

August 24, 2020

#ReopenStrong – Important Updates

From the Chancellor

This post is an email sent by Chancellor Ferebee to the DCPS community on August 21, 2020

Dear DCPS Community,

The first day of school is August 31, and we cannot wait to welcome students back. The beginning of every school year presents the opportunity to establish a strong foundation for learning. As we look toward School Year 2020-2021, I am optimistic that the lessons we learned over the past few months will guide us to #ReopenStrong virtually for our students, staff, and families.

You play a critical role in our strong start to the year — enroll your student in DCPS as soon as possible at enrolldcps.dc.gov (<http://enrolldcps.dc.gov>). Contact your school or the DCPS Enrollment Team Hotline at (202) 478-5738 if you need assistance completing the forms.

Below are important updates for families for SY20-21 on topics like grading and attendance. You can find additional information, such as [sample schedules by grade](https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/schedule/) (<https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/schedule/>), at our #ReopenStrong online hub at dcpsreopenstrong.com. There, you can also find our [Family FAQ](https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/faqs/) (<https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/faqs/>) that includes more information about topics shared below, as well as other frequently asked questions you may have ahead of the new school year.

Canvas, our online learning management system that every student will use daily, is an important tool for families to understand. In case you missed yesterday's Parent University presentation, you can stream "[Accessing Learning Online – Canvas 101 for Families](https://www.youtube.com/user/dcpublicschools)," on YouTube. (<https://www.youtube.com/user/dcpublicschools>).

Countdown To August 31

Next week, schools will distribute tech devices to students and will be in touch with families directly about how to pick them up. Elementary school students will also receive take-home materials from their school at this time. Secondary student materials will be all digital. If you plan to use your personal computer for virtual instruction, please review the recommended technical and system requirements at dcpsreopenstrong.com/resources/technology/ (<https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/resources/technology/>).

Over the coming days, DCPS may reach out to you by phone to say hello and see if you have what you need as students begin learning at home. We are here to help with questions you may have around enrollment, getting a computer or internet access, or other back to school items. Be sure to also check out what your school is sending your way about student schedules (coming August 26), supply drives, or checklists for the new school year.

ReopenStrong means a safe return to learning for every student. It is what our teachers are using as the basis for their pre-service professional development days next week, and what I spoke to our more than 400 new educators about earlier this week.

We are excited to establish a solid foundation that ensures DCPS students feel loved, challenged, and prepared for SY20-21 and beyond.

Sincerely,

Lewis D. Ferebee, Ed.D.
Chancellor, DC Public Schools

P.S. Do you need a device to learn at home? It's not too late to let your school know what technology you may need! Let us know at dcps.tech/survey. (<http://dcps.tech/survey>).

In case you missed it, please visit our [Fiscal Year 2022 public input site \(https://publicinput.com/9375/\)](https://publicinput.com/9375/). At the link, you can watch a series of informational videos, review a detailed presentation on this work, and find a forum where you can share your thoughts.

IMPORTANT UPDATES FOR FAMILIES

Social Emotional Learning And Behavioral Supports

Part of setting a strong foundation for learning requires understanding and meeting students' social emotional learning (SEL) needs. Each school day, families can expect that teachers will utilize morning check-ins or other strategies to connect and build trusting relationships with their students via video on Teams.

Schools will provide space and supports both in the virtual classroom and through support services. Classroom supports will include activities such as emoji mood checks, reflection time, team building activities, 1:1 time with students who appear to be struggling, social emotional learning activities, and referrals for counseling supports as appropriate.

DCPS recognizes the extended school closures have impacted students, families, and school staff, and we will use a trauma-responsive model to support our students and schools. This will allow us to elevate student voice and agency, support educator SEL and well-being, and deepen partnerships with families.

Throughout the virtual school day, students will be greeted by their teachers and other school staff with positive and affirming language. Students will be provided resources to support self-management and emotional regulation, and teachers will spend dedicated time to build relational trust. Overall, educators will teach, model, and reinforce school-wide behavior expectations.

[Join a Parent University online workshop on August 27 at 5:30 p.m. on "Helping Our Children Respond to Trauma as We Return to Learning," RSVP to attend. \(https://www.eventbrite.com/e/helping-our-children-respond-to-trauma-as-we-return-to-learning-registration-115277684658?aff=ebcollection\)](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/helping-our-children-respond-to-trauma-as-we-return-to-learning-registration-115277684658?aff=ebcollection)

We believe that the time students have to connect with their teachers is more precious than ever. Therefore, we are committed to limiting the exclusion of students from the virtual learning environment. In the event of behavior that disrupts a virtual learning environment, such as academic dishonesty, inappropriate language or gestures, or posting material unrelated to the topic in the chat, a teacher may verbally redirect the student, meet to discuss the disruptive behavior with the student individually, consult with the student's parents or guardians, or design an accountability plan.

[Join a Parent University online workshop on September 10 at 5:30 p.m. on "Experiencing Restorative Practices with Your Family," RSVP to attend. \(https://www.eventbrite.com/e/experience-restorative-practices-with-your-family-registration-115278557268?aff=ebcollection\)](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/experience-restorative-practices-with-your-family-registration-115278557268?aff=ebcollection)

Attendance Expectations

Every Day Counts! Daily attendance remains compulsory for students age 5-17, even in the virtual setting.

Students must sign into Canvas at least once every day between 6:00 a.m. and 11:59 p.m.; otherwise, they will be counted as absent. Canvas participation will transfer to a student's Aspen attendance record on a daily basis. No additional action is needed beyond signing into the Canvas system. If a student experiences a tech issue, they should call their school to have their attendance recorded for that day. [Review the full attendance guidance on the #ReopenStrong website. \(https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/resources/attendance/\)](https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/resources/attendance/)

Schools will use much more than just daily attendance as an indicator of student engagement in learning, including completing assignments and participation in live classes.

[Join a Parent University online workshop on September 15 at 3:00 p.m. on "What Attendance Will Look Like for SY20-21" RSVP to attend. \(https://www.eventbrite.com/e/what-will-attendance-look-like-for-sy20-21-registration-115280282428?aff=ebcollection\)](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/what-will-attendance-look-like-for-sy20-21-registration-115280282428?aff=ebcollection)

Grading

DCPS believes that grades support ongoing learning, by providing timely feedback and informing personalized instruction, while making a record of growth and development over students' school career. We used feedback from teachers, school leaders, students, and the education community to ensure our learning at home grading policy is equitable and genuinely based on students' learning. [Review the full grading guidance on the #ReopenStrong website. \(https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/resources/grading/\)](https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/resources/grading/)

Pre-K

At each grading period, students will receive marks for individual skills or expectations within each area of development (language, literacy, cognitive, math, social emotional, and physical) indicating if they are below developmental expectations, meeting developmental expectations, or exceeding developmental expectations.

Grades K-5

Term grade calculations are based on student engagement, practice and application, and assessment to reflect the diverse nature of student work. All student work will be scored objectively, and grades will be supported with evidence and documentation. Teachers will regularly communicate expectations to students and keep them informed of their academic status.

Grades 6-12

Student work will be scored objectively and consistently, and teachers must support grades with evidence and documentation. Term grade calculations for secondary students are based on Student Engagement (20%), Practice and Application (40%) and Assessment (40%) to reflect the diverse nature of student work.

Teachers will regularly communicate expectations to students and keep them informed of their academic status. Students will not be penalized for late submission of work assigned by their teacher through the Canvas Course Companion. Students in grades 6-12 and their families will continue to use the Aspen Student and Parent Portal to view current course and assignment grades.

[Join a Parent University online workshop on September 17 at 5:30 p.m. on “High School Grading, Graduation, and Supports.” RSVP to attend.](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/high-school-grading-graduation-and-supports-registration-116133509453?aff=ebcollection) (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/high-school-grading-graduation-and-supports-registration-116133509453?aff=ebcollection>)

Changes To Out Of School Time Programming

With DCPS beginning SY20-21 in a fully virtual model, we will not offer virtual before and after school programming for students. When health conditions permit a transition into hybrid instruction, we expect to re-start these services for students attending in-person instruction.

For Term 1, we are exploring avenues with partners to provide eventual in-person programming for students furthest from opportunity with a focus on supporting learning at home, enrichment, and physical activities. These offerings would follow all required health and safety guidelines and more information is forthcoming. Independently funded before and aftercare partners may continue to offer virtual programming while learning at home takes place, but it will not be sponsored by DCPS. [Read more in our Family FAQ.](https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/faqs/) (<https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/faqs/>)

Meals For Students

Even though we will be starting the year with virtual instruction, we remain committed to supporting our students with meal distribution during the pandemic. Ensuring access to nutritious meals means that students are set up for success and ready to learn. We are excited to continue this service and more information will be provided soon on how and where families can access high-quality meals as we start our virtual school year.

Free daily meals and weekly grocery distribution are still available at sites throughout the District. Visit coronavirus.dc.gov/food (<http://coronavirus.dc.gov/food>) for locations and times.

Bookmark [dcpsreopenstrong.com](https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/home-2/) (<https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/home-2/>) on your mobile phone or computer for more information about SY20-21.

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