

Decorah Community School District
Message to Families
May 1, 2020



Good Afternoon,

I am frequently asked questions like, what will happen next school year, will school start on time next year, and will we have to do online learning next year. Unfortunately, at this time, it is impossible to answer these questions. What I can do today is lay out the timeline upon which we will receive information and make decisions.

All Iowa public schools will be required to submit a Return to Learning plan to the Iowa Department of Education by July 1, 2020. The Department has been working on Return to Learning planning guidance, and yesterday we were informed that Department of Education Director, Dr. Ann Lebo, hopes to release the guidance to schools by the end of next week. There are two final steps that need to occur before the guidance will be released. First, the Governor's Continuous Learning Task Force needs to vet and approve the guidance. After that, Governor Reynolds will give final approval. I know the task force met last night, and I am hopeful that the Department of Education will share the planning guidance with school districts either next Tuesday or Thursday.

Once we receive the Return to Learning guidance, we will use a similar process to what we recently used to develop our current continuous learning plan. I wrote about that process in this [blog post](#).

Given the unpredictability of what the future holds, it will be important for us to consider multiple potential pathways as part of our Return to Learning planning. Here are some examples of the types of scenarios we will need to consider.

- How might we approach the start of the school year if group size and social distancing requirements keep public schools closed when we would normally be returning to school?
- How might we approach the start of the school year if we are allowed to begin the 2020-2021 school year earlier than originally planned?
- What contingency plans might we put in place in order to pivot to continuous learning quickly if emergency school closures happen during the 2020-2021 school year?
- What public health recommended practices and procedures might we put in place to ensure the health and safety of students, staff, and visitors.
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While we have already begun these conversations, it will be helpful to receive the full guidance from the Department of Education. We will use the guidance, and our strategic planning

processes to develop a plan. We will share that plan with our stakeholders, and ultimately submit our plan to the State by July 1, 2020.

I am thankful for the strength and resilience of our community during this crisis, and I thank you for your support of Decorah Schools.

Mark M. Lane, Superintendent of Schools