

Chancellor's Memo



Dear Colleagues,

The health and safety of our students and school communities remains our first priority. As the situation around the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) evolves in New York City, we will continue to regularly communicate important updates to our families and principals.

To maximize our ability to share new guidance and policies as quickly as possible, we are suspending the Chancellor's Memo in *Principals Weekly* for the foreseeable future. Instead, I will be sharing communications about COVID-19 and other topics with you outside of *Principals Weekly*, with more frequent emails as needed. You will continue to receive *Principals Weekly* as usual.

I am aware there is anxiety around COVID-19, and I want you to know that I share your urgency to do everything possible to keep our students and school communities safe. I trust that we are all vigilant and prepared. But while we go about our daily lives, inside and outside of school, we must all take the lead in bringing our school communities together. As the Mayor said, ultimately, we all are part of the solution. It's critical that we protect what we as educators hold most dear: our students, their families, and everyone who works in our schools.

As you share DOE updates with your staff members and families, I also encourage you to stress the importance of fighting stigma and bias around COVID-19. The COVID-19 virus is not more prevalent in any one race or nationality, and we must each model inclusion and actively work to combat bias in our school communities.

I am honored to work with such dedicated principals, and want to thank those of you who participated in last week's webinar on coronavirus. If you were unable to join us for the webinar, you can access it [online. For more information and resources, see the Principal Coronavirus Updates on InfoHub.](#)

Most importantly, thank you for working with us to keep educators and families safe—and informed.

In unity,
Richard

Announcements

Guidance on Documenting Student Attendance Issues Related to COVID-19

School Type: **All schools**

Workflow Subcategory: **Attendance**

In order to document the impact of COVID-19 on student attendance, you should ensure that student attendance is being marked as follows:

Use [Reason Code 14](#) (COVID-19-related absence) in ATS to indicate any absences related to the virus. Reason Code 14 will be considered excused for NY student-attendance reporting and will appear as “E” on the student’s individual attendance report ([RISA](#)). This includes situations when:

- Students are staying home with any illness related to COVID-19 (students who are ill should stay home).
- Students who have returned from COVID-19-affected areas and are self-quarantined.
- Students who are absent due to exposure to COVID-19 and possess a doctor’s note.
- Families/caregivers who choose to keep students home in an effort to reduce their child’s risk of exposure to COVID-19.

In addition, attendance staff should generate an [ILOG](#) record explaining the specific circumstance for the absences, as you would for any outreach.

For all student absences related to the COVID-19 virus, attendance staff should use Reason Code 14 going forward, instead of using Reason Code 11 (quarantine), or Reason Code 01 or 02 (illness), or Reason Code 06 (special circumstances). Note that schools do not need to go back and change the previously used attendance codes (01, 02, 06 or 11) to Reason Code 14. Using the appropriate reason codes will help track the virus’s impact on students and their instruction.

As noted in recent communications:

- For current fourth and seventh graders, this year’s attendance will not be used as a screen for admissions.
- However, all absences, including both excused and unexcused, appear on student records (STARS report card and NYC Schools Account).

Please ensure that attendance is fully scanned in ATS every day. If you encounter any difficulty scanning or entering daily attendance, please email attendance@schools.nyc.gov or contact the ATS HelpDesk.

For questions, email attendance@schools.nyc.gov.

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Timekeeping Procedures for Absences Related to COVID-19

School Type: **All schools**

Workflow Subcategory: **Payroll**

In accordance with policy issued by the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS), absences on or after February 2 shall be excusable and not charged to either sick or annual leave banks when the absence is related to the 2019-nCoV virus (also referred to as “COVID-19” and “coronavirus”). For detailed guidance and eligibility, including timekeeping codes and procedures, refer to this [Payroll Administration Memorandum 2019–20 No. 13](#). Please share this information with your payroll secretary, as appropriate.

Please note that absences due to regular illness or general flu like symptoms will be treated according to the standard sick leave/time policy unless they qualify, with appropriate documentation, as set forth in the memo linked above.

For questions, email COVIDtimekeeping@schools.nyc.gov.

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