Strategies and Considerations for In-Person Assessment During a Pandemic

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Introduction

Purpose
The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is committed to every student receiving an equitable education—regardless of learning environment—so all students have the skills, habits, and dispositions to graduate career and college ready. We must strengthen relationships, focus on equity, and support the overall well-being of Wisconsin’s students, families, school staff, tribal nations, and communities. *Education Forward: Operating Schools during a Pandemic* provides considerations for district and school leaders to plan and implement a safe, efficient, and equitable school year. Please know the information provided in this document does not constitute a requirement for any district or school. Instead, this information should be used as a starting point and adjusted to fit each assessment and each school’s unique student population and needs. There is no remote (virtual) testing option available for 2020-21. This document is going to give you steps to plan for test administration.

Test Participation
Participation in State assessments can help determine the impact the pandemic has had on academic achievement and equity. Equitable testing is important because clearly knowing the performance of all students is the first step in closing achievement gaps. We must know exactly which gaps exist, the size of the gaps, and the persistence of the gaps. More information about the importance of test participation can be found in [Deputy State Superintendent Mike Thompson’s letter](mailto:mthompson@dpi.wi.gov).
Preparing for the Assessment

Scheduling

- Know what each assessment’s test window is and utilize the entire test window to your advantage. Do not wait to test your students as staff and student absences may make it very difficult to ensure testing of all students.
- Know and understand what testing flexibilities are allowed for each assessment.
- Break the testing population into smaller groups, over multiple testing rooms, over multiple days (if applicable).
- Consider staggering the start time for groups for students by just a few minutes to spread out that higher need for network bandwidth.
- Plan a flexible testing schedule with makeup dates and longer testing windows in anticipation of student and staff illness.
- Create backup plans for staff shortages, student absences, school closures, and possible test day cancellations (training additional staff—particularly for DLM and ACCESS, alternative test days, alternate testing site).
- Create a plan for students or staff members in case of illness.
- Consider a check-in process and waiting area (if they arrive early) for students who are coming in only for testing, whether your format is virtual or hybrid.
- Create alternate plans to complete testing that align with different schooling scenarios including:
  - The district switches to an all-virtual format prior to or during testing.
  - The district switches to a hybrid (virtual/in-person) format prior to or during testing.
- Allow sufficient time for handwashing, sanitization, moving students in and out, doing health assessments, socially distanced bathroom breaks, and other safety procedures.
- Allow time to maintain social distancing during breaks.
- Assemble a team of staff to assist the District Assessment Coordinator plan and implement in-person testing.
- Be creative in creating small student pods. (Example: grouping families together, keeping student cohorts or classrooms together as much as possible, etc.)
- Food and nutrition requirements must be met for students attending school for testing. Refer to COVID-19 Cafeteria and Food Service Guidelines and Serving School Meals during COVID.
Preparing the School Building

- Designate specific entrances and exits only at the facility.
- Require face coverings. Masks should not be worn by anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. Work with those who are uncomfortable or unable to wear a cloth face covering (due to health or racial discrimination concerns) to develop an appropriate alternative.
- Provide hand sanitizer at building entrances and in common high traffic areas.
- Provide masks at building entrances for students and staff who have forgotten or do not have their own.
- Place visual floor markers six feet apart and hang social distancing/best practices reminders throughout the facility.
- Clean and disinfect facilities and communal surfaces (desks, chairs, computers, keyboards, mice, etc.). Follow the CDC’s Cleaning, Disinfection, and Hand Hygiene in Schools – a Toolkit for School Administrators, and guidelines in the DHS COVID-19: Schools and Child Care.
- Ensure restrooms are stocked with soap and hand drying materials. Check restroom supplies often.

Alternative Testing Environments

- Know what assessments offer testing offsite in case of building closure (e.g. proctored in-person assessment at a community center or library).
- Plan on where else you could potentially test safely and how to securely transfer test materials.
- Consider breaking up a gymnasium into pods to serve as additional rooms for testing.
- Verify that alternative testing sites have adequate network and WiFi access point capacity.

Classroom/Testing Space Preparation

- Set up the room before students enter for the testing session.
- Use sanitizing wipes or cleaner to clean the testing area before and after student uses.
- Sanitize shared equipment (headphones, microphones, keyboards, monitors, mice, dividers, etc.) after each use with sanitizing products approved for electronics. See the CDC Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting for more specific guidance.
- Offer multiple test participant check-in stations for safe distancing and efficiency.
• Provide hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes, or access to a sink and soap, for teachers and students to use in testing rooms.
• Place social distancing/best practices reminders in testing rooms.

Technology Considerations
• Verify the process for updates with your technology department. Updates to software may not be reliably pushed-out during remote/virtual learning. Check with your technology departments to ensure that the students’ devices meet the minimum standards for the testing software, have all updates installed, and are running the most recent version of the testing platform. If these updates cannot be done remotely consider alternatives:
  o Updates for Hybrid learners (student in school part-time and virtual the rest) – prepare for updates when student groups are in the building.
  o Updates for Virtual learners - Consider “Drive-through” device update stations prior to testing for students who are virtual full-time.
  o Ensure there are a number of updated and pre-sanitized devices available for students that were unable to have their device updated prior to testing or for students who forget their device on testing day.
  o Have extra pre-sanitized equipment available on site for students who forgot chargers, mice, headsets etc. are available onsite.
• Consider where in the building students may be testing. Given the need for social distancing, you may need to utilize different parts of the building than normal. Ensure these areas have adequate WiFi access points and capacity for the student testing from those areas.
• Consider staggering the start time for groups for students by just a few minutes to spread out that higher need for network bandwidth.
• Minimize the sharing of devices between students. If devices must be shared, sanitize between usages by students (e.g. Microphones, headsets, keyboards, screens).
• Review your overall network utilization patterns. With remote learning occurring at the same time as testing from the site, network utilization will most likely be different than prior years’ testing.
• Ensure district owned student devices are brought to school/testing site fully charged with all accessories including charging cords, headsets, mice, mouse pads, external keypads, etc.
• Ensure there are adequate electrical outlets for students to plug devices into during testing.
• Work with your technology leadership to provide support during the testing window. Also, work with them on a back-up plan in case there are technology issues.
Preparing Staff, Students, and Families

Staff Preparation

- Prepare your staff by providing training and additional information about safe in-person practices and expectations (masks, social distancing, sanitation, etc.).
- Communicate clearly and consistently with and between administrators, coordinators, educators, and parents/families to ensure the highest participation possible.
- Outline assessment plans in an easily accessible format, such as an FAQ document, that can explain your plan and offer guidance to address health and safety concerns prior to test administration. See the DAC Trainings and Resources webpage for an FAQ template.
- Remind staff to encourage students to do their best on the test and explain how the results are meaningful to them.

Student and Family Preparation

- Provide clear and consistent communication to parents/guardians in an accessible format (appropriate language level, translation, FAQs, etc.). See the DAC Trainings and Resources webpage for assessment specific parent communications letter templates.
  o Detail the safety precautions and social-distancing practices you will be providing on testing days, to help parents feel comfortable (masks, social distancing, sanitation, etc.).
  o Detail the information about what materials students will be expected to have with them on testing days (fully charged, district owned device with all accessories, pencil, mask, etc.).
  o Detail precautions being taken by the school for safety and wellness to help parents feel comfortable about testing situations.
  o Provide clear information about keeping sick students home on testing days. There will be make-up opportunities available.
- Document every effort made to contact parents and schedule testing sessions.
- Encourage students to do their best on the test, and explain how the results are meaningful to them.
Considerations for Administration

Health Screening

- Screen all students and testing staff for COVID-19 related symptoms per the School Health Services Interim COVID-19 Infection Control and Mitigation: Toolkit.
- Ask students and staff to remain home on testing days if ill (have a temperature or showing symptoms) or have had exposure to COVID in the last two weeks.
- Turn away students or staff that are showing symptoms or have indicated they have had exposure to COVID in the last two weeks.

Materials Preparation

- Recommend staff wear gloves when distributing, handling, or collecting materials.
- Ask students to return items used for the assessment to a specific container labelled “used” at the end to minimize handling materials between test administrator and student.
- Encourage students to bring their own pencil (for paper/pencil testing, notes/calculations and/or scrap paper during online testing).
- Provide separate containers in the testing rooms, one for extra unused pencils and one for used pencils.
- Consider placing allowable student manipulatives and accommodation/support materials in plastic bags/wrap, binder sleeves, or lamination—anything easily discarded or washed between student uses.
- For special populations, please refer to specific assessment guidance.

The following materials may be needed for safe in-person testing:

- Plastic wrap or keyboard covers
- Masks (consider types of masks for students with special needs and teachers)
- Plexiglass dividers
- 70% alcohol solution/Spray bottles
- Wipes/paper towels
- Hand sanitizer
- Pencils for students to keep
- Containers for used materials that need to be sanitized prior to next use
- Sheet protectors/plastic bags
- Gloves
- Thermometers (if symptom screening)
Transportation

- Consider transportation needs of students and families.
- Plan in advance how you will adhere to CDC safety protocols if transportation is to be provided by the schools.
- Direct students who have fevers (100.4°F) as monitored by their family, not to get on the bus.
- Do not transport visibly ill students by bus.
- Recommend students practice social distancing and wear facial coverings/masks while riding the bus.
- Allow students from the same household or living unit to sit together.
- Ensure students do not to pass or share any items such as books, electronics, or personal items with other students while riding the bus.
- Ensure students do not eat or drink while riding the bus.
- See DPI COVID-19 Transportation Guidelines for more information about safety guidelines while transporting students.

Note: DPI will continue to update guidance based on the direction from the national, state and local partners. Check the COVID-19 Assessment and Accountability Updates webpages as information
Resources

Assessment Specific Resources

- Assessment FAQs
- ACCESS
- ACCESS for ELLs - WIDA - Tips for safer testing
- ACT
- ACT Social Distancing Guidelines
- Aspire
- DLM
- Forward
- NAEP
- NAEP COVID-19 Protocols

Additional Resources

- Education Forward
- COVID-19 Infection Control and Mitigation Measures in Schools
- Badger Bounce Back
- COVID-19: Schools and Child Care
- Department of Health Services
- Considerations in Using Facial Coverings When Supporting Students during In-Person Instruction
- CDC Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting
- PPE Considerations for Schools
- Considerations in Using Facial Coverings When Supporting Students during In-Person Instruction
References
