

December 28, 2021

Dear Families,

We hope you had a restful holiday and were able to spend time with your loved ones. As we look ahead to the New Year, our highest priority is to continue to ensure the health and safety of our students, families, and staff. Schools will be open, as scheduled, beginning January 3 for all students. We are putting additional health and safety measures in place to ensure students and staff are safe and that our schools can continue to be open.

You will notice that this letter is coming to you jointly from outgoing Schools Chancellor Meisha Porter and incoming Schools Chancellor David C. Banks. The Department of Education's leadership is changing, but one thing remains the same: our unwavering commitment to safely providing our students with a top-quality education that leads to their long-term success.

The following updates were made in partnership with our City and State public health colleagues and are based on federal and scientific guidance.

### **COVID-19 Testing Before Returning on January 3**

- To keep our school communities safe upon everyone's return to school buildings, we *strongly encourage* that all students get tested for COVID-19, through a PCR, lab-based rapid test, or a home test kit, before returning to school on January 3, regardless of vaccination status. For a list of testing sites, including sites with at-home rapid tests, call 212- COVID19, visit <http://nyc.gov/covidtest>, or text "COVID TEST" to 855-48, or call 311 to find a nearby testing site. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) continues to open new testing sites, so please check back often for updates.
- Additionally, many pharmacies and doctor's offices may be offering COVID-19 testing. Please check with your pediatrician's office or local pharmacy to see if you can schedule a test.

### **Home Test Kits**

- Beginning January 3, schools will distribute free, take-home COVID-19 rapid test kits to any **students or staff who exhibit COVID-like symptoms or have been in a classroom where a positive case has been identified.**
- Students who have a take-home test kit will need to take the test two times over the course of five days (each kit includes two tests).
  - Students who may have been exposed to COVID in the school should take a test that evening and then again on Day 5.
  - If a student begins to show symptoms of COVID before Day 5, you should use the test kit immediately.
- Anyone who tests positive on a take-home test should immediately report it to the school and begin isolating. Students who test positive must isolate for 10 days and can return to school on Day 11. No negative test is required to return to school.
- Remember, all students, staff and visitors must pass the DOE health screener in order to enter school buildings. Additional questions will be added to the health screeners for those students and staff who receive at-home rapid test kits to share their negative result. No other proof of a negative result is required in order for these students to enter the school building.

### **New Quarantine Policy**

Our goal is to ensure that students safely remain in school as much as possible, and we have updated our policies to ensure we meet this goal. This means that if there is a positive case in a classroom:

- Students who were in close proximity to these students will no longer have to quarantine and will continue attending school if they do not have symptoms and do not have a positive test result from a COVID test.
- Instead, all students and adults in that classroom will receive a take-home rapid test kit. The test kits contain two tests.
- Those who have a take-home test kit will need to take two tests over the course of five days.

### **Increased In-School Surveillance Testing**

To further ensure the safety of our students, families, and staff, the in-school surveillance testing program is expanding to double the number of individuals tested in each school, including both vaccinated and unvaccinated students, in grades 1 and up. The random in-school surveillance program continues to provide public health experts with an accurate look at the prevalence of COVID-19 in schools. We encourage all families, regardless of whether their child is vaccinated, to consent to in-school testing through their [NYC Schools Account](#) or return a signed paper form to the school. Additional information on testing for students can be found on the DOE website: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/health-and-wellness/covid-information/covid-19-testing-for-students>

Testing is a critical part of keeping schools open and communities safe. Thank you for your cooperation by consenting to and participating in our in-school testing program!

We know that nothing is more important to you than keeping your children in school, learning in healthy and safe environments. The changes we are announcing today aim to keep students in our classrooms with the least amount of disruption as possible, while putting their safety front and center.

We will continue to update you as the situation changes and hear your feedback on these updated policies and procedures. In the meantime, please feel free to share your feedback at [FACE@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:FACE@schools.nyc.gov). We thank you in advance for partnering with us to keep our children safe in school.

In partnership,



Meisha Porter  
New York City Schools Chancellor



David C. Banks  
Incoming New York City Schools Chancellor

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