



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

ROY COOPER • Governor

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary

SUSAN GALE PERRY • Chief Deputy Secretary

August 5, 2020

Dear Superintendents,

We know that our youngest children learn best when they have the opportunity to be together with their classmates and teachers. COVID-19 has presented many challenges to the way we work, live, learn and socialize with each other, and its impact is being felt across the entire spectrum of learning in North Carolina, from birth through higher education, including in the NC Pre-Kindergarten program.

Our goals for the NC Pre-K program this year are to provide as much stability and in-person instruction as possible as we all work to navigate through the pandemic, in partnership with K – 12 public schools throughout the state. As superintendents of North Carolina's school districts, your schools support half of the state's NC Pre-K classrooms, serving about 15,000 children. (The other half of NC Pre-K children are served through private child care centers, Head Starts, and other nonprofit programs). Maintaining high-quality early learning through the NC Pre-K program is essential to set up students for success in the classroom and beyond, as noted in the *Leandro* case and as demonstrated through ongoing research through Duke University and the University of North Carolina.

On August 4, 2020, [Interim NC Pre-K Reopening Guidance](#) was shared with NC Pre-K Contracting Agencies and Site Administrators to address program and reporting requirements for the academic year. While key highlights for district leaders are captured below, Superintendents are strongly encouraged to read and understand how the requirements of the NC Pre-K program will apply within their district.

**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) Goals for NC Pre-K for the 2020 – 2021 Academic Year:**

1. All NC Pre-K students receive the benefit of fully in-person instruction to the fullest extent possible.
2. All parents/guardians are offered the option of in-person instruction for the full NC Pre-K program year.
3. Recognizing the unique challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, remote learning will be available for all NC Pre-K students as an option of last resort and used as sparingly as possible (*such as during time-limited school entry periods where schools are in remote learning only, during necessary quarantine periods, or other circumstances outlined in the guidance*).
4. All remote learning offered will meet standard quality measures that support children's healthy development and engage families in their children's learning.

**DCDEE strongly encourages NC Pre-K programs to prioritize having students physically present in Pre-K classrooms for the 2020-2021 school year.**



- As a school district leader, if your school district has buildings open for in-person instruction for **any** students or children (Plan B), the NC Pre-K program **must** also offer Traditional/In-Person or Hybrid instruction.
- If your school district does not have buildings open for in-person instruction (Plan C), the NC Pre-K program **may** still be offered in Traditional/In-Person or Hybrid instruction.
- Regardless of which plan a school district chooses to operate under (Plan B or Plan C), school districts are **strongly encouraged** to prioritize having NC Pre-K students physically present in classrooms.

NC Pre-K sites must select from the three learning modes in the table below and inform their Contracting Agency (LEA) of their mode of instruction. Contracting Agencies must notify DCDEE regarding their sites' initial mode of instruction (Traditional/In-Person, Hybrid, or Full Remote Learning) by **Friday, September 4, 2020 at 5:00PM**. (More details on reporting requirements are provided in the guidance.) The full remote learning option, while not ideal for early learning, will be available to Pre-K sites through November 6, 2020. This option may be extended depending on COVID-19 metrics and future state directives.

### NC Pre-K Modes of Instruction

Traditional/In-Person (Strongly Encouraged)	Hybrid	Full Remote Learning
No children are learning remotely; all children are learning in the classroom. <b>Even when selecting the Traditional/In-Person mode, a remote learning option must be available to students under certain circumstances (such as during necessary quarantine periods, if closure for deep cleaning is needed, for high-risk students, or other circumstances outlined in the guidance)</b>	Pre-K classroom/site is delivering a mix of in-person and remote learning to the same group of children – for example, if a school district is alternating days/weeks when students are in and out of school buildings or the classroom/site is providing some children with full-time in-person learning and other children with full-time remote learning (such as during necessary quarantine periods, if closure for deep cleaning is needed, for high-risk students).	No children are learning in the classroom; all children are learning remotely.

**All preschool programs in public schools and private sites are required to follow the health and safety guidance outlined in the [ChildCareStrongNC Public Health Toolkit](#), in accordance with the [Memorandum on Preschool Programs and K-12 Public Health Guidance](#).**

- To date, NC Pre-K students are not included in the K – 12 requirements to wear masks at all times while on school grounds.
- To date, NC Pre-K students are not included in the social distancing requirements under Plan B in K – 12 school operations. However, the memorandum noted above states that a public school may ask an NC Pre-K class to participate in K – 12 health and safety requirements in common areas, such as staying 6 feet apart while in hallways.



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Thank you for all the work you are doing to support the education and well-being of children across North Carolina. The effort you make today to provide in-person instruction through your NC Pre-K program, while adhering to health and safety guidelines, will support children's achievements in the longer term. If you have any questions about how NC Pre-K reopening fits into your efforts as a school district, please contact your NC Pre-K Contract Administrator, or superintendents may email [StrongSchoolsNC@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:StrongSchoolsNC@dhhs.nc.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Gale Perry".

Susan Gale Perry

Chief Deputy Secretary, NCDHHS