Establishing reliable metrics for determining when it is safe to return students and staff to in-person learning in our schools is particularly challenging given that there is not a robust or even adequate COVID-19 testing strategy in place in Polk County and we continue to have concerns with the validity of the data being shared through the Iowa Department of Public Health. According to the Harvard Global Health Institute and Brown School of Public Health, the state of Iowa is well below the testing level needed to slow the spread of COVID-19 and dramatically below the testing level need to control the spread. In Polk County, there should be a minimum of 1,445 tests conducted each day (of a representative sample of our population) to reach a minimum number of tests. To reach a level where we could control the virus, Polk County would need to test 5,280 or more individuals daily. On Friday, September 11, fewer than 1,000 tests were administered in Polk County. The metrics below are based on adequate testing taking place in Polk County.

These metrics were determined after considerable research and consultation with notable public health and infectious disease doctors with a specialty in pandemics. The goal of these metrics is to provide clarity for district leadership in determining when we can safely return students and staff back to in-person learning with a reasonable level of confidence that we can remain in in-person learning for at least several weeks. The challenges that come with transitioning between virtual and in-person learning are many, for both school staff, families, and our community partners. It is important that we limit these transitions to as few as necessary to continue the educational process as successfully as possible.

Below are the three metrics that will guide our return to in-person instruction. Data will be pulled from the following sources and confirmed with additional sources as needed:
Metric 1: Johns Hopkins University: https://bao.arcgis.com/covid-19/jhu/county/19153.html
Metric 2: https://coronavirus.iowa.gov/pages/case-counts
Metric 3: Harvard University: https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/biostatistics/2020/06/new-interactive-site-for-visualizing-covid-19s-rt/

DMPS Return to In-Person Instruction metrics

DMPS will begin to transition into its hybrid instructional model when the following three conditions are met in Polk County:

1) Ensure local COVID-19 community spread is controlled as indicated by less than one new case per day per 100,000 population in Polk County on a 7-day rolling average. This threshold is consistent with the levels of community spread in countries where schools have successfully reopened without subsequent surges in COVID-19.

2) 14-day declining incidence of COVID-19 cases and a positive 14-day rolling average testing rate of less than 5%. (individual people, not individual tests)

3) Rt of less than 1.0 in Polk County (latest measure; typically lags by 5 or 6 days).
see [http://metrics.covid19-analysis.org/]

DMPS Return to Virtual Instruction metrics

1) More than four cases per 100,000 population in Polk County on a 7-day rolling average.

2) Increasing incidence of COVID-19 cases and a 14-day rolling average testing rate of greater than 5%.

3) Rt of more than 1.0 in Polk County (latest measure; typically lags by 5 or 6 days).

Phase-In/Phase-Out of Instructional Models Plan

- We will move from Virtual to Hybrid and/or Full In-Person, as conditions allow.
- We may move from Hybrid back to Virtual or from Full In-Person back to Virtual as conditions dictate.
- Transition from Virtual to Hybrid would be announced on Wednesday for the Hybrid model to begin the following Monday.
- Pre-K and Elementary students would return in the first week of Hybrid; secondary schools would begin the following week. This phase-in approach will provide for food service systems and transportation (especially DART) to successfully transition and prioritizes our youngest learners.

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