

West Des Moines Community Schools
Temporary Permission to Provide Primarily Continuous/Remote Learning ([Guidance](#))
December 2, 2020

Additional Resources Supporting Required Continuous Learning

[PreK-6 Guidance for Required Continuous Learning](#)

[Secondary Guidance for Required Continuous Learning](#)

[Mitigation Strategies For In-Person Learning in WDMCS](#)

1. Evidence of consultation with local/county public health determining that the area meets the requirements established by IDPH

There has been a strong and consistent consultation with the Polk County Health Department (PCHD) whenever we have received knowledge of a positive COVID-19 case in the district; whether that be an employee or student. That collaborative communication has taken place with Polk County Health Department staff and our school nurses, district central office administrators, and our Blank nursing supervisor. Virtual meetings led by Polk County Health Department staff are attended by our district nurse, HR administrator, and contracted Blank nurses. These are valuable opportunities to provide clarification, responses to scenarios and answer questions that arise during this unique time.

Administrators from the Polk County Health Department have shared information with our WDMCS School Board and provided information for our district as we implement our Return to Learn plans.

As we have been monitoring the positive cases, conducting close contact tracing and consulting with PCHD on recommended actions, there continues to be concern. The positivity rate for Polk County over the past 14 days averages 15.7%.

While currently in our required continuous learning virtual model, onsite student absenteeism across our thirteen buildings for all absences range from 4.9% to 20.2% with our alternative high school as an outlier at 52.9% (only 44 on-site students).

Onsite student absenteeism across our buildings for only COVID and illness related absences range from 2% to 7.3% and has decreased while in our required continuous learning virtual delivery model. Over the past two weeks through November 30th, we've had an additional 82 positive student cases of COVID and 143 student close contacts.

Staff absenteeism in our required continuous learning virtual model has significantly improved, due to flexibility to work from alternative locations. The absentee rate for certified and support staff is currently 5.8%. Over the past two weeks through November 30th, we've had an additional 30 positive staff cases of COVID and 25 staff close contacts.

Prior to our temporary move to a required continuous learning virtual model, we made multiple efforts to creatively address the staffing issues and considered the suggestion to have (non-ill) teachers remote into classrooms with students supervised by paraprofessional staff. If we returned to in-person learning at this

time, we'd have 26 building-level staff who would need to remote in to support students and instruction. With the current positivity rate, as well as the predictions of increased positive cases following Thanksgiving, we are concerned this will continue to be an issue if back onsite.

We are experiencing challenges staffing our on-site child care, Kids West, in a similar manner to when we were providing in-person instruction (10.6% absenteeism). Kids West staff members are currently supporting students all day in our required continuous learning virtual model to support working families.

Therefore, we respectfully request the approval of the Iowa Department of Education for our district to continue in our required continuous learning virtual model December 7 through December 22. This would be a waiver for 12 school calendar days.

2. If the application for temporary permission is approved:

a. How will the district or accredited nonpublic school ensure that all students with IEPs are provided with FAPE during the time the district/school is providing services primarily online?

Students with disabilities will have access to the services and supports outlined in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). IEP teams will ensure appropriate revisions are made for learning in a virtual environment as necessary. This could include consideration of additional assistive technology. Teams will consider the general education setting for all students as they determine appropriate virtual specially designed instruction and changes in LRE. Efforts will be made by the IEP team to create a virtual setting appropriate for each student. (See [Special Education Program Guidance](#))

b. How will the district or accredited nonpublic school ensure that students who require mental health or health services still have access to these services during the time the district/school is providing services primarily online?

Relationships and connectedness are critical, especially in times of crisis, change and in a virtual space. Communication, ongoing support and connections to needed resources are essential.

In required continuous learning counselors and behavior interventionists will provide a weekly asynchronous learning opportunity in the area of SEBMH. The school district's Employee and Student Assistance programs are an option as well as School Based Therapy at each school will continue virtually.

School counselors can interact with students individually or in small groups through virtual meetings, e-mail, and/phone calls. Counselors will have scheduled daily office hours.

c. How will the district or accredited nonpublic school ensure that students with 504 plans continue to receive services?

Accommodations and modifications written in the Section 504 plan will be provided by school personnel (classroom teacher, nurse, administrator, etc.). Section 504 teams will consider if accommodations and modifications are relevant or need to be adapted to the virtual or hybrid setting.

(See [Section 504 Guidance for Required Continuous Learning](#))

d. How will the district continue to provide meals to students?

Meals will be available for pick up at our secondary building locations. We will provide 5 breakfast and 5 lunches per week and price will be based on students individual meal eligibility status. An order form will be available online for families to sign up.

e. How will the district provide access to instructional materials and services for students who do not have access to the internet?

WDMCS has contracted with Mediacom to support families in need with internet access. In addition, where this option provides barriers for families, the district will have limited hot spots to support.

f. What process will you use to communicate with parents/families on educational services and changes in delivery models?

The WDMCS School Community Relations Department supports internal and external communication (i.e. text, email, website, etc.), including frequently-asked-questions. Information continues to be updated to provide the most relevant information to support students, families and staff. Interpreters and translators are used to communicate with multilingual families.