

AUGUST 21, 2020

Public Health released **Emergency Order #9**, requiring schools to start grades 3–12 virtually and published “Targets for possibly resuming in-person pupil instruction” for all grades, including metrics necessary for students in grades 3-5 and 6-12 to return in-person instruction.

Grade Levels	Target for Possibly Resuming In-Person Pupil Instruction	Status
K-2	A 14-day average of 54 cases per day, sustained for four weeks	Met on August 18, may open per order #9
3-5	A 14-day average of 39 cases per day, sustained for four weeks	Not met
6-12	A 14-day average of 19 cases per day, sustained for four weeks	Not met

“As this is a novel disease and we are learning more each day, the thresholds Public Health has established will be frequently reexamined and potentially updated as additional information about COVID-19 transmission, mitigation, impact, testing, and treatments become available.” – Public Health Madison & Dane County

To help guide our decision-making around reopening, MMSD convened an advisory panel of health experts from Public Health Madison & Dane County, UW Madison, UW-Health, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and UW-Madison including epidemiologists, infection preventionists, infection disease specialists, pediatricians, nurse consultants, professors and more.

Among our questions: “What do we need to consider when using the metrics from Public Health that indicate the community is ready to have in-person instruction in our schools?”

SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) released Indicators for Dynamic School Decision-Making, relying on 14-day averages of numbers of new cases per 100,000 people, defining five zones of risk, going from green (lowest) to red (highest).

“When coupled with local data about community spread, these indicators are an important tool to help local health officials, school administrators, and communities prepare, plan, and respond to COVID-19.” – CDC

Indicator	Low risk of transmission in schools	Lower risk of transmission in schools	Moderate risk of transmission in schools	Higher risk of transmission in schools	Highest risk of transmission in schools
New cases per 100,000 population in the last 14 days	<5	5 to <20	20 to <50	50 to <200	>200
(For comparison to new thresholds, equivalent new cases per 1000,000 in 7-day period shown in parenthesis)	(2-3 in 7 days)	(3-9 in 7 days)	(10-24 in 7 days)	(25-100 in 7 days)	(>100 in 7 days)
RT-PCR diagnostic test results positivity rate in the last 14 days	<3%	3% to <5%	5% to <8%	8% to <10%	>10%

OCTOBER 15, 2020

MMSD announced plans to **remain virtual through the second quarter**, which ends January 22, 2021, after considering the state of the COVID-19 pandemic in Wisconsin, Dane County and Madison.

DECEMBER 14, 2020

Public Health released updated guidance that:

- **Eliminates previously published thresholds.**
- **Refers school districts to CDC guidelines built around rates of positive cases per 100K people.**
- **Recommends school districts adopt their own thresholds.**

Following this guidance, MMSD shifted our thresholds to reflect the CDC’s Indicators for Dynamic School Decision-Making. Our thresholds shifted from 54, 39 and 19 to:

- K-2: Dane County 14-day average should be **78 or fewer** new cases per day for 4 consecutive weeks.
- 3-5: Dane County 14-day average should be **63 or fewer** new cases per day for 4 consecutive weeks.
- 6-12: Dane County 14-day average should be **43 or fewer** new cases per day for 4 consecutive weeks.

JANUARY 8, 2021

MMSD announced a plan to start the third quarter virtually. After weeks of careful analysis, consultation with health experts and close consideration of a recent decline in local cases, the metrics did not support a safe return to our school buildings at that time.

FEBRUARY 10, 2021

MMSD announced a decision to begin a phased approach to reopening, beginning with our earliest grades (4K–2) on March 9, citing improved conditions and information from Public Health Madison & Dane County and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

FEBRUARY 18, 2021

CDC released a new **Operational Strategy for K–12 schools**, replacing their previously published indicators with revised indicators and thresholds.

Indicator	Lowest Transmission	Low Transmission Blue	Moderate Transmission Yellow	Substantial Transmission Orange	High Transmission Red
Total new cases per 1000,000 persons in the past 7 days**	Category no longer exists. It has been merged into one low transmission (blue category)	0-9	10-49	50-99	>100
Percentage of NAATs that are positive during the past 7 days**		<5.0%	5.0%-7.9%	8.0%-9.9%	>10.0%

MARCH 3, 2021

Public Health released K–12 School Requirements and Updated Recommendations during COVID-19.

MMSD joined the ABC Science Collaborative, which pairs scientists and physicians with school and community leaders to help understand the most current and relevant information about COVID-19. The program helps us make informed decisions about returning to school using data from our own communities.