



# OUR 2021-2022 INSTRUCTIONAL PRINCIPLES

New York City Department of Education

IN THIS YEAR OF *HOMECOMING*, WE WILL TRANSFORM OUR SYSTEM THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING, AND ESTABLISH A NEW PATH TO ACADEMIC RECOVERY AND REIMAGINING.

July 7, 2021

Dear Principals,

NYC schools have worked to advance equity over the past decade with marked successes in areas ranging from the highest rate of graduation in the department's history, to expanded access to advanced course offerings for students, to decreased suspensions as a result of deep policy shifts, to the youngest learners having access to a full range of services. While we have made major inroads, disproportionality data continues to highlight existing opportunity gaps, and there is still more to be done to ensure that all students, diverse in race, culture and learning and language needs, have expanded opportunities to experience academic and social emotional success.

Over the past year, the pandemic has shone a spotlight on the stark inequities our students and schools are grappling with, and we listened to learn what we as a city – central DOE, boroughs, communities, districts and schools – need to do better. We heard from principals, teachers, central office staff, families, and students who shared with us their experiences over the last year and their hopes for how we move forward.

**Your voices were clear:** We have the opportunity to transform our system in ways that welcome every student, staff, and family back, and confront the inequities that continue to exist in our system.

Transforming our system means lifting academic expectations *and* creating and sustaining school cultures where students, staff and families can experience joy and thrive, particularly communities that have been underserved within our school system. This moment is about ensuring school communities are places where all students are safe and well-cared for and where they can learn and grow socially, emotionally and academically for post-secondary success.

To achieve this vision, school leaders must partner with their staff, students, families and other community members to co-create the necessary conditions where all students' and their families' experiences, hopes, and dreams are centered in all aspects of teaching and learning. As leaders engage in this work, particular attention should be given to groups who have been undervalued and systemically marginalized.

We, as a system, also need a focus—one that describes what we want our students to experience and serves as a guidepost as we reimagine what teaching and learning look like for the future together to support and accelerate learning for every single student. Through the integration of academic and social emotional learning rooted in a culturally responsive approach, we will redefine teaching and learning to transform our system with a special focus in 2021-2022 on early literacy, curricular materials that meets the needs of our NYC students, digital literacy, special education investments, supports for multilingual learners and their families, and college and post-secondary readiness.

There has never been a time of greater clarity and urgency for our work, and the *2021-2022 Instructional Principles for Reopening* sets the annual expectations for how we will accomplish our goals by **setting high expectations and rigorous instruction** that begins with a **welcoming and affirming environment** and uses **inclusive curricula and assessments**, all supported by **ongoing and targeted professional learning** for educators.

Our path to reopening, and reimagining, our schools and system, starts here with these *Instructional Principles for Reopening*. We look forward to launching this new journey during our annual Principals Conference from July 13 through July 16. We will unpack this work together and lay out our path on how we will continue our work together throughout the next academic year to best serve our students in this year of homecoming.

In partnership,  
Meisha



Meisha Porter  
Chancellor

## **2021-2022 INSTRUCTIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR REOPENING**

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## I. KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Through empathy interviews with over 70 stakeholder groups, and engagement with thousands of families across the city through borough town halls, we heard how the pandemic has impacted the socio-emotional well-being of the entire school community, and concerns about how we will ensure that students have a strong academic comeback in the fall.

The following themes emerged with high frequency across all stakeholder groups:

Theme 1: Concerns over disparities of resources and outcomes

Theme 2: Concerns about the quality of instruction and learning

Theme 3: Need for social emotional learning work that is targeted

Theme 4: Technology utilization, efficiency and adequacy

To address these concerns, stakeholders made several recommendations to address:

<p><b><i>Academic Needs:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Strategies for addressing skill/standards gaps in literacy and numeracy</li><li>✓ Schoolwide academic intervention services</li><li>✓ Improvements in special education</li><li>✓ Expansion of early childhood education</li></ul>	<p><b><i>Technological Needs:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Ensure equitable access to technology</li><li>✓ Embed technology in interventions</li></ul>
<p><b><i>Mental Health Needs:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Additional staff for mental health</li><li>✓ Regular opportunities within the school day to support mental health for students</li></ul>	<p><b><i>Educators' Needs:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Create targeted time for professional development and coaching</li><li>✓ Provide time for planning before the school year</li><li>✓ Ensure regular opportunities within the school day to support mental health for staff</li></ul>

We have an opportunity to use our creativity and ingenuity to innovate and re-imagine our schools and broader system, especially for marginalized students, their families, and communities. There has never been a time of greater clarity or urgency for our work and acting on our shared vision – starting with our **2021-2022 Academic Priorities**.

## II. 2021-2022 ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

**As we re-imagine education for our students, we will focus on the following academic priorities starting in the 2021-2022 school year:**

### **1. Focusing on Early Childhood Literacy**

Addressing literacy is our most urgent priority. Every level of the DOE – from the teacher to the Chancellor – will intensively focus on literacy acceleration, prioritizing students in Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade with a singular goal of all students reading on grade level by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

### **2. Ensuring a Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Curriculum in Every School**

We will ensure all schools have CR-SE aligned curriculum beginning this fall, pushing students out of their academic comfort zones and freeing teachers from time-consuming curriculum development.

### **3. Developing our Students as Digital Citizens**

The pandemic led to an unprecedented investment in technology, with over 800,000 devices purchased by DOE and schools. The Academic Recovery Plan leaves remote learning behind but builds on this technological advantage by guaranteeing all students K-12 have access to a digital devices and ensuring all students become fully fluent digital citizens for the new economy.

### **4. Investing in Special Education**

The pandemic disproportionately impacted our students with disabilities. We will make every resource available to better support students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). This will expand our focus on both younger students and those preparing for life after graduation.

### **5. Providing Greater Support for our Multilingual Learners (MLs) and their Families**

Multilingual learners (MLs) and immigrant families are valued and supported at DOE. We will provide culturally responsive supports that give students and their families equitable access to resources and opportunities that help students succeed inside and outside the classroom.

### **6. Ensuring Our Students are College- and Career-Ready**

We will ensure every student, whether heading to college or a career, is better prepared for the next step in life.

### III. INSTRUCTIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR SCHOOLS

**Our academic recovery demands more from all of us. To deliver on our *Instructional Priorities* and commitment to deliver educational justice for every student, our schools will:**

1. Ensure **high expectations and rigorous instruction** for every single student grounded in an asset-based mindset.
  - ✓ Integrate explicit teaching of social-emotional learning in core instruction and engage students in culturally responsive cognitively demanding tasks that require them to think and act critically, applying their new learning and prior knowledge to transform the world around them by ensuring all students engage in evidence-based foundational literacy that equip them to read, write, speak and listen deeply and critically.
  - ✓ Recognize every student brings assets with them into the classroom and comes to us ready to learn and achieve at high levels.
2. Develop and strengthen a **welcoming and affirming school environment**.
  - ✓ Implement daily relationship building practices to foster supportive and inclusive communities in every classroom and school building so that students feel safe, affirmed, and are ready to engage in joyful learning experiences.
  - ✓ Hold space for students, families, and staff throughout the school year, using one-on-one check-ins, restorative circles, town halls, and other strategies, in order to foster healing centered school communities and gather feedback to continue to create, sustain, and deepen community.
3. Implement **inclusive curricula and assessments** that center student voice and collaboration.
  - ✓ Use high-quality instructional materials, written from racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse perspectives, that reflect and affirm all students' identities, lived experiences, and culture, provide insight into the identities and experiences of others, and result in learning experiences that reduce or eliminate barriers allowing for greater access for diverse learners.
  - ✓ Deeply engages all students in a knowledge-building approach through critical reading, writing, listening, and speaking with rich, meaningful culturally responsive grade level content, where every student sees themselves reflected in the content they are learning, has the opportunity to grow their knowledge about the world around them, and learns processes that helps them grow as learners.
  - ✓ Leverage the knowledge we have gained as a system to integrate technology in innovative ways to enhance and extend learning and assessment.
4. Center time for **ongoing and targeted professional learning communities**.
  - ✓ Foster purposeful adult learning communities to strengthen the capacity of educators to create welcoming and affirming environments that center students' histories and lived experiences and make learning responsive, rigorous and relevant. Utilize adult learning communities to critically examine data, learn together, explore new approaches, and take risks.
  - ✓ Strengthen dynamic cultures for adult learning where educators have brave spaces for critical and continuous self-reflection in order to best facilitate practices to ensure student success.

## IV. INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

### Summer 2021

- Engage in ongoing reflection conversations with all stakeholders (staff, student, families, community organizations, etc.) to reimagine what teaching and learning look like by creating and maintaining healing centered culturally responsive practices, which includes goal-setting processes and shared school-wide decision-making.
- Plan for 2021-22 curriculum, assessment, scheduling, and staffing needs.
- Engage all stakeholders (staff, students, families, community organizations, etc.) in committing to build a common understanding of the interconnectedness between social emotional and academic learning for every student in every classroom, through multi-tiered systems of support.
- With support from your Superintendent team and BCO, engage all stakeholders (staff, student, families, community organizations, etc.) in the Recommendations for Reopening [REFLECTION TOOL](#) to assess the current state of each of the four citywide instructional principles and academic recovery priorities for 2021-22.
- Use your self-assessment to select places for growth within each of the principles and supports needed.
- Engage in leadership professional learning and capacity building to plan, leveraging existing structures.
- Using multi-tiered systems of support as a vehicle for delivery, plan next steps to support and develop each focus practice for the 2021-22 school year.
- Plan structures and systems for collecting evidence and monitoring impact of the 2021-2022 Principles for Reopening.

### Fall 2021

- Communicate with families to ensure partnership on the school's plans.
- Implement structures that support the school's welcoming and affirming environment, high expectations and rigorous instruction, and inclusive curriculum and assessment. Plan and execute ongoing professional learning communities to support staff capacity to enact these plans.
- Gather and reflect upon evidence of student mastery of content and standards, students' social-emotional learning, and progress towards graduating high school college and career ready.
- Reflect and adjust professional learning, instruction, pedagogy, resources and staffing.

### Winter/Spring 2022

- Reflect upon and refine structures that support the school's plans.
- Regularly monitor evidence of the impact of instruction and school structures on school-wide outcomes, determine adjustments, and refine practices.
- Engage in community reflection and goal-setting processes to inform school-wide decision-making.

## V. OVERVIEW OF COMMON SCREENERS

**In preparation for this upcoming school year, strong culturally responsive core instruction (Tier 1) and the use of varied assessments are critical in accelerating learning for each student academically and social emotionally.**

### Assessment Strategy Coordination

We need actionable, reliable and common information about how our students are doing in order to help every school with the supports needed. To complement other forms of assessment in each school, the below screeners, which will be centrally funded and provided to schools, will provide information that will support teachers in making informed instructional decisions on the standards and skills needed to accelerate learning. Coupled with “knowing students well,” decisions by teachers will be more informed to support instructional growth.

- Schools will select common screeners that will be administered to all students in ELA and Math K-8/HS, three times a year (Fall, Winter, Spring) to inform instructional next steps for teachers focusing on core instruction as a priority. The common screeners are:
  - K-2 Literacy: *Acadience*
  - 3-12 ELA and K-12 Math: *MAP Growth* or *iReady* (for schools already using)
  - Instead of the above, additional options are available in consideration of:
    - Students with disabilities that participate in Alternate Assessment: *SANDI* or *WebABLLS* (but choose from above for students participating in Standardized Assessment)
    - Multilingual Learners/ELLs in Spanish bilingual programs: *STAR*
- If schools prefer to use a different screener than the ones provided by central DOE, they must seek approval from their Superintendent through an exception process:
  - Alternative screeners must be 1) valid and reliable screeners for ELA and Mathematics, as vetted by the Superintendent and central office; and, 2) the screener data must be shared with Central and included in each district’s dataset.
  - Pre-vetted alternative screeners include *DRP* (reading only for MSQI schools) and *Acadience* (math for K-2)
- Training in *Acadience*, *MAP Growth* and *iReady* for school leaders and teachers focusing on administration and interpretation of data for instructional decisions will be provided.

### Core Instruction & Intervention Planning Based on Screener Outcomes

- Based on screener outcomes (and other school-based information), students who are not yet meeting benchmark, even after core instruction (Tier 1) has been adjusted, will have the opportunity to be provided targeted intervention (Tier 2) supports.
- In the event that the progress has not been successfully made by the student, Tier 3 interventions will take place and students will receive these services as a way to meet benchmarks.
- Tiers 2 and 3 ELA and Math intervention menus will be made available and training for teachers and paraprofessionals will be provided.