

SAFE RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING AND CONTINUITY OF SERVICES: JANUARY 18, 2022 - ADDENDUM 1

Background

Bronx Charter Schools for Excellence 1-5 (Bronx Excellence 1-5) recognize the value of maintaining full in-person instruction and the significant impacts it has on children's academic achievement and social-emotional wellbeing. Our schools continuously monitor Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and New York State Department of Health (DOH) guidance as it evolves. We also remain vigilant of the state of the pandemic and its impact on our communities. We closely evaluate the efficacy of our practices using a data-based approach as circumstances continually shift.

On July 1, 2021, Bronx Excellence published our plan for [Safe Return to In Person Learning and Continuity of Services](#), which informed our [2021-22 Reopening Plan](#). This Addendum is added to ensure we are maintaining best practices in keeping our scholars and staff safe, particularly in response to rising community infection rates and updated guidance from the CDC and DOH.

As the Delta and Omicron variants have both demonstrated higher transmissibility than the original strain, Bronx Excellence will be reinforcing our adherence and strengthening our commitment to our layered mitigation strategies to minimize the spread of the virus within our schools.

Vaccines

The CDC continues to recognize vaccines as the best measure to protect people from getting infected, to reduce transmission, and decrease the likelihood for the virus to mutate and create new variants. In accordance with [CDC recommendations](#), Bronx Excellence strongly endorses all eligible individuals to protect themselves by getting fully vaccinated. Current COVID-19 vaccines were designed to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death and remain highly effective tools in our protection against the virus. However, as we are observing rising breakthrough cases, we have also learned that vaccine efficacy wanes over time. As such, Bronx Excellence will be instituting a secondary vaccine mandate for all employees to get their [vaccine boosters](#) if/when they meet at least one of the following criteria:

- It has been five months since they completed the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine series, OR
- It has been two months after they received the primary J&J vaccine, OR
- It has been three months since they recovered from a confirmed COVID-19 case.

Our goal is to have all eligible staff boosted by February 28th. Bronx Excellence also continues to recommend all eligible individuals to get vaccinated. Scholars who are fully vaccinated and identified as close contacts are exempt from quarantine if identified as close contacts. By minimizing the spread of the virus within our schools,

we will be able to protect the health and wellbeing of our children, staff, and families and minimize disruptions to learning.

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR A COVID-19 BOOSTER OR A THIRD DOSE?



DISCLAIMER:

THIS CHART IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY. PLEASE CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR FOR MEDICAL ADVICE.

Masks

Bronx Excellence will continue to require all students and staff to wear face masks, regardless of vaccination status, when they are inside of any school building, on the bus, and outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained. However, because the highly contagious Delta and Omicron variants are circulating, health experts are stating that loose fitting and permeable cloth masks that do not offer a secure seal around the nose and mouth will no longer provide sufficient protection. The best use of a face covering is to ensure it fully covers your nose and mouth and can be secured under your chin. The mask should also fit snugly against the sides of your face. The most effective masks that offer this level of protection are N95 and KN95 masks. Our schools will now require all staff and students to wear N95, KN95, or similar grade masks while in our school buildings. If a student or staff member arrives to school wearing a loose-fitting or cloth mask, a disposable replacement N95 or KN95 mask will be provided for use for the remainder of the day. (The most effective masks are based on fit and filtration capabilities. If the N95 or KN95 masks do not fit properly, a three-ply children’s surgical masks may be a viable alternative.)

Exemptions for masking are determined on a case-by-case basis (for example for scholars with documented developmental disabilities that prevent tolerance of wearing a face covering for an extended period of time) and accommodations such as mask breaks will be permitted, particularly as cases require. Medical contraindications are extremely rare and limited to individuals who, for example, suffer from severe COPD, facial burns, emphysema, or heart failure. In such instances where individuals are suffering from medical conditions that are so severe that they prevent the proper use of face coverings, it is generally advised that such individuals should not enter congregate settings where their health and safety might be compromised.

Why Cloth Masks Might Not Be Enough as Omicron Spreads

Time it takes to transmit an infectious dose of Covid-19

		PERSON NOT INFECTED IS WEARING			
		Nothing	Cloth mask	Surgical mask	N95
PERSON INFECTED IS WEARING	Nothing	15 min.	20 min.	30 min.	2.5 hours
	Cloth mask	20 min.	27 min.	40 min.	3.3 hours
	Surgical mask	30 min.	40 min.	1 hour	5 hours
	N95	2.5 hours	3.3 hours	5 hours	25 hours

It will take 25 hours for an infectious dose of Covid-19 to transmit between people wearing non-fit-tested N95 respirators. If they're using tightly sealed N95s—where only 1% of particles enter the facepiece—they will have 2,500 hours of protection.

Note: Results published in Spring 2021. The CDC expects the Omicron variant to spread more easily.
Source: ACGIH's Pandemic Response Task Force

Daily Screening, Isolation of Suspected Cases, and Diagnostic Testing

Bronx Excellence will continue to emphasize the importance of daily screening at home prior to arrival to the building. In order to prevent the spread of the virus, we must do our best to prevent it from entering our schools. We must ensure that individuals who have been exposed to the virus, or any individuals who are sick or tested positive should not enter the building and quarantine or isolate respectively. Bronx Excellence requires families and staff to conduct daily screenings for any symptoms. Individuals who are feeling ill must stay home. If an individual begins to exhibit symptoms, regardless of vaccination status, s/he will be encouraged to consult with a licensed healthcare professional and get tested.

Bronx Excellence will continue to require families and staff to conduct daily morning screenings for symptoms or risk factors prior to arriving to the schools. Symptoms to monitor include:

- Fever or chills (100°F or greater)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting; and/or
- Diarrhea

Risk factors include being unvaccinated and having close contact with a confirmed case. Any individual exhibiting any symptoms must stay at home, consult with a licensed healthcare provider, and get tested.

If a student or staff member exhibits any of these symptoms while in the building with no other explanation, s/he will be sent to the designated isolation room for an assessment by the school nurse. The parents/guardians of a student suspected of having COVID-19 will be contacted for immediate pickup and the student will be safely isolated from others with a staff member until the parent/guardian arrives. The individual must continue to wear a facemask, isolate, and socially distance to minimize the chance of transmission until they are able to leave the building. A maintenance team will be asked to clean the isolation room upon their exit when it is deemed safe. Per guidance, scholars and staff suspected of having COVID-19 will be asked to consult with a licensed healthcare provider or urgent care facility and to get tested.

Potentially sick individuals will be informed to begin self-isolation and asked not to return until they have confirmed they have tested negative and/or have met the criteria to discontinue home isolation. Any area that may have been contaminated will be closed off for cleaning and disinfecting. The identification of the individual will not be disclosed and confidentiality will be kept. However, as a communicable

disease, confirmed COVID-19 cases must be reported to the DOH and any necessary precautions for isolation and containment will be taken.

Testing sites are available in local pharmacies and at [statewide testing sites](#). Daily screening has become a very important factor in our layers of mitigation strategies as we increased the number of scholars and teachers in the buildings and decreased physical distancing as a result.

Isolation and Quarantine

The CDC issued new [guidance for K-12](#) schools on January 6, 2022 allowing for shortened [isolation and quarantine](#) periods. While the chances of transmission decrease after five days, the virus still remains transmissible. Therefore, Bronx Excellence will allow individuals who test positive to return after at least five days of isolation, but they must take additional precautions and may not return with a fever or without symptom improvement.

Isolation

Regardless of vaccination status, all individuals who test positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus must:

- Stay home and isolate for at least five days (Day 0 is the day symptoms start or, if asymptomatic, the day the test sample is taken)
- Wear a well-fitting mask around others at home and in public for an additional five days
- Monitor for symptoms for the full ten days

Individuals who test positive and remain asymptomatic must isolate for at least five days. After the fifth day, if they remain without symptoms, they will be permitted to return to school, but must continue to mask for an additional five days using a well-fitting N95 or similar-grade mask. Such individuals will need to remain vigilant for symptom development and must take additional precautions such as maintaining physical distance from others when unmasked or eating. If symptoms develop, the individual should immediately isolate and seek guidance from a licensed healthcare provider.

Individuals with symptoms who test positive must isolate for at least 5 days. After the fifth day, they may return to school if at least 24 hours have passed with no fever (without the use of fever-reducing medications) and improvement of other symptoms. Upon return, individuals must continue to mask for an additional five days using a well-fitting N95 or similar-grade mask. Those recovering from a symptomatic infection must also take additional precautions such as maintaining physical distance from others when unmasked or eating. If fever persists or symptoms show no improvement after five days, the individual should remain isolated until they meet the exit criteria.

Any individual who is exhibiting symptoms and is awaiting test results should also self-isolate, particularly if there has been known contact with a confirmed case.

How to Isolate

People in isolation should monitor for symptoms. Make every effort to stay away from other household members, particularly those who may be immunocompromised or at risk of severe illness for the full ten days. This may mean staying in a separate room and using a separate bathroom if available. They should wear a mask if around others and should not leave the house. Individuals with active infections should not participate in activities that might involve contact with others, such as social gatherings, play dates, parties, or theater performances. If emergent symptoms develop (such as difficulty breathing), seek emergency medical care immediately.

Sample Isolation Calendar

You are considered infectious two days prior to symptom onset/date of test.		1 Symptoms Begin/Test Sample Taken ISOLATION DAY 0	2 ISOLATION DAY 1	3 ISOLATION DAY 2	4 ISOLATION DAY 3	5 ISOLATION DAY 4
6 ISOLATION DAY 5	7 If no fever for 24 hours and symptoms improving, return to school. MASK DAY 6	8 MASK DAY 7	9 MASK DAY 8	10 MASK DAY 9	11 MASK DAY 10	12

Mask, Monitor for symptoms, Take Additional Precautions

Quarantine

In accordance with the CDC and DOH, Bronx Excellence defines close contacts as those individuals who have been within six feet of a confirmed positive case for 15 or more cumulative minutes within a 24-hour period. Although the state and city have public health contact tracing programs, the school does not wait to respond to positive cases. When the school is notified of a confirmed positive COVID-19 test result, the staff takes immediate action to implement tracing and quarantine protocols. Individuals who test positive are considered infectious two days prior to symptom onset or, for asymptomatic cases, two days prior to the test date. Accordingly, all close contacts who might have been exposed during this time period are identified and notified while maintaining confidentiality of the individual who tested positive.

Close contacts who meet the following criteria must quarantine for at least 5 days:

- Scholars who are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated
- Staff who are fully vaccinated, but not boosted. This means it has been:
 - More than 5 months since the second Pfizer or Moderna dose
 - More than 2 months since the primary J&J dose

On or after the fifth day of quarantine, close contacts should get tested by a licensed care provider or facility. If they remain asymptomatic after 5 days of quarantine and do not test positive, they will be permitted to return to school as long as they continue to wear a well-fitting N95/KN95 mask and take additional precautions for an additional 5 days. Proof of a negative test from a provider or test facility must be emailed to the principal prior to school return. Negative home tests will not be accepted.

Individuals identified as close contacts who meet the following criteria do not need to quarantine as long as they remain well and without symptoms:

- Staff who are fully vaccinated and boosted
- Scholars 5-17 years old who are fully vaccinated (2 weeks after series)
- Any individual who has had a confirmed case within the past 90 days

All close contacts, regardless of vaccination status, must:

- Wear a well-fitting mask when around others for 10 days from exposure
- Test on/after 5 days (unless you have had a confirmed case within the past 90 days*). Proof of a negative test from a provider or test facility must be emailed to the principal. Negative home tests will not be accepted.
- Monitor for symptoms for 10 days from exposure

*In accordance with [CDC guidance](#), individuals can continue to test positive for up to 90 days after an infection. Therefore, recently recovered close contacts do not need to test on or after 5 days from exposure.

Bronx Excellence will continue to contemplate CDC and DOH guidance for contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine in collaboration with local and state health departments and the NYS Contact Tracing Program. Community transmission will rely primarily on the local health departments for contact tracing. Contact tracing within the schools will be facilitated by our principal, with input from our school nurses and local health department as needed.

The schools have received a shipment of home test kits. The test kits are not for screening purposes. Rather, when a positive case is identified, close contacts will receive a home test with instructions for administration *while supplies last*. It is important that individuals follow the directions provided in the test kits. Scholars and staff do not need to inform the school of negative home test results. Please note that students and staff will still need to quarantine for the full duration described above regardless of a negative test result. If a home test indicates a positive result, the school recommends that individuals contact their healthcare provider for further guidance, particularly if symptoms develop. We also ask that close contacts who test positive notify the school immediately so we can enact tracing protocols accordingly.

How to Quarantine

Close contacts in quarantine should stay home and stay away from others for at least five days from exposure to the individual who tested positive. The day of exposure is Day 0, followed by Days 1-5 of quarantine. Close contacts should wear a mask around


others while at home and monitor for symptoms for 10 days. If symptoms develop, refer to a healthcare provider and get tested.

Close contacts in quarantine should get tested by a licensed healthcare provider or facility on or after the 5th day after exposure. If the test result is negative and there are no symptoms, the individual may return to school, but must wear a well-fitting mask and monitor for symptoms. Proof of a negative test from a provider or test facility must be emailed to the principal prior to school return. Negative home tests will not be accepted. If the test result is positive, the individual must isolate for at least 5 days from the date the test sample was taken, or if symptoms develop, at least 5 days from symptom onset.

Close contacts should avoid contact with others who may be immunocompromised or at risk of severe illness for at least 10 days from exposure. Close contacts should not travel for 10 days from exposure. They should also not participate in social activities such as play dates, parties, gatherings, and theaters for 10 days.

Sample Quarantine Calendar

		1 Day of Exposure	2	3	4	5
		QUARANTINE DAY 0	QUARANTINE DAY 1	QUARANTINE DAY 2	QUARANTINE DAY 3	QUARANTINE DAY 4
6 Get tested. If negative and no symptoms, return to school on Day 6.	7	8	9	10	11	12
QUARANTINE DAY 5	MASK DAY 6	MASK DAY 7	MASK DAY 8	MASK DAY 9	MASK DAY 10	

Mask, Monitor for symptoms, Take Additional Precautions


Bronx Excellence will make the decisions we believe will minimize the spread of the infection based on recommended guidance, data, and consultation with licensed medical professionals.

	If you test positive	If you are a close contact
Scholars	Regardless of vaccination status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolate for at least 5 days Return after Day 5 if no fever for 24 or more hours and symptom improvement Mask for Days 6-10 Take additional precautions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolate for at least 5 days Test on/after Day 5 after exposure Return if negative test and no symptoms Mask for Days 6-10 Take additional precautions <p>Scholars who are fully vaccinated or have recently recovered (within the past 90 days) from a confirmed COVID case do not</p>

		have to quarantine as long as they remain well. However, fully vaccinated scholars must get tested on/after the fifth day after exposure. Monitor for symptoms.
	If you test positive	If you are a close contact
Staff	Regardless of vaccination status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolate for at least 5 days • Return after Day 5 if no fever for 24 or more hours and symptom improvement • Mask for Days 6-10 • Take additional precautions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarantine for 5 days • Test on Day 5 after exposure • Return if negative test and no symptoms • Mask for Days 6-10 • Take additional precautions <p>If you are within 5 months of your Pfizer or Moderna series, 2 months of the Janssen primary shot, recovered within the past 90 days from a confirmed case, or are boosted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You do not need to quarantine • Test on Day 5 after exposure • Monitor for symptoms

Additional Mitigation Measures

Bronx Excellence continues to adhere to [CDC guidance](#) for additional mitigation strategies to support safe in-person learning.

Physical Distancing and Cohorting

Bronx Excellence recognizes the importance of providing full in-person learning, both for students’ academic advancement and social-emotional wellbeing. Prior to the start of the school year, the schools removed all non-essential furniture to maximize distancing capabilities. The school abides by [CDC guidance](#) for physical distancing. Wherever possible, our schools will continue to maintain three feet of physical distance between scholars in the classroom and six feet in common spaces such as hallways and bathrooms. The school also uses physical barriers to help define personal spaces at tables and to reduce the spread of expelled respiratory droplets when children are unmasked to eat.

With more students in the building, this means that cohort sizes increased to include entire classrooms. At this time, with the more contagious strains of Delta and Omicron circulating, we will maintain the cohort size to classrooms to minimize opportunities for transmission. Students will remain with their classroom cohorts throughout the day. We will also minimize movement throughout the building to avoid face-to-face encounters with other classrooms. Students and staff will be discouraged from congregating and will continue to abide by distancing rules whenever possible, in the hallways, bathrooms, playground, stairwells, and on buses. Building access will continue to be restricted to students and essential staff.

Hand Hygiene

Bronx Excellence will reinforce frequent hand hygiene, upon building entry, after use of lavatories, prior to eating, and other key points throughout the day. Bronx Excellence will continue to abide by [CDC guidance](#) for hand hygiene. Staff will continue to promote proper hand and respiratory hygiene and incorporate it into their daily practice with their students. The schools have posted printed materials and installed single-use and no-touch dispensers throughout the buildings. We will continue to teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol content is also widely available throughout the building in no-touch dispensers in high-traffic zones and in classrooms.

Seating Charts

Effective contact tracing requires staff to identify who was a close contact to a positive case. This is best accomplished by adherence to seating charts in the classroom, cafeteria, on buses, and any other congregate area. It also prevents having to quarantine large groups of children if close contacts cannot be identified, and subsequently minimizes disruptions to learning. Seating charts will be enforced in classrooms, buses, and any other congregate settings including small groups, intervention groups, and Saturday Academy. Students and staff must adhere to social distancing requirements at all times.

Cleaning

Bronx Excellence will continue to employ strict cleaning and disinfection protocols throughout the day, after potential contamination, and after school. In general, the CDC recommends daily cleaning as a means to sufficiently remove any potential virus particles that are on surfaces. This includes wiping down chairs and desks. Throughout the day, staff will also clean frequently touched surfaces such as door handles and stair rails. If an individual is suspected of having or known to have tested positive for COVID-19, those spaces will be disinfected. This includes spaces such as the nurse's office and/or isolation rooms.