



THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

ANITA SKOP, *Community Superintendent*

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COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT 15  
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October 15, 2020

Dear District 15 Community:

It is hard to believe that the world has changed so much in the past year. One year ago, COVID was an emerging crisis that still had not influenced the lives of most New Yorkers. One year ago, we had only begun to acknowledge the systemic racism that the Black community has lived with for centuries. One year ago, there was an anachronistic innocence to school that belied the inequities and profound life differences that many of our students and their families faced.

This year has changed all of us. For many people it has been the most difficult year they have ever had to face. It has been fraught with economic and personal challenges and decisions that will impact their lives for years to come. We all feel we have no control and are completely out of balance. Everything looks and feels different. The same can be said for school.

Student health and safety are our top priority, as they always have been, but in these COVID times the precautions are more rigorous and more defined. Children have returned to schools that look very different than the ones they left in March. Morning screenings and/or temperature checks are required for all students, teachers and visitors in order to enter the school buildings. In person classes are small with limited numbers of socially distanced students who will not be able to cluster together to share work and chat during lunch, but despite these setbacks our district has still developed a strong sense of community and family, thanks to the tireless work of our dedicated principals and teachers. The same can be said of students attending remotely. I have had the privilege of virtually visiting a number of classes, and the sensitivity and caring shown by the teachers is remarkable. As a District and as a city this is what we prioritize and value.

I want to acknowledge, however, that there is a reality for all of us that is still a moving target. For most students remote learning is the new normal and has been since last spring. Even students in a blended model who attend school two days a week are still remote sixty percent of the time. Nothing is where we all want it to be as yet, but we will not stop improving every aspect of the learning until it is the best that we can make it. We are working with our teachers and school leaders to develop engaging projects and challenging learning opportunities that support students' individual needs and promote student engagement. We will constantly continue to work to ensure that the use of technology does not overwhelm our young students, but makes them even more adept at both the independent learning and digital collaborations that are the hallmark of workplace life skills in the twenty first century.

This focus is crucial because changes occur daily, and we must be prepared for a fully remote experience for all of our children based on the implications of COVID rates both citywide and in specific areas of Brooklyn at any time. This past week, for example, eight of our schools moved to a purely remote model as a result of the Governor's and Mayor's mandates. The schools listed below will be fully remote until at least the 21<sup>st</sup> of October at which point the situation will be re-evaluated and the decision will be made to either continue the remote period or to return to a blended model.

PS 024  
PS 094  
PS 169

PS 230  
PS 896  
MS 839

This coming week, we will also begin random testing at schools across the district and across the city for children in grades 1-12. You have already received permission slips that enable your children to be tested. Please know that these tests are quick and painless and will be conducted by medical professionals who come to the schools. No child will be tested without their parents' permission, but we urge you to sign the permission slip and return it promptly to enable your child to be tested. If you have Kindergarten or Pre-Kindergarten students, they will not be eligible for the random testing. However, we encourage you to take your child to your pediatrician for these free tests.

As I stated earlier, this is an incredibly intense and difficult time for every member of the District 15 community. Change is the only constant and stress levels are at an all-time high. Please know that our District Office is here to support you in any way that we can. Do not hesitate to reach out to any of the members of our team. You are welcome to call our temporary Google Voice number at 201-731-6507 or to email me at [askop@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:askop@schools.nyc.gov).

I thank you for your patience and support on behalf of our principals, our teachers, our paraprofessionals, our school aides, our school safety agents, the custodians and the Food and Nutrition personnel. Every member of our school community is working tirelessly to help make this challenging and demanding year successful for all of our children, not just because this is our work, but because this is essential for us all as we face the future.

May you all be safe, stay healthy and may we all come through this time with an even greater appreciation for each other as a human family.

Warmest regards,  
Anita Skop