

## The Brooklyn Schools

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Dear Parents and Families,

Happy New Year! I hope that you all had a wonderful winter break! It did not feel like winter last week but this afternoon it sure did!

I wanted to provide you with a few pieces of information. As you are likely aware, the State's positivity rate is very high. It is not surprising given the nature of the virus, and the numerous indoor activities over the holidays. You may be aware that the Governor is planning to distribute rapid tests for staff and students. The original shipment was delayed and they have not been received yet. The initial shipment scheduled for Brooklyn is 180 rapid test kits. This is not enough to cover our approximately 180 employees and 886 students. I realize that there may be families and staff members who do not need a kit so we will figure out how to equitably distribute what we have to individuals who have had an exposure or who have symptoms.

There are new guidelines for dealing with individuals who have positive cases and exposures. These guidelines were generated by the Commissioner of Public Health and were shared on December 27th. I have attached them for your review but they are not fully implemented and will be discussed on our Department of Health and State Department of Education weekly call tomorrow. The new guidelines require that anyone who has symptoms gets a COVID test or has ten days of quarantine. The length of quarantine before testing is at least 5 days after an exposure. Individuals who are considered a contact outside of the school day are asked to test after 5 days from exposure. Quarantine will be determined based on vaccination status. These new guidelines suggest **no contact tracing for in school exposures and the ability to use self-tests or tests at a testing site**. We will inform classes or grade levels at the middle school if there is a student who is positive who was in school. We will let you know your child *may have been exposed* but we will not be contact tracing. As you know, our youngest learners in preschool, and some other students struggle to maintain physical distance and properly wear their masks all day. There may be times that we will ask students to quarantine based on an exposure and the ability of them or their peers to wear a mask. The CIAC guidelines for athletics changed in late December and all athletic practices and competition offered in Brooklyn will require students to wear masks.

We have had a large number of positive cases reported since the holiday and many more who are awaiting test results. Your children may come home and report that they had a different teacher today or that they had to join another class for a period or part of a day. We are doing everything we can to keep our students in school and keep them and our staff healthy. Today we had 28 student/staff positive cases since the holidays and we had 148 additional staff and students out of school. This is a total of 16.5% of our population out. I tell you this so that you are aware how challenging it is to staff the buildings and keep school running as normal. Please be aware that there may be a day that we will need to close the school if we do not have enough staff to safely operate. I certainly hope it does not come to that and encourage anyone who is sick to stay home so that we do not spread these germs. Right now our level of illness is high, higher than the precovid times.

I must say it was wonderful to see students running into the building to start their day and equally excited to go home again! I hope that you are having a nice evening and I look forward to a wonderful week ahead! Happy 2022!

Patricia L. Buell  
Superintendent

**Mission:** The Brooklyn Schools will foster a drive for learning within each student to reach his/her greatest potential. To achieve this mission, the school will continually improve its educational programs and services to meet this community's expectations for a quality education for all.