Iowa schools are being directed by guidance from the Iowa Department of Education in conjunction with the Iowa Department of Public Health. The guidance falls into two categories. Future gubernatorial proclamations and emergency orders can also impact health and safety measures. In addition, the Iowa Legislature set direction for local decision making as part of Senate File 2310.

### Return-to-Learn Guidance: Focus on Planning

**Return-to-Learn guidance** sets a planning process for how districts prepare to reopen in the fall. Districts are planning for:

- **On-Site Delivery**: Districts can provide on-site education so long as it is deemed safe by public health officials and the school has actively planned for appropriate health and safety measures.

- **Continuous Learning**: Remote learning options can be used in an emergency, such as the resurgence of COVID-19, or under another circumstance in which it is not possible for students to be in the building receiving instruction.

- **Hybrid Learning**: Districts have the option to use a hybrid model—blending remote learning with on-site learning. This may allow for social distancing while partially reopening school buildings.

### Reopening Guidance: Time-Specific Health Directives

Reopening guidance is time-specific direction based on the state’s view of health needs at the time. It guides districts in determining how to implement their plans.

**Reopening Guidance issued June 25, 2020** authorizes schools to begin implementing approved Return-to-Learn plans.

Schools may begin offering all school activities July 1, 2020, with several health parameters.

No end-date was specified as a timeframe for these parameters.

**Gubernatorial proclamations/emergency orders** could also impact local decisions in implementing their plans, as could updated or expanded IDPH/DE guidance.

### Legislative Direction

**Senate File 2310** passed by the legislature in 2020 provides parameters regarding decisions to balance in-person vs. remote options. These parameters set the tone that in-person instruction is preferred and authorize school boards to make local closure decisions.

- **Brick and Mortar**: Any Return-to-Learn plan submitted by a school district must contain provisions for in-person instruction and provide that in-person instruction is the presumed method of instruction. Unless explicitly authorized in a proclamation of a public health disaster emergency issued by the governor related to COVID-19, a brick-and-mortar school district shall not take action to provide instruction primarily through remote learning opportunities.

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Summary compiled by the Iowa Association of School Boards, July 2020
**Return-to-Learn Guidance: Focus on Planning (Continued)**

The planning framework supports districts in considering leadership, infrastructure, health and safety, Iowa academic standards, social-emotional behavioral health, equity, and data needs.

July 1, 2020 was the deadline for districts to submit plan assurances to the Department of Education. Only continuous learning plans require approval by the Department of Education.

**Legislative Direction (Continued)**

- **Social Distancing:** In implementing social distancing policies included in a Return-to-Learn plan, the board of directors shall, to the extent possible, provide in-person instruction for core academic subjects.

- **School Closure:** School boards are authorized, if the governor proclaims a public health disaster, to close a district or attendance center due to an outbreak of COVID-19 in the school district or an attendance center. Decisions to close are made at the local level in collaboration with public health.

*Summary compiled by the Iowa Association of School Boards, July 2020*