



# North Carolina School for the Deaf

517 West Fleming Drive, Morganton, NC 28655

Mark D. Patrick, Director | Telephone: 828.432.5200 | Fax: 828.433.4044

January 06, 2021

Dear Students, Parents/Guardians, and NCSD Staff:

I hope that this letter finds all of you well after a safe and restful holiday season. My wish is that each one of you were able to celebrate with your immediate families and enjoy some amazing fellowship together.

Per my letter on December 09, 2020, I am writing today to let all students and families know of the upcoming plans for instruction for our students. A review on recent data collected by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), has yielded over 582,384 cases of COVID-19 in NC including 6808 in Burke County: 1,385 active positive cases, 27 current hospitalizations, and over 250,000 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 reviewed 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. This guidance has been modified several times, most recently on December 4, 2020, with updates on cloth face coverings, quarantine guidelines, mask requirements for all students ages 5 and up; while eating lunch, and during all physical activities including PE classes and recess.

Today, Governor Cooper extended the modified stay at home order amid rising COVID-19 case counts. This order requires residents to be at home from 10:00 PM-5:00AM and this is to last through January 29, 2021. The modified stay at home order was extended as numbers continue to increase at alarming rates. The Executive Order can be found here for additional details. [Executive Order No. 188](#) and you may view the [slides](#) from today's briefing at the link provided here.

Dr. Mandy Cohen also provided an update on North Carolina's [COVID-19 County Alert System map](#). There are now 84 counties designated as red (critical community spread) and 12 counties that are yellow (substantial community spread). Read the [update](#) to see where each county stands and how the system was designed. Dr. Cohen also issued a Secretarial Directive with stark warnings for North Carolinians to avoid indoor spaces without masks and gatherings between households. Read here for more details on the [Secretarial Directive](#). It is stated that over the next 14 days, the state will be in crisis.

The current COVID-19 trend data, the NCSD Staff quarantine numbers, most recent announcement from Governor Cooper and Center for Disease Control guidance have provided an evidence-based decision regarding the continuation of in person instruction at NCSD. The NCSD Leadership Team has made the difficult decision to ***extended Plan C, Remote Learning Only, which began Monday, December 14, 2020 until at least Monday, February 01, 2021.*** More information will be provided by the educational staff regarding virtual learning times.

NCSD leadership will continue to analyze the data and remain in communication with governing bodies to establish a safe return date. We also 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. This provision allows school systems to study trend data and consistency for the adherence to everchanging safety protocols.

NCSD serves students who present with significant medical complexities, as well as other special circumstances that may be at an increased risk for severe complications. Even with measures delineated in the CDC Toolkit for Schools implemented with the highest expectations for students and staff, the NCSD Family continues to be impacted daily. Many staff continue to be in quarantine, and we can expect to be without personnel to provide substitute staff. Inadequate staffing has the potential to pose a risk to the safety of our students. The safety of the NCSD Family is of utmost importance and will continue to be our priority and will guide all decision making. As we had noted in the September 2020 letter, parents and families must always be prepared for the possibility of return or continued *Plan C- Remote Learning Only*, at any time.

**"EVERY STUDENT MATTERS, EVERY MOMENT COUNTS."**

Education Services for the Deaf and the Blind  
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To review, all NCSD students will continue Plan C-Remote Learning Only through at least **Monday, February 01, 2021**. Student and Parents will be notified by Friday, January 22, 2021 about a possible return to a modified Plan A – in person instruction. We appreciate your support and understanding. Continued individualized instruction will continue via schedules developed by Ms. Sargent ([Amy.Sargent@esdb.dpi.nc.gov](mailto:Amy.Sargent@esdb.dpi.nc.gov)) and Mrs. Shirley-Bailey ([Sharon.Shirley-Bailey@esdb.dpi.nc.gov](mailto:Sharon.Shirley-Bailey@esdb.dpi.nc.gov)). Sunday packet pick up and meal drop off will continue following the same schedule. Any questions regarding packet pick up or meal drop off should be directed to Mrs. Shirley-Bailey as well.

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](mailto:mark.patrick@esdb.dpi.nc.gov).

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark D. Patrick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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

cc: Ms. Amy Sargent, Principal  
Dr. Thea Wilson, School Audiologist and Director of Enrollment  
Mrs. Sharon Shirley-Bailey, Director of Residential Life