

#REOPENSTRONG: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR STAFF – updated July 24, 2020



1. Limit the size of groups — In-person learning in general education settings will be limited to small group cohorts and follow DC Health guidelines. There will be no more than 12 people assigned to a room, with the ability for a 13th person to briefly enter as needed. Students in self-contained programming will be part of smaller cohorts.

2. Require students and staff to practice safe routines — Anyone who comes to school in-person will be provided with a supply of disposable face masks, including smaller masks for our youngest students, and other personal protective equipment (PPE).

3. Maintain clean and safe facilities — Enhanced cleaning practices will be a part of our school routines. Frequently touched surfaces (e.g., sink handles, door handles) will be cleaned and disinfected daily and a deep cleaning will happen weekly.

4. Reduce class transitions and time in hallways — Students will be scheduled with a small group of students that will stay in their classroom for the majority of the day. Schedules will be modified to limit transitions and interactions between groups.

5. Reorganize classroom spaces — Desks will be spaced at least 6 feet apart, and students will be facing the front of the classroom. Communal spaces will have occupancy caps and staggered usage. Signage and floor markers will be displayed to promote social distancing.

6. Adjust arrival and dismissal procedures — Our schools will have new procedures that incorporate social distancing, including health screenings, and provide hand sanitizer and masks for students. Family members will be able to help their students check-in at their school entry point, but they will not be permitted to enter the building. Visitor access will be significantly limited.

7. Screen for illness and report symptoms — Staff and students will be required to participate in a daily health screening. If a student or staff member develops any COVID-19 symptoms while at school, there will be a designated physical location and a process in place that allows the individual to isolate until it is safe to go home and seek medical care. DC Health reporting protocols will be initiated.

8. Adjust meal and snack routines — Each student's small group will eat meals together. Meal distribution procedures will prioritize safety and hygiene, through individualized "grab and go" meals and the use of hand sanitizer and/or handwashing before and after meals.

9. Train staff — Staff are receiving training on our new safety protocols, contact tracing, maximizing learning opportunities, maintaining safety, and ways to support adults and students with trauma.

10. Provide virtual learning opportunities — We will offer an all-virtual instructional option for families who prefer the learning at home model.

DCPS STAFF FAQ: HEALTH, SAFETY AND SCHOOL OPERATIONS

How did DCPS establish these safety commitments?

The safety and health of our students, staff, and families remain DCPS' top priority. In planning for reopening, DCPS consulted guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), DC Health, Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), and US Department of Labor. DCPS guidelines are consistent with the best practices and recommendations established by these federal and local agencies. In developing guidance specific for DCPS students, staff, and communities, we also reviewed publicly available information from and consulted with over 15 school districts and state-level education planners from across the country.

How will schools apply these health and safety commitments?

DCPS developed a Reopen Strong COVID-19 Operational Handbook to ensure a planning process that prioritizes the health and safety of all students and staff returning to our facilities this fall, should health conditions allow. The guidance provided in this handbook aligns with current DC Health standards and provides a practical framework that can be customized for every school. DCPS will continue to monitor the latest health information from DC Health, Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and adjust our operational plans as needed. Principals received a preview of this handbook on July 21 and it will inform professional development and training sessions at the OCOO institute schedule on August 10 and 11.

Are school HVAC systems being inspected and repaired this summer in all school buildings to ensure proper air quality and filtration?

In partnership with the Department of General Services (DGS), DCPS is consulting the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) guidance to inform potential HVAC enhancements across all schools to ensure a healthy environment for our staff and students. This includes, but is not limited to, evaluation of filter replacements and increased fresh air ventilation into our classrooms. Building specific HVAC plans will be developed and implemented.

What supplies will be provided to schools to support social distancing protocols and space modifications?

DCPS central office will help supply the following modifications with the custodial and operational staff at each school supporting with set up and site preparation:

- **Tents** for student arrival and use for outdoor learning if field space allows on school grounds
- **Stanchions, cones, and barricade ropes** for helping staff and students abide by social distancing guidelines during arrival to school
- **Plexiglass table-top dividers** for reception and security areas where staff will have to interact with visitors and families in closer proximity than six feet
- **Clear screen dividers** to separate designated spaces such as the Health Isolation Room and better facilitate social distancing should multiple students with symptoms be directed there at the same time
- **Six feet spacing disks and floor tape** to visualize social distancing for students and staff as they move around the school building
- **Carpet tiles** in classrooms for younger students to help facilitate social distancing
- **Door jams** to prop open doors whenever students are scheduled to move throughout the building (e.g. arrival, dismissal, transitions)

Can schools consider setting up outdoor classrooms to support further social distancing?

Yes. In addition to ensuring schools' indoor spaces are adapted based on health and safety guidelines, it is recommended that schools consider using outdoor spaces for learning and classes where feasible. The tents schools will

be utilizing at arrival in the morning are portable and can be repurposed as coverage for outdoor learning and working space if space is available on school grounds.

What is the difference between an enhanced daily cleaning at school and a weekly deep cleaning?

Enhanced Cleaning will be the daily standard cleaning routines custodial staff complete with particular focus on all frequently touched surfaces in common areas and restrooms, including but not limited to doorknobs and push/pulls, light switches, elevator buttons, tables, sink faucets, toilets, chairs, and any other common area hard surfaces.

Deep Cleaning will include cleaning of all vertical and horizontal surfaces in the school building in addition to the practices outlined above, using additional dedicated time to thoroughly clean all surfaces students and staff may encounter inside the school building.

What PPE will be made available to staff?

All staff will be provided with a non-surgical face mask each day. Additionally, enhanced PPE will be provided for staff members whose roles increase the likelihood of more frequent proximity to other staff and students. Examples include specialized program staff, behavioral support staff and security. Enhanced PPE may include items like gloves, face shields, medical gowns, shoe covers, and utility aprons.

What PPE will be made available to students?

As part of the daily arrival process, students will be provided with a non-medical face mask for each in-person learning day. Students will be required to wear masks while in school unless unique circumstances apply as outlined in DC Health and OSSE guidance. Students will also be expected to wear masks on their travel to and from the school if using public transportation. Students and staff may bring their own face covering, but they must ensure they are cleaning their face coverings consistently and as directed by health guidelines.

Are schools responsible for procuring PPE and cleaning supplies?

Central Office is procuring PPE such as non-medical face masks, communicator masks, gloves, medical gowns, and shoe covers, as well as hand sanitizer stations and refills, disinfectant wipe, clear screen separators, health and hygiene signage, water cooler supplies, doorstops, and service materials for in-class meals.

At the same time, schools should continue to purchase the following items as they would during a typical school year: day to day cleaning supplies, gloves, wipes, soap, trash bags, paper towels, and floor stripper/wax.

How will DCPS screen for COVID symptoms among staff?

For staff who will be returning to work in-person on a daily basis, DCPS will require daily symptom self-screenings to help protect the safety and health of all employees. For all District employees reporting to a physical work location, whether daily or on a hybrid schedule that is in-person and remote, required screenings will be completed via participation in a short survey. Upon arrival at the school building, staff will be required to complete a sign-in sheet verifying that they conducted the daily symptom self-screen and are safe to come to work per the outcome of the symptom self-screening survey. Staff who are working a hybrid schedule that is in-person and remote will be expected to conduct self-screenings even on the days they are working remotely to maintain constant vigilance for symptoms.

An individual that does not pass the health screening should not enter the school, and instead should isolate immediately and call their healthcare provider to determine next steps.

Will there be regular health screenings for students?

Students will be screened according to the OSSE "Ask, Ask, Look" protocol which is a health screening process that has three steps: an at-home self-screening, at-home close contact check, and a visual symptom assessment at school. If a

student develops any symptoms outlined during the school day, the school must direct them to the Health Isolation Room and contact their guardian for pick up and to seek healthcare guidance. Signage will be posted throughout the school with this information for students and staff.

What happens if there is a COVID-19 case at school?

Schools will follow standardized procedures when there is possible exposure to COVID-19 in the school community. DCPS Central Office will coordinate closely with DC Health and support schools throughout the process.

DCPS will consult with DC Health to determine the conditions under which an individual school, multiple schools, or all schools districtwide will be shut down. Schools should not automatically close a classroom or an entire building until or unless instructed to do so by Central Office.

How will classrooms be set up to support small cohorts?

In-person learning in general education settings will be limited to small group cohorts comprised of students and instructors and follow DC Health guidelines (no more than 12 individuals (staff and students) clustered in one room, with an additional staff member (13 total individuals) added to the group briefly), with smaller student cohorts in self-contained programming. Students will learn in their classroom cohorts, with teachers and staff rotating in when needed. Furniture will be arranged to facilitate social distancing. Additional signage can be used to create age-appropriate learning settings for students that encourage social distancing.

Will PE or recess be available to students?

Yes. Students should only play with those in their cohort. Outdoor recess is highly encouraged if the school has a field for use. An indoor space can only be used if outdoor space isn't sufficient or weather doesn't permit use. PE guidance is being developed on how to keep students physically active in their own "circles of space" (e.g. yoga, individual activities in marked off spaces).

Will DCPS consider inspection teams to do safety walk-throughs before schools open?

DCPS developed a Reopen Strong COVID-19 Operational Handbook to ensure a planning process that prioritizes the health and safety of all students and staff returning to our facilities this fall, should health conditions allow. Central Office operations teams will support school leaders with their planning, monitor school plans, and will conduct building walkthroughs to ensure consistency with DC Health and CDC health and safety guidance.

DCPS STAFF FAQ: STAFF SUPPORT & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

When did DCPS solicit input from families and staff?

In May and June, we issued a series of surveys around reopening strong for next school year and heard from approximately 3,400 students, 8,600 families, and 5,200 staff members.

The Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) conducted a citywide, “Our Schools Family Survey” from June 3 to 10 that was open to all public-school parents/guardians. More than 16,000 families representing over 25,000 students responded and you can find the [full report at this link](#). As a complement to the family survey, we reached out to students from June 3 to 15.

DCPS also issued an optional and anonymous survey to all staff from June 15 to 22 to capture their understanding and concerns as planning is underway to reopen schools this fall. We heard from 5,263 staff members, including 3,006 teachers.

See this link for more information: [Family Student and Staff Survey Highlights - July 2020](#).

Additionally, DCPS hosted a series of focus groups including teachers, staff, school leaders, students, families, and community members throughout May, June, and July to help inform our planning and also met with employee unions. We recognize that conditions and plans are continually evolving and are committed to ongoing engagement with our families and staff.

Is DCPS planning for any more surveys?

Yes. Recognizing that learning at home is necessary in any instructional model for SY20-21, we are asking families to let us know their tech device and internet connectivity needs. A survey is available online at [dcps.tech/survey](#).

We are committed to promoting equity by ensuring every student has access to the supplies and supports they need for a safe return to learning, including a tech device for learning at home.

When will parents hear about plans for the new school year?

DCPS will host family town halls at 5:30 pm on July 22, 23, 27 (Spanish), and 28 (Amharic). Additionally, on July 31 we will launch a new website — DCPSReopenStrong — following Mayor Bowser’s announcement about DC Health’s public health determination on the feasibility of in-person instruction. Throughout August, we will hold a series of Parent University sessions ahead of the start of school. The website and other family materials will be available in all languages and will be mobile-friendly.

If families are offered the choice to learn in school or at home, will teachers get the same option? Are staff, regardless of risk group, going to be given an all virtual option?

We know that employees are juggling complex situations between home and work and we are working to determine the best way to balance the needs of our employees and the more than 51,000 families we serve. Our goal is to support employees in fulfilling their roles in ways that ensure their safety. As we determine our learning model for this fall and learn more about family learning preferences and the needs of our staff, we will be providing additional guidance.

How is DCPS determining if there are enough teachers to support in-school learning?

With the initial Return to Work Guidelines, DCPS wanted to ensure staff were aware of what protections are available to them in accordance with federal and local law. Updated guidelines will be issued for staff in the coming weeks and will provide additional information about accommodations and supports for employees.

What is the plan for substitute teacher staffing for SY20-21?

DCPS is developing guidelines for schools related to substitute staffing strategy with additional considerations for enhanced substitute support during this unique time.

What does an average day of virtual learning look like?

Based on the learning at home experience this past Spring, we heard from students that they are eager for more structure, more opportunities to interact with peers, and more connections with teachers. With this feedback in mind, we are planning virtual learning days that will include a mix of synchronous and asynchronous instruction throughout the day. Synchronous sessions may include both whole group and small group sessions to facilitate additional interactions between teachers and students and students with their peers.

What does an average day of hybrid learning look like?

In alignment with DC Health and OSSE guidance, students will be scheduled with a small group of students that will stay in their classroom for the majority of the day, with teachers and staff rotating in where needed. However, schedules will be modified to limit transitions for staff and students, as well as, interactions between groups.

When will teachers get breaks during the day?

Individual teacher schedules may vary by grade band and school, but in all cases lunch breaks will be scheduled and differentiated professional development and planning time is embedded throughout the week.

Will schools still have a full-time school nurse?

Should health conditions allow for in-person instruction, schools will be staffed with nursing staff as they normally would.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [OSSE School Health and Safety Frequently Asked Questions: COVID-19 Recovery Period \(Updated July 20, 2020\)](#)
- [DC Health Phase Two Guidance Coronavirus 2019 \(COVID-19\): Guidance for Schools \(Preschool-K-12 and Adult Education\) \(Updated May 25, 2020\)](#)