



# Archdale-Trinity News

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## Gainey provides school update

**BY DANIEL KENNEDY**

RANDOLPH COUNTY — Since the return of classes in August, officials with Randolph County Schools have worked consistently to keep students in classrooms as much as possible. RCSS Superintendent Stephen Gainey provided the county

school board with updates earlier this month on the condition of community spread of COVID-19 in the schools. Overall, Gainey said that a combined total of 96 staff and students had tested positive for COVID-19 as of Oct. 14. Of those, 59 positives came in the 25 days between Sept. 21 and Oct. 14.

Two schools closed for 14 days. Trinity High School was the first.

“Both groups handled it like champions,” Gainey said. “The Trinity High School community was the first one, and that staff and that community handled it like champions. They set the tone.”

The superintendent said that Trinity’s experience with combating the virus provided the model for what schools will be faced with and how to tackle issues associated with positive cases, which continue to increase in recent weeks.

Susan Hayes, director of Randolph County Public Health,

told the school board that case numbers are especially concerning since the start of the month. She estimated that as many as a quarter of the positive tests on any given day are from school-age children and reported the county’s ratio of positive tests per

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total administered to be at its highest point in three months.

“On Oct. 3, out of 120 cases, probably 30 or 35 of them were ages 0-17,” Hayes said. “The seven days between Aug. 9-15, our% positive was 5.5%. ... The last time we were at 8% was the end of July.”

As of the second week in October, Hayes said the county’s positive test rate had exceeded 8%.

Hamstrung in many ways, school board members alluded to the decisions on in-person and remote scheduling for students being akin to a rock and a hard place. Even as the positive test rate is at 8%, one school board member pointed to a survey con-

ducted by the CDC that detailed harrowing results of individuals riddled with mental health concerns due to the pandemic.

According to the CDC, one in four young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 say they’ve considered suicide in the past month because of the pandemic. The data also reveals a spike in anxiety and substance abuse, with more than 40% of those surveyed saying they experienced a mental or behavioral health condition connected to the COVID-19 emergency. The CDC study analyzed 5,412 survey respondents between June 24 and 30.

Those and other problems associated with feelings of being trapped led the board to approve a return for all of its youngest students. Pre-K students and those in grades K-5 returned for a standard four-day schedule on Monday.

Gainey said in the face of grave health risks, staff, parents and students have risen to meet the challenges. Those actions, he said, have prevented an even greater health crisis from occurring.

“A parent will call you and tell you, ‘My child’s not feeling well; I’m not sending them tomorrow,’” Gainey said. “That keeps other kids from being exposed to other staff members. That’s one of those things that, when it’s all over, I’ll be very proud of, because those are the calls we’ve been getting since Day 1.

“People want to talk about a lot of the other things, but there’s a lot of parents and staff and students who have stepped up in all of this.”

Staff writer Daniel Kennedy can be reached at 336-888-3578, or at [dkennedy@atnonline.net](mailto:dkennedy@atnonline.net).