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Governor Cooper, State Education Leaders Say it's Time for In-Person Instruction in K-12 Schools Statewide

Research continues to show mitigation measures allow safe in-person learning, low transmission among students and teachers

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RALEIGH

Top state education leaders joined Governor Roy Cooper today to call on K-12 school districts across the state to allow in-person instruction for all students. The Governor joined North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) Secretary Mandy Cohen, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine

Truitt and State Board of Education Chair Eric Davis to thank educators for their extraordinary work during an unprecedented time, to highlight ongoing research that shows that with proper mitigation measures, in-person learning is safe, and to emphasize the critical importance of ensuring all students have an opportunity to learn in a classroom.

“Protecting the health and safety of the people of this state, especially our children and our teachers, has been our goal,” said Governor Cooper. “We know school is important for reasons beyond academic instruction. School is where students learn social skills, get reliable meals, and find their voices. Research done right here in North Carolina tells us that in-person learning is working and that students can be in classrooms safely with the right safety protocols in place.”

Since the beginning of the pandemic, state leaders have emphasized the importance of returning students to in-person learning as quickly and safely as possible. Children who rely solely on remote instruction are feeling the negative effects of isolation, including learning loss, mental health challenges and food insecurity. The state’s public health toolkit details specific health and safety protocols K-12 schools must implement to keep students and teachers safe during in-person instruction.

Read the updated StrongSchools NC Public Health Toolkit (https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=31992164&msgid=486542&act=K61A&c=1346310&destination=https*3A*2F*2Ffiles.nc.gov*2Fcovid*2Fdocuments*2Fguidance*2FStrong-Schools-NC-Public-Health-Toolkit.pdf&cf=13425&v=e67579f5937ed3f6f0b3d6ea6494da8bc98aa6fd82959c0cfdde479cc4ac54df__;JSUlJSUlJQ!!HYmSToo!Psu-nn395gOLJ4DRN28M-

XFf2RZUPFb31WDSCCUrjlbqu2j-T9bDisYie2sHhFk$).

“Even with the thousands of students and teachers attending school in-person across the state, we have seen few COVID-19 clusters in our public schools,” said NCDHHS Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D. “Our Department will continue to serve our school communities, offering resources and support so we can keep our school doors open.”

Increasing evidence suggests that, with prevention measures in place, there are low rates of COVID-19 transmission in primary and secondary school settings even with high rates of community transmission. In addition, ongoing medical studies and peer-reviewed data affirm that children infected with COVID-19 generally have mild or no symptoms, and are less likely to spread the disease. Read more at What are We Learning (https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=31992164&msgid=486542&act=K61A&c=1346310&destination=https*3A*2F*2Ffiles.nc.gov*2Fcovid*2Fdocuments*2Fguidance*2Feducation*2FWAre-We-Learning-About-Children-and-COVID-English.pdf&cf=13425&v=95a678316a1fe5b8fc2b7b0263b3942855558ee3f052543d4922d3424ca9d23c__;JSUlJSUlJSU!!HYmSToo!Psu-nn395gOLJ4DRN28M-XFf2RZUPFb31WDSCCUrjlbqu2j-T9bDisYiWZ4hzf4$).

“Learning loss resulting from COVID has the potential to be a generational hurdle, but the data we have seen shows us that schools can reopen safely if they adhere to COVID prevention policies,” said Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine Truitt. “For many schools, the logistics of returning to in-person instruction five days per week will be a challenge, but this is absolutely a challenge we must face head on so that all students

have a chance to fulfill their potential. With strong prevention measures in place, and the scientific research to back them, now is the time to act. North Carolina's students cannot lose any more time."

"We know that to equitably and fully address the needs of the whole child in every student, it is imperative that schools reopen for in-person instruction," said State Board Chairman Eric Davis. "Since August, public school leaders have proven the merits of the safety protocols that have kept our schools safe for students and staff."

The Governor and state health and education officials have made protecting the health and safety of students and educators the top priority since the beginning of the pandemic, moving to fully remote learning last Spring and giving local school districts the flexibility to gradually return to the classroom in September.

Today, Governor Cooper, Superintendent Truitt, Chair Davis and Secretary Cohen sent a letter to local school board members and superintendents encouraging in-person instruction across the state.

Read the letter (https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=31992164&msgid=486542&act=K61A&c=1346310&destination=https*3A*2F*2Ffiles.nc.gov*2Fgovernor*2Fdocuments*2Ffiles*2F2021_02_02_Joi Reopening-Letter.pdf&cf=13425&v=61b400f7f53887398b1b47185aa6336299e0888137ea1fdbda16993ea0d298b0__;JSUlJSUlJQ!!HYmSToo!Psu-nn395gOLJ4DRN28M-XFf2RZUPFb31WDSCCUrjlbqu2j-T9bDisYic84ow4k$) state leaders sent to school board members and superintendents.

North Carolina has now administered more than 1 million COVID-19

doses across the state. Today, two new resources that will help provide North Carolinians with more information on vaccines were announced. First, the state's call center has now expanded its operations and will be open seven days a week to help answer questions about vaccine eligibility, how the vaccines work and more. The number for the call center is: 888-675-4567. Additionally, NCDHHS launched an online search tool (https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=31992164&msgid=486542&act=K61A&c=1346310&destination=https*3A*2F*2Fmyspot.nc.gov*2Fmap-view&cf=13425&v=12df59eec9c9e18799895f9259e2372787a34d9ff26189e44206114d2b5ecb3e__;JSUlJQ!!HYmSToo!Psu-nn395gOLJ4DRN28M-XFf2RZUPFb31WDSCCUrjlbqu2j-T9bDisYiYvf_xYY$) where users can enter their ZIP code or current location to find nearby vaccine providers.

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