



Reopening Schools Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

In GCS, our goal for reopening our schools is to serve the most students for the greatest amount of time possible while keeping students and staff healthy and safe. While we are eager to welcome students back to our classrooms, the health and safety for students and staff must come first. Please note that information contained in this FAQ is subject to change as new information, data or state directives become available.

Reopening Plan

Q. Why is GCS starting school on August 17 instead of August 24 as originally planned?

A. A new state law passed this spring mandates that all North Carolina public schools start on Monday, August 17. The new state law also added five instructional days for students; the new student days replace five teacher workdays/professional learning days.

Q. Why is GCS opening on Plan C (remote learning only) when the Governor said school districts could open with either Plan B (mix of remote and in-person) or Plan C (remote only)?

A. Current public health data trends in North Carolina and Guilford County do not support reopening schools in August.

For more information about public health data and trends, please see the North Carolina Division of Health and Human Services COVID-19 data dashboard: <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/dashboard> and the Guilford County Department of Public Health COVID-19 webpage: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Info](#).

Q. How many weeks of remote instruction is GCS planning?

A. Students will learn remotely for nine weeks (the first quarter). Pending a review of public health data, GCS will reopen on Tuesday, October 20, following the plan approved by the school board.

Q. What if I don't feel comfortable sending my child back to school when schools reopen for in-person learning?

A. Parents/guardians of currently enrolled GCS students may apply for a transfer to the appropriate virtual academy. While we cannot guarantee all transfers or new enrollments from non-GCS students that are requested after the new September 15 deadline will be granted – due to staffing considerations – we will grant as many requests as we can while still serving children well.

However, if you plan to keep your child out of school all year due to the coronavirus pandemic, you should consider registering your child now in the appropriate virtual academy. The deadline for enrollment/registration has been extended to **Tuesday, September 15**.

Remote Learning

Overview

Q. What will remote learning look like in August? Will it be like last spring?

- A.** During the first few weeks, students will access pre-recorded content and remote learning activities while schools distribute devices, host student/guardian orientation sessions to make sure students can access the district's learning management system (Canvas), tools (Google Apps, Teams) and new digital resources such as Nearpod and digital textbooks. School staff will also make sure students/guardians understand the health protocols that will be in place when schools reopen for in-person instruction.

Live, online instruction, virtual small group sessions and individual check-ins with students/guardians will start after Labor Day, on Tuesday, Sep. 8. A graphic illustrating a typical student day during remote learning is attached for your review and information. Common instructional resources and materials have been provided to all teachers.

We also are adding Google Apps for Education, including YouTube, to our learning management system (Canvas). These new tools will give teachers more tools to use and are reportedly easier for parents and students to access.

Teachers will provide feedback on submitted assignments and students will receive grades, pending any new direction from state officials.

We anticipate that remote instruction will be better this fall, but we don't expect it to be perfect. We are asking about 5,000 teachers to completely change how they organize their lessons and deliver instruction while also learning new technology and tools in a relatively short period of time.

Q. Who will teach my child during remote learning?

- A.** Teachers from your child's school will be assigned students and will instruct their classrooms virtually, with rare exceptions. Exceptions include changes triggered by the state's classroom size mandate in grades K-3 and schedule changes.

Q. I am not a trained teacher. What supports will be in place to help parents and guardians support our children during remote learning?

- A.** During the orientation sessions hosted by each school, teachers will share their classroom's daily schedule. Teachers will also check-in regularly with students and their parents/guardians, as will school counselors and social workers.

In addition, Guilford Parent Academy will host virtual workshops featuring GCS educators to help students and their parents/guardians experience more success during remote learning. Topics include but are not limited to:

- Navigating Canvas
- Understanding Google Apps for Education
- Accessing digital textbooks
- Participating in live instruction
- Submitting assignments
- Accessing recorded lessons
- Understanding your child's remote learning day

During the first few weeks of school, we will also operate a multi-lingual call center to assist students and parents/guardians.

Q. My spouse and I both work during the day. We will only be able to help our children at night or on the weekends.

A. We understand that remote learning is a big challenge for many families, including GCS staff. We are asking teachers to record lessons, where possible, so students and their parents/guardians can view them later, or multiple times, if needed. To prevent learning loss, we need all students to engage in online learning daily to the maximum extent possible.

Q. Will teachers at my child's school continue to provide remote learning when schools reopen for in-person instruction if choose to keep my child at home?

A. When schools reopen, classroom teachers at all but our two new virtual academies will shift from online to in-person instruction. We do not have enough staff to maintain both methods of instruction at the same time when schools reopen.

Virtual School

Q. Can you extend the registration/enrollment period for the two virtual academies since the school board is voting on the district's reopening plan July 28?

A. Yes. The deadline for registering/enrolling in one of the two virtual academies, or the virtual high school program, has been **extended to Tuesday, September 15.**

Q. What is the difference between remote learning through my child's school and the programs being offered by the new virtual academies?

A. The virtual academies for students in grades K-5 and 6-8 are separate schools with their own teachers, counselors and principals.

Virtual academy classes will be taught by district teachers who work exclusively with the eLearning Virtual Academy (K-5) and eLearning University Prep (6-8).

Virtual student schedules will be more flexible than those at traditional high schools. Students can move through the content at their own pace.

Q. What if I transfer my child to the virtual academy and find out it's not a good fit?

A. Students will be able to transfer back to their assigned schools at the semester break or the end of the school year. The district will hold students' magnet seats for one year only.

Q. What if I don't register my child for one of the virtual academies and then decide later that I would prefer that option?

A. Parents/guardians of currently enrolled GCS students may apply for a transfer to the appropriate virtual academy. While we cannot guarantee all transfers will be granted, due to staffing considerations, we will grant as many requests as we can while still serving children well.

However, if you plan to keep your child out of school all year due to the coronavirus pandemic, you should consider registering your child now in the appropriate virtual academy. The deadline for new student enrollment/current GCS student registration has been extended to **Tuesday, September 15.**

The new GCS virtual academies are also open to K-8 students who reside in Guilford County but are not enrolled in a GCS school if they enroll by September 15. After September 15, GCS cannot guarantee that all new enrollments will be granted, due to staffing considerations. New students will be able to attend their assigned school (remotely or in-person, depending on the plan adopted by the school board).

Q. If I enroll my child in one of the GCS virtual academies, will that take away money or resources from my child's home or assigned school?

A. Virtual academies receive the same weighted student formula funding from the state (approximately \$50 per student) that other schools receive. This funding follows the child until the 20th day of school. Schools may experience staffing changes based on virtual academy registrations. Teachers are allocated by the state to schools based on student enrollment.

High School Options

Q. What about high school students? Do they have more remote/online learning options than other grade levels?

A. Yes. During the district's nine-week remote learning period, high school courses normally taught in-person in our classrooms will be taught remotely by each school's teachers. High school students may also register for courses through the district's new virtual academy program, while remaining enrolled at their home or assigned high school.

In addition, GCS high school students have always had the option of taking additional classes online through APEX (taught by independent instructors), the North Carolina Virtual Public School or online classes through the state's Career and College Promise Program, which pays the tuition for eligible juniors and seniors who want to take classes and earn college credit at local public 2-year and four-year colleges and universities. (Students may be responsible for books and transportation.)

Students enrolled in our early/middle colleges may also take online courses and earn college credit through their respective colleges/universities.

For additional guidance, please contact your child's school counselor.

Early/Middle Colleges

Q. What will remote learning look like at our early/middle colleges, especially since teachers only have two workdays to prepare before school starts?

A. From August 3-7, our early and middle colleges will focus on remote learning instructional activities, device distribution and professional learning for teachers. Remote learning activities will continue the next week, along with individual student orientation sessions and virtual sessions with school counselors. Live instruction and regular daily coursework for high school classes begins August 17-21; online college classes begin August 17-21 as well.

Special Populations

Q. What about programs and services for gifted and talented students, students with disabilities and other exceptional learners? How will the district ensure their needs are met during remote learning?

- A. We have high expectations for all students and believe in challenging all students through daily access to on-grade level academic content through our general education program, as well as through advanced coursework (honors, AP/IB) and specialized services and supports for gifted and talented students, students with disabilities and other health impairments, and English language learners.

Advanced Placement courses will be taught remotely by AP teachers from your child's home or assigned school. Online AP courses are also available that are taught by independent instructors. International Baccalaureate classes will be offered virtually to students attending an IB school and will be taught by GCS teachers at those schools.

Individual Education Plans and 504 Plans govern instructional needs, modifications, adaptations, services and supports for students with disabilities either through the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. To the maximum extent possible, such services will be provided remotely until schools reopen. In some situations, related services require in-person sessions. If in-person sessions are required, students and staff must adhere to additional health protocols and wear the appropriate personal protective equipment.

Exceptional Children

Q. How will students with disabilities be served during remote learning?

- A. Case managers will work with families to modify IEPs as needed to ensure access during periods of remote learning. Exceptional Children teachers will work with general education teachers to modify assignments, establish individual/small group check-in schedules and monitor student challenges and successes.

Public separate teachers will set-up individual student schedules with families that include live instruction, student/family check-ins and recorded learning opportunities each week.

Therapies that are difficult to provide virtually may be provided in-person during individual appointment times.

Q. What about our medically fragile students, those with special healthcare needs or those served in our public separate schools)? Will those classrooms and schools remain closed during COVID-19?

- A. Like all other students, students with disabilities have a right to receive a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. During remote learning, students with disabilities will learn remotely, in accordance with their IEPs. When schools reopen for in-person learning, public separate schools will reopen as well.

Pre-Kindergarten (PreK)

Q. What about PreK students?

- A. Prekindergarten programs in our state are governed by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, which currently permits remote learning for PreK students through September 7. PreK teachers will have weekly check-ins with families to monitor student progress and provide feedback during remote learning.

Re-entry for PreK students will be based on public health guidance for licensed childcare facilities. During remote learning. (K-12 public schools are governed by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, which has issued different guidelines for remote and in-person instruction.)

In-takes for EC PreK students will continue following health protocols. Schools will work with families to provide manipulatives and printed copies of materials as appropriate.

English Language Learners

Q. How will schools support English language learners during remote learning?

- A. English learner teachers work with general education teachers to modify assignments, establish individual/small group check-in schedules and monitor student challenges and successes. Schools will work with families to provide manipulatives and printed copies of materials as appropriate. Teachers will also conduct individual student check-ins.

Schools will provide translated materials for parents and the district will staff a multilingual call center (with interpreters well-versed in the seven top world languages spoken in GCS) to support students and parents/families during the first few weeks of remote learning. Digital resources will be made available in students' first language as needed.

Graduating Seniors

Q. What are you doing to make sure high school students stay on track for graduation?

- A. The district's Counseling Services team audits transcripts of high school juniors and seniors to make sure they are on track for graduation. School counselors send letters to all seniors indicating their graduation status, and work closely with students who may need to accelerate their learning or recover one or more credits in order to graduate. This spring, students also received a publication on colleges and careers that included their GPAs, course credits and other useful information designed to help them meet their personal and professional goals. If you have concerns about your child's academic progress, please contact your child's school counselor.

Career and Technical Education

Q. How will labs and practicums for certain academic subjects and Career and Technical Education classes be addressed?

- A. Remote learning is not an exact replica of in-person instruction. While some labs may be demonstrated virtually and include virtual activities for students to complete, some activities and practicums may have to be completed when schools reopen to ensure students have gained the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities.

Special Academic Programs

Q. What about the visual and performing arts, world languages, physical education, career and technical education and other non-core instructional programs?

- A. We will continue to provide a well-rounded curriculum that provides multiple opportunities for students to explore their interests and develop their knowledge, skills and abilities in a variety of areas. Some subjects and activities translate more readily to an online environment, and we recognize that most hands-on activities and labs work best in-person.

While not ideal, we have addressed these concerns by offering extensive professional learning opportunities this summer and purchasing more digital tools such as Nearpod and digital textbooks to support students and staff.

While our teachers are creative and innovative, adapting academic content (subjects) to a remote learning environment takes time and represents a new skill set for many. We are proud that more than 2,386 teachers have participated in more than 7,300 summer training opportunities offered by the district during their summer “vacations.”

Social and Emotional Learning

Q. How will you meet students’ social and emotional learning needs during remote learning?

- A. Students will get support from their counselors, social workers and school psychologists on an individual, as needed basis. The district will continue its student intervention process, which identifies students who are showing signs of distress or other at-risk behaviors, and will continue to refer students and their families to appropriate community supports and services.

All schools also will continue to focus on creating and maintaining positive, respectful and inclusive school climates during remote and in-person learning that support students and their parents/guardians.

Q. My children are scared and overwhelmed by the amount of COVID-19 information on the news, in casual conversations and on social media. Some kids are really traumatized. How are you preparing staff and schools to handle this?

- A. Our school counselors, social workers and psychologists are partnering with community partners and mental/physical health providers to develop plans to carefully and thoughtfully meet individual student needs.

We are also providing additional training for school personnel regarding trauma-informed care, implicit bias and anti-racism, mental health, restorative school discipline strategies and other topics to help staff respond appropriately, effectively and compassionately to prevent negative interactions and when children and young people show signs of distress.

For additional tips and suggestions regarding how to support your children during this challenging time, we have posted information from the National Association of School Psychologists on our COVID-19 and Reopening Schools 2020 webpages: [COVID-19 Important Resources](#) and [Reopen, Reconnect and Stay Safe: 2020 GCS Reopening of Schools Plan](#). Guilford Parent Academy will continue to offer virtual workshops on health and wellness for families relating to remote learning, COVID-19, and other topics. See [Welcome to Guilford Parent Academy](#) for more details and to get on their email distribution list.

You may also contact your child’s school counselor or social worker for assistance.

ACES

Q. What about ACES/after-school care?

- A. ACES will not be held while schools are closed for in-person instruction and students are learning remotely only (Governor’s Plan C). When schools reopen for in-person instruction, ACES will operate if there is sufficient enrollment to support the program when schools reopen.

Parent fees will be adjusted to accommodate the increased staffing required for social distancing and

for cleaning/sanitation. GCS is encouraging community agencies and childcare providers to offer additional and more flexible options for school-aged children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public Health Indicators

Q. What criteria is GCS using to determine when it's safe to responsibly open schools again for in-person instruction?

If North Carolina does not determine health indicator metrics for reopening schools, the Guilford County Board of Education will need to determine the re-entry criteria for opening and closing schools.

Indicators the school board may wish to consider include:

- ✓ Downward trajectory of documented cases during a 14-day period (U.S. Centers for Disease Control, May 2020)
- ✓ Data thresholds that include less than a 3-5% positivity rate (based on the percentage of screening and diagnostic tests positive by date, with threshold, with 7-day moving average ([www.https://preventepidemics.org](https://www.preventepidemics.org) US CDC).
- ✓ Other relevant indicators determined by local public health officials (trends in COVID-19 lab-confirmed cases, hospitalizations and deaths.)

Summer Meal Distributions

Q. Will summer meal distribution end on July 31 as planned?

- A. No. **Summer meal distributions will continue through August 31.** For a list of locations, please see the GCS website or click [Meal Distribution Sites](#).

Policy and Advocacy Concerns

Q. Does GCS have the funding and resources it needs to meet its goal of serving the greatest number of students in-person for the maximum amount of time while keeping students and staff safe?

- A. Thank you for asking. The costs of meeting all requirements is outpacing our funding.

Our Board voted unanimously in open session to support the passage of the Heroes Act with enough funding to help stabilize public school budgets nationwide and cover the rising pandemic-related costs. These atypical costs include but are not limited to additional supplies, specialized equipment for sanitizing and disinfecting schools and classrooms, student laptops and tablets, hotspots, digital curriculum and learning resources, personal protective equipment for students and staff, and costs associated with putting social distancing measures in place in buildings, classrooms, offices and school buses, among others.

Q. What happens if Congress doesn't pass the Heroes Act?

- A. We will do the best we can with the resources we have. However, more children will not get what they need educationally, socially and emotionally, which will worsen existing achievement gaps and disparities. The learning of an entire generation of students is at-risk.

Q. What happens if the U.S. Department of Agriculture doesn't grant additional waivers?

- A. If waivers are not granted as they were when North Carolina schools closed last spring due to the pandemic, the current meal (breakfast and lunch) distribution program will end August 31 and GCS will no longer be able to feed hungry children while schools are closed due to the pandemic. Without

work to perform for GCS, school nutrition workers may seek other employment, making it more difficult to restart the program when schools reopen for in-person learning.

Q. Why is GCS concerned about the U.S. Department of Education’s rule change regarding federal funding?

A. The department’s new interim rule and guidance diverts CARES Act funding to private school services, reducing the resources available for public schools to serve vulnerable students.

Q. What is GCS’ position regarding extending state leave for the state’s public-school employees?

A. The GCS Board of Education and Administration support expanding leave for public school employees who do not have work to do during remote learning and risk layoffs, yet whose services will be needed when schools reopen.

Timeline

Board of Education Meeting	Recommended Action Item
July 28	Vote on Reopening Plan (Recommendation is Option C)
August 5	Remote Learning Starts for Early/Middle College Students
August 11	Review Public Health COVID-19 Indicators to Determine Re-Entry Criteria for Opening and Closing Schools
August 17	Remote Learning Starts for Traditional Academic Calendar Schools
September 8	Work Session on Re-Entry
September 15	New Deadline for Enrollment/Registration in GCS Virtual Academies
September 24	Review Public Health COVID-19 Indicators
October 20	Schools Reopen Pending Results of COVID-19 Public Health Data Review

Staying Informed

Q. How can I stay informed about decisions and changes?

A. We are dealing with a complex and fluid situation that is driven by a pandemic and resulting medical crisis outside of school district control. As a result, information, directives, requirements and guidance change quickly. While we will do our best to keep parents and staff informed, please check our COVID-19 and School Reopening webpages frequently for the most accurate and up-to-date information. These include the following: [COVID-19 Important Resources](#) and [Reopen, Reconnect and Stay Safe: 2020 GCS Reopening of Schools Plan](#).

Community Support

Q. How Can the Community Help?

A. Community members and groups can help in several ways to ensure that our students, teachers and schools have the support needed.

Options range from building more outdoor seating and picnic tables to moving furniture to ready classrooms for social distancing to hosting small study group sessions for students or offering parents more options for licensed, school-aged childcare with internet access to support remote learning.

Other partnerships are focused on putting more books and more remote learning-ready devices and internet access in students' hands and homes, expanding community hotspots and advocating for universal internet access for low-income families and additional funding for public schools.

For more information, please contact Nora Carr, chief of staff, at carrn@gcsnc.com, 336-370-8106 or Wanda Edwards, director of communications, at edwardsw2@gcsnc.com, 336-370-8997.