



NC Governor Sets Plan B As Baseline For School Reopening, Extends 'Safer At Home Phase 2'

NCASA Advocacy Team

Governor Cooper announced on Tuesday his plan for reopening schools this fall, stating, "schools will be open for in-person and remote learning with key safety precautions." Cooper noted this hybrid approach, referred to as "**Plan B**," would be the most expensive option for schools, but also the most beneficial to students. "Our schools provide more than academics; they are vital to our children's health, safety and emotional development," stated Cooper. The Governor's announcement takes Plan A, or full school reopening with minimal social distancing, off the table, but allows schools to take an even more cautious approach by utilizing Plan C, or remote learning only, if needed for student and staff safety. While the school year starts for most in less than four weeks, Cooper warned that all schools may need to move to remote-only learning if there is a further spike in coronavirus cases. In addition to his announcement about school reopening, Governor Cooper also declared he will extend "Safer At Home Phase 2" after the current Executive Order expires on Friday, July 17.

The following is an overview of major highlights from the Governor's press conference on Tuesday:

- **Masks** — All students and staff will be required to wear masks. To assist with this requirement, NC Dept. of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) will provide 5 reusable cloth masks for every student and staff member.
- **Screening** — All schools should conduct screenings for those entering the building or getting on school buses. NCDHHS has said it will provide one no-touch thermometer for every 100 students.
- **Social Distancing** — Schools should require social distancing of 6 feet between individuals. To accomplish this, the districts can adjust schedules to alternate days or weeks or choose other strategies that ensure more space between our students and staff members.
- **Sick Students** — Schools should create a plan for isolating students with symptoms and ensuring transportation home if they become symptomatic during the school day.
- **Daily School Activities** — Schools should ensure their daily schedules allow extra time for frequent hand washing. Schools should also limit non-essential visitors and suspend activities that bring large groups together, like assemblies.
- **Cleaning and Disinfecting** – Schools should ensure all high-touch surfaces are cleaned and disinfected frequently to limit exposure to viruses like COVID-19 and influenza.

- **Remote Instruction** — Governor Cooper noted the NC Attorney General issued an [advisory letter](#) on Monday stating the General Assembly recognized the need for remote instruction in emergency situations, and that the outlined plans are in compliance with the law.
- **ADM Enrollment** — The Governor remained hopeful that Congress will allocate more funding for schools before the General Assembly is set to return in September. Cooper noted, “ADM enrollment is one of a number of issues we can look at then to ensure our schools have the support they need.”

Following the Governor’s announcement, many lawmakers and education groups shared their responses to the reopening decision. In a [statement](#), NC Senate leader Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) wrote, “The Governor permits parents to choose full remote learning — he must also permit parents to choose full in-person learning as well.” House Speaker Tim Moore (R-Cleveland) also released a [statement critical of the Governor’s decision](#), noting, “Today’s announcement that classrooms will remain closed to students either periodically or completely exacerbates the administration’s economic and public health failures while adding even more uncertainty for struggling families in North Carolina.” On the other hand, the NC Association of Educators (NCAE) released a [statement](#) praising the Governor’s “careful approach,” while urging state lawmakers to provide the “significant amount of resources” need to reopen.

The NC Association of School Administrators (NCASA) shared the following in response to the Governor’s announcement: “While all school re-entry plans have their challenges during this pandemic, our superintendents, principals, and other school leaders will continue to prioritize student and staff safety in reopening schools under the cautious parameters outlined today by the Governor,” said NCASA Executive Director Katherine Joyce. “We look forward to continuing work with the Governor, the General Assembly, and other state leaders to ensure our schools have the support needed to get student learning back on track in the safest manner possible in each local district.”

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