



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

School Operational Posture Guidance

Issued: Dec. 29, 2021

In December 2021, the District of Columbia experienced an increase in coronavirus (COVID-19) cases due to the Omicron variant of the virus. The purpose of this guidance document is to support local education agencies (LEAs) as they return to in-person learning in January 2022. This guidance clarifies instructions provided to LEA Heads of School on Dec. 20, 2021, in a letter from the State Superintendent of Education.

Use of Distance Learning

Educational institutions in the District of Columbia must continue to prioritize in-person instruction to the greatest extent possible during the 2021-22 school year. Schools should strive to ensure sufficient instructional coverage for in-person learning by utilizing substitute teachers or modifying teacher schedules to ensure student supervision to the greatest extent possible. Schools should also strive to preserve in-person learning for as many students as possible by using targeted transitions to distance learning, for example, particular grades and classes, if possible.

Yet, there may be instances where a significant number of students or school staff must quarantine or isolate due to COVID-19 thus complicating in-person instruction. In those cases, LEAs may use situational distance learning to continue instruction on a school-by-school basis. LEAs should take the following steps to prepare for this case:

- Ensure that all students have access to distance learning consistent with the LEAs continuous education plan;
- Report the school's transition to situational distance learning to OSSE using [the Distance Learning Status Reporting Application](#) by 8 p.m. the day prior to the first day of the transition; and
- Must communicate to their school community that the school(s) will remain in a distance posture **for up to 10** calendar days (not instructional days).
 - For example, if a school transitions to distance learning on Jan. 10, 2022, the school may remain in distance learning until Jan. 24.
 - First Day of Distance Learning: Jan. 10, 2022
 - Add 10 Calendar Days: Jan. 20, 2022
- Schools must reopen for in-person learning after this period has passed.
- Schools must then reassess their operational conditions in their school and submit an additional situational distance learning request using the process outlined above if needed.
- This process for distance learning will only be available until Jan. 31, 2022. All schools will return to in-person learning on Feb. 1, 2022, and may only provide distance learning to students as permitted through OSSE's attendance guidance.

For questions relating to the Distance Status Reporting Application, please contact Stephanie Davis at Stephanie.Davis3@dc.gov. For questions related to this policy, please contact Justin Tooley at Justin.Tooley@dc.gov.

Instructional Day Waivers to Prepare for a Return to In-Person Learning

OSSE has extended a waiver to [the instructional day requirements](#) to LEAs. LEAs may request a waiver for extraordinary operational conditions for **TWO** instructional days of school before returning to in-person learning after the holiday break in January 2022. These two days should be used to prepare schools for the safe return for in-person learning. LEAs must use this time to distribute rapid antigen tests and Return to School Criteria After an Antigen Test flyer to students to take before they return to school. LEAs could also use this time for professional development for teachers and staff or cleaning efforts. As always, LEAs have the flexibility to utilize staff time as they see fit during this time. The waiver is attached and can be accessed [here](#) and should be submitted to OSSE.CalendarWaivers@dc.gov by **Monday, Jan. 3, 2022**. Any changes to calendars due to an approved waiver should be updated in eSchoolPLUS.

Attendance Collection for Distance Learning

Schools must collect daily student attendance consistent with [Guidance: Collecting Attendance for the 2021-22 School Year](#). Further, LEAs must ensure that daily attendance is reported to OSSE consistent with collection and reporting policies. OSSE's attendance regulations and subsequent guidance authorize distance learning in the following cases: to comply with District of Columbia laws, regulations, executive actions, or public health guidance requiring remote instruction or due to the temporary closure of the school to protect the health or safety of all enrolled students. As a reminder, there are three attendance codes used to code distance learning: distance learning situational, distance learning medical certification, distance learning routine. The table below provides general descriptions of when these codes should be used.

Distance Learning Code	Used in the Following Situations
Distance Learning Situational	This code should be used when distance learning is used in any short-term circumstance, for example, during quarantine, isolation, or any conversion of school operations to distance learning for a short period of time.
Distance Learning Medical Certification	This code should be used for students that have been granted distance learning due to the completion and approval of a medical certification form.
Distance Learning Routine	This code should only be used in the instance where the school has an approved distance learning program.

Attendance Collection for Testing Efforts to Return to In-Person Learning in January 2022

Many LEAs are taking steps to ramp up testing efforts to prepare for a return to in-person learning in January 2022. Some LEAs are requiring students to show evidence of a negative test for COVID-19 prior to returning to in-person learning. This is an LEA decision. LEAs must make all reasonable efforts to notify and accommodate families in complying with their policies on presenting a negative test. Any absence due to a student's lack of a negative test should be coded as an excused absence. It should be excused because the student has been excluded from attending school due to an LEAs policy. This will also ensure that the student's absence does not result in a truancy referral as required by local law.

COVID-19 guidance and information for schools is available on the District's [coronavirus website](#) and at [OSSE COVID-19 Guidance and Resources](#). The website also includes information on the District's COVID-19 [vaccination sites](#) and [testing sites](#).

For questions, please contact OSSE.HealthandSafety@dc.gov.