



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

February 2, 2021

Dear School Board Members and Superintendents:

Thank you for everything that you and our teachers and school staff are doing to educate and support our children during this unprecedented pandemic. We appreciate the ongoing partnership to best meet children's educational and emotional needs.

We write today to strongly recommend that all public schools provide in-person instruction using the safety protocols outlined in the NC Strong Schools Toolkit. Research has shown that these protocols are working. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently cited North Carolina as an example that schools can reopen safely when they follow specific COVID-19 mitigation strategies even during periods of high community transmission.

In-person learning is fundamental to children's development and well-being. Our public schools provide academic guidance, social and emotional supports, reliable meals, and opportunities for physical activity. Further, there are growing harms to children who are relying solely on remote instruction, including negative impacts on academic and mental health and food insecurity.

Because of the importance of in-person learning, the Governor and the NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) released in July the toolkit so schools could safely provide in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since August, at least 90 of our state's 115 school districts have safely provided in-person instruction for some or all their students. In fact, based on attendance data more than 750,000 students - 48 percent of the state's public school student population - were attending school in-person on November 23. Even with the thousands of students and teachers attending school in-person across the state, DHHS has seen few COVID-19 clusters in our public schools.

While we may still be months away from the end of this pandemic, our children's well-being is too important to wait when we can act safely now. We urge you to make sure our children will have the opportunity to be back in classrooms.

Sincerely,

Roy Cooper

Catherine Truitt
Superintendent
NC Department of Public Instruction

Mandy K. Cohen, MD, MPH
Secretary
NC Dept. of Health & Human Services

Eric C. Davis
Chair, State Board of Education