

## Local school systems struggle with returning to in-person learning

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As the number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase school systems in the area are struggling to balance the need to return students to the classroom with protecting them and their staff from exposure to the virus.

While several school districts have already resumed in-person learning under an altered schedule, other districts have chosen to remain fully remote until the end of the third nine-weeks in March.

### Lexington City Schools

Lexington City School students will not be returning to in-person learning on Jan. 17 as originally planned.

Members of the Lexington City Schools Board of Education voted during their meeting on Tuesday night to remain in Option C, all remote learning until the end of the first semester in March.

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“There is not a perfect fit to this; we have to find a plan to educate our kids while also minimizing exposure to the virus,” said Dr. Anitra Wells, superintendent of Lexington City Schools. “I think regardless of what decision you make, we are going to have some unhappy people. Keep in mind that we have a responsibility to our students and staff, one is keeping them safe, one is educating children. I think we can do both.”

Some board members were wary to keep students out of school longer than necessary.

“We have kids that really, truly need the face to face learning. If the parent doesn’t want their kid to come back, we still have virtual learning...We are doing other things school-wise; we are having sporting events in our gyms. How are we able to do this and not the other,” said school board chairman Darrick Horton who was one of two board members who voted against the motion.

Lexington City Schools Board of Education member Dr. Margaret Loda also voted no.

At the beginning of the school year, Lexington City Schools opted to remain in Option C, all remote learning, for all students based on student, parent, and teacher surveys

After an announcement by Gov. Roy Cooper lifting restrictions, Lexington City Schools K-5 students returned to in-person school on Oct. 26, with half the students reporting to school one week while the other used remote learning and then alternating the following week

In November, the board of education decided to return to all-remote learning for all students after the Thanksgiving holiday due to the potential risk of exposure to COVID-19. Middle and high school students were already scheduled to remain fully remote until the beginning of the second semester in January.

Students were scheduled to return to Plan B on January 19, which includes alternating weeks of remote and in person learning.

During the school board meeting, Dr. Anitra Wells, superintendent of Lexington City Schools, stated that the district will implement a change in remediation days which are on Fridays. Under this adjusted Plan C, teachers will provide in-class remediation for underperforming students in small groups.

### Randolph County Schools

Randolph County Schools also started the school year in August with the state’s Plan B, which involved an A Day/B Day rotating schedule four days a week with Wednesday as remote instruction day for all students.

On Oct. 26, students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade returned to in-person instruction at 100 capacity for four days a week. Students in grades 6 – 12 remained on the A Day/B Day schedule.

Randolph County Schools did not alter their schedule after the Thanksgiving and Christmas break, and all students return to school according to the schedule prior to the break.

According to Dr. Stephen Gainey, superintendent of Randolph County Schools, there has been no discussion as of yet to return to all in-person instruction for middle and high school students.

“No changes to this plan have been discussed. In addition, since Aug. 17, each student at each grade level was given the opportunity to engage in school remotely rather than using the in-person instruction option provided for his/her school level,” said Gainey.

### **Thomasville City Schools**

According to Thomasville City Schools Superintendent Catherine Gentry, the school district will also remain in Plan C, fully remote learning, for all students through Feb. 5.

The schools will reopen for all K – 12 students on Feb. 8 under Plan B, which will include alternating weeks of in-person and remote learning four days a week.

Thomasville City Schools opened the school year under Plan C, full remote learning, before implementing a rotating A week/B week schedule for all students in October. Due to potential exposure to the virus over the Christmas break, the school board voted to return to remote instruction for the first two weeks of school in January.

“(These are) hard decisions as percent positive in Davidson County is almost 20 percent, and in the last three reports from the state over 30,000 people have been infected since Thursday. Whenever we come back it would be in Plan B, which is the hybrid model,” said Gentry.

### **Asheboro City Schools**

Asheboro City Schools opened the school year under Plan C, all remote for students before students began Plan B with alternating A Days/B Days in October with Wednesday set aside for remote learning and remediation.

The district did not alter its schedule or go to remote learning after either Thanksgiving or Christmas break. Students returned to school under Plan B on Jan. 5.

Representatives from the school district said there are no plans for moving students to Plan A, 100 percent capacity, at this time.

### **Davidson County Schools**

Davidson County Schools started with A Day/B Day rotating schedule for students on September 14, but elementary students returned to in-person learning early at 100 percent capacity for four days a week beginning in October.

Davidson County Schools did not revert to remote learning after the Thanksgiving or Christmas holidays and all middle and high school students remain on alternate A Day/B Day schedules.

According to Davidson County Schools Superintendent Dr. Emily Lipe, the school board has not discussed an anticipated date when 6 – 12 grade students will return to 100 percent capacity, or Plan A.