

Superintendent Cathy Q. Moore
Wake County Public School System

September 21, 2020

Dear Superintendent Moore and Members of the Core Team:

In consideration of your upcoming planning around returning students to the building, the Wake County Division of Principals and Assistant Principals Board members (Division Board) provided specific feedback on the feasibility of an October 26th return date. This letter summarizes that information, which is also attached. While the data provides a clear picture of our collective beliefs, it does not indicate an unwillingness to work towards achieving any goals or plan you may put forth.

Key data takeaways from the division board survey are as follows:

- 33 of 49 board members submitted responses
- 69.7% of responding administrators indicated that they did not think it was feasible to return students to face-to-face instruction by October 26th, or October 19th for modified/year-round calendars
- 90.9% of responding administrators indicated that they believed a second semester student return would produce more satisfactory student learning outcomes
- Qualitative data collected (attached to this letter) show a definite trend that even administrators who feel face-to-face instruction can be successfully accomplished by late October, desire additional supports

As you examine a return to in person instruction, and the provided data, we ask that you also take into account the following:

- Time to implement safe reopening logistics with smaller numbers of students (*transportation procedures for carpool and bus transportation, lunch, recess, specials/electives, cohorts, daily student health screenings*)
- The accommodation process for staff or staff supporting at risk family members is ongoing. Principals have been encouraged to approve teleworking when asked. Increasing the number of students in a building requires additional staff currently not required to transition back to in person duties.
- What will be the tool/measure to indicate any necessary return to full remote learning?
- How will we meet instructional expectations as it relates to the demand for substitute teachers when teachers are absent due to illness?
- What training will be provided to implement and manage the 3 Ws with our youngest students, “invincible” teenagers, and students with significant cognitive delays attending regional programs?
- How will the Spring Virtual Academy option impact students, families, and schools? Will it require another change of teacher? Will it require another change of schedule (such as the number of cohorts)?
- For elementary schools: Our reopening plan emphasizes the 3 Ws but “Plan A” does not require social distancing. If the plan is the focus over metrics, can Plan A really be considered at this time in Wake County?

Like you, the members of the Division Board desire a return to in person instruction. Similar to many parents, there are concerns with reopening safely and effectively. Additionally, the data provided in this letter does not reflect the real personal and professional challenges school leaders are facing, including social-emotional well-being of themselves and that of their staff. Thank you for considering our thoughts as you make these most difficult decisions.

On behalf of the full WCDPAP Board,

Teresa Caswell

Ms. Teresa Caswell, President

CC: WCPSS Core Team & Superintendent Cathy Moore

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	A	B	C	D	E
1	Do you feel reopening, in any form, is feasible October 19 (Modified and YR) or October 26?	Please expand on #1 including specifics on your position	Regardless of your answer to #1, do you feel that a return in January could be more successful?	Please expand on your answer regarding a Semester return.	Any other information to share?
2	Yes	It will be feasible if we reopen starting with a small group/cohort of students to ease everyone back into the process and workout the necessary kinks slowly.	Yes	I believe it would allow all necessary measures to be in place and everyone would be fully ready to implement the protocols and procedures to ensure a smooth reopening for students and staff	
3	No	Given our current county metrics, the examples provided by area universities of positive Covid-19 cases, and a lack of a district wide detailed plan regarding the logistics (lunch, recess, specials schedule, hybrid teaching, quarantining for staff and students, subs, etc.) of reopening at this time, we are not prepared. Because the cohort numbers did not align nicely packaged across the environments, we have teachers with VA and Plan B students on their roster. These would become hybrid teachers. In addition, Principals and teachers need a lot of time and exemplars to collaborate about how to implement in person and remote at the same time. In addition, students are not returning to school as they left it on March 13, 2020. Much time needs to be spent to creating new expectations and routines which can then be broadly communicated. Also, in speaking with many school administrators and teachers right now, there are some serious mental health needs due to the pace at which educators are being forced to reopen. A semester opening would be so much more appropriate as it would allow the time for a detailed plan and also to see how our community fares during cold and flu season. We are simply not ready. Also, our school communities are getting adjusted to what we have now....let us continue to tweak a little and continue with this current set up.	Yes	See above	
4	No	Teachers are not ready or comfortable. We need to consider staffing. I understand that parents want to send their children to school, but we also need teachers to be comfortable in receiving children. Starting this process at the start of flu season seems to be short-sighted. If we say we are about safety when it snows, we need to be all about safety in a pandemic.	Yes	It will give people more time to phase into the schools. I also think it gives the community time to see how flu season unfolds in a pandemic.	

	A	B	C	D	E
5	Yes	I do believe it's feasible IF and ONLY if there is significant support and work around: 1) requiring all teachers to return to the building (even those with approved accommodations); and 2) we give teachers workdays prior to the start of a return to plan	Yes	I do think a semester return would be more successful given the amount of time there will be to prepare.	1) I think enforcing the 3 Ws in high school is going to be extraordinarily difficult. We need backup when kids refuse to wear masks or don't social distance; 2) We cannot expect teachers to do both remote learning and in-person learning. We will burn out our employees.
6	No	Most teachers track out (YR) on October 1, which is less than two weeks away without a clear decision in place. Teachers would return to the building on the 19th, the same day you are suggesting F2F instruction occur. We do not have guidance on expectations for F2F and remote learning. Since they cannot occur simultaneously as they do now, this would be a huge lift.	Yes	Planning would be more sufficient to support effective learning.	We need numbers for Virtual Academy finalized for second semester as soon as possible since we will have to reschedule students and staff to make this happen.
7	No	Our teachers need more time mentally and emotionally to prepare for the very quick transition.	Yes	No that we officially know that kids are coming back, we have more time to effectively plan.	
8	Yes	Reopen with pre-K & K only in 3 group rotation then phase in grades 1, 2, by Jan	Yes	Give schools more time to create a 2 group rotation and look at staffing as it will impact whether we can do this with many who have accommodations/modification etc	We need more 3 W signage better screening tool messaging, floor signage, cots/beds for second health room, computers for returning students.
9	No	I believe we need more time-and we are entering flu season now	Yes	January will allow teacher the chance to prepare more efficiently and hopefully the cases of COVID will be decreased even more than now.	This is a tough decision for everyone and I will whole heartily support the board and administrations decision-
10	No	Don't think it is realistic to provide daily health screenings to every students. Also, with staff committed to the virtual academy, not sure schools can adequately staff a plan A scenario. I don't feel like staff consideration was given with the October date. Too many possible changes for teachers to deal with.	Yes	More time to adequately and thoroughly prepare. Allow families another round of virtual academy choice without significant changes to school schedules.	

	A	B	C	D	E
11	Yes	<p>Regional Program students need to return to school.</p> <p>By October 26, high schools will be underway with optional workouts for Cross Country, Volleyball, Swim & Dive (off-campus), Basketball, Cheer, and Dance. These groups will provide us a wealth of experience on what we should and should not do for re-opening.</p>	Yes	<p>Teachers, students, and families need stability. For high schools, it is extremely challenging for teachers to re-design their curriculum multiple times to adjust from a brick and mortar to an online setting. If we transition again in the middle of a semester, teachers will need to navigate their curriculum again and figure out how to teach in both worlds (VA and in-person setting). I am highly concerned that this change will push them over the edge. Please allow high schools to remain online for the Fall semester.</p> <p>I am very worried about what to do when we need a sub and do not have a sub. Have you collected data on how many staff members at each school have quarantine themselves because of an exposure? I lost count. Child care is also a big issue with our staff.</p>	<p>We want kids back in school; but, we want people to be and feel safe.</p> <p>FYI-- I only have 70% of my staff in the building. For the first 5 weeks of school, I've had staff out each week for a variety of issues (quarantine, sick family member, child care issues, medical issues, family emergencies- need to leave town, etc..) Retaining subs is going to be very challenging- not sure who can cover the classes.</p> <p>Please do not consider one grade level over another. Once again, in high school classes are mixed heterogeneously and homogenously. This sounds easy on paper; but, implementation is very difficult (ie-- no social distancing in classes).</p>
12	No	<p>Don't think it is realistic to provide daily health screenings to every students. Also, with staff committed to the virtual academy, not sure schools can adequately staff a plan A scenario. I don't feel like staff consideration was given with the October date. Too many possible changes for teachers to deal with.</p>	Yes	<p>More time to adequately and thoroughly prepare. Allow families another round of virtual academy choice without significant changes to school schedules.</p>	
13	Yes	<p>I believe it is feasible to return PreK-2 and regional program students. O think there may be potential to return 6th and 9th graders in cohorts.</p>	No	<p>I think if we could return limited numbers in October, we could return those students in January. And Visa versa.</p>	
14	No	<p>Families need consistency especially in the case where there are multiple school aged children.</p> <p>Virtual learning is finally on a path of growth and families are building capacity.</p> <p>Cohorts are fine on paper, but a nightmare in reality. We already have stretched resources, K3 mandate, staff with health concerns, and more.</p> <p>Very concerned about flu season and Covid.</p>	Yes	<p>We can better prepare for F2F with more time, another round of VA signup for spring, and staff training.</p>	<p>We have to do what is right for staff and students. We will never please everyone!</p>

	A	B	C	D	E
15	No	<p>Teachers are just now beginning to get used to the current situation, and if we change it again I am very concerned about their SEL health and capacity. We still need adjustments to give them more planning time in our current environment, not add expectations for even more planning.</p> <p>Returning in cohorts sounds reasonable from a capacity view, but that means teachers will then be planning for full daily remote & also a full day of simultaneous face to face. I don't see how teachers can manage all of this.</p> <p>At this time, we don't have the staffing needed to fully support Fall VA, Full year VA, and 2-3 cohorts at each grade level. Changing teacher assignments will be absolutely necessary if we return prior to January--families are not going to like that unintended consequence. Recruiting and hiring IAs and teachers right now is also beyond challenging, as is planning for and supporting substitutes.</p> <p>PreK and Regional program students may need to return in October. However, I would strongly encourage consideration of a half day of instruction that does not include lunch. The students could then spend the Q2 getting used to being back in routine for half a day. Their stamina and routine needs to be reestablished. Asking them to return to a full day of instruction may be very overwhelming for students. We can send school lunch home with them and include PM creative activities to be</p>	Yes	<p>I believe returning in January would give Fall VA families and potentially full-time VA families an opportunity to return to F2F with confidence. It also provides a smoother transition for staffing, as I need the Fall VA teachers to be in whatever F2F rotation or full return we have. I simply cannot staff any form of F2F without the return of Fall VA teachers to a F2F model. Teacher assignment changes will definitely occur if we return prior to January, and we really don't have the allotments needed to do this sooner. Stability for families should be considered as important as Safety.</p> <p>I imagine YR schools would also fare better because returning to assigned tracks is more feasible at the end of first semester.</p>	<p>Teachers are at their breaking point and have done all we have asked of them and more. Virtual learning is starting to become more routine, not perfect, but more routine. We already recognize a need to provide more planning and less online time for K-2. Making those changes could make a positive change for all.</p> <p>If we were providing interventions with students, we would not be changing course for at least 6 weeks, and we would use the data from that period of time to determine if changes are needed. However, we have yet to have 6 weeks of full-time Remote/Virtual instruction in place before we are considering making a dynamic change in service for our regular education students. If WCPSS adjusts online time and provides some additional planning time for teachers, then the 6 week mark should be reset before teachers and families are asked if "it is working." In this context, I believe the family survey was sent too early--we are asking for feedback on something that is still being developed & may change again, which is not fair to those giving their all to their students and to WCPSS.</p> <p>Let's give teachers more planning time. Let's reduce the amount of online time for K-2. Let's allow teachers to finish BOY assessments and inventories. Let's allow teachers time to use that data to drive their instruction. Let's let middle and high school teachers complete a semester of instruction before interrupting the pace with an environmental change. Let's pause</p>
16	No	Too many teachers still feel it unsafe.	Yes	By that time our key metrics should be much better.	
17	No	We have a large (large enough to hinder supervision needs) number of teachers who have a WCPSS approved accommodation to telework or work in an alternate location in the building. It is difficult to require teachers to work in the building when teleworking is an option from the district. At my school, out of ~125 teachers, an average of ~20 teachers are choosing to work in the building each day.	Yes	By January, the district and schools can have a plan to cover the supervisory duties of teachers who are teleworking.	Thank you for providing a survey to seek feedback.

	A	B	C	D	E
18	No	I think that returning to school during the month of October is too soon. I don't believe that we will have enough time to properly prepare for our students to return. We have not received specific guidelines on what school will look like and what the safety measures truly consist of. Teachers will have to replan and adjust many lessons in order for them to provide instruction in person as well as online. I am also very concerned that transportation services needs will not be at the forefront. I can foresee many delays and lots of confusion. There are always hiccups and the beginning of the school year and due to the circumstances and student cohorts, I worry about safety and efficiency.	Yes	I think that January would be better only if we being preparing now. We have been making huge decisions at the last minute and it has caused large amounts of burnout and stress. Please consider those who are working hard in our school buildings.	
19	No	This question is deeply personal. I want nothing more than to have my own children back in school face to face. Yet to do so would be completely irresponsible. We do not have the personnel to staff the screenings necessary. Logistics such as carpool, buses, cohorts, etc are too demanding and taxing on schools. We must wait!	No	I cannot answer this question because we do not know what the conditions will be like in January.	Though a return in January sounds wonderful, I imagine March is more likely. Remember there are families who will not send students back face to face until everyone is vaccinated.
20	Yes	I have both the space and staffing to handle the number of plan B Students. I can open with whole grade in, 1/2 grade in or 1/3 grade in. Not all schools are in this position, however. Given this, I could see it may be prudent to start with 3 groups or 2 of all schools can do it.	No	I support return of Plan B students given the significant impact having students at home is having on working families.	If all students return in a grade level will the 50 sq ft per student no longer apply given the approval of plan A by the governor? having potential 18-25 students in a room, not socially distanced, will be problematic for some staff. If still needing to socially distance will need desk or possibly second rooms and staff to monitor.
21	No	1. The virus is not over and the metrics don't indicate we should open. 2. Teachers are stressed , yet they are in the flow of virtual classes, we should give teachers and students a chance to succeed in this new normal before pulling the rug out again. Teachers are expressing anxiety and fear over opening too soon. 3. We don't have the space to follow WWW with two cohorts, please keep it at 3 cohorts.	Yes	By January, the metrics COULD warrant reopening SAFELY. Teachers will prepare for the transition, hence will be less stressed and overwhelmed. October is too soon for them to feel ready and safe.	PLEASE consider our teachers; their mental state, their health, the extra hours they are working, their stress levels, the overwhelming tasks we are asking of them. Allow them to prepare and us to prepare adequately and to feel SAFE.

	A	B	C	D	E
22	No	Schools will not be ready with procedures in place to keep staff and students safe. Also the younger children such as pre-k and kindergarten students will not wear their masks as required and therefore put staff at risk. The teachers of the younger students will find it difficult to remain 6 ft. away with so many hands-on experiences and the need for one-on-one instruction. Health screenings will be difficult to manage as well as sick children without nurses. Teachers and support staff should not be required to "supervise" potential COVID cases in a "designated space (COVID room)" while waiting for a parent to pick up a child. Once again it appears private industry appreciates, protects and values their employees more than the school system.	Yes	There is a possibility that the spread is greatly reduced, masks no longer required and the country has returned to a "safer" state.	
23	Yes	The only way I see it as feasible would be in 3 cohorts and perhaps for a smaller group, like PreK-2 and Regional SPED programs.	Yes	For secondary, a return at the semester break will allow us to schedule accordingly. It may also allow us to better accommodate faculty that have placed late HR accommodations requests.	
24	Yes	I believe we could accomplish this particularly if VA was facilitated through central office instead of site-based (force those who signed up for it to be a part of it) and we had 2 cohorts running 1 week on one week off.	Yes	Of course, more planning time, more certainty around disease— vaccine?	
25	Yes	It is feasible, but we need clear timelines and information now. We will be running essentially two school schedules between plan B and virtual. This means we will be repurposing staff, creating a new master schedule for in person, along with all the other structures that go into starting a school year for in person learning. If this is to be done safely, and with the best possible organization, we need to know how many cohorts are coming back, what the expectation is for staff children, among many other things, now.	Yes	Starting back during the second semester will allow parents to decide if they are comfortable sending their children back to in person learning. It will also allow us to have more time to create all the structures that I referenced in the question above.	
26	No	Cohorts have not been established, additionally decisions will be rushed thus causing problems to help open effectively.	Yes	There will be a better understanding of COVID as well as Flu season will be almost over. Additionally, we will have procedures and processes in place to operate safely. Staff is not ready for student to be in building and this is causing a lot of anxiety amongst school staff.	

	A	B	C	D	E
27	No	I think that the biggest issues are going to be transportation and substitutes. I do not believe that social distancing is going to be possible on buses. Also, when teachers get Covid (which they will- either from school or from the community) what are we going to do about substitutes?) We have a teacher out right now with Covid- but she can teach from her house because of remote learning- that won't be possible if students are in school unless there is additional supervision.	Yes	I believe that it will allow for more time for planning and for putting together a well-thought out plan instead of rushing through something because of parent push back. All of our students don't even have their devices yet.	
28	No	We should not consider bringing students back until it's safe enough to have all WCPSS employees back in their workspaces. The COVID-19 numbers need to be down for a longer period before it's a consideration. The number of cases in colleges and universities after they opened should make us think twice about bringing students back to the buildings. It feels rushed.	Yes	If the numbers are down for several weeks and flu season is not a problem, then January is a more realistic goal. We will need to monitor the numbers after the holidays. If the numbers increase after Thanksgiving and Christmas, then we don't need to rush and open in January.	It's a hard decision and I understand the pressure from both sides. I would err on the side of safety. We do need to require all staff members to return to work before bringing students back. If teachers resign or quit because they have to report to work, we will need time to fill those vacancies before students return.
29	Yes	I think it is doable, but I am not sure it is the right thing to do. I think we should wait until January when we know how the virus is going to react in the fall. I fear a 2nd wave will cause issues.	Yes	We will have more information about how the virus will react in the winter months.	I trust the district to what's right.

	A	B	C	D	E
30	No	<p>-The opening plans state that all classroom teachers will have access to cleaner for their classrooms. To date, we do not have any cleaner for the classrooms. All the wipes we collected are expired, and it is not safe to open unless we have the proper cleaning materials to keep everyone safe. When I ask questions in the county, responses do not come in a timely manner.</p> <p>-The FAST Program has been a "test run" and it is a challenge with the small number of children in that program to a) keep them socially distanced and 2) monitor face covering compliance.</p> <p>-YR schools need time to prepare for this WITH PROPER PPE and CLEANING SUPPLIES. We are getting ready to track out and it will be a lot for our staff to prepare for coming off a track out. Teachers need track out time to rest and recharge. For this reason, the return should be delayed until January or later.</p> <p>-Will the FAST Program continue? If so, who will staff the program? Is schools are asked to use IAs, that is a concern for me. We will need IAs for health screenings and for the Care Center. This already impacts how many will be available for supporting teachers and students in classrooms, where teachers will need support with face covering reminders and social distance reminders.</p>	Yes	It will give the county more time to secure proper PPE and cleaning equipment for all classrooms and make decisions regarding staffing of FAST and use of IAs.	I have serious concerns about a rush to return in October. Please reconsider. The health and safety of students and staff is more important than a rushed return to school. I personally feel like the decision to return to school is very politically motivated, and this is one thing that should not be!
31	No	<p>I am not confident have the safety precautions and equipment ready & available to open the building. Much of my staff has expressed concerns about safety and routines- starting again in October could disrupt the stability of instruction.</p>	Yes	The is a greater chance of the virus metrics decreasing significantly by January. It would give time to gather the proper equipment and training. It would also give us time to monitor the virus and flu season. Further, it provides more stability and safety for our children and our staff.	
32	No	HS AP - Concern with high school students and not practicing social distancing. Also, students will be leaving for lunch and returning to campus - which adds to additional community exposure.	Yes	Clean starting point for everyone to access processes	Thank you for listening

	A	B	C	D	E
33	No	<p>To date, Wake County hasn't reached the recommendation of daily new COVID cases to support this risk. Many teachers/staff feel unsafe with students returning to due issues with social distancing, increased exposure, the number of new daily COVID cases in Wake Co, etc. There will be teachers that have HR accommodations to work remotely and a plan has not been made of who will supervise these students when they are face-to-face when the teacher is teleworking. Also, what is the plan for acquiring subs for lengthy absences created by teachers setting sick or becoming symptomatic? Schools simply don't have the staff to absorb this on their own.</p> <p>All schools don't have the required PPE and there isn't a plan to date that addresses how this will be expedited prior to students returning to campus.</p> <p>There are other things such as the inequity in learning between students face-to-face vs those that stay remote, however, health, safety, and well-being should be the driver of everything.</p>	Yes	<p>Provided the number of new COVID cases stabilize and don't get worse, if the issues highlighted in #1 are addressed, a January opening would be more realistic.</p>	
34	No	<p>I believe we have a solid plan and most can follow it, however, we also need explicit training for teachers, staff, and admin on how to effectively ensure safety protocols are in place with regional program students and kindergarten/first graders - due to specialized needs or age, how do teachers stay socially distanced and support their instruction (let alone mask wearing).</p> <p>Several administrative colleagues and teachers are already on anti-anxiety meds - the idea of opening in 4 weeks has caused mental health concerns</p> <p>Knowing that there will be changes in VA numbers in January means that schools will have to go through a change now, just as teachers are feeling that they are gaining positive ground with remote instruction, and then AGAIN in another 9 weeks.</p>	Yes	<p>Less changes for students, staff, and parents</p> <p>We will have a better understanding of how flu and cold season will affect our community</p> <p>Explicit training on supporting our youngest or most vulnerable students should be in place</p>	