



North Carolina School for the Deaf

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October 2, 2020

Greeting Parents, Students, and Staff:

I would like to extend heartfelt admiration and pride to the North Carolina School for the Deaf (NCSD) Community for the efforts put forth to ensure that our students are successfully engaging in learning at this time. The passionate efforts of NCSD Educators, Staff and Families has been evident daily. The collective efforts of our community continue to prove the value of academic rigor, social-emotional health, and access to expertise in Deaf Education. We are #TeamNCSD and #NCSDStrong!

I am writing to provide an update on the NCSD status learning protocols. An update on recent data collected by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), has yielded over 211,000 cases of COVID-19 in NC including; 2415 in Burke County: 302 active positive cases, 7 current hospitalizations, and over 54,000 positive cases from the counties in which our students reside. In addition to reviewing the latest data, we have received guidance from Governor Roy Cooper and continue to review parental feedback.

On September 17, 2020, Governor Roy Cooper made an announcement regarding the provision of educational services. The announcement based on the North Carolina trend data and CDC guidance, allotted for the transition to *Plan A; In-Person Instruction*, of the state's protocols beginning October 5, 2020 for school systems who were ready as defined within the COVID-19 Educational Toolkit Guidelines. The provision is limited to kindergarten through fifth grade.

NCSD administration has actively and personally contacted parents in applicable grade levels, to obtain data for families who would desire in-person instruction (if applicable). NCSD Leadership understands that the decision to send a student in-person is individually based on the health considerations of each family. Therefore, a family decision to maintain a student in the *Plan C- Remote Learning* protocols has our upmost respect upon request.

The current COVID-19 trend data, the NCSD Parent Survey, announcement from Governor Cooper and Center for Disease Control guidance have provided an evidence-based decision regarding instruction. The Leadership Team at NCSD has decided to open on a *Plan A; In-Person protocols* for students in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth, on Tuesday, October 20, 2020. This date aligns with the initiation of the second nine-week period. The reduced number of NCSD students in sixth through eighth grade has granted NCSD permission from external governance to extend the *Plan A* protocols to those students; again, parents may still opt for the provision of a *Plan C- Remote Only* option. The class schedule will be synchronous with the *Plan-A* schedule for the applicable grade levels.

NCSD leadership will continue to analyze the data and remain in communication with governing bodies to establish timelines for tapering in high school students. Our initial plan is to have high school students return on Monday, November 2, 2020 if we have smooth transitions for grades pre-kindergarten through eighth and we do not experience any impacts or setbacks from COVID-19. We continue to acknowledge that *Plan C- Remote*

Learning Only is challenging for students and families, and that face-to-face instruction is the most ideal learning environment. However, this plan presents with the opportunity for students to be tapered in and adjust to new standards for daily interactions/instruction. This provision allows school systems to study trend data and consistency for the adherence to new safety protocols.

NCSD serves students who may present with significant medical complexities, as well as other special circumstances that may be at an increased risk for severe complications. Therefore, measures delineated in the CDC Toolkit for Schools will be implemented with the highest expectations that students and staff will adhere to them. Please note that should there be a cluster outbreak of COVID-19 cases, NCSD's status for instruction will be under the guidance of the Burke County Health Department. Parents and families must be prepared for the possibility of return to *Plan C- Remote Learning Only*, at *any* time. Parents and families must be prepared to pick up your student in the event that he/she present with symptomology consistent with COVID-19. NCSD **will not** transport any student with symptoms and it is the parent/guardian responsibility to immediately pick up your student upon being contacted by Student Health Center.

Please see NCSD's website for COVID-19 under Family Resources. Please note that any PreK-8 grade student who **has not** completed and returned his/her Registration Documentation by October 12, 2020 including; Student Health Center, Residential Life, and General School Information, Business Office (Student Activity Fee), **will not** be able to begin in-person instruction on October 20, 2020.

We will continue to watch the COVID-19 data and trends and will update you on possible changes to our continued implementation of *Plan A/In-Person Instruction*; pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, and *Plan C/Remote Learning Only*; high school, on or before October 16, 2020. We appreciate your support and understanding. Thank you for continuing to come out to the bus stops to obtain course material/supplies on a weekly basis and for your daily participation in remote classes. Bus route times will remain the same but if there are time changes necessary, parents will be contacted. Parents of local/day students may drop off student packets and pick up student technology and distance learning materials at the flagpole from 3:00-4:00 pm at NCSD.

We appreciate all you are doing to ensure our students continue to make progress on IEP goals and academics. Please stay safe and contact me by phone at 828 432-5200 or by sending an e-mail to mark.patrick@esdb.dpi.nc.gov if you have any questions.

Respectfully,



Mark D. Patrick
School Director
North Carolina School for the Deaf

cc: Amy Sargent, Principal
cc: Dr. Thea Wilson, School Audiologist and Director of Enrollment