

NEW YORK STATE BACK TO SCHOOL FAQ

As children head back to school, they and their families have concerns about how schooling will take place safely and effectively during the COVID pandemic. Here are some key questions answered.

School environment safety

Will PPE be provided at school for parents who can't provide their own?

Schools are expected to provide face masks to students who do not have their own.

What chemicals will be used to clean classrooms and meeting areas?

This depends on each school district's plans. Every school district has submitted a plan to the state that is required to meet the minimum standards of the state's guidance. Visit <https://healthcareeducationproject.org/new-york-state-back-to-school-faq/>. Broadly, it focuses on four areas: how to safely resume in-person instruction, how to monitor the school community's health, how to contain potential transmission of the virus, and when to close schools if facing widespread virus transmission.¹

Activities

Will there still be recess or gym, activities that cause perspiration, heavy breathing and contact?

It depends on the school district's plans. The state's guidance covers how shared spaces, such as cafeterias, libraries, playgrounds, and gymnasiums, will be modified and used, and the protocols for hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection.

Internet access

How do families who do not have internet access participate in online schooling?

- Parents should check with schools about helping students get tablet devices with Wifi
- The National PTA website suggests the services of the nonprofit <https://www.everyoneon.org/> which connects low-income families to affordable internet services.
- In NYC, the New York Public Library had offered free hotspots to families with at least one child in public school and no internet access at the time of sign-up. While no new hotspots are being given out for the 2020–2021 school year, the library has extended the hotspot due date to July 6, 2021 for those who borrowed a hotspot in the last school year (2019–2020).

Online tutoring/support

How do students who rely on tutors and additional learning support get the help they need?

- Office hours: Most teachers provide office hours to tutor students. Check with your school.
- [GoPeer](https://www.gopeer.org): Offers online tutoring by college students in many subjects. Includes two free hours of tutoring, then unlimited tutoring at \$20 an hour. The tutors keep all the money earned. www.gopeer.org.
- [NYPL](https://www.nypl.org): In New York City, the New York Public Library offers free virtual tutoring. Students must have a library card.

¹ CNY Central, <https://cnycentral.com/news/local/ny-health-dept-school-reopening-guidance-masks-assigned-groups-health-checks-more>.

- [EduMate NYC](#): This is a free tutoring service in New York City offered by college students. Focuses on lower-income New Yorkers, homeless, children with special needs, and other vulnerable students. www.edumatenyc.org/home; EduMateNYC@gmail.com

Children with special needs

What online learning support is there for children with special needs?

- The support offered depends on school districts. School districts must provide a free and appropriate education to children with special needs, in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Act. The US guidance to schools on this during Covid is at <https://healthcareeducationproject.org/new-york-state-back-to-school-faq/>.

- [SoundingBoard](#): A free mobile app from Apple to help children with speech disabilities learn how to better communicate. For Apple products only. www.ablenetinc.com/soundingboard; (800) 322-0956.

- [INCLUDEnyc](#): This New York City program provides resources including workshops and a direct help line for parents and educational support for children. www.includenyc.org; 212 677 4650; info@includenyc.org

Food pantries

Where can I find a food pantry where I live?

To find a food pantry in your county, visit the New York State website at ny.gov/foodbanks

Keeping a child focused

How do I keep my child focused on online lessons?

Too much screen time and distractions on the internet are among the many reasons that online learning can be difficult for children who are used to being in a classroom. Here are some tips on how to keep them focused.

- Brain breaks: Make sure your child takes breaks from staring at their tablet or computer screen so that they are better able to pay attention during lessons. It also relieves their eyes.

- Time management: Try to see that your child maintains a regular schedule, as in an actual classroom. This makes it easier for children to learn.

- Social Interaction: The classroom is a social space. Keep your child in touch with their friends, even if it is virtual, to keep them happy and better able to focus on schoolwork.

Got a health question? Email us at info@healthcareedproject.org



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