

The Pandemic's Moving Goal Posts

- When this all started, basically a year ago today: “OK, a few weeks of shutdowns and then we’re done and back to normal.”

Governor Cooper Issues Executive Order Closing K-12 Public Schools and Banning Gatherings of More Than 100 People

Raleigh

Mar 14, 2020

Governor Roy Cooper today ordered all K-12 public schools in North Carolina to close for a minimum of two weeks in response to COVID-19. The Executive Order also bans gatherings of more than 100 people. North Carolina currently has 23 people in 12 counties who have tested positive for COVID-19.

Traffic Engineer-ese: “OK short pause. Few weeks and we’ll be back. Don’t collect any traffic data for now, we’ll use historic information to reflect the future – before long it’ll be the same as the past.”

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- As autumn approached: "Is this the new normal? Nah, soon, surely schools will open, I will be back at work in a few weeks, we'll wear masks. Vaccines are coming. Right?"

- **Traffic Engineer-ese: "Daily volume data are almost back to pre-pandemic but patterns are completely different! Is this still temporary?"**



The screenshot shows the CMS website header with the logo, navigation menu, and a search bar. Below the header is a photo of three students in a classroom setting. The main content area features a news article with a sub-header, a date, a CMS logo, and several paragraphs of text. The article discusses the three plans for reopening schools and the district's confidence in these plans.

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CMS presents plans for opening 2020-2021 school year

7/1/2020

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Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools leadership presented three plans for reopening schools at tonight's special meeting of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education. No determination was made regarding which of the three plans the district will enact when school opens Aug. 17, 2020, but the Board reviewed each plan and will vote to approve after a statewide announcement is made by N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper at a date yet to be determined.

"Tonight we received thoughtful and insightful information about the operational models for each of the three plans district personnel have developed," said Elyse Dashew, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education chairperson. "We are confident that these plans give CMS the opportunity to educate all our students while protecting their health, and after the governor issues his statewide recommendation, our decision to implement the chosen plan is one for which we are well-informed."

Under guidance from Cooper, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services and the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, school districts throughout the state were directed in June 2020 to develop three distinct plans designed to address COVID-19 conditions at the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

Cooper was expected to announce earlier today the statewide recommendation for which of the three plans school districts should follow in opening for 2020-2021. He has delayed that announcement indefinitely.

The state guidelines CMS followed in preparing its reopening plans are designed to protect the health of students and staff while offering the best possible learning environment for students. Districts throughout North Carolina were tasked with developing one plan to address improved COVID conditions (plan A), one plan to address moderate COVID conditions (plan B) and one plan to address a significant worsening of COVID conditions (plan C). In all plans, a remote-learning option may be selected by parents who have concerns about sending their students to school during continued pandemic conditions.

Plan A will require all students and staff to return to school for in-classroom learning. This is the least restrictive plan and the one most similar to school openings in prior years. Health and Human Services requirements will be followed, including health screenings and temperature checks for students and staff, and social distancing in hallways and common areas. Symptom screenings and health attestations will be required for use of school transportation.

Under plan B, all students will participate in a mix of in-classroom and remote learning. From an operational and academic standpoint, this plan will enable the most students to have a balance of in-classroom and remote learning while maintaining student and staff health and safety.

- All Pre-K through eighth-grade students will attend in-classroom learning Monday-Friday during their assigned week, followed by two weeks of remote learning; one-third of each grade will attend their assigned schools in A week, a different one-third will attend in B week, and the remaining third will attend during C week.
- Students in grades 9-11 will have an A, B, C schedule, attending in-classroom learning Monday-Thursday during their assigned week, followed by two weeks of remote learning; these students will have remote learning on the Fridays of their assigned in-classroom weeks.
- 12th-grade students will attend in-classroom learning one day each week; these students will participate in remote learning on all days they are not in the classroom.

Plan C will offer a remote-learning environment for all students, with all staff assigned to remote instruction. No students or staff will be in CMS facilities or use CMS transportation. CMS plans a robust remote-learning experience, using best practices learned in the fourth quarter of the last school year.

"We are committed to helping all students learn and succeed during this pandemic and beyond," said CMS Superintendent Earnest Winston. "Our teams have worked tirelessly to develop plans that will meet the needs of students and staff, even as conditions shift in our community. Our first priority is to provide a robust educational experience for our students and a safe environment for all."

While working within the guidelines provided by state education and public health officials, CMS leadership staff looked to challenge norms and seek opportunities to improve accessibility and equity for students' educational experiences in the face of significant challenges.

"While the logistics of starting the school year might be different than in years past, it is nonnegotiable that we uphold our obligation to provide accessible learning opportunities for all our students," said Winston.

CMS will communicate additional details about the plan, including classroom social-distancing procedures, transportation practices and bus routes, school and classroom sanitation policies, nutrition services procedures, technology distribution and availability, state-mandated health/safety checks and temperature screenings. Parents are encouraged to update their contact information with their schools to ensure they receive this timely information.

The CMS Call Center – (980) 343-3001 – will be prepared to field questions, concerns, and collect comments about the three operational plans under consideration.

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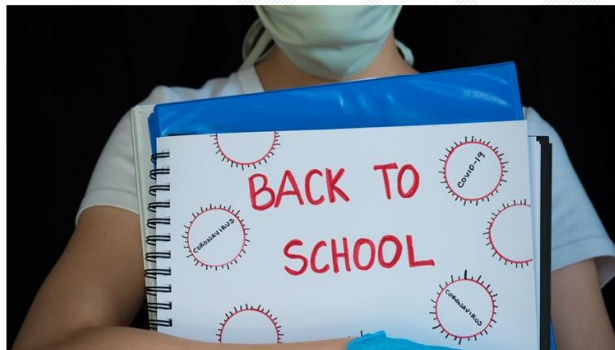
- Through the winter waves, vaccinations, variants, here we are: "Holy cow it's been a whole year and so much has changed, maybe forever. What's next?"



POLITICS

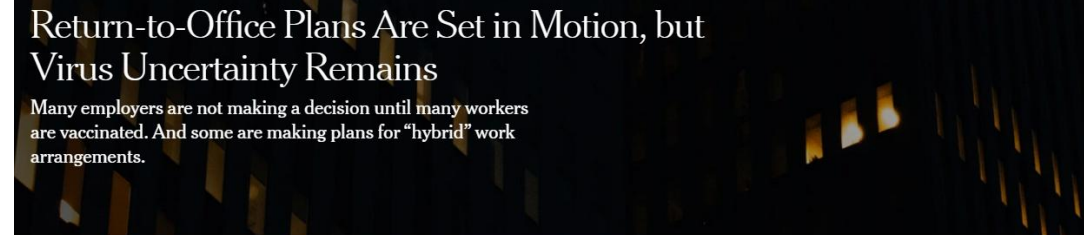
Gov. Cooper signs NC return to school bill into law

Grades K-5 will be required for in-person instruction, while local school districts can make decisions for grades 6-12



Credit: Getty Images/iStockphoto

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Return-to-Office Plans Are Set in Motion, but Virus Uncertainty Remains

Many employers are not making a decision until many workers are vaccinated. And some are making plans for "hybrid" work arrangements.

Buildings in Manhattan, where the amount of sublet office space available to rent surged nearly 50 percent last year. George Etheredge for The New York Times



By Julie Creswell, Gillian Friedman and Peter Eavis

March 3, 2021

A year and a pandemic ago, over 100,000 people filled the central business district in Charlotte, N.C., pouring out of offices, including several recently built skyscrapers, and into restaurants, bars and sports venues. Then as the coronavirus sent employees to their homes, much of the city center quickly went quiet and dark.

The return of those employees to their offices has been halting and difficult. Last fall, Fifth Third Bank began bringing back workers, but soon reversed course. LendingTree, which is moving from the suburbs to the city, is waiting for the end of the school year. Wells Fargo has delayed its return to the office several times, telling its employees recently that they will continue to work remotely through at least May 1. And Duke Energy will bring some employees back in June, and most of the 6,000 people at its headquarters in September, when children should be able to go back to schools.

Traffic Engineer-ese: "Holy cow, it's been a whole year and so much has changed, maybe forever. What's next?"