

September 13, 2021

Dear Families,

Welcome to the 2021–2022 school year—our long-awaited homecoming!

I am beyond excited to begin our historic return to full-time, in-person instruction—after the most challenging 18 months of our lives. This year, the first day of school means everything to me. Not only because I’m your Schools Chancellor, but because I’m also the mother of a New York City public high school student who is over the moon to return to the classroom full time.

My daughter’s experience is a living, breathing testament to what I’ve learned in more than 20 years as an educator: nothing replaces the experience between a child and a teacher in a classroom. That is why it feels like a dream come true to welcome all our children back to safe, supportive, rigorous school environments. The first day of school is a true homecoming for our school communities.

I know that COVID-19 and the Delta variant are on all our minds, and I want to be clear that the health and safety of our children, families, and school staff is our highest priority. For the last several months, we have worked with school leaders, public health experts, and union partners to develop and health and safety approach that provides multiple layers of scientifically proven prevention strategies.

We are meeting or exceeding Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting surface areas in our schools, inspection and certification of ventilation in our buildings, and regular random testing of staff and students for COVID-19. We know masks work to reduce the spread of disease, and we are requiring all students and staff to wear face coverings when riding on school buses and anywhere on school property, indoors and outdoors. This is regardless of vaccination status unless students have a medical exemption.

The most important step you can take to protect you and your family from COVID-19 is vaccination. All New Yorkers ages 12 and older can receive a free COVID-19 vaccine. In partnership with the NYC Test & Trace Corps and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, all school sites serving children 12 and over are offering Pfizer-BioNTech vaccinations to eligible New Yorkers during the first week of school (with second doses provided at the beginning of October). No appointment is needed, and you can learn more about site hours from your school or by visiting schools.nyc.gov/covid19.

You can find the most up-to-date information on how we’re working to keep students and staff healthy and safe on the DOE’s website for school year 2021–22 at schools.nyc.gov/homecoming.

I hope you are as thrilled as I am about the first day of school. You can be sure I’ll be out visiting classrooms throughout the week, welcoming back our students, families, and educators—and celebrating all we have done to get to this point.

As always, I am honored to have you at my side as we usher in our most important first day of school ever. Thank you for entrusting your children to us.

In partnership,



Meisha Porter
New York City Schools Chancellor

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