

NEWS & RECORD

With schools closed, the learning 'losses are glacial' for Guilford students, leaders say

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GREENSBORO — Staggering learning losses are expected for Guilford County students due to the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, district administrators revealed to the Board of Education during an online meeting Tuesday night.

Chief Academic Officer Whitney Oakley said district leaders expect an average student is likely to retain less than 50% of what they would have learned in math this year.

In reading, it's better — around 70%.

“The losses are glacial,” said Deena Hayes-Greene, the school board’s chairwoman.

Oakley said the information comes from the work of two organizations: **the Council of Great City Schools** and the Northwest Evaluation Association.

In its projections, the Northwest Evaluation Association treated March 13 — the last day of school for Guilford County and other districts affected by the coronavirus outbreak — as though it were the final day of classes for the academic year.

It modeled those projections based on previous data that looked at learning losses over summer.

“We know the instruction they are getting is as good as it can be, but is absolutely not the same as face-to-face,” Oakley said Wednesday.

During Tuesday’s night meeting, Oakley also shared key details about how grades will be given this academic year.

The end of the third quarter was moved up to March 13, the last day students were in class before Gov. Roy Cooper announced that all schools in the state would close.

For the fourth quarter, Oakley said students in kindergarten through 11th grade won't be given letter grades. Instead, they will be graded on either a "pass" or "withdraw" basis.

To earn a "pass," students will be asked to complete assignments and lessons that show they demonstrate a basic understanding of a course's core concepts.

Students who aren't able to do that will be considered "withdrawn" from that course. However, they would get another chance to complete those assignments and upgrade to a "pass" before starting the 2020-21 school year.

Seniors who were passing their required courses before March 13 will pass for the spring semester.

For any seniors with an "F" as of March 13, teachers are required to provide opportunities for them to improve to a "pass."

Superintendent Sharon Contreras said Tuesday the issues created by the coronavirus are not just a problem now, but for the future. With the expected learning losses incurred this year, administrators are going to have to be thinking about how to mitigate those losses next year.

Further complicating things, some school board members said they thought the state might still be unwilling for teachers or students to return to school as late as July.

Tuesday night's meeting occurred through the videoconferencing platform Zoom, a departure from the board's usual practice of gathering in the school administration building or the City Council chambers in High Point.

It was streamed live on the district's YouTube channel and on GCS TV, the cable television channel run by Guilford County Schools.

Hayes-Greene and some school administrators were in the administration building, while other board members and administrators joined from homes or offices.