

November 24, 2020

Dear Families,

As Thanksgiving approaches, I want to express how grateful I am for your patience and partnership, and how honored I am to serve you and your children. We have been through so much together this year. But despite these trying times, we have shown the nation, and the world, that New York City is not just a sprawling metropolis, but a community of good, caring people who—when times are difficult—come together to protect and support each other.

Closing all our school buildings to in-person learning for the second time this year has been one of the most painful actions I have had to take as Schools Chancellor. I know it's disappointing for the hundreds of thousands of students who were thrilled to be back in classrooms learning face-to-face with their teachers and classmates. It is equally hard on adults, who have been forced to make more adjustments to their schedules and lives. However, this is a temporary closure, and we will reopen as soon as it is safe to do so. You and your family are part of this effort—because it will take all of us to once again drive COVID-19 rates down so we can reopen our doors to teaching and learning.

The increasing levels of COVID-19 infection overall in the city are very concerning, and we must strengthen precautions further for our school communities. Therefore, no student will be permitted to return to the building without a signed consent form for in-school testing. Your consent must be submitted by the first day your child resumes in-person learning. If you have already provided consent via NYCSA or a paper form, we encourage you to submit it again to ensure we have the most up to date form on file. You can find instructions on easy ways to submit consent below.

In the meantime, we have pulled together some resources to help you and your children get the most out of fully remote learning. In this Update for Families, you will find information on:

- devices for remote learning
- attendance requirements for remote instruction
- grading in the 2020-21 school year
- how to provide consent for in-school testing (when blended learning resumes)

I also want to remind you that the ninth annual Big Apple Awards, honoring outstanding teachers and college and career counselors, recently kicked off. This year, it feels especially important to honor the teachers or counselors who have made a difference in your child's life. Nominate an educator by January 10, 2021 by visiting the Big Apple Awards website at schools.nyc.gov/bigappleawards.

And a quick reminder for our high school families that the Board of Regents and the New York State Education Department have cancelled all Regents exams that had been scheduled for January 2021. No decisions have been made regarding the June and August 2021 administrations of the Regents exam, but we'll share updates as we receive them.

As we continue to focus on immediate issues and needs in this unprecedented year, we are also thinking about the future, especially around middle and high school admissions. We are carefully examining all potential paths for admissions policies for the 2021-22 school year, and we look forward to sharing an update as soon as possible.

We have achieved so much together despite so many unsettling challenges. I want to assure you that everyone at the DOE is working tirelessly to ensure your children continue to receive the high-quality education they deserve.

On behalf of myself and everyone at the Department of Education, I wish you and your families a happy, healthy Thanksgiving.

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, November 24, 2020

Devices for Remote Learning

Do you need a device or technical support? Need help with a broken, lost, or stolen device? Call DOE's IT Help desk at 718-935-5100 and press 5 to get assistance.

You can also get quick help online:

- Browse tech support topics: schools.nyc.gov/technicaltools
- File a tech support ticket: schools.nyc.gov/techsupport
- Request a device: schools.nyc.gov/devices
- Get support with a DOE-issued iPad: schools.nyc.gov/ipadfixes
- Issues with your Internet connection: schools.nyc.gov/internet

For information on platforms your child may use and ways to support them during remote learning, visit schools.nyc.gov/remotecompletechecklist.

Attendance Requirements for Remote Instruction

As we continue to adjust to all the changes this school year, one thing that remains the same is our goal to have every student learning and connecting with a caring adult from their school each day. As previously announced, for the 2020-21 school year, we are returning to more traditional definitions for attendance that track a student's engagement in learning and instruction.

- “Present” is defined as participating and being virtually present in a specific virtual learning environment during the scheduled school day, or participating in scheduled coursework. This may look like logging into full or small group instruction over Zoom, participating in student-teacher check-ins, completing pre-recorded lessons and coursework, or participating in group projects and discussions in an online setting.
- “Absent” is defined as not being present during a remote class, remote lesson, or scheduled teacher-student instruction during the scheduled school day.

Grading in the 2020-21 School Year

Schools' grading policies will reflect the new ways students complete their work in blended and remote learning models. This means flexibility with assignments, giving students different ways to show what they have learned.

Grades will still be based on academic progress and performance, considering students' entire body of work in each subject. This year, each school selects its own grading scale from among several options including a scale of 1-4, a numerical scale (100 points), and an alphabetical scale (A-D).

You can find more information on grading at schools.NYC.gov/messagesforfamilies/#grading.

How to Provide Consent for In-school Testing

When we return to in-person learning, students from grades 1-12 will be participating in random testing for COVID-19 through the rest of the school year. Regular testing of staff and students in schools allows us to keep our schools and broader communities healthy and safe. More than 57,000 students have already been tested across the city. The testing process is quick and easy, and entails swabbing the anterior nasal area/frontal part of the nose with a short swab (like a Q-tip). The swab length may vary, but only a small portion is inserted into the front part of the nose for five to 10 seconds.

To ensure that your child can be tested, please submit a consent form for testing. You can complete the consent in two easy ways:

1. **Online:** Fill out the form online using a New York City Schools Account (NYCSA). Go to mystudent.nyc
 - If you already have a NYCSA account linked to your student(s): Log in, click your student's name, click "Manage Account," and then when a dropdown menu appears, click "Consent Forms." Read the page, and then choose the consent option at the end for your student.
 - If you do not already have a NYCSA account: You can create one right away! If you have an account creation code from your school, you can create a full account in approximately five minutes, and then provide consent as described above. If you do not have an account creation code from your school, you can still provide your consent right away by clicking "Manage Consent" under "COVID-19 Testing" and filling out your and your child's information to provide consent.
2. **Paper form:** Fill out and return the paper form to school. A printable PDF file is available in ten languages at schools.nyc.gov/covidtesting.

Your consent must be submitted by the first day your child resumes in-person learning. If you have already provided consent for your child to be tested, we encourage you to submit it again to ensure we have the most up to date form on file.

You can find additional information about consent and testing under *Frequently Asked Questions* at schools.nyc.gov/covidtesting.