

September 21, 2020

Dear Families,

It is my pleasure to welcome you and your children to the 2020–21 school year! We could not have achieved this milestone without every one of you. I am grateful for your support and your faith in our public schools. So many New Yorkers have worked around the clock to accomplish this shared goal: the safe return of our students, teachers, and school staff to classroom and remote learning.

There is no doubt this has been a challenging seven months, but we should feel proud of the outstanding job New Yorkers have done to fight COVID-19. Our actions have led to weeks of very low infection rates citywide. However, the virus is still active in our city, state, and country. We know that there will be cases of COVID-19 this fall. The good news is we are prepared to fight this virus while holding true to our mission—ensuring that all our students continue to learn and thrive.

To carry this out, we have put in place strict health and safety protocols and created a COVID-19 Response Situation Room for DOE principals, which serves as a “one-stop shop” for school leaders in handling all COVID-19 cases in schools. When principals learn of a potential COVID-19 case in their school, they call the Situation Room to report it, and medical, public health, and education staff are on hand and readily available to support principals through responding to it. Principals or their designees call the Situation Room, which helps to handle everything from there - including quickly communicating vital updates for principals to share with their school communities.

We are confident in our ability to provide your children with the healthy, safe, engaging, high-quality education you expect. We will continue to be transparent and keep you informed. In this Update for Families, I am happy to share the latest information on:

- How to complete daily health screenings for your child,
- Where to get tested for COVID-19,
- How to stay informed on COVID-19 cases in your school community, and
- What transportation to and from school looks like

In addition, to help you find key information I have shared in past updates, we have included quick links to DOE resources on:

- Health and safety measures in our schools,
- What teaching and learning looks like this year, and
- School schedules for elementary, middle, and high schools

As always, all information regarding back to school can be found at schools.nyc.gov/returntoschool2020. If you have additional questions, please contact your principal. You can find information about your child’s school, including principal contact information, on our website using “Find a School” at schoolsearch.schools.nyc.

You have heard me say that September is my favorite month, and that is especially true this year. Return to School 2020 took a team effort, thousands of hours of work, and attention to countless details to get where we are today. I could not be prouder of our families, students, educators, and everyone who works in and for our schools.

As we start the new school year together, I can assure you that the largest school system in the nation is well prepared and up to the task. Please know that we are here for you. Your teachers and principals are here for you. And, together, we will achieve a remarkable year of learning.

Sincerely,



Richard A. Carranza
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education

To view a copy of this document in your language, visit schools.nyc.gov/messagesforfamilies

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Update for Families: September 21, 2020

How to Complete Daily Health Screenings for Your Child

As always, the health and safety of our students, families, and school staff remain our top priority. We have spent months preparing for the safe reopening of our schools; we know they are like home for so many of us and provide the social-emotional support and learning our children need.

We all have a part to play in keeping our school communities safe. We are asking you to do your part by making sure your children have completed their health screenings (including temperature checks) before they enter school buildings. ***We encourage you to use our Online Health Screening Tool each day that your child is scheduled to attend in-person learning.***

- You can find the online health screening at healthscreening.schools.nyc. When you do the screening at home, you or your child just need to provide the results of the screening either by showing the email on a smartphone or a printout of the results before entering the school building. All students will receive an oral thermometer in their first week of in-person instruction in case they need one to check their temperature.
- If you or your child is not able to pre-screen using the online tool, you may use the Paper Health Screening Questionnaire and have your child bring the completed form to school and show it upon entry. Your school will provide you with printed copies so you can complete the questionnaire at home.
- If you or your child forgets or is unable to pre-screen, someone will be available at your school's entrance to assist your child in completing the form and checking your child's temperature.
- In order to keep everyone healthy and slow the spread of COVID-19, students will not be able to attend in-person classes if they have:
 - Experienced any symptoms of COVID-19, including a fever of 100.0 degrees F or greater, a new cough, new loss of taste or smell, or shortness of breath within the past 10 days;
 - Received a positive result from a COVID-19 test that tested saliva or used a nose or throat swab (not a blood test) in the past 10 days;
 - Been in close contact (within 6 feet for at least 10 minutes) with anyone who tested positive for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days; or
 - Traveled internationally or from a state with widespread community transmission of COVID-19 per the [New York State Travel Advisory](#) in the past 14 days.

As always, please keep your child home if they are sick.

Where to Get Tested for COVID-19

It's up to all of us to keep our school communities and families safe by wearing face coverings, keeping our distance, washing hands frequently, and getting tested!

- Help us keep our schools open and school communities healthy by getting tested for COVID-19. It's safe, free, and easy for everyone, regardless of immigration or insurance status. To find a testing site near you, visit nyc.gov/covidtest.
- Students in 3K through twelfth grade can get priority testing at 22 Health + Hospitals testing sites throughout the school year. To find a location near you, visit schools.nyc.gov/covidtesting.
- Beginning in early October, we will begin testing a random sampling of students and staff in every school. This is essential to keeping your family and school community healthy and safe. We'll be sharing much more information and a link to a parent/guardian consent form in our next family update.

How to Stay Informed on Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in Your School Community

It's important that your school is able to reach you to share crucial information quickly, including alerts about confirmed COVID-19 cases in your child's school. Please sign up for a NYC Schools Account (NYCSA) so we can contact you via phone, email, or text message.

- With NYCSA, you can access your child's grades, test scores, schedules, transportation information, and more—from anywhere, and in all nine standard DOE language translations.
- In order to see your child's records, request an Account Creation Code from your school. I encourage you to keep your contact information up to date, so your school can get in touch with you in the event of an emergency.
- If you don't have an account, sign up today at schools.nyc.gov/nycsa. It only takes five minutes!

What Transportation to and from School Will Look Like

Whether traveling by bus, public transportation, or other means, students will be expected to wear masks and practice social distancing, just as they will in and around their school. Here are some details about different modes of transportation:

Busing

Following guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), buses transporting students will be limited to 25 percent of capacity to ensure safe social distancing. Seating on the bus will be clearly marked to guide students to where they can and cannot sit.

- If students do not have a face covering, the bus operator will provide one. Drivers and attendants will also wear face coverings as well as gloves. Before sending children on a bus, family members should screen their children's health at home, including temperature checks, to make certain they are well enough to board a bus and attend school.
- Buses will operate with the windows open whenever possible and with the air in the non-recirculating mode.

- Upon arrival at a destination where passengers will be exiting the bus, students will be directed to exit one row at a time to maintain a safe social distance.
- Each night, all school transportation vehicles will be cleaned and disinfected following CDC protocols.

Public Transportation and Other Alternatives

Schools will provide free MetroCards to students and families engaged in blended learning for travel to and from school.

- When using public transportation, students will be expected to follow the same social distancing and face covering protocols as all New Yorkers.
- The MTA has marked all stations with social distancing guidance and offers free masks at stations across the city. In addition, the NYPD conducts frequent sweeps of stations and subway cars to enforce distancing and mask wearing. For more about MTA procedures, visit [mta.info/coronavirus](https://www.mta.info/coronavirus).

Where to Find Information on:

Health and Safety Measures in Schools

To learn more about ventilation and other building safety measures, outdoor learning, food services in schools, testing and tracing, and personal health measures all schools are taking to keep your children safe, visit schools.nyc.gov/RTShealthsafety.

What Teaching and Learning Looks Like This Year

To learn more about blended learning supports, social-emotional learning and mental health, supports for multilingual/English language learners, students with disabilities, students in temporary housing and foster care, students who are 21 or older, and students in early childhood programs, visit schools.nyc.gov/RTSteachinglearning.

School Schedules for Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

To learn more about programming models, sibling schedules, and what happens when students come to school on the wrong day during blended learning, visit schools.nyc.gov/RTSschedules.