

Governor Cooper Allows Districts To Open Elementary Schools

By Administrator

Friday, 18 September 2020 17:20 -

After several weeks of stable COVID-19 trends and continued low virus spread in school settings, Governor Roy Cooper today announced that beginning on October 5, North Carolina public school districts and charter schools can choose to implement Plan A for elementary schools (grades K-5). Plan A continues to include important safety measures like face coverings for all students, teachers and staff, social distancing, and symptom screening, but does not require schools to reduce the number of children in the classroom. “We are able to open this option because most North Carolinians have doubled down on our safety and prevention measures and stabilized our numbers,” said Governor Roy Cooper. “North Carolinians are doing the hard work to improve our numbers and trends. Many people are wearing masks, keeping social distance and being careful to protect others as well as themselves. We have shown that listening to the science works. And I’m proud of our resolve.”

As the Governor announced in July, every district will continue to have flexibility to select Plan A, B or C based on their unique needs. In addition, districts should still provide an option for families to select all remote learning for their students. Read the Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit to learn more about the requirements under each plan.

Dr. Mandy Cohen, Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services shared an update on North Carolina’s data trends. Dr. Cohen explained that North Carolina has seen a sustained leveling or decrease of key metrics.

“Our trends show that we are on the right track. It’s up to all of us to protect our progress. Our individual actions like those 3 Ws will help keep our school doors open.,” said Secretary Cohen.

Dr. Cohen also explained that as schools have opened, the current science shows that younger children are less likely to become infected, have symptoms, experience severe disease or spread the virus.

“It’s great news today that we are a step closer to providing the option of in-person learning to families who want their children to return to school,” said Superintendent of Public Instruction Mark Johnson. “While the Governor, the State Board of Education, and I have our differences, I join with them today to encourage local school board members to take advantage of this change and open all schools safely. I thank the many parents and teachers across North Carolina who have been vocal advocates on this important issue.”

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“For the past 6 months, superintendents, principals, teachers and local BOE have worked diligently to care for the safety of our students and staff while educating our children. While we are anxious to return all students, we know that teachers, principals, and students need a gradual transition over the next 3 months. I ask our parents to remain patient, knowing that we are moving as quickly as is safely possible. And I ask our teachers to continue to assist our students by supporting this deliberate, thoughtful transition,” said Eric Davis, Chairman of the State Board of Education.

Trajectory in COVID-Like Illness (CLI) Surveillance Over 14 Days

North Carolina’s syndromic surveillance trend for COVID-like illness is declining.

Trajectory of Confirmed Cases Over 14 Days

North Carolina’s trajectory of lab-confirmed cases is declining.

Trajectory in Percent of Tests Returning Positive Over 14 Days

North Carolina’s trajectory in percent of tests returning positive is declining.

Trajectory in Hospitalizations Over 14 Days

North Carolina’s trajectory of hospitalizations is declining.

In addition to these metrics, the state continues building capacity to be able to adequately respond to an increase in virus spread. These areas include:

Laboratory Testing

Access to testing has expanded. No-cost testing events are being deployed across the state

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and testing turnaround times have improved.

Tracing Capability

Contact tracers continue to be hired to bolster the efforts of local health departments. A new exposure notification app will be launched soon.

Personal Protective Equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies are stable

North Carolina education leaders gave statements in support of Governor Cooper's announcement.

Mark Johnson, Superintendent of NC Department of Public Instruction: "It's great news today that we are a step closer to providing the option of in-person learning to families who want their children to return to school. While the Governor, the State Board of Education, and I have our differences, I join with them today to encourage local school board members to take advantage of this change and open all schools safely. I thank the many parents and teachers across North Carolina who have been vocal advocates on this important issue."

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