



THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
**Stuyvesant High School**  
345 Chambers Street, New York, NY 10282-1099  
Telephone: (212) 312-4800 Facsimile: (212) 587-3874

October 25, 2021

Dear Stuyvesant Families,

The mental health and overall well-being of our students (and entire school community) is a priority. The pandemic initiated an opportunity to have earnest discussions within our community about the overall experience our students have at Stuyvesant during their four years. Last year, “school” looked very different as a result of COVID-19; and the combination of the challenges of remote instruction, the limited in-person interactions and activities, and the surrounding societal and political issues left many of our students, families, and staff emotionally and mentally exhausted. We acknowledge the community trauma we all endured, and consequently, we want to find ways to support the members of our community particularly our young people.

Therefore, Stuyvesant High School will collect information on social-emotional learning (SEL) of students and how they are adjusting back to in-person school in order for us to continue making the necessary adjustments that will support our students’ overall high school experience. Please note, the information gathered will not impact student grades or be used in any other way than what is specified in the letters. We will collect information in two ways to help us better support our students:

- Stuyvesant staff will complete a Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) screener for each student as per the NYC DOE’s focus on social emotional supports (please review accompanying letter for more details)
- Stuyvesant students will complete at home an online High Achieving Schools survey from Authentic Connections (please review the accompanying letter for more details)

Our goal is to use the screener and survey to better understand the perspective of our students and how we might be able to better support them. We want to encourage as much student participation in order to ensure maximum usefulness of the data. However, if you do not want your child to participate in either the screener and/or survey, then please complete the form below and return to school or complete/submit using this online [opt out form](#) by **November 1, 2021**. The form should only be filled out if you do NOT want your child to participate.

If you prefer not to fill out this form electronically, then please use the printed tear-off below.

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Please fill in this form ONLY if you do **not** want your child to participate in the screener and/or survey:

- I do **not** want a staff member to complete the DESSA screener for my child.
- I do **not** wish for my child to participate in the Authentic Connections High Achieving Schools online survey.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print)

Student OSIS: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Return to Room 105 OR complete online [opt out form](#) by November 1, 2021**



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Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

We understand just how challenging the past 18 months of the pandemic have been for you as parents, families, and caregivers. We are in awe of the work you have done, and continue to do each and every day, to support your child(ren) and we thank you for your continued partnership with us. Our work together is more important than ever as we strive to ensure your child thrives this school year and beyond. To further support you, our teachers, counselors, and social workers as champions of your child(ren)'s academic and social and emotional needs, are excited to let you know about a wonderful opportunity in our school this year!

Research has consistently shown that developing the social and emotional skills of students helps them to succeed academically, gain confidence, and be happier. Social-emotional learning, or SEL, includes developing relationship skills, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, and optimistic thinking.

To identify and support the social-emotional growth of all children in our school, we are excited to be administering a strengths-based SEL screener, known as the Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA). The DESSA asks questions about areas of social-emotional functioning including decision making, relationship building, confidence, and others. This tool will be completed by someone who knows your child well—in most cases a teacher.

The responses we gather will help us provide targeted, highly responsive support to each individual student. Perhaps most importantly, the tool enables us to build on each student's strengths while identifying the social-emotional skills they need to further develop. Once our students' growth areas are identified, we can create highly responsive plans to target and enhance those skills in the most appropriate manner and settings.

The results of this screener will not be included on report cards, will not have any impact on grades, and will not be used to make any diagnostic or evaluation decisions. The results will be stored securely in an online portal that meets the DOE's strictest privacy and security settings and will only be viewable by your child(ren)'s teachers and select school staff such as the principal or counselor.

The information gathered from the DESSA screening tool will allow us to provide the very best support to your child and will be beneficial to their overall success, both inside and outside of school. Families will have an opportunity to hear about their student's SEL skills during family conferences.

We are excited to implement the DESSA beginning November 2, 2021. If you have any questions, please feel free to email us at **[contactus@stuy.edu](mailto:contactus@stuy.edu)**.

If you do not want a staff member to complete the DESSA screener for your student, you must write a letter to me stating that. This letter needs to be received by the school by November 1, 2021.

If you have any questions regarding social-emotional learning or the DESSA, please email us at **[contactus@stuy.edu](mailto:contactus@stuy.edu)**

Sincerely,  
Seung C. Yu  
Principal



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Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Stuyvesant High School is blessed with a strong community. The collective values and efforts of the students, parents, coaches, teachers, and staff combine to make for what is an intense, but positive, educational experience. While grateful for the current state of our School environment, the School nevertheless continues to seek better understanding regarding the well-being of its students. I am writing to ask for your assistance in this by granting permission for your child to participate in a survey that should give the School helpful information. The survey questions cover areas such as personal values, empathy and kindness, depression and anxiety, substance use, and relationships with family and friends. The goal of the study is to better understand the preoccupations and concerns of children growing up in our community and, accordingly, to learn how best to continue promoting positive development among our students.

The survey is an extension of Dr. Suniya Luthar's efforts to study and promote positive youth development. Dr. Luthar is currently the Chief Research Officer of [Authentic Connections](#) and Professor Emerita at Columbia University's Teachers College, where she had previously served as professor and senior advisor to the Provost. Dr. Luthar has also previously been on the faculty at Yale University's School of Medicine. Please find more about her research publications, honors and awards at [SuniyaLuthar.org](#).

The questionnaires that Dr. Luthar has used in her research were developed from several standard measures that ask youth questions about their feelings and behaviors. Honest responses from students are essential in this endeavor. There are therefore important criteria in place to engender honest responses and protect our students' privacy. As in Dr. Luthar's past research, **all of the information submitted will remain completely anonymous**. No identifying information – including IP addresses – will be collected. Your child's name will **not** appear anywhere on his or her responses, and questionnaires are all stored according to random ID numbers, specially allotted for this survey. When analyzed, survey data will be presented to school administrators only in terms of trends (by grade, gender, ...), and responses cannot be linked to an individual respondent.

Students will take the survey online at home during a designated window of time (dates forthcoming shortly) and to ensure maximum usefulness of the data, we need the maximum participation of students in Grades 9-12. However, your child **does not have to participate**. If you **do not** want your child to participate, please be sure to complete the **opt out form**. Also, please know that if your child begins a survey but decides during the survey that (s)he wishes to withdraw from the project, he or she may do so at any time. Thank you very much for your support in this endeavor, and for all you do to keep the Stuyvesant community healthy and formative.

Sincerely,

Seung C. Yu  
Principal