on a given day (Hybrid Learning).

A primary goal of the Ames CSD is to plan for a variety of delivery models that will allow us to provide a quality experience to our students regardless of the current health and safety context within our state or community.

Over the next few weeks, we will be collaborating with Story County Health Department and Story County Emergency Management to develop a matrix on how decisions are made to move from one education model to another.

Once our *Return to Learn* plans are submitted on July 1, we will continue with implementation in what is a very fluid situation. What will school exactly look like in the fall? We honestly do not know yet. We take the guidance from Story County Health Department and Iowa Department of Education very seriously and their recommendations weigh heavily in our ability to make informed decisions. And even though the

guidance is helpful, we know that we must make decisions that are in the best interest of our students, staff, families, and community. We must also balance the need for our students to get an amazing education and understand the logistics and reality that come along with that.

This past school year was one unlike any other and we appreciate the patience, understanding, and commitment to educational equity that we saw from across this community. As we continue to develop our plans and have a more accurate understanding of what school will look like in the fall, we will be as thorough and comprehensive in our communication as possible.

Key Points from this Communication:

- **Guidance** - Guidance from the [Department of Education](#) and [Story County Health Department](#).
- **Return to Learn plan** - Presented to the school board on Monday, June 29, and will be shared with our community afterward on our website.
- **Matrix** - Developing a decision-making matrix in collaboration with Story County Health and Story County Emergency Management.