

APPLE/Apple Tree
Queens Centers for Progress
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September 2021

Dear Families,

We hope you are well. Here is a summary of our health and safety plan for 2021-22. The challenges of the last year were many, yet our school remained safe. Our staff were exceptional in their creativity and dedication, and our families were very cooperative.

We are instituting a few new plans as regulations have changed and fine-tuned others for the safe return of all our students and our staff. We are ready to reopen to full capacity. We are committed that our school remain safe in accordance with CDC guidelines and regulations from NYS and NYC DOH, and NY State Education Department. In addition, our new Governor might announce further guidance. Our priority remains the safety and health of our community. We are up to the challenge of managing the risks of COVID-19 while providing engaging full-time school for your children.

Many items are a continuation from last school year. Our strategies may change, based on transmission levels.

Masks:

- Staff and children will **wear masks at all times** – inside and outdoors; bandanas are not allowed.
- It is our expectation and goal that children will wear masks, though we know there will be lapses with some children. Face shields are available for children who won't/can't wear masks. If children can only wear masks some of the time due to their disability, we will prioritize having them wear masks during times when it is difficult to separate children. Masks will not be worn when a child is napping.
- Please place a face covering on your child before sending him/her to school. We will provide masks to students as needed and have an adequate supply in case of need for replacement.

Physical Distancing:

- Children will no longer need to remain in “cohorts” (small groups), with the same classroom staff and therapists. Class cohorts will be maintained in the elevators, gym, social hall, and other indoor areas.
- Physical distancing is not required on school buses, as per CDC for this school year.
- Our plan is for children to remain **three feet apart** from other children. For children not wearing masks, social distancing will be increased.
- Adults will be socially distance in the classrooms, but there will always be proper supervision and engagement with our students.
- Physical activities that encourage physical closeness will be limited.

Hygiene:

- Children and adults will **wash hands frequently**. Hand sanitizer will be used when handwashing is not possible. There will be strict attention to hand hygiene – sinks available to all, along with hand sanitizer dispensers in all classrooms.

Food:

- During mealtime, classes will be separated or use a larger room, as children will not be wearing masks. This way there can be more social distancing. There will always be a certified staff member with your children.

Temperature, Questionnaire Screenings:

- At the entrance, a staff will take your child's temperature with a no-touch thermometer. We will also see if there are any obvious signs of illness including persistent cough, flushed cheeks, excessively runny nose, etc. Our School Nurse or Pediatrician will further assess any child with questionable symptoms. If a child does not pass the screening, parents will be required immediately to come to school to pick up their child and call their pediatrician.

Staying Home When Sick and Getting Tested:

- Currently, adults who are fully vaccinated do NOT need to quarantine after contact with someone who had COVID-19 *unless* they have symptoms. It is recommended that fully vaccinated staff get tested 3-5 days after their exposure. Contact is defined as being within 6 feet of an infected person for 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.
- However, for children, there is an exception from quarantine if the infected child and the exposed child are wearing well-fitting masks the entire time. Families will be reminded and encouraged to keep their children at home who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19; children will be sent home with symptoms. Our Medical Department will advise families about the need to quarantine and/or seek testing when such symptoms are present in their children.

School Building:

- We have spent the summer getting the building ready with deep cleaning.
- We are using high efficiency air filters which are changed monthly. Windows will remain open in the classrooms for increased ventilation. Children should dress accordingly.
- We are continuing not to allow items that are not easily cleanable in the classrooms (e.g., carpets in classrooms, sensory materials, dress-up clothes).
- Water fountains will remain closed.
- Classrooms can share bathrooms, but only one child/two adults in a bathroom at a time.
- There will be limited Discovery Zone and Smart Zone time. The gym and Social Hall will be available. There will be no shows or school-wide events. Classes will continue to use the playground.
- Our ventilation filters are changed monthly.

Remote Instruction:

- All children will be attending 100% in-person. Our children will benefit from in-person learning in a safe environment. We are not having a hybrid or 100% remote option.

Visitors:

- Parents – sadly - will not be allowed into our building, except for exceptional circumstances.

Family Responsibilities:

We ask all to do the following:

- Take your child's temperature at home each morning and **keep your child home when he/she has a temperature over 100° F, any signs of illness or anyone in your home has been diagnosed with COVID in the past two weeks.** COVID-19 symptoms include flushed cheeks, coughing, looking sick, vomiting, diarrhea, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle aches, sore throat and new loss of smell or taste. Children are encouraged to get tested when symptoms are compatible with COVID-19.

- Please wash your child’s hands more frequently including right before your child leaves your home in the morning and when your child returns home in the afternoon.
- Please use a mask on your child so he/she is used to wearing one in school.
- Please continue to socially distance.
- Family members who are eligible are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated, the leading strategy to prevent serious COVID-19 illness. It is hoped that 100% of our staff will be fully vaccinated. Bravo to all!
- Keep us updated of any changes to your phone numbers or emails.
- Be sure your child is up-to-date with his/her medical and immunizations.
- For children who require treatment for asthma while in school, we will be treating students with inhalers and spacers instead of nebulizers in order to decrease the spread of the virus. Authorization for treatment will be required from your child’s doctor.
- If the school calls that your child is sick, you must pick your child up right away. Your child cannot go home on the bus.
- Check our website www.queenscp.org for more information on our Reopening Plan. Call us at 718-374-0002 to hear a recording if school is closed or check out our website.

Arrival/Dismissal:

If you are using the school bus,

- Be sure to put a facial covering on your child before he/she goes on the bus.
- When your child arrives in school, we will take your child’s temperature with a no-touch thermometer.
- We will also see if there are any obvious signs of illness including persistent cough, flushed cheeks, excessively runny nose, etc. Our School Nurse or Pediatrician will further assess your child as appropriate.
- We will make every effort to complete this screening outdoors. Be sure your child is dressed for the current weather conditions.
- If your child does not pass the screening, **you will be required immediately to come to school to pick up your child** and call your pediatrician.

If you are dropping off or picking up your child,

- Upon arrival you must remain **six feet away** from others waiting to enter the building.
- Regardless of the weather, parents will need to remain outside until your child has been screened. Be sure you and your child are prepared and dressed for the weather conditions.
- You and your child **MUST** be wearing face coverings.
- At the entrance, a staff will take your child’s temperature with a no-touch thermometer.
- If your child’s temperature **exceeds 100 F, or has obvious symptoms, you will need to take your child home** and call your pediatrician.
- Only your child will be allowed to enter the school building. For the safety of your child and our staff, no parents will be allowed to enter the school building.
- At pick-up time, you will need to call the front office (718-374-0002, ext. 471) and let the receptionist know you are here to pick up your child. Your child will then be brought to you outside.
- Apple Tree PKA and 3K children will have staggered arrival/dismissal times to cut down on the congestion outdoors. Schedules will be shared with families.

Calendar:

Our first day of school is **Monday, September 13, 2021.**

Communication:

- We will continue to notify families if we learn of any COVID-19 cases in your child’s classroom or any new regulations or guidance that affects our school. As always, we will do our best to be transparent in our decision-making and timely in our communication. Things can change very quickly though.
- Please seek us out if you have any questions, concerns, suggestions.

Our priority is the safety and health of your children and our staff. We are committed to preventing illness, keeping our school open, providing a safe and nurturing environment for our students and staff, and being flexible. In addition, please know that nothing has changed our sincere commitment to your children and our staff. We are determined to provide the highest quality education and therapeutic programming - even during these difficult times.

We look forward to working with you this year.

Thank you for your trust,

Cindy Heller

Director, Children’s Services

Jennifer Bommarito

Jennifer Bommarito, Assistant Director of Children’s Services