



To the parents of
all school-age children
in NRW

Yvonne Gebauer MdL

**Open letter from the NRW secretary of education and schools to all
parents of school-age children in North Rhine-Westphalia on the
occasion of the start of self-tests in schools**

Dear parents,

today I turn to you with thanks, important information and a request.

The past few months of exclusive distance learning have presented us all, yet you in particular, with great challenges. After the experience of the first lockdown a year ago, we are all very aware that families with children and single parents in particular had to cope with a great double burden, if not a multiple burden, for many weeks. It deserves great recognition and appreciation from all of us for having supported and accompanied your children so intensely during this period of exclusive remote schooling beyond all the other challenges that this pandemic brings with it for many people. For this I would like to thank you very much today.

For one year now, the pandemic has been the greatest challenge of this century for us. Our children and adolescents in particular suffer most from those massive restrictions. The lack of social contacts, socializing and exchange among peers outside the parental home demands a lot from our children and young people. All of what they are lacking now, however, is part of school life in addition to its educational objectives. This is another reason why it is important to enable school attendance again.

Since February 22, 2021, the pupils at primary schools, at special needs schools as well as graduating classes have been rotating between face-

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to-face and distance learning. The experiences made so far have already shown how important these encounters with classmates, teachers and other school staff are, as school is much more than just a mere place of learning.

Now, in a further step, it is a matter of leading all other students from grade 5 back to schools. We will support this with effective infection control measures as part of a triad of protection, vaccination and testing.

The schools have developed extensive hygiene concepts and have implemented them reliably. Vaccinations for teachers have already started with primary and special needs teachers as well as school employees with regular contact with pupils. These measures are gradually developing an increasing effect in combating the pandemic.

In order to detect corona infections at an early stage and thus be able to better protect all those involved in school life, the state government will, as a first step, make corona self-tests available to secondary schools in North Rhine-Westphalia. Around 1.8 million tests will be delivered to schools before the Easter holidays and testing will also start before the holidays.

Dear parents,

in addition to the hygiene measures and vaccinations, these Corona self-tests are another important component in making everyday school life safe for everyone involved in class rotation.

So here is my request to you today: Support the tests in school and encourage your children to take part in these self-tests. The self-tests provide protection - not only in school, but also for your families.

In the next few days, the schools are expected to contact you or your children with information on the on-site texting procedures. If you are interested, you can find further information on the website of the Ministry of Schools and Education at <https://www.schulministerium.nrw/selbsttests>. Information on the adapted school operation in Corona times is also constantly supplemented and updated on the homepage.

The state government will continue to monitor the development of the pandemic very closely in the coming days and weeks. It is also still imperative to re-evaluate the situation continuously and to make any necessary changes. In all of our measures, health protection is

paramount. Yet, it is also key not to lose sight of any child, to ensure high-quality and comparable school qualifications and to continue enabling successful school careers.

As the state government, we cannot do this alone. We will only overcome this crisis together and in responsible cooperation. That is why I ask you, as parents, for your support and the accompaniment of your child in these challenging times.

Thank you for your commitment and understanding. Please stay healthy!

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvonne Gebauer', written in a cursive style.

Yvonne Gebauer