



A Child-Centered Return to School Reentry Plan - July 17, 2020

This past March 2020, schools from across the country were abruptly closed to mitigate the risk and spread of COVID-19. Wisconsin superintendents and district leaders had to quickly pivot to respond to serving the needs of their children and families in unprecedented ways without the daily face-to-face delivery of services. Even though we were not physically present in our school communities, we remained mission-driven providing essential resources of daily meals, technology devices, internet access to learn remotely, professional development for teachers, and additional vital support to our most vulnerable learners.

All across Wisconsin, leaders have been diligently working on scenario planning for reentry, recovery, and beyond. Working in collaboration with local health departments, learning from the CDC, the pandemic data required us to close our schools to mitigate the spread of the disease. We now have the immense responsibility to safely reopen our schools to mitigate the long-term educational effects of lost learning and instructional opportunities.

The top priority of health and safety for all students remains constant however, we now have the opportunity to intentionally choose what to return to and what changes need to be made to better serve our students. The disease data changes daily based upon the context of our local school communities. This group of leaders is committed to seizing the opportunity in the face of this crisis to better meet the needs of every student. While our planning has been fraught with complexity and ambiguity there have been silver-linings to these challenges to reposition and reimagine our educational systems. We are committed to reopening our schools with support of our health departments and endorsement of our local school boards.

A team of Legislators and Superintendents held several meetings to discuss how to safely reopen our schools. Senator Alberta Darling initiated these conversations to create better understanding of the challenges and to provide support to local school leaders. A series of guiding principles were defined to use as cornerstones of our school districts' learning plan for the 2020-21 school year as we plan for recovery, reentry, and beyond.

Guiding Principles

1. Maintain the health and safety of all students and staff;
2. Address the social-emotional and mental health needs of all students and staff;
3. Ensure meaningful and engaging academic experiences for all students by keeping learning coherent through the creation of a scope of essential standards with aligned systems of assessments, bound in units of instruction
4. Prioritize consistency and stability for all students, staff, and parents, while remaining nimble and flexible to the situation; and
5. Provide professional learning opportunities for staff that address learning needs unique to this time, as well as for community stakeholders (i.e. parents, volunteers, community and business partners) as the pandemic situation evolves or environment merits.

Instructional Beliefs and Vision

From an instructional perspective, we believe that providing a consistent and stable learning environment is a critical element for student success. And while we are all supportive of a return to face-to-face education, we acknowledge that essential health and safety measures present barriers in restoring operations as well as predicted financial challenges. Given these barriers:

1. Understanding that face-to-face instruction is the preferred approach, we believe that school reopening decisions should be informed based upon current health data and the ability to implement flexible and phased scenarios while honoring parent choice when virtual learning is a necessary precaution and/or preference for their student and family.
2. We believe if face-to-face instruction on a daily basis in the classroom is not possible, we must enhance our efforts to provide a consistent and more robust digital and remote learning experience, until we are able to safely return; and
3. We acknowledge that there will be times when our students may need access to face-to-face interactions and student support services that are best accessed within the school building.
4. We believe that we must be able to pivot and adapt to the evolving health situation. As such, we must be able to validate our digital and remote learning parameters and experience, enabling students and teachers to more effectively transition between digital and remote learning and face-to-face learning if needed.

Legislative Support & Requests

In terms of legislative support as we prepare to safely reopen our school districts in the fall, there are several areas of support we are requesting:

1. Maintain consistent financial support for K-12 Schools as per biennial budget and beyond
2. Allow for flexible staffing (non-licensed staff) in classrooms and supervising students
 1. Paraprofessionals
 2. Pre-service teachers
3. Allow flexibility when providing supervision for building entrance and exit procedures
4. Flexibility in rehiring retirees
 1. Eliminate the 75 day waiting period as schools will need additional staff to assist with social-emotional support of students, families, and staff, digital/remote learning, and reading/math interventions.
5. Attendance Count - Third Friday Count
 1. Calculating enrollment by counting students attending in person and attending remotely
 2. Moving it to another month
 3. Be prepared for adjustment for the January student count
 4. Use of a three-year rolling-average for either/both the third Friday count and summer school FTE calculations
6. Virtual minutes count as face-to-face days like other states ([eLearning Days - Illinois](#), [Expand innovative solutions per WI PI8](#), and [Digital Learning Collaborative-eLearning Days: A Scan of Policies and Guidance from Other States](#))
7. Truancy - Discretion in counting days missed due to self-quarantine or other medical-related issues where absence may mitigate the spread of the pandemic, or be necessary to fully recover and return
8. Alternative Open Enrollment Applications - DPI to support the resident school district with denied applications at the school level.

9. Flexibility of School Start Date and Waiver of Hours for Instruction
10. Delay or postpone requirements for federal/state assessments - do not use any data or require publication of 2019-2020 for State Report Cards
11. Equity of access and opportunities for devices and robust internet connections

We also ask that individual districts are afforded the opportunity to maintain latitude to implement health recommendations and guidelines based upon local circumstances. There are many factors that point to a localized approach being the best course of action, including the varying numbers of cases, disparate medical facilities, and the testing and treatment abilities, all of which vary from community to community. While we are hoping for consistency, we understand that a one-sized approach does not fit all.

Resources

Resources that have guided our collaborative conversations include looking at various countries around the world who have either not closed their schools, or have already reopened their doors following the pandemic, as well as the CDC, and national and local organizations. The list that follows is nonexhaustive:

- Center for Disease Control ([CDC School Decision Tree](#))
- [CDC Planning Tools](#): CDC released a planning tool for schools aligned with their “considerations for schools” document, that can be used to assess and then monitor recommended practices.
 - Readiness and Planning Tool: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/School-Admin-K12-readiness-and-planning-tool.pdf>
 - Considerations: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>
- [Social-emotional learning resources provided by \(CASEL\)](#)
- [AASA COVID-19 Recovery Task Force Guidelines For REOPENING SCHOOLS: An Opportunity to Transform Public Education](#)
- [COVID-19 Costing Estimates- ASBO and AASA](#)
- [Pediatricians, Educators and Superintendents Urge a Safe Return to School](#)
- [Chiefs for Change Report in collaboration with John Hopkins University](#)
- USDA Further Extends School Meal Waivers: USDA has once again extended the flexibilities it granted school districts during the spring closure period, this time through the end of SY20-21. (EdWeek coverage is [here](#).)
- [Creating Equitable Opportunities for ALL Learners - COSN-AASA](#)
- [Preventing a Lost School Year - Stand for Children Leadership Center](#)
- [Digital Equity - Supporting Students and Families in Out of School Learning](#)
- [EdResearch for Recovery Project](#): A new initiative by Results for America and the Annenberg Institute at Brown University is working with leading researchers to rapidly develop and disseminate research briefs about key questions raised by practitioners and policy makers to inform their COVID recovery decisions. The first three briefs address:
 - [School Practices to Address Learning Loss](#)
 - [Academic Supports for Students with Disabilities](#)
 - [Guidance and Support for Students Moving into Postsecondary](#)
- [National Institute for Excellence in Teaching](#)
- [National Standards for Quality Online Teaching](#)
- American Enterprise Institute ([AEI Blueprint](#))
- WI-DPI - [Education Forward Workbook](#) and several other state plans
 - [Arizona](#), [Illinois](#), [Maryland](#), [Massachusetts](#), [Michigan](#), [North Carolina](#), [Ohio](#)
 - [Virginia](#) (a plan that addresses equity)
 - [Washington State 2020 Reopening Plan](#)
- [Remote Learning Resource Guide - State of Ohio](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [Learning Policy Institute - Executive Summary](#)
- [Learning Policy Institute - Policy Brief](#)
- [Restoring Hope and Seizing Opportunity in Face of Crisis - KnowledgeWorks](#)
- [Schools for Health - Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools - Harvard School of Public Health](#)
- [Wheeler Reports](#)

- [Reopened Schools in Europe and Asia have lessons for the United States](#) - Washington Post 7/11/2020
- [How to Reopen Schools: What Science and Other Countries Teach Us](#) - NY Times - 7/11/2020
- [Milwaukee Public Schools Plan](#) - Journal Sentinel
- [Phased Reopening Plan for the City of Milwaukee Health Department](#)

Disclaimer

There is no one size fits all approach or a pandemic playbook to guide our leadership practices. We realize that our schools will need to eventually reopen safely. The planning for reentry requires a multi-faceted approach based upon scientific evidence and data about a virus that has yet no vaccine as of to date. Since the medical data and cases of the coronavirus changes daily what school districts can do is be responsive to this data and create health and safety protocols to mitigate the risk of spreading the virus adhering to strict sanitation and control measures. COVID-19 is not going away anytime soon. Leaders will also need responsive and flexible plans to be in place in response to potential outbreaks and communication strategies to effectively share updated information. The CDC planning tools list specific tasks and responsibilities for each district to consider. The reopening of our schools will be challenging but with support from local health departments and endorsements by local school boards we can lower the risks of exposure and limit the transmission of COVID-19. Only can each individual school district uniquely address the health and safety needs of their students and staff to safely reopen their schools.

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 Jerry Ponio, Chief of Staff, Office of Senator Darling
 Abby Trawicki, Office of Senator Darling

Area Superintendents

Todd Bugnacki, Cedarburg School District
 Bryan Davis, Shorewood
 Jeff Dellutri, Fox Point Bayside
 Matt Joynt, Mequon-Thiensville School District
 Greg Kabara, Nicolet Union High School
 Monica Kelsey-Brown, Brown Deer
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