

August 12, 2022

Dear School District of Philadelphia Parents & Families,

The first day of school is Monday, August 29th and we are excited to welcome our students and staff back to our classrooms for in-person learning. The School District of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) have been working closely throughout the summer, monitoring local COVID-19 conditions, and following federal and local public health guidance to determine the best health and safety measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 as students return to school.

**For the first 10 days of the new school year – from August 29 through September 9 – all students and staff will be required to wear masks while in school, regardless of the COVID-19 Community Level.** This is an extra precaution for everyone’s health and well-being since increased end-of-summer social gatherings may heighten the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Masking **may** then become optional under specific circumstances. Our updated General COVID-19 Protocols for SY 2022-2023 can be found [here](#). Here are the highlights:

<p><b>Masking</b></p>	<p>Masking will be <i>optional</i> for students and staff <b>except</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>for the first 10 days of the new school year – August 29 through September 9.</b></li> <li>- <b>when the COVID-19 Community Level is high</b> according to the <a href="#">CDC COVID-19 Community Level Indicators</a>. In this instance, the District will notify families and staff that indoor universal masking will be required in schools, school buses and offices until the Community Level returns to medium. <b>At a Community Level of medium, masking is strongly recommended.</b></li> <li>- <b>in specific instances</b> where universal masking may be required, regardless of the COVID-19 Community Level, including:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>classroom- or school-wide outbreak,</b></li> <li>- <b>or upon return from extended breaks and holidays</b> when increased social gatherings may heighten the risk of exposure to COVID-19.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Students and staff at PreK Head Start programs are still required to wear masks at all times, regardless of the Community Level.</p>
<p><b>Mask to Stay</b></p>	<p>Students and staff who have been exposed to COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status, are no longer required to quarantine at home unless COVID-like symptoms are present. Instead, they may return to school but are required to wear a mask for 10 days.</p>

<b>Isolation</b>	<p>Students who test positive for COVID-19 are required to isolate at home for at least 5 calendar days and participate in virtual learning.</p> <p>Parents/guardians must also notify their school nurse or call the COVID Response Team at 215-400-5454. If symptom-free after 5 days of isolation, students may return to school but must wear a high-quality (N95 or KN95) mask for an additional 5 days and must eat in a designated area.</p>
<b>Student Testing</b>	<p>School nurses will provide COVID-19 testing for students who begin to show symptoms during the school day. In case of an outbreak at a school, a testing vendor will provide additional on-site testing support. A signed <a href="#">parental consent form</a> on file at the school is required for student testing to occur, so please submit the completed form to your child’s school nurse. All families must submit a new consent form for the 2022-2023 school year. The District will also continue to make free COVID-19 testing available for students at five school-based testing locations. The locations are listed <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
<b>Vaccines</b>	<p>COVID-19 vaccines are encouraged but <b>not</b> required for students, including student athletes. Children six months of age and older are now eligible for the primary COVID vaccine and those five and older are eligible for booster shots. To learn more about vaccines and where to get them, visit the <a href="#">Covid-19 Information Hub</a>, the City of Philadelphia’s website <a href="#">here</a> or <a href="http://www.vaccines.gov">www.vaccines.gov</a>.</p>
<b>General Health &amp; Hygiene</b>	<p>All schools will be equipped with high-quality masks, hand sanitizer stations, and air and surface purifiers to further promote healthy learning environments. To further support the health and well-being of everyone in our schools, families are asked to monitor their child’s health and keep them home if they are sick, and practice proper hand-washing and mask wearing with their child.</p>

Monkeypox may also be top of mind for our families and staff. Please know that we are working closely with PDPH to monitor the situation, and we will seek guidance from PDPH and the Centers for Disease Control to identify any needed safety measures for our schools. We will update you as more information is available. In the meantime, we will continue to implement enhanced cleaning and disinfecting procedures daily in schools and offices, paying special attention to high-touch areas such as bathroom facilities, desks and doorknobs.

You can always find the latest information, including information about upcoming Health & Safety Town Halls for families, by visiting the [Covid-19 Information Hub](#). As COVID-19 and other public health matters continue to evolve, so too will our response. The last several years have taught us all that by working together and remaining flexible as needed, we can support the

healthy in-person learning environments our students need. We look forward to working together with you as we welcome students back to school on August 29th.

*Dr. Kendra McDow*

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The School District of Philadelphia  
School District Medical Officer

*Dr. Cheryl Bettigole*

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Philadelphia Department of Health  
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