

KIPP:NEWARK

August 30, 2021

Dear KIPP Families,

Wow! **Despite the odds, we were able to open schools last week for over 7,000 students across our schools in Newark and Camden.** I have spent the last week in schools alongside your school leaders, teachers, and scholars and - while a lot feels different - there is also a lot that feels the same. I watched kindergarteners beaming on their first day of school while they read their first book. I saw our elementary and middle school students back with their friends, preparing to learn the skills that will prepare them for life success. And I smiled as our high school students went to their first week of orientation, just a few short years from graduating! I was reminded last week why I do this work – to guarantee that Newark and Camden both become cities where students have access to a world class education.

With that said, we must also acknowledge that the pandemic is certainly not over. I have heard from teachers, students, and parents that communication is one of the keys to getting through this pandemic and I share that belief. **Today I wanted to provide everyone with an additional update on our COVID efforts.**

Students in New Jersey are mandated to attend in-person instruction this school year. What we know to be true is that when it comes to meeting the needs of our students, in-person learning is the best option we have *and* we believe we can do this well with the proper health practices and your partnership. **Our practices are based on guidance and mandates from the [New Jersey State Department of Health \(NJDOH\)](#) and the [Centers of Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).**



First and foremost, we are doing everything we can to keep everyone safe and prevent transmission of the virus. **We are focused on THRIVE ON FIVE** to make this happen:

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- 1) **Vaccination** - Vaccination is the most important weapon we have to mitigate the virus’s surge. We therefore strongly encourage our staff members, students, and families to get the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine is available and free for all individuals age 12 and over. Additional resources about the vaccine can be found [here](#).
- 2) **Mask wearing** - All teachers, staff, and students wear masks indoors at all times, except when eating.
- 3) **3-feet Distancing** - Whenever space allows, our classrooms are set up with 3 feet of distance between scholars’ desks and 3 feet of distance at mealtimes. This is aligned with the research-based CDC guidelines.
- 4) **Ventilation** - All KIPP New Jersey campuses have had their ventilation systems evaluated and updated - including adding additional filters and air purifiers. Weather permitting, we also ensure that windows and doors are opened to encourage air flow.
- 5) **Contact Tracing** - When someone tests positive for COVID-19 in our community, we hold a pandemic response team meeting (PRT). At this meeting we determine which individuals are close contacts of the individual who tested positive. Any individuals who have had close contact and are not vaccinated will need to quarantine. We communicate with close contacts directly and in a timely fashion.

In addition, we ask that our families help us keep our school communities safe. **By far the most important thing you can do is to keep your child home from school if they are showing symptoms, have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID, or test positive themselves.** If any of these occur, please contact your child’s school immediately.

	If your child:	Then your child:
1	<p>Is showing the following symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At least two of the following: fever, chills, shivers, muscle aches, headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion or runny nose. ● At least one of the following: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, loss of smell, or loss of taste. 	<p>Should take a COVID test.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● COVID testing centers in Newark and Camden ● If test is negative and your child has been fever free for 24 hours, they can return to in-person school immediately ● If test is positive, please see row below <p>If students do not take a COVID test, they must quarantine for 10 days from the date symptoms began.</p>
2	Tests positive for COVID-19	Must quarantine for 10 days from the date the student took the test that was positive OR the date symptoms began, whichever is earlier.

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3	Is a close contact of someone who tests positive for COVID-19	Must quarantine for 10 days from the date of close contact. Students can return on Day 11 if they are not experiencing any symptoms.
4	Has a close contact in the household and is unable to quarantine from the COVID positive individual	Must quarantine for 20 days from the date the close contact took the test that was positive. Students can return on day 21 if they are not experiencing any symptoms.

When we do have positive cases, we take the following actions:

- 1) Immediately **assemble a school-based Pandemic Response Team** of leaders to investigate any close contacts. We use school-level seating charts and knowledge of the school's transition procedures to do this.
 - The PRT meeting includes your child's school leader and director of school operations, along with members of our network team.
- 2) We **immediately contact any individuals who were in close contact** with the person who tested positive and ensure that they quarantine. In accordance with [CDC guidelines for contact tracing in schools](#), students are identified as a close contact if they are:
 - Within 6 feet of a COVID-positive adult for a total of 15 minutes in a 24-hour period
 - Within 3 feet of a COVID-positive student when masked for a total of 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period
 - Within 6 feet of a COVID-positive student when unmasked (during mealtimes)
- 3) **For quarantined individuals, we will be offering a virtual learning option.** Our teachers are hard at work to help make this virtual option equitable for all students who are required to quarantine. Starting on September 7th, students can join school remotely if they feel well enough to do so. Students will be marked Present for any days they attend virtually by logging into classes via Zoom and absent for any days they do not attend virtually via Zoom. It is important to note that this option is not available unless a student is quarantined because of a positive test or a close contact (see table above). This is in agreement with the NJ state mandate for in-person instruction. In all other cases where a student is not present for school, unfortunately, they will be marked absent. Chromebooks will be loaned to students who need them for the duration of their quarantine.
- 4) **We inform the larger school community of the positive case.** We want to make sure that you have the most up-to-date information about what is happening at your child's campus. Moving forward, we will notify each school community at 6 PM each day if there were positive cases at that campus for students or staff. Positive cases after 6 PM will be communicated the following day.

As guidelines and regulations evolve, so will our practices and we will be sure to keep our families informed. We thank you in advance for working with us to rebuild and maintain a predictable environment and experience for our students during a remarkably unpredictable time.

Sincerely,

Drew Martin

Executive Director