

Local board of education scheduled to make decision on reopening school

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

In the blockbuster film “The Matrix,” Neo, played by Keanu Reeves, is offered the choice of a red pill and a blue pill by Morpheus, who was played by Laurence Fishburne. Take the red pill and you supposedly reveal the “unpleasant truth” about society or take the blue pill and remain in “blissful ignorance.” While their decision won’t involve colorful capsules or special effects, just like Neo, today, Oct. 1, the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools (WS/FCS) Board of Education is faced with their own tough decision, when they vote whether to allow students to return to classrooms or continue virtual learning for at least nine more weeks.

Here’s what we know: On Sept. 17 Governor Roy Cooper announced that beginning Oct. 5, public school districts can choose to allow students grades K-5 to return to in-person learning with important safety measures like face coverings for all students, teachers and staff, social distancing, and symptom screening.

“We are able to offer this option because most North Carolinians have doubled down on our safety and prevention measures and stabilized our numbers,” said Cooper. “North Carolinians are doing the hard work to improve our numbers and trends. Many people are wearing masks, keeping social distance and being careful to protect others as well as themselves. We have shown that listening to the science works. And I’m proud of our resolve.”

On the same day Gov. Cooper made his announcement, the WS/FCS COVID-19 committee was presented with a proposed, phased re-entry plan that would begin Oct. 26. The proposed re-entry plan is a hybrid of in-person and remote learning. Although the governor recommended opening elementary schools under Plan A, the least restrictive of the three plans for reopening schools, Dr. Angela Hairston, WS/FCS superintendent, said she feels the hybrid model is the best way for students,



teachers and faculty to return safely.

Under the hybrid model, students will return to in-person learning by grade level beginning with Pre-K as soon as Oct. 26, other grade levels will be added every two weeks. For example, after Pre-K, grades K-2, 6 and EC Self Contained, EC-OCS, ESL Academy can return as soon as Nov. 2. Grades 3, 4, and 7 will be able to return as soon as Nov. 16 and grades 5 and 8 are expected to be able to return by Dec. 7. Due to winter break, high school students wouldn’t return to in-person learning until Jan. 21.

“It’s a slow transition,” said Hairston. “It gives teachers time to adjust, it gives us time for staff to adjust.”

Once all grades levels have transitioned into in-person learning, to account for social distancing measures, students will have a modified schedule. Grades Pre-K through 2 will attend school four days per week, EC Self-Contained, EC-OCS, ESL Academy and EC Students who attend special schools, will also attend school four days a week. Grades 3, 4, and 5 will be split into four different cohorts and attend school once a week.

All middle and high schools will be divided into “2” or “4” cohorts depending on school enrollment and the square-foot-per-student requirement at COVID occupancy. Two cohort schools will attend school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Wednesdays will

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MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

Local students discuss race and equity during annual forum

BY TEVIN STINSON
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Students from Winston-Salem/Forsyth County high schools came together virtually last week to share their thoughts on race relations and equity across the country and in their respective schools, during the annual Student Race Relations Forum.

The forum, which is hosted by the city’s Human Relations Commission/Human Relations Department (WSHRC/HRD), is designed to give young people throughout the community a platform to openly share their perspectives and has been held annually for nearly 20 years. “Each year we hold this forum so that we can benefit from hearing from our youth,” said Wanda Allen-Abraha, WSHRC/HRD director. She said our youth have a lot of important insight and experiences that need to be shared, and older generations should value what they have to say.

According to Allen-Abraha, students were selected by their guidance counselors and every high school in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County was represented.

“This is something we look forward to every year,” Allen-Abraha said. “We do think it’s very important that we provide a safe space and platform for our communities’ young people to talk about

some really important topics.”

To jumpstart the conversation, moderators, Porsche Smith, a senior at Winston-Salem Preparatory Academy, and James Taylor III, a senior at Early College of Forsyth County, asked participants a series of questions that focused on race. One of the early questions asked students if they felt they were affected by the racial justice movement that has swept through the country in recent months.

Prince Thon, a junior at Walkertown, said when it comes to the Black Live Matter movement, he has a lot of friends who have different opinions than he does and at times that can be hard to deal with.

“I think it has put a toll on everyone I believe,” Thon continued. “It just makes me feel very sad because this is the way we have to live and this is what we have to go through to find equality in our communities.”

Zoe Adunoluwa, a senior at Early College of Forsyth County, said the past few months has forced her to reevaluate her friends. She said at a place in time where race is dominating conversations across the country, it is important that minority cultures create spaces where they feel safe, even if that means losing a few friends.

“What I’ve been trying to learn for myself and what I’ve been trying to

implore the people around me to understand ... especially if you are part of these minority groups, is that not everyone is going to hold space for you so you have to do it yourself. And you really have to reevaluate who you’re going to keep around and what sort of people you want to have relationships with,” Adunoluwa continued. “We all hear about leveling up and becoming your best self; well a part of that is the people around you.”

During the virtual forum, Mayor Allen Joines applauded the students for having the courage to speak openly on such an important topic. He said we can learn a lot from the young people in our community.

“I can’t think of a more important time and more important topic to have,” Joines said. “I’m so encouraged every year when we hear from these young people who are discussing frankly, and openly and candidly, issues that they see out there every day ... we can learn a lot from these young people.”

The Student Race Relations Forum can be viewed in its entirety on the City of Winston-Salem YouTube channel. For more information on the forum or the Human Relations Department, visit the city’s website.

YOU ARE INVITED

Virtual Public Input Drop-In Session for the Downtown Winston-Salem Business Improvement District

Wednesday, October 7th

4:00 pm - 6:30 pm

VIA ZOOM - go to www.downtownws.com for link

In this session you will have the opportunity to give your input on the services provided in the Downtown Winston-Salem Business Improvement District.

If you are unable to attend the Public Zoom meeting, you can also provide feedback via these other outlets:
E-mail: jason@dwsp.org, phone: (336) 354-1500 x1, or online: www.downtownws.org (look for public input tab)

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