

Date:

8/03/20

Subject:

School Board Decision For Rolling Green

Email:

Urbandale CSD Families and Staff,

After much research, reflection, and discussion, our School Board voted in favor of prioritizing the safety and health of all Rolling Green students and staff by maintaining the current online instructional model (Required Continuous Learning) for another two weeks through August 20 (Note: Rolling Green does not have school on Friday, August 21 and Monday, August 24 due to teacher professional development days; thus, it is anticipated that Rolling Green will resume their school year in the same instructional model that the rest of our district schools will utilize for the beginning of the school year on August 25, which will be discussed during the August 10 School Board meeting.). Even though [public health metrics](#) continue to indicate that Polk County is experiencing a high level of community spread of COVID-19, the Iowa Department of Education (DE) denied the District's request to extend Rolling Green's online instructional model (Required Continuous Learning) past August 6. Our School Board believed the risk was too high to bring Rolling Green students and staff together in small spaces for long periods of time.

Our preference has always been to align our instructional methods with guidance from our leaders at the DE. We find no pleasure in opposing the DE's denial of our request to remain online for two more weeks. In fact, if you ask any School Board member, you will know just how agonizing this decision has been in the face of an unprecedented and impossible public health situation.

However, impossible situations call for improbable solutions which is why the decision to maintain the current online instructional model for two additional weeks is necessary. When the District made the recommendation to the School Board on July 13 to begin the Rolling Green school year online, and the DE approved the request, it was due to high levels of community spread of the virus and in consideration of information and guidance provided by local public health officials that the safest course of action at that time was online instruction. Although we are three weeks out from that initial decision, we are still seeing high levels of community spread of the virus so we are no safer now than we were three weeks ago. This is why the School Board felt they could not, in good conscience, send students and staff back into small spaces for long periods of time.

We realize this decision will seem too cautious for some and the right call for others. It may be perceived as a poor decision by one group and a good decision by another. But here is what continues to guide our decision making process: at the end of the day, we want to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for our students and staff. Right now, on August 3, the

safest and healthiest learning environment does not involve small spaces, with large groups of people, for long periods of time.

As I've shared before, I cannot thank our families and staff enough—especially our Rolling Green families and staff—for your patience as we navigate the best course of action for maintaining safe and healthy schools while living through a global pandemic.

Sincerely,

Steve Bass
Superintendent