

# New York City Department of Education’s School Reopening Plan Submission to the New York State Department of Health

This the New York City Department of Education’s School Re-Opening Plan as required by the New York State Department of Health. The health and safety aspects of DOE's plan shall apply, where necessary to protect the health and safety of all students and staff in a building, to all DOE school buildings, including charter schools co-located in DOE school buildings.

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On behalf of the New York City Department of Education, please accept the submission of the following plan pursuant to the Department of Health’s *Interim Guidance for In-Person Instruction at Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency*. This plan meets the standards as outlined by the Department of Health and is informed by deep engagement with school community stakeholders. It may be updated in the coming days and weeks.

Nothing is more important to me than the health and safety of our students, educators, and school communities. New York City has been the epicenter of the crisis, and we will not reopen buildings if the community transmission rate is above 3% over a seven-day rolling average. Over the past four months, the New York City Department of Education has been exhaustively planning for an ever-changing landscape, while keeping health and safety at the center of our planning. We have leveraged the expertise of our partners at the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, NYC Health and Hospitals, and the New York City Test and Trace Corps to develop rigorous protocols to ensure our schools are well prepared. With their collaboration, we will take swift and decisive action when needed to address any issues of concern and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in school buildings.

This submission builds on the preliminary plans that I released on July 8<sup>th</sup>, where I outlined essential planning information to school communities regarding social distancing, health and hygiene measures, and models to ensure safe instructional programming of students while still ensuring academic rigor. NYCDOE is committed to providing continuous policy updates and has been doing so on a weekly basis since, both on our website and via regular updates to our principals and school communities. All of our policies will always be guided first and foremost by health and safety.

The information included in this plan will be similarly shared with stakeholders, whose input and voices have been critical to its development. We know that it is essential that

we navigate this new territory in partnership with school communities across the city. We have listened to the voices of families and students to ensure our plans are responsive to their needs and concerns. We have lifted up the voices of educators and worked collaboratively with principals to keep the safety of our staff as a driving factor our decision-making.

Additionally, we created multiple opportunities for feedback and questions through citywide and school-based information sessions, which will continue over the next several weeks.

As we continue to prepare for the 2020-2021 school year—which will look like no other in history—I am confident in the preparedness of the New York City Department of Education. We have the best students, staff, and families anywhere in the world. Working together, we can meet the unprecedented challenges presented by COVID-19 while ensuring a safe, welcoming, and academically rigorous return to school.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Carranza

## **REOPENING**

**Capacity: Phasing and quantity of students, faculty, and staff allowed to return in-person, considering factors such as ability to maintain appropriate social distance, personal protective equipment (PPE) availability, local medical capacity, and availability of safe transportation.**

In order to provide the maximum number of students access to in-person instruction at each school while following health and safety plans, students will rotate in groups between in-person and remote learning (known as blended learning for the purposes of this document). Each school was provided a preliminary estimate of what their space allows when accounting for social distancing. These building capacity calculations allow for at least six feet of space to be maintained around each person in a classroom, while ensuring that there remains room for teachers and students to circulate.

The Department of Education has developed three baseline programming options for schools to choose from. The models, having been created by analyzing system-wide constraints, researching national and international best practices, surveying families and students, and by holding focus groups with school leaders, are meant to support schools in determining how to serve the needs of their students and families in line with health and safety guidance. These

models apply to Elementary (including early childhood grades), Middle, and High Schools. Two additional models are available for District 75 schools, a citywide school district with schools that provide highly specialized instructional support for students with significant challenges, such as Autism Spectrum Disorders, significant cognitive delays, emotional disturbances, sensory impairments, and multiple disabilities. Schools will be able to apply for an exception to implement an alternative model based on that school's specific needs. Families will be notified of their student's specific schedule in August. More details on programming models can be found here: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-year-20-21/return-to-school-2020/school-schedules>.

Families will also have the choice to opt-in to an all-remote schedule next fall. Students will not need a medical reason to register for this option. Families will have the option to transition to blended learning during set time periods for their child, and will be asked to register two weeks prior to the start of the when their child would switch to in-person instruction to give schools time to plan. Principals will make further adjustments based on expected in-person student and staff attendance for the first time in August.

### **Social Distancing: Protocols and procedures for students, faculty, and staff to ensure appropriate social distancing when on school grounds and in school facilities.**

The health and safety of the [New York City Department of Education's \(NYCDOE\) students and staff](#) are a top priority. Safely reopening schools for in-person learning means significant changes to classroom capacity. In order to fully comply with the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and [New York State's physical distancing requirements](#) that reduce the spread of COVID-19 ([as outlined by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene \(DOHMH\)](#)), schools will operate at significantly reduced capacity for in-person instruction, with, on average, between half and one third of the student population attending at one time. Maximum capacity has been determined using a formulaic approach that calculates the space needed to be in compliance with COVID-19 health and safety protocols including maintaining at least six feet of physical distancing-

NYCDOE will continue to support schools in ensuring that conditions make physical distancing possible. Schools will receive signage, including but not limited to signs to remind individuals to remain six feet apart, signs to support appropriate movement protocols, and floor markers that show six feet in distance. The NYCDOE will support schools in redesigning movement protocols within a building to minimize congestion, including but not limited to designating one-way direction stairwells, single file routes, and requiring students to stay on campus during lunch periods. This includes larger shared spaces (e.g.: gyms, cafeterias, auditoriums, school-yards) and protocols on entrance and departure from the building.

**PPE and Face Coverings: Protocols and procedures for students, faculty, staff, and other individuals to ensure appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is used to protect against the transmission of the COVID-19 virus when on school grounds and in school facilities, including buses.**

Face coverings are a proven effective tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and are a necessary component for the NYCDOE's plans for school reopening and for ensuring the safety of students and staff. [As face coverings contribute to slowing the transmission of COVID-19](#), face coverings will be required inside school buildings. Exceptions will be developmentally- and age-appropriate, consistent with guidance of health agencies, and paired with increased PPE for staff. [See below for more information re: special populations.]

NYCDOE will procure and distribute appropriate PPE for students and staff to use when inside school buildings. This will be done by central administration for and on behalf of schools, prioritizing school budgets for educational needs. Students and staff will be able to bring their own face coverings, but if for any reason someone comes to a school building without the needed PPE, the NYCDOE will have face coverings available. Certain titles/roles will receive additional PPE consistent with their professional responsibilities (i.e., health professionals who may have increased contact with staff/students, those titles who may conduct entry screenings, etc). The nurse/health professional and any additional staff supervising a school building's Isolation Room will be given the appropriate PPE, including, but not limited to, N95 respirator masks, gloves, gowns, and face shields or goggles.

Signage will be provided to remind students, faculty, and staff of the importance of wearing appropriate PPE.

**Operational Activity: Determinations on how classes, shared spaces, and activities may be adapted in various phases of learning and operations (e.g., identify which, if any, students will be offered alternate approaches, such as alternative schedules or hybrids of in-person and remote learning; how additional and alternative—school and non-school—spaces can be used for, or in support of, in-person instruction; how such schedules could be administered to create overlap for students from the same household; how shared spaces, such as cafeterias, libraries, playgrounds, and gymnasiums, will be modified and used, if and how cohorts will be implemented). Policies regarding field trips, special congregate events, and visitors considering risks for COVID-19 transmission, as well as protocols and procedures for social distancing, PPE usage, and cleaning and disinfection, which may include conducting virtual events;**

#### General Protocols

- Physical distancing guidelines and mandatory use of face coverings must be enforced for all individuals while in the building. Exceptions to face covering usage are as follows:

- Students who cannot tolerate a face covering medically, including where students with such coverings would impair their physical or mental health, will not be subject to wearing a face covering.
- Where the use of face covering is inappropriate considering the development level or age of the student.
- Appropriate signage (e.g., six-foot space markings and directional signs) should be used outdoors as needed, and must be visible upon entry and throughout school buildings, including entrances, exits, classrooms, offices, public assembly spaces and corridors.
- Signage, face coverings, and other forms of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as hand sanitizer, gloves, and thermometers, will be provided by Central.
- Hand sanitizing dispensers will be installed throughout co-located spaces and high traffic areas.
- Wellness barriers will be provided by Central, to be placed in the general office, and at the main school safety desk.
- Co-located schools will receive a wellness barrier for each school's general office.
- Custodians will sanitize school building on a nightly basis with an electrostatic sprayer that is CDC approved. Cleaning and disinfection will include all high touch surfaces: classrooms, desks & chairs, conference tables, drinking fountains, door handles and push plates, conference tables, light switches, restroom fixtures, partitions and hardware, buttons on hardware, buttons on vending machines, elevator buttons, gym padding, and physical therapy equipment.

### Student Circulation

- School leaders must create plans to support movement that upholds physical distancing throughout the building, e.g. the use of one directional stairwells and single file travel patterns.
- Elevator use should be limited to individuals with special needs or in high-rise buildings and should be operated at limited capacity as per current DOHMH guidance (2 persons per elevator), and face coverings must be worn at all times.
- Face coverings must be worn at all times except while eating or drinking.
- Per SDOH guidelines, appropriate signage, e.g., directional markers and physical distancing guidelines, must be displayed on walls and floors throughout all travel routes.
- Travel areas should be appropriately staffed to support students with physical distancing guidelines.
- To reduce movement throughout the building, teachers should travel from class to class, with students remaining in the same room throughout the day to the extent possible. If students have to travel, proper social distancing protocols should be followed.
- Where possible, students should remain with the same group of students, in a cohort, throughout the day.

- DOE is developing additional guidance as it relates to cohorts and grades. DOE will support creation of cohorts wherever possible.
- Where feasible, co-located schools should have designated hallways and stairwells. For co-located campuses, Building Council discussion should take place in order to norm student movement.

### Bathroom Usage (For Students and Staff)

- Bathroom use must not exceed established cap (based on physical distancing guidelines) at any given time.
- Schools may adjust how bathrooms are used to accommodate for physical distancing requirements, e.g., use of alternate stalls and/or sinks.
- Appropriate signage regarding hand washing and physical distancing must be displayed.
- Where feasible, co-located schools should have designated bathrooms

### Public Assembly Spaces

Use of large assembly spaces (e.g. cafeterias, auditoriums, libraries, and, gymnasiums) must comply with physical distancing guidelines.

These areas may be used as additional classroom spaces in lieu of or in addition to their traditional use.

Cafeterias may be used for instructional spaces depending on school need. Cafeterias may only be used for food service for students who are receiving their instruction there. Cafeterias must adhere to the same health and safety protocols in classroom settings. School leaders should refer to [the Physical Education Expectations for In-Person and Remote Instruction policy](#) when making decisions regarding the use of gymnasiums.

Spaces accommodate different sections of students on any given day. As always, Building Councils in co-located campuses must agree on how spaces will be shared and used.

Building Council decisions around the allocation of shared space should be driven by several factors, including number of shared spaces, number of schools, number of students in each school, as well as selected instruction models will require cleaning between uses.

Some approaches which may be applied to the decision-making process, using the cafeteria and auditorium spaces as examples, include:

- Space Designation - In this scenario school A utilizes the cafeteria exclusively as classroom space while School B utilizes the auditorium exclusively.
- Alternating Days - In this scenario school A utilizes the cafeteria on Mondays and Wednesdays while School B uses it on Tuesdays and Fridays.

- Rotation Schedule - In this scenario Schools A and B utilize the cafeteria and auditorium respectively one week and schools C and D utilize it the following week. This rotation would repeat in subsequent weeks.

#### Exterior Spaces/Play Yards

- Multiple cohorts of students may use larger exterior spaces concurrently, provided that physical distancing is practiced between and within cohorts and students are well supervised.
- Blending of different cohorts or school organizations should not be permitted as it could complicate contact tracing efforts and increase risk of transmission.
- Co-located schools should ensure that spaces are shared equitably and safely.
- Ground markings may be used to encourage physical distancing.
- Schools should endeavor to maximize the use of outdoor space for multiple uses, including instruction where feasible and appropriate.

#### Student Dismissal

- Schools must adopt procedures that allow students to engage in physical distancing while exiting the building.
- Additional school personnel should be deployed strategically to assist students.
- Schools must identify designated points of egress using signage visible to all.
- Schools should consider the use of staggered dismissal times and multiple exits.
- Co-located schools should use separate exits to the extent possible.
- For students being dismissed, e.g., play yards, physical distancing markers and directional signs must be in use.
- Families must be aware of exit procedures and encouraged to arrive at designated times to avoid congestion.
- Schools must assign staff to school yard or exterior of school to encourage students and parents to not congregate outside.
- Conspicuously post signage at points of egress identifying the dismissal protocols and DOHMH's four core actions to stop the spread of COVID-19: stay home if sick, keep physical distance, keep your hands clean, and wear a face covering. Signage will be available in multiple languages.

#### Policies regarding field trips, special congregate events, and visitors

At this time, schools must cancel/limit on site student assemblies, athletic events/practices, performances, school-wide parent meetings and, to the extent possible, transition field trips to free virtual opportunities. The DOE will also strongly encourage all schools to change any regularly or previously scheduled in-school events to a virtual format; and limit visitors to school buildings. Any in-person meeting needs to comply with the processes outlined in this policy.

Minimizing opportunities for spread is a necessary component for maintaining health and safety in NYCDOE schools. In an effort to limit the number of visitors in a school at any given time, [as recommended by the CDC](#), schools are encouraged, where possible, to address all visitor and family concerns by phone or computer. Principals and designated staff should conduct meetings remotely where possible. When it is essential to hold an in-person meeting, all visitors are required to follow the visitor control protocols, including complying with physical distancing requirements and wearing a face covering.

All visitors must receive a visitor's pass, which must be returned upon exiting the building. All visitors must be escorted to and from the meeting destination, in order to prevent visitors from accessing unauthorized areas, limiting the possibility of exposure. If a parent is called to the school to pick up their child, the child must be brought to the main lobby to meet the parent.

Non-essential individuals should not be allowed to enter school buildings. All packages are to be delivered to the main lobby in a manner consistent with physical distancing protocols, or to another location if proper physical distancing cannot be met with lobby deliveries. Co-located schools must be aligned on policies governing how adults are allowed to enter and traverse the building.

Schools must develop practices to eliminate the need for families to enter school buildings to drop off or pick up children, except for 3-K and Pre-K families during the first month of school.

The DOE will notify the DOHMH immediately upon being informed of any positive COVID-19 diagnostic test result by an individual within school facilities or on school grounds, including visitors pursuant to New York City test and trace protocol. In the case of an individual testing positive, the DOE has developed plans to support local health departments in tracing all contacts of the individual, in accordance with the protocols, training, and tools provided through a partnership with DOHMH and Test + Trace Corps.

**Restart Operations: Plans to safely reopen facilities and grounds, such as cleaning and disinfection, and restarting building ventilation, water systems, and other key facility components.**

DOE buildings are never closed to maintenance and critical operations. We continue to perform water flushing, maintain life safety systems, and regular cleaning and disinfecting, especially in buildings that are Regional Education Centers, (RECs), food hubs, and COVID testing sites.

DOE completed a survey of HVAC systems and window operability to identify necessary repairs. We are working with the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) to complete repairs and ensure air circulation before start of school. We are also upgrading central HVAC system filters from MERV 8 to MERV 13 where appropriate.

At the start of the school year, DOE will provide all schools with necessary health and cleaning supplies to help protect students and staff from COVID-19, including hand sanitizer, soap, and disinfectants. DOE conducted a survey of all hand washing sinks and will make necessary repairs prior to school opening. We will make the maximum number of sinks available for handwashing, including the recommissioning of hand washing sinks with tempered outlets that were previously offline. DOE will also increase cleaning throughout the school day, with special attention to high-touch areas.

When the school year begins, schools will need to implement enhanced cleaning and disinfection of surfaces to ensure the health and safety of staff and students. DOE will continue the rigorous practices used to prepare buildings for reopening, including: providing adequate cleaning and disinfection supplies or plan to procure those supplies; requiring deep cleanings to be completed on a nightly basis, including with the use of electrostatic sprayers; setting-up enhanced cleaning in classrooms, bathrooms, and for high touch areas such as doorknobs and shared equipment such as laptops; providing teachers with cleaning supplies for classrooms. There will be increased access and regular opportunities for students and staff to wash hands or use hand sanitizer throughout the day.

**Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfection: Protocols and procedures for school-wide cleaning and disinfection of classrooms, restrooms, cafeterias, libraries, playgrounds, school buses, and all other school facilities, as well as training and promotion of hand and respiratory hygiene among all individuals in school facilities and on school grounds.**

Guidance from [the CDC](#), [New York State Department of Health](#), and [NYC's DOHMH](#) all point to the importance of frequent access to handwashing in preventing the spread of COVID-19. It is a necessary component for ensuring the health and safety of NYCDOE students and staff. There will be increased access and regular opportunities for students and staff to wash hands or use hand sanitizer throughout the day. At the start of the school year, DOE will provide all schools with necessary health and cleaning supplies to help protect students and staff from COVID-19, including hand sanitizer, soap, and disinfectants. DOE will make the maximum number of sinks available for handwashing. DOE will increase cleaning throughout the school day, with special attention to high-touch areas.

Schools will need to implement enhanced cleaning and disinfection of surfaces to ensure the health and safety of staff and students. Throughout the school year, DOE will continue the rigorous practices used to prepare buildings for reopening, including: providing adequate cleaning and disinfection supplies or plan to procure those supplies; requiring deep cleanings to be completed on a nightly basis, including with the use of electrostatic sprayers; repairing and maintaining HVAC systems to ensure proper ventilation; setting-up enhanced cleaning in classrooms, bathrooms, and for high touch areas such as doorknobs and shared equipment such as laptops; providing teachers with cleaning supplies for classrooms.

**Extracurriculars: Policies regarding extracurricular programs and which activities will be allowed, considering social distancing, PPE usage, and cleaning and disinfection, as well as risk of COVID-19 transmission (e.g., interscholastic sports, assemblies, and other gatherings).**

Policies should consider how to maintain cohorts, if applicable, or members of the same household.

As students in New York City return to schools after months of isolated and sedentary living, it is more important than ever to support and promote opportunities for physical activity and safe socialization during and after the school day. Extracurricular activities and before or after school programs serve as a critical means to cultivate student voice, empower youth, and provide access to experiential opportunities and skill development to children who would not otherwise be afforded such opportunities.

All extracurricular and afterschool activities, inclusive of Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD) elementary school and middle school programs, must adhere to the guidelines and recommendations set for school opening, including all health and safety guidelines.

The DOE will be issuing additional guidance on afterschool programming, but it is important to note that afterschool programs will require increased custodial labor and programs will incur extra extended use costs to pay for those services. Additionally, afterschool programs must adhere to DOE health policy regarding face coverings and other personal protective equipment and these programs will be required to provide those items for staff and students.

As of the submission of this document, the [New York State Department of Health](#) has stated “interscholastic sports are not permitted at this time.” The NYCDOE will comply with this regulation and specific Public Schools Athletic League (PSAL) and CHAMPS (middle-school, afterschool physical activity program) guidance on those official offerings will be forthcoming for when interscholastic sports are permitted to resume.

When schools are deciding what extracurricular and afterschool activities should be offered this school year, the following factors must be considered:

- The level of risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Associated modifications that will be needed to lower transmission risk.
- In what form the activity will be possible.
- Level of interest in the activity from students and families.

All extracurricular activities that include physical activity must consider these additional factors:

- Certain activities pose a higher risk for transmission than others. The higher the risk, the more modifications will be needed OR the activity may not be able to be offered at the outset of the school year.
- Eliminate student-to-student contact.
- Ensure students and staff observe physical distancing protocols to remain six feet apart for low-to-moderate activity, and 12 feet apart for any vigorous activity.
  - Design activities for the space in which they will take place, e.g. classroom vs. outdoor space, and the number of students present. Activities should be low-to-moderate when there are 6 feet between students, focusing on individual activities. If 12 feet of space between students is available, moderate-to-vigorous physical activities may be appropriate.
- Programs should follow DOHMH guidelines regarding sharing or passing of equipment and use of playground equipment.
- As much as possible, hold activities outdoors or in well-ventilated spaces.
- Ensure students wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after each activity.
- Avoid using locker rooms.
- Establish boundaries (safe zones) to maintain at least six feet of distance throughout the activity.

Schools offering extracurricular and afterschool programming will uphold the following:

- Any in-person activity that takes place after the regular school day should be limited on a daily basis to students who were in physical attendance on that given day within the same school building.
- Schools should keep students in the same groupings during the day and in afterschool programming (e.g., by age, by class/cohort).
- Wherever possible, schools should work to offer remote options for those students not attending in-person.
- After hours dismissal procedures should align with school day dismissal processes and adhere to health and safety protocols.  
If a student feels unwell prior to or during an afterschool activity, the school should follow standard COVID response protocols.
- Afterschool program staff who work at a location or school other than where they are supervising afterschool activities/coaching are required to follow daily entry protocols upon arrival to the afterschool site.

**Before and Aftercare: Policies regarding before and aftercare programs, considering social distancing, PPE usage, and cleaning and disinfection requirements, as well as risk of COVID-19 transmission. Policies should consider how to maintain cohorts, if applicable, or group members of the same household;**

Please see the answer above.

**Vulnerable Populations: Policies regarding vulnerable populations, including students, faculty and staff who are at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness, and individuals who may not feel comfortable returning to an in-person educational environment, must be developed to allow them to safely participate in educational activities and, where appropriate, accommodate their specific circumstances. These accommodations may include but are not limited to: remote learning or telework, modified educational or work settings, or providing additional PPE to individuals with underlying health conditions.**

Families will have the choice to opt-in to an all-remote schedule next fall. Students will not need a medical reason to register for this option. Families will have the option to review this decision during set time periods for their child, and will be asked to register two weeks prior to the start of when their child would switch to in person instruction to give schools time to plan. Principals will make further adjustments based on expected in-person student and staff attendance for the first time in August.

All DOE employees who are older adults and/or have underlying medical condition(s) that create an increased risk of severe illness should they contract COVID-19, may be eligible for a reasonable accommodation to work remotely at the start of the school year. A reasonable accommodation to work from home will be considered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and in line with the medical conditions as set forth by the CDC. In order to submit an application, staff must also provide medical documentation at the same time.

Schools and offices may consider the needs of staff who may not feel comfortable returning to an in-person educational environment when making assignments and modifying work settings and/or schedules where possible.

**Vulnerable Populations, Part Two: Responsible Parties must identify and describe any modifications to social distancing or PPE that may be necessary for certain student or staff populations, including individuals who have hearing impairment or loss, students receiving language services, and young students in early education programs, ensuring that any modifications minimize COVID-19 exposure risk for students, faculty, and staff, to the greatest extent possible.**

Staff and students must follow PPE and social distancing guidelines except when modifications are necessary as set forth above.

Face coverings or masks should not be placed on anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. Schools should follow CDC guidance on the use of cloth face coverings in schools.

Teachers and related service providers may require a clear face shield to be available for use in specific types of intervention or when deemed appropriate. The teacher/provider will determine when the face shield is needed based upon students' IEP goals, needs, intervention strategies, and professional judgment. A clear face shield should be utilized only by the person to whom it was assigned and may not be shared with another staff member. Clear face coverings should be cleaned after each session using CDC-approved cleaning materials.

If the mask is a distraction to the student because its use is developmentally inappropriate as determined on a case-by-case basis, the teacher/provider can allow the student to take the mask off. In such a case, the teacher/provider should then ensure as much as possible that 6 feet of distance are maintained between the provider and student. If a student's face covering/mask is removed, it should be removed with gloved hands. Gloves and proper sanitation should always be used when touching a used or contaminated face covering/mask. Handwashing/sanitizing protocol must be followed after touching a used or contaminated face covering/mask.

In some cases, it may not be possible for a staff member to maintain 6 feet of distance from a student. For example, a nurse supporting a student's medical needs or a paraprofessional assisting a student with toileting or mobility/ambulation may be required to work within 6 feet of the student. Gloves, face coverings and proper sanitation should always be used when working within 6 feet of a student. Handwashing/sanitizing protocol must be followed after periods during which social distancing cannot be maintained.

**Transportation: Consistent with State-issued public transit guidance, protocols and procedures, which include that individuals must wear acceptable face coverings at all times on school buses (e.g., entering, exiting, and seated), and that individuals should maintain appropriate social distancing, unless they are members of the same household. Protocols and procedures should include how school buses will be adapted to keep students and staff safe(e.g., how face covering swill be provided to students in need, how members of the same household will be seated together, how social distancing will be conducted on buses, whether bus schedules will be adapted to accommodate reduced capacity, whether any health screening will be conducted at home before students board buses, how parents/legal guardians will be encouraged to drop off or walk students to reduce density on buses);**

While it is widely recognized that the current pandemic presents unique challenges to providing school bus service and that it may not be possible to provide service in all cases, to the extent possible, DOE will provide school transportation, as required, to include all public, non-public, charter schools, students with special needs and students in temporary housing situations. Because of this unique situation, it may not be possible to provide transportation through a conventional mode such as a bus, and may require other modes to be employed to satisfy transportation needs, such as MetroCard. Likewise, this also applies to any after-school

transportation needs as well. The DOE is actively engaged in a complex routing exercise that is attempting to account for new parameters around a mix of socially distanced in-person learning and remote learning.

Consistent with State-issued public transit guidance, protocols and procedures, individuals must wear acceptable face coverings at all times on any DOE school transport vehicle (e.g., entering, exiting, and seated), and should maintain appropriate social distancing, unless they are members of the same household. Protocols and procedures will include how DOE school transport vehicles will be adapted to keep students and staff safe (e.g., how face coverings will be provided to students in need, how members of the same household will be seated together, how social distancing will be conducted on buses, whether bus schedules will be adapted to accommodate reduced capacity, whether any health screening will be conducted at home before students board buses, and how parents/legal guardians will be encouraged to drop off or walk students to reduce density on buses).

In the event that a child does not have a face covering when attempting to board a bus, protective face coverings will be available for distribution at the bus door inside the bus. Social distancing requirements will reduce the typical school bus capacity to approximately 25% of its normal operating passenger capacity. The only exception to this will be students from the same household who will be seated with each other and will still be required to wear face masks. Seating on the bus will be clearly marked to designate which seats may be used and which seats will be blocked off for social distancing. Families will be notified prior to the start of school as to what the seat designators will look like so that they can instruct their children prior to boarding the bus. Wherever possible, individual bus route rosters will be scrutinized to attempt to seat individuals in proximity to the rear emergency exit that are capable of operating it.

Parents should screen their children prior to boarding a bus to make certain that their child is well enough to board a bus and attend school, which may include temperature checks as needed. Bus personnel will not be administering screening prior to buses being boarded.

All DOE school transportation vehicles will be cleaned and disinfected each day using CDC recommended cleaning and disinfection protocols, the specifics of which will be provided to parents prior to the start of school. Parents will need to read these specifics prior to the start of school to assure that the materials being utilized will not have an adverse reaction on their children.

Upon arrival at a destination where a passenger(s) will be exiting the bus, the bus operator/aide will direct students to exit one row at a time in order to avoid students from being in close proximity to one another. Students exiting a bus at school should continue to wear their face covering. Each individual school will establish specific procedures for students as to where/how they are to assemble, and these specifics will be communicated by the individual schools prior to the start of school.

In recognizing the impact of this pandemic, the DOE is recommending that families, wherever possible, help reduce the number of students in need of busing by either transporting their children to school on their own, walking, or biking. In cases where parents are utilizing public transit to transport their children, families should have their children wear a face covering and practice social distancing while en route to and returning home from school to the extent possible.

**Food Services: Protocols and procedures must be developed for onsite and remote food services for students, considering appropriate social distancing and any modifications to service that may be necessary (e.g., providing meals in a combination of classrooms and cafeterias, staggering meal periods). Measures must be taken to protect students with food allergies if providing meals in spaces outside the cafeteria. Protocols and procedures must also include how students will perform hand hygiene before and after eating, how appropriate hand hygiene will be promoted, and how sharing of food and beverages will be discouraged. Additionally, protocols and procedures must account for cleaning and disinfection prior to the next group of students arriving for meals, if served in the same common area (e.g. the cafeteria).**

Grab-and-go meals will be available for breakfast and lunch each day, though students will also be permitted to bring their own lunch if preferred. Lunch will likely be in classrooms to minimize interaction between groups of students. Grab-and-go meals will be delivered to students in 3K to K classrooms, and pickup points within the school will be designated for grades 1-12. Signage will be provided to direct students to pick up points within the school for grades 1-12.

If the cafeteria must be used, schools must maintain appropriate physical distancing. After eating, students and staff will wipe down the area where they ate their meal. Every evening, our Division of School Facilities will be sanitizing the entire building with COVID-19 approved disinfectant.

Students who are not receiving in-person instruction on a given day can pick up a lunch from their home school or an identified school building near their home.

We want to ensure that children receive the best care possible while at school. The DOE takes allergies, food safety, and student health very seriously. We cannot guarantee a nut, milk or “allergen-free” environment, but we do have an “allergen aware” policy which empowers everyone. Children with allergies become aware of what they can and cannot eat, and school staff are alert and careful about each student’s allergies. School staff will work with the parent and the child’s health care provider to create an allergy response plan for each child that needs one. In the case of a severe allergic reaction, the affected child will immediately be given his/her prescribed medicine by trained school staff or a nurse. If the child has severe allergies, we request parents have health care providers complete the [Medical Review for Severe](#)

[Allergies form and complete an Allergy Response Plan](#). School staff will call 911, and contact the child's parent and health care provider in cases of severe allergic reactions and emergencies. Lastly, the school nurse will train school staff members to enact the child's allergy response plan in an emergency.

**Mental Health, Behavioral, and Emotional Support Services and Programs: Available resources and referrals to address mental health, behavioral, and emotional needs of students, faculty, and staff when school reopens for in-person instruction. Any training for faculty and staff on how to talk with, and support, students during and after the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, as well as information on developing coping and resilience skills for students, faculty, and staff.**

[As stated by the CDC](#), a return to in-person schooling provides students with access to a variety of mental health and social services. Without in-person schooling, many students may lose access to vital services. Even outside the context of school closures, young people often do not receive the mental health treatment they need. In alignment with NYSED guidance, supporting student and staff social-emotional needs across school communities (remote and blended) must be a top priority in order to create the mental, social, and emotional foundations for academic learning to occur. Social-emotional learning (SEL) can provide stabilization and consistency for all students during this challenging time.

Unprecedented levels of stress, trauma, and social isolation from COVID-19 have created a public health emergency, with a notable disproportionate impact for low-income communities and communities of color. When students return to school this fall, many will be struggling with increased anxiety, depression, trauma, and grief that will impact their ability to engage in learning and remain focused on their educational goals. Addressing the social-emotional needs of school communities through trauma-informed approaches to teaching and learning must be a top priority for school re-opening and throughout the year. To advance this priority, the NYCDOE will support for staff at all levels to understand to understand trauma and build trauma-informed approaches into their practices and plans for the coming school year. NYCDOE is committed to partnering with communities to create trauma-informed schools that offer robust SEL and mental health support through a tiered infrastructure, with a focus on community building and resilience.

In order to fulfill the vision for comprehensive mental health and SEL supports across all DOE schools in SY2020-2021, the NYCDOE will support schools, where possible, in developing the following core components:

- Trauma-Informed Care
- Bridge to School Plan
- Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Infrastructure

- Strengthen Tier 1 SEL (Explicit SEL Instruction and SEL-Academic Integration)
- Targeted Mental Health Supports

### Trauma-Informed Care (TIC)

Through cross-divisional and inter-agency partnerships, the NYCDOE will implement a comprehensive, multi-part professional learning series that empowers teachers with foundational knowledge and basic skills of trauma-informed care; this is for all staff serving students from Birth to 5 and K-12 populations. Anchored in a continuum from trauma-aware to trauma-informed, this series will include foundational elements to be completed between July and September 2020 with the possibility of supplemental sessions interspersed throughout the school year. These trauma modules include examination of equity and cultural considerations, the importance of adult self-care, and actionable trauma-informed strategies for classroom teachers and all support staff. School leaders will also participate in a supplemental training series that offers specialized content for framing TIC in a broader school vision and how to establish systems of support for implementation.

### Bridge to School Plan

In order to support the long-term mental health of students, families, and educators, schools must prioritize SEL and wellness during the initial re-opening transition, ensuring that all students have access to a foundational period of stabilization and support. This period should include opportunities to build coping skills, process grief, re-connect, build community, and orient themselves to the new dual environments and expectations. By establishing this emotional foundation, the number of students requiring intensive clinical mental health services may be reduced. Standardizing this initial care also prevents adults from pathologizing behavior that reflects a normal stress response and prevents students from being re-traumatized by a premature referral for clinical services. NYCDOE is creating school-facing resources that include sample activities and general best practices for a positive re-opening transition, with a focus on key themes of community and resilience.

### Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

The DOE wants to ensure that all schools are equipped to offer tiered social-emotional and mental health supports to students, as determined through a data-based decision-making process. Schools can seek supports from the DOE to help build a robust MTSS infrastructure.

### Strengthen Tier 1 SEL (Explicit SEL Instruction and SEL-Academic Integration)

Prior to COVID-19, NYCDOE provided recommendations and expanded access to SEL curricula in elementary, middle, and high school through citywide expansion of Sanford Harmony, RULER, and Restorative Practices. These evidence-based models support each of the key actions identified by the Collaborative for Academic and Social-Emotional Learning (CASEL): community building, SEL-academic integration, and explicit SEL instruction. They also support a trauma-

informed care approach by creating opportunities to develop positive relationships and build students' self-regulation skills.

This year, in response to increased needs generated by COVID-19, all schools are encouraged to adopt an age- and developmentally-appropriate SEL program. Schools are encouraged to select the program that best meets the needs of their students. School teams can reference the publicly available [CASEL Program Guide](#) that evaluates additional SEL programs for use in the classroom and in explicit SEL instruction.

Integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into core academic instruction ensures that students are experiencing safe, welcoming, and culturally responsive environments, that students have daily opportunities to experience SEL within content-driven lessons, and that they are developing the SEL competencies they need in order to be successful in school and in the future.

### Targeted Mental Health Supports

The DOE has a robust network of mental health services for students. Schools have established relationships with programs and resources to provide direct services, community linkages and referrals, staff coaching and training, and crisis response.

These include School Mental Health Clinics, on-site CBO-provided direct counseling services (Prevention and Intervention Program, Community School Mental Health), School Mental Health Consultant Program, School Response Clinicians, Children's Mobile Crisis Team, and DOE Social Workers and School Counselors. All programs and partners are prepared to address the expected increase in student mental health needs upon returning to schools.

Students' increased exposure to trauma and loss and the extended separation from core support systems will also necessitate expanded access to on-site, direct mental health supports (in person or through tele-therapy). Following implementation of the aforementioned "stabilization period" and concurrently with robust Tier 1 interventions, schools will use data to make determinations about the appropriate group or individual intervention for students in need.

DOE has developed extensive resources to support the social-emotional needs of central and school-based staff during COVID-19. These resources complement the DOE's Supportive Environment Framework and Social Emotional Learning resources for schools.

There are also a number of citywide resources that DOE has collated and shared with staff to support their health and wellbeing. These programs and opportunities are available to all New York City agency employees, and have been publicized through DOE's internal communication channels:

**ThriveNYC:** identifies mental health services and resources for all New Yorkers, as well as those tailored to the needs of aging New Yorkers, veterans, students, and young people, as well as people harmed by violence, crime, or abuse.

**The New York City Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** The NYC EAP is offering services to promote stress management, mental health, self-care, education, referrals, and other resources. EAP services will be provided via phone, text, and/or video calls, with expanded hours from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. You can contact the EAP by email at [eap@olr.nyc.gov](mailto:eap@olr.nyc.gov) or call and leave a message at 212-306-7660.

**WorkWell NYC:** New York City's workplace wellness program. Their mission is to empower all 380,000 City employees to live healthy, active lifestyles – at work, at home, and beyond. The WorkWell NYC team offers convenient, accessible programs, tools, and resources to support employees at every stage of their wellness journey. Visit the WorkWell NYC website to explore each of their program areas and discover how WorkWell NYC can support you and your worksite.

**Communication: Communications plans for students, parents/legal guardians of students, faculty, staff and visitors that includes applicable instructions, training, signage, and a consistent means to provide individuals with information. Plans should describe how schools will communicate with students and families about preparing for the upcoming year, which should include adapting to social distancing requirements, properly wearing face coverings, and proper hand and respiratory hygiene. Consider developing webpages, text and email groups, and social media to disseminate information. Schools should develop communication plans in multiple languages, as necessary.**

DOE has been planning for the reopening of school buildings since the day they closed. Since that time, we've heard from hundreds of thousands of families, students, and staff; closely followed national and international trends; and worked with multiple City agencies, City and State education advisory groups, and other partners. We remain in lockstep with the City's health experts, and we continue to look to CDC and State Health guidance as the basis for all of DOE's plans.

Our families are our partners as we chart this new path forward, and we heard from 300,000 of them—in addition to 110,000 students—in a citywide survey on reopening. [The survey findings](#), along with information from public health experts, are guiding our reopening plans.

As we continue to develop and finalize guidelines and protocols for the beginning of the school year, we have and will continue to engage families, educators, staff and advocates in the policy development process and have a robust plan to inform stakeholders of the guidance as we roll it out. This includes, but is not limited to:

Policy Development

- A weekly roundtable with education advocates and families to get policy feedback prior to releasing guidance;
- Informal focus groups with various groups of teachers, families and staff to get feedback on possible guidance before it is released; and
- An ongoing working group of principals and superintendents to ensure that the guidance can be implemented at the school level.

### Rollout

- We created a Return to School 2020 web portal ([schools.nyc.gov/returntoschool2020](https://schools.nyc.gov/returntoschool2020)) that is updated with each new guidance and policy as it is announced. This site is accessible in 23 different languages;
- Frequent “backpack” letters to families in the school system with details information about school re-opening;
- Social media amplification of all new policy announcements;
- Bi-weekly citywide Family Information Sessions;
- Bi-weekly briefings of the Panel for Education Policy;
- Briefings of elected officials, community stakeholders and other interested parties as policies roll out;
- Webinars with business leaders ;
- DOE participation in district and elected official townhalls; and
- Created a Family Engagement Toolkit for school principals to use to communicate with and engage their local school communities

### **MONITORING**

**Screening: Protocols and procedures for mandatory health screenings, including temperature checks, of students, faculty, staff, and, where applicable, contractors, vendors, and visitors to identify any individuals who may have COVID-19 or who may have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus. Responsible Parties should consider limiting the number of visitors permitted on school grounds or in school facilities, and, if visitors are allowed, screening of such visitors;** It is strongly recommended that nonessential visitors do not enter the school building. Schools should limit the frequency and duration of other visitors.

Screening will happen in the following ways:

- Online Health Screening Application: DOE employees are encouraged to pre-screen themselves before heading to a DOE building using an online application. Upon entering the facility, the employee will be asked to provide the results of their screening either by

showing the email on their phone or a printout of the results. The online health screening application can be found here: <https://healthscreening.schools.nyc/>.

- In-person health screening upon entry to a building: If DOE employees/visitors are not able to pre-screen themselves using the application, they will be asked to complete a screening assessment in-person at any DOE building prior to entering.

Any staff/visitor who fails or does not complete their health screening will be refused entry to the building by the School Safety Agent/DOE Special Officer.

### Daily Health Screenings for Students and School-Based Staff

Daily health screenings, including temperature checks, must be completed at home by families and by school-based staff. The DOE will launch a robust education campaign that makes clear to parents and school-based staff how important these daily health checks are to keeping school communities healthy and safe. The DOE is committed to purchasing of thermometers for at-home use for families who may need them.

School-based staff and students cannot report to school if they have:

- Been knowingly been in close contact in the past 10 days with anyone who has tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19.
- Tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 in the past 10 days.
- Experienced any symptoms of COVID-19, including a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, in the past 14 days.
- 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.

### Random Temperature Screenings

Every morning, prior to entering the school, specific staff will perform random samplings of temperatures for both students and school-based staff using non-touch thermometers.

Additional guidance on random temperature screenings is forthcoming.

- Schools should screen people entering the building at random.
- Face coverings and gloves will be worn continually by designated staff taking temperatures.
- Schools are prohibited to record or track student/staff temperatures or other health information.
- Any student with a temperature of more than 100.4 from a random temperature check must be evaluated by the nurse or health professional. If a nurse or health professional is unavailable, student will be escorted to the building's Isolation Room.

- DOE-contracted Community Based Organizations providing early childhood services must continue to conduct daily health checks and align with DOE and DOHMH issued guidance that pertains to their program and setting.

The DOE is also exploring enhanced at-school temperature check protocols and processes and will ensure such compliance with state health guidance.

**Testing Protocols: Process for the provision or referral of diagnostic testing for students, faculty, and staff for COVID-19, in consultation with local health department officials, when needed, which should include plans for testing of symptomatic individuals, close contacts of COVID-19 suspected or confirmed individuals, and individuals with recent international travel or travel within a state with widespread transmission of COVID-19 as designated through the New York State Travel Advisory, before allowing such individuals to return to in-person to the school;**

As [the CDC acknowledges](#), testing to diagnose COVID-19 should be one component of a school district's comprehensive strategy to safely reopen schools and should be used in conjunction with [promoting behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19](#), [maintaining healthy environments](#), [maintaining healthy operations](#), and [preparing for when someone gets sick](#).

Frequent testing during the COVID-19 pandemic is a safety measure that helps diagnose both symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals. Positive test results require individuals to isolate for 10 days, as outlined in our policy, and this period of isolation reduces the risk that they will transmit the infection to others.

The NYCDOE strongly recommends that all school-based staff get tested at least seven days before the start of in-person instruction and get tested on a regular basis, at least once a month. In order to support testing, New York City will prioritize for DOE staff both access to testing and communication of test results at any of its [34 city-run testing locations](#). Once in-person learning has begun, the NYCDOE and DOHMH will help establish a rolling pattern of testing for all school-based staff. This frequent testing may occur at any location, but it is encouraged that school-based staff use City-run sites which will provide priority access and aim to return test results in 24 hours.

If a student shows symptoms of COVID-19 while at school:

- Students showing symptoms of COVID-19 will be escorted to the Isolation Room by a designated staff member wearing appropriate PPE.
- The nurse or health professional will evaluate the student for symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, lack of sense of taste or smell, and other symptoms.
- The student will wait in the supervised Isolation Room for pick up.

- A family member or guardian will be contacted by a staff member and asked to pick up the student.
- Upon pick up, the nurse/health professional and school staff should strongly encourage the family to visit a doctor and get the student tested for COVID-19, and provide the information of the closest testing site, if asked.
- If the student has had no known contact with a positive case, the student can only return to school when all the following are met. The DOE will explore with NYS DOH the possibility of adjusting the standard for students returning to school who have been unable to seek COVID testing and health care provider evaluation:
  - Presents clearance from a health care provider evaluation **AND**
  - The student has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.
  - Additionally, the student should participate in remote learning, if feeling well enough.
- If DOHMH or Test + Trace determine the student is considered a close contact of a positive case, the student can only return to school when all the following are met:
  - The student has completed a 14-day quarantine regardless of symptoms or test results since their last exposure to that case **AND**
  - Presents clearance from a health care provider evaluation **AND**
  - The student has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.
  - Additionally, the student should participate in remote learning, if feeling well enough.
- If the student does not get tested, then the student cannot return to school until:
  - 10 days have passed since the first symptom **AND**
  - The student has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

If a school-based staff member shows symptoms of COVID-19 while at school:

- School-based staff members showing symptoms at COVID-19 will be directed to leave the building.
- The school should strongly encourage the staff member to visit a doctor and get tested for COVID-19.
- If the staff member has had no known contact with a positive case, the staff member can only return to work when all the following are met:
  - Presents a negative COVID-19 test result **AND**
  - Presents clearance from a health care provider evaluation **AND**
  - The staff member has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.
- If DOHMH or Test + Trace determine the staff member is considered a close contact of a positive case, the staff member can only return to work when all the following have been met:

- The staff member has completed a 14-day quarantine regardless of symptoms or test results since their last exposure to that case **AND**
- Presents clearance from a health care provider evaluation **AND**
- The staff member has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.
- If the staff member does not get tested, then the staff member cannot return to school until:
  - 10 days have passed since the first symptom **AND**
  - The staff member has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

In order to ensure a uniform agency-wide response, DOE has developed a restricted-access, secure database, the [COVID-19 Tracking System \(CTS\)](#), to record and track COVID-19 cases.

Upon learning of an employee who had or has been symptomatic for COVID-19 or tested positive for COVID-19, the central administrator must promptly enter the relevant, most recent health status and emergency contact information for the employee within the CTS. If such employee information changes, central administrators must promptly update the corresponding COVID-19 case entry in the CTS. Although completion of all fields is not required, central administrators must enter all available information to permit adequate tracking.

**Testing Responsibility: Identification of who in the community is responsible for referring, sourcing, and administering testing (e.g., local health department testing site, physician offices, hospital system), particularly in the event that large-scale testing at the school is needed; and**

New York City strongly recommends all its residents, even children, to get tested for COVID-19. Testing is free and readily available at numerous locations across the five boroughs. NYCDOE asks that all school-based staff get tested at least seven days before the start of in-person instruction and get tested on a regular basis, at least once a month. In order to support testing, New York City will prioritize for DOE staff both access to testing and communication of test results at any of its [34 city-run testing locations](#). Once in-person learning has begun, the NYCDOE and DOHMH will help establish a rolling pattern of testing for all school-based staff. This frequent testing may occur at any location, but it is encouraged that school-based staff use City-run sites where they will receive test results in 24 hours.

**Early Warning Signs: Defined metrics that will serve as early warning signs that positive COVID-19 cases may be increasing beyond an acceptable level, as established by state and local health departments; define and deploy method(s) to monitor against such metrics.**

The health and safety of students and staff are of the utmost priority when considering reopening schools. The NYCDOE has worked closely with DOHMH to determine thresholds for opening and, if necessary, closing schools.

In order for schools to reopen and stay open, the percentage of positive tests in New York City must be less than 3% using a 7-day rolling average. Schools will need to close if the percentage of positive tests in New York City are equal to or more than 3% using a 7-day rolling average.

It is important to note that the above threshold is just one trigger for closing schools, but may not be the only trigger. For example, a decision to close schools would be made where there were recurrent, uncontrolled outbreaks of COVID-19 in schools, even if the overall case rates across New York City were to remain low.

## **CONTAINMENT**

### **School Health Offices: Protocols for safely caring for a student, faculty, or staff member if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day.**

Please see below for information on Isolation Rooms.

Should a student present with symptoms of COVID-19, a school must be prepared to separate the ill student from the rest of the school until the student can be picked up; staff members who experience symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked to leave the building for the day and seek medical help.

### **Isolation: Procedures to isolate individuals who screen positive upon arrival, or symptomatic individuals should they become symptomatic while at school, providing appropriate PPE for school health office staff caring for the symptomatic individual. Protocols for safe transportation, including pick-up arrangements, if applicable, for symptomatic students, faculty, and staff.**

Schools will take every precaution to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within school communities. One of the [key actions in preventing the spread of COVID-19 is isolating when sick](#). Should a student present with symptoms of COVID-19, a school must be prepared to separate the ill student from the rest of the school until the student can be picked up. In order to protect students and staff members from potential exposure to COVID-19, every building must designate space to be used as an Isolation Room. An Isolation Room is a place where a student with suspected COVID-19 symptoms can be safely isolated in the building until they can be picked up by a guardian.

If there is a nurse or health professional assigned to the building, the student should be evaluated by the nurse or health professional in an appropriate medical space, such as a nurse's office. Should the nurse/health professional be unavailable to examine the student OR if a school does not have a nurse or access to a health professional at that time, the student must be placed in the building's Isolation Room.

The principal will designate a staff member to supervise a student in the Isolation Room. The nurse/health professional and any additional staff supervising the Isolation Room must be given the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including, but not limited to, N95 respirators, gloves, gowns, and face shields or goggles.

**Collection: Protocols for how parents or legal guardians should pick up their student with instructions that the student must be seen by a health care provider.**

Should a student present with COVID-19 symptoms, a family member or guardian will be contacted by a staff member and asked to pick up the student. The student must remain in the Isolation Room until picked up. Upon pick up, the nurse/health professional and school staff should strongly encourage the family to visit a doctor and get the student tested for COVID-19, and [provide the information of the closest testing site](#), if asked.

**Infected Individuals: Requirements that persons who have tested positive complete isolation and have recovered, and will not transmit COVID-19 when returning to in-person learning. Discharge from isolation and return to school will be conducted in coordination with the local health department.**

Individuals exposed to COVID-19 [must quarantine in order to stop the spread of the virus](#); this includes both students and staff members who test positive for COVID-19 and those who are considered close contacts of a positive case.

Students and staff members who test positive for COVID-19 cannot return to school until all the following are met:

- Presents clearance from a health care provider evaluation **AND**
- The individual has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

**Exposed Individuals: Requirements that individuals who were exposed to the COVID-19 virus complete quarantine and have not developed symptoms before returning to in-person learning. Discharge from quarantine and return to school will be conducted in coordination with the local health department.**

Individuals exposed to COVID-19 [must quarantine in order to stop the spread of the virus](#); this includes both students and staff members who test positive for COVID-19 and those who are considered close contacts of a positive case. DOHMH or Test + Trace will determine whether a student or staff member is considered a close contact of a positive case. If the student/staff member is considered a close contact, the individual can only return to school when all the following are met:

- The student has completed a 14-day quarantine regardless of symptoms or test results since their last exposure to that case **AND**
- Presents clearance from a health care provider evaluation **AND**
- The individual has been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

**Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfection: Adherence to, and promotion of, hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection guidance set forth by DOH and CDC, including strategies for cleaning and disinfection of exposed areas and appropriate notification to occupants of such areas.**

There will be increased access and regular opportunities for students and staff to wash hands or use hand sanitizer throughout the day. At the start of the school year, DOE will provide all schools with necessary supplies to help protect students and staff from COVID-19, including hand sanitizer, soap, and disinfectants. DOE will make the maximum number of sinks available for handwashing. DOE will increase cleaning throughout the school day, with special attention to high-touch areas.

Schools will implement enhanced cleaning and disinfection procedures to ensure the health and safety of staff and students. Throughout the school year, DOE will continue these rigorous practices including: providing adequate cleaning and disinfection supplies for both custodial and pedagogical staff; requiring deep cleanings to be completed on a nightly basis, including the use of electrostatic sprayers; repairing and maintaining HVAC systems to ensure proper ventilation; performing enhanced cleaning in classrooms, bathrooms, and high touch areas such as doorknobs and shared equipment such as laptops; and implementing bathroom check and disinfecting logs for custodial staff.

**Contact Tracing: Plans to support local health departments in contact tracing efforts using the protocols, training, and tools provided through the New York State Contact Tracing Program—an initiative between the Department of Health, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Vital Strategies.**

In order to protect students and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic, DOHMH will support schools by investigating confirmed COVID-19 cases. DOHMH and the NYC Test + Trace Corps, will perform contact tracing as [recommended by the CDC](#), which is a key strategy for preventing further spread of COVID-19. DOHMH will support with rapid identification of close contacts

within a school to identify individuals who need to quarantine. A positive case can be reported to a school in several ways:

1. Test + Trace finds through case interview,
2. Staff or parent alert school,
3. Staff or parent alert DOHMH hotline.

NYC Test + Trace and DOHMH will begin investigating self-reported positive COVID-19 test results from a school community within three hours.

#### One Confirmed Case in a School:

- DOHMH will notify the principal and Central NYCDOE of confirmed case.
- Principal notifies Building Response Team, superintendent, and informs affected teacher(s).
- Building Response Team notifies Borough Safety Director.
- All students and teacher(s) in class(es) with a confirmed case are assumed close contacts and are instructed to quarantine for 14 days since their last exposure to that case.
- In schools where students travel between classes, the school must require quarantine for individuals in all classes attended by the confirmed case.
- Learning continues remotely for students who are in quarantine.
- A negative COVID-19 test result for a student does not reduce the 14-day quarantine period.
- Test + Trace contact tracing will interview the case and school administration to establish if there were any other additional close contacts.
- Test + Trace contact tracing will interview staff members to verify levels of contact with the confirmed case.
- If a staff member is deemed NOT a close contact, then the staff member can opt to return to school.
- If a staff member is considered a close contact then the staff member is required to complete the 14-day quarantine.
- Schools must communicate, to all families and students when a case is confirmed:
  - Families of students who are confirmed close contacts of the positive case must receive a letter stating that their child has been in close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual; this letter gives clear direction to quarantine for 14 days;
  - Families of students who are not considered close contacts must receive a letter stating that there was a confirmed case of COVID-19 at the school but that their child is not considered a close contact therefore there is no need to quarantine.

#### Two or More Confirmed Cases in a School:

- If two or more confirmed cases present within seven days of each other, NYC Test + Trace Corps and DOHMH begins investigation immediately and makes every attempt to conclude the investigation within 24 hours.
- DOHMH will notify the principal and Central NYCDOE of the confirmed case.
- Principal notifies Building Response Team, superintendent, and informs affected teacher(s).
- Building Response Team notifies Borough Safety Director.
- During the NYC Test + Trace Corps and DOHMH investigation:
  - Two or more confirmed cases within the same school (not same classroom) triggers classroom quarantines and the school is closed for a minimum of 24 hours while the DOHMH investigation is underway.
  - NYC Test + Trace Corps and DOHMH must determine by 6:00 pm whether the school needs to remain closed beyond the minimum 24 hours in order to reach the conclusion of the investigation.
  - Two or more confirmed cases within the same class triggers a classroom quarantine, but the school stays open.
- Once the NYC Test + Trace Corps and DOHMH investigation is complete:
  - NYC Test + Trace Corps and DOHMH investigations will result in one of the below conclusions (see table under “closure”).
  - NYC Test + Trace Corps makes recommendation to NYC Department of Buildings and Central NYCDOE on the closure of classroom(s) and/or school as well as the duration of closure.
  - Central NYCDOE informs principal and superintendent and communicates closure decision to school community.
  - School moves immediately to remote learning mode during temporary closure.
  - Students on split schedules return for in-person learning on the next assigned day following reopening.
  - Any exposed contacts will be directed to COVID-19 testing resources.

**Communication: Plans to share protocols and safety measures taken by the school with all relevant parties including parents/legal guardians, faculty, staff, students and the local community.**

Schools must communicate to all families and students at school when a case is confirmed. Families of students and staff who are confirmed close contacts of the positive case must receive a letter stating that their child/staff member has been in close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual; this letter gives clear direction to quarantine for 14 days. Families of students and staff who are not considered close contacts must receive a letter stating that there was a confirmed case of COVID-19 at the school, but that the child or staff member is not considered a close contact therefore there is no need to quarantine.

In the event a school needs to close due to two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19, that decision will be made by Test + Trace and the Central NYCDOE will inform the principal and superintendent and will communicate the closure decision to the entire school community.

**CLOSURE**

**Closure Triggers: Identification of the conditions that may warrant reducing in-person education or closing the school, in consultation with state and local health departments, and plan for an orderly closure.**

There are various scenarios in which a school with two or more confirmed positive COVID-19 cases may need to close. In collaboration with the health experts at DOHMH, there are five possible conclusions that may lead to partial or full closure during an investigation and after an investigation. While intermittent school closures may be disruptive to the school community, the [CDC acknowledges](#) that these types of closures are an essential part of limiting exposure to COVID-19. All schools in New York City will need to close if the percentage of positive tests are equal to or more than 3% using a 7-day rolling average.

Conclusion of Investigation	During Investigation (for at 24 hours)	After Investigation
One confirmed case	Close classroom, transition to remote learning	Classroom remains closed for 14 days; students and staff in close contact with positive case self-quarantine for 14 days.
At least two cases linked together in school, same classroom	Close classroom, transition to remote learning	Classroom remains closed for 14 days; students and staff in close contact with positive cases self-quarantine for 14 days
At least two cases linked together in school, different classrooms	Close school building, transition to remote learning	Classrooms of each case remain closed and quarantined for 14 days, additional school members are quarantined based on where the exposure was in

		the school (e.g., the locker room)
At least two cases linked together by circumstances outside of school (e.g., acquired infection by different setting and source)	Close school building, transition to remote learning	School opens after investigation, classrooms remain closed for 14 days
At least two cases, not linked but exposure confirmed for each outside of school setting	Close school building, transition to remote learning	School opens after investigation, classrooms remain closed for 14 days
Link unable to be determined	Close school building, transition to remote learning	Close school for 14 days

**Operational Activity: Determination of which operations will be decreased, or ceased and which operations will be conducted remotely; include process to conduct orderly closures which may include phasing, milestones, and involvement of key personnel**

One positive case at school will result in a 14-day quarantine of all known close contacts, essentially closing at least one class for 14 days. In a situation where there are two or more positive cases, DOHMH must investigate; the investigation will result in one of five conclusions (see table above). However, schools must close if the percentage of positive tests in New York City are equal to or more than 3% using a 7-day rolling average.

**Communication: Plan to communicate internally and externally throughout the closure process.**

Once a DOHMH investigation of a positive case is complete, DOHMH will share investigation results with NYC Test + Trace. Test + Trace will make a recommendation to NYC Department of Buildings and Central NYCDOE on the closure of classroom(s) and/or school, as well as the anticipated length of closure. Central NYCDOE informs principal and superintendent and communicates closure decision to school community.