



THE CITY OF NEW YORK

April 11, 2020

Dear Families:

Less than one month ago, we came together and began transforming the largest school system in the nation. The battle against COVID-19 left us no choice but to close school buildings to students and staff, transition to remote teaching and learning from home, and adjust to distancing from each other to remain safe.

Now, we face another painful decision. After consulting with public health experts about the ongoing trajectory of the virus, and with educators about the potential for continued disruption for the remainder of the year, we have decided that New York City school buildings will not reopen during the 2019-2020 school year. Teachers and students will finish the school year in remote learning. We will continue to operate our 400+ school-based Meal Hubs, which serve three free meals a day to any New Yorker who needs them, and we will continue to ensure child care for the children of essential workers.

This is a painful but necessary decision for two reasons. First, public health experts have determined that community transmission of COVID-19 will be widespread well into the end of the school year. Even at low-level transmission, we'd have new cases, which would be extremely difficult to contain school-to-school. We believe there simply wouldn't be enough time to bring our students back.

Second, we, as parents, know how important it is to have some sense of predictability in order to effectively plan for your family. This crisis is hitting all of us very hard. But we are hopeful that this sense of certainty will allow for more stability and the ability to better plan for our work and home lives.

We know this will have an immense impact on the 1.1 million students and 150,000 staff who make up our New York City public schools. But we are inspired by the extraordinary ways everyone in our school communities has risen to this challenge. Every day, we see how you – students, families, and the dedicated staff serving and supporting our public schools – are going above and beyond to connect in the face of this crisis, all in service of making sure learning continues. We also know that you'll need support to continue this tremendous undertaking. That's why we're making the following commitments to you as we extend the closure of our school buildings until the end of the school year:

- 1. Every student who has requested an internet-enabled device will have one by the end of April.** No student will go without the tools they need for learning. We have already delivered tens of thousands of devices to our most vulnerable students, including those in shelter and temporary housing. We are committed to closing the remainder of the digital divide for each of our kids. If you still need a device, please fill out the Remote Learning Device Request Form at schools.nyc.gov, or call 311.
- 2. We will make sure that parents can ask and get answers to their questions about remote learning.** We know you need someone to turn to who will answer any question you have about

education during this time—from social-emotional support to academic progress to graduation requirements. Your school is always ready and willing to support you, and we will also make sure that additional support is available as we continue in our remote environment. This means increasing hours and staffing of our parent hotlines so you can get the answers you need. Call 311 to be directed to the right DOE support.

3. **We'll continue to invest in instructional resources, enrichment programs, and student supports for your families to engage in learning at home.** Our students need and deserve rich, deep programming and remote learning opportunities as we go further into the school year, and we will continue to provide them. This includes learning resources provided by your teachers and schools, but it also includes enriching and fun materials from the world-class cultural institutions, libraries, museums, parks, and more right here in New York City.
4. **We will ensure every high school senior is supported towards graduation.** We'll provide 1:1 counseling support to every senior, working closely with schools and families to understand if students are on track—and if not, provide opportunities to help them get there. Guidance counselors from every high school will reach out to every senior to make sure they are on a path to graduate.
5. **We will reopen schools stronger than ever in September,** ensuring the safety of our buildings and the resources in place to combat any learning loss and provide emotional support to our students, families, and educators as needed to resume learning and reconnect our communities.

Nothing about this is easy. For the last six years of this administration, public schools have been the anchor of our fight against inequality. They are how we've delivered increased opportunity, and we can't overstate the loss of the concrete sense of community our schools provide. But this is about saving lives.

We are so grateful for your flexibility and patience; we know how hard every one of you has worked to support your children's learning at home. And we will continue to make every effort to both support you and keep learning going during this unprecedented time.

We will also continue to keep you updated. As a reminder, you can visit DOE's website anytime at schools.nyc.gov for more information and updates on our plans for the rest of the school year.

Sincerely,



Bill de Blasio
Mayor



Richard A. Carranza
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education