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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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January 20, 2021
Start: 11:05 a.m.
Recess: 3:03 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 3)

B E F O R E: Mark Treyger,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Alicka Ampry-Samuel
- Inez D. Barron
- Joseph C. Borelli
- Justin L. Brannan
- Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
- D. Diaz
- Daniel Dromm
- Barry S. Grodenchik
- Ben Kallos
- Brad S. Lander
- Stephen T. Levin
- Mark Levine
- Farah N. Louis
- I. Daneek Miller
- Kevin C. Riley
- Ydanis A. Rodriguez
- Deborah L. Rose
- Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
- Eric A. Ulrich

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

A P P E A R A N C E S

Dr. Linda Chen
Chief Academic Officer

Donald Conyers
First Deputy Chancellor

Adrienne Austin
Deputy Chancellor

Lauren Siciliano
Chief Administrative Officer

Nadia Quddus
Senior Advisor

Trevonda Kelly
Executive Director

Katherine Jedrlinic
Chief of Staff

Christina Foti
Deputy CAO

Mirza Sanchez-Medina
Deputy CAO

Lawrence Pendergast
Deputy CAO

Alice Brown
Senior Executive Director

Tida Dukuray
Youth Organizer of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol

Wilhemina Amoah
Youth Organizer of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol

Mam Fatau
Sharing on behalf of youth at the
Brotherhood/Sister Sol

John Paul Infante
Liberation Program Facilitator and Organizer of
the Brotherhood/Sister Sol

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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Mary Vaccaro
Vice President of Education of the United
Federation of Teachers and the Executive Director
of the UFT Teacher Center

Kaveri Sengupta
Coalition for Asian American Children and
Families

Holly Smeltzer
Coalition for Hispanic Family Services

Randi Levine
Advocates for Children

Maggie Moroff
ARISE Coalition

Lori Podvesker
Include NYC

Leonie Haimson
Class Size Matters

Sandra Escamilla
Children's Aid

Abe Fernandez
Children's Aid

Daryl Hornick-Becker
Citizens' Committee for Children

Robert Robinson
Student Leadership Network

Sandra Sheppard
WNET-NY Public Media

Sherrie Jackson
Opportunity Charter Schools

Jefferson Pestronk
New Visions

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Ambreen Qureshi
Educational Video Center

Andrea Alejandra Ortiz
New York Immigration Coalition

Vanessa Luna
IMM Schools

Tydie Abreu
Hispanic Federation

Jennifer Salgado
Community Organizer at MASA

Christina Reyes
Inwood Academy for Leadership

Reyes Claudio
Brilla Public Charter Schools

Edwin Cespedes
Charter Schools

Valerie Marquez Edwards
KIPP

Gregory Brender
Day Care Council

Marc Merino
USS

Shawina Garnett-Evans
Head Start Assistant Teacher

1 SERGEANT LUGO: PC recording good.

2 SERGEANT DAUTAJ: Cloud recording good.

3 SERGEANT PEREZ: Back up is rolling.

4 SERGEANT BIONDO: Live stream is rolling and
5 Sergeant Sadowsky, with your opening statement
6 please.

7
8 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Good morning and welcome to
9 today's Remote New York City Council Hearing of
10 Committee on Education. At this time, would all
11 Council Members and Council Staff please turn on
12 their video.

13 To minimize disruption please place electronic
14 devices on vibrate or silent mode. If you wish to
15 submit testimony, you may do so at
16 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that is
17 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you Chair Treyger,
18 we are ready to begin.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, good morning and
20 welcome to today's virtual Education Committee
21 hearing on the impact of COVID-19 on student learning
22 and academic achievement. I am Mark Treyger, Chair
23 of the Education Committee.

24 Since May, this Committee has exclusively focused
25 on COVID-19's impact on our education system. We

1
2 focused our efforts on areas of the pandemics impact
3 with each hearing leading to this one. We looked at
4 the switch to remote learning last spring. We
5 examined the delay to the 2020-2021 school year. We
6 focused on the overall health and safety of our
7 reopening our school system. We looked at the impact
8 on students with disabilities. We held a hearing on
9 social emotional learning and support staff and
10 schools and we looked at the impact of the pandemic
11 on childcare in New York City.

12 Each hearing led to today. The impact of COVID-
13 19 on student learning and academic achievement.
14 Each hearing provided deeper insight for this
15 Committee on the challenges and problems facing our
16 students, families, teachers and school leaders.
17 Virtual hearings have also allowed this Committee to
18 hear from even more students and parents and
19 educators and others who might have found it to be a
20 challenge when we used to have hearings all day at
21 City Hall.

22 We have strived to hold this Administration
23 accountable for missed steps, questionable ideas and
24 missed opportunities. And we will give credit when
25 it is due but our main job here is oversight and

1 holding folks accountable on behalf of our students
2 and our school communities.

3
4 With great fanfare this past December, the Mayor
5 and Chancellor announced yet another bold initiative,
6 the 2021 Student Achievement Plan, its aim is to
7 close the COVID-19 achievement gap. It sounds great,
8 especially with the six core tenants being many of
9 things that this Committee and I have been advocating
10 for since last summer.

11 But there are questionable parts that we have to
12 dive deeper on. It does not come into effect until
13 September 2021. It is for the next school year.
14 What about this existing school year? What about
15 last year's summer school? What about last spring?
16 Core Tenant Number 1, getting a baseline of what
17 ground has been lost. Are we to sit around until
18 September '21 to get the baseline?

19 I can tell you the ground has been lost since
20 March 16, 2020 when schools shifted to full remote.
21 We have been losing ground since. Over and over I
22 see a DOE hamstrung by a Mayor who seemingly only
23 goal last year was to be first in the nation to open
24 the school system. Instead of a coherent long-term
25 plan to be executed by the DOE, the Administration

1
2 has scrambled to get devices into students hands
3 months deep into the school year. They have
4 scrambled to get reliable Wi-Fi into shelters still
5 have not executed that part of the plan and they have
6 scrambled to get enough teachers, which our system is
7 still short.

8 We have all watched our Mayor set and reset
9 school reopening dates. We have all watched our
10 schools close and open and close and open. We see a
11 new student achievement plan launched with literally
12 zero details available in either the DOE's website or
13 the Mayor's own website. Micromanaging by this
14 Administration has stymied the efforts of our
15 educators and school years to meet the challenges of
16 the day. Continually changing goals, wins and
17 priorities by this Mayor has made the task of the DOE
18 that much more challenging. Bearing the brunt of
19 that burden is our students and their scholastic
20 achievement.

21 Today, I don't only want to hear what we are
22 doing in September to address the learning loss, I
23 also want to hear what has been happening since March
24 2020 to identify, address and begin to reverse the
25 learning loss faced by many of our students in

1
2 addition to the trauma which many of our kids
3 continue to face. I want to know what has worked,
4 what has not worked. I want to know in detail the
5 work that has been ongoing by the DOE and the Chief
6 Academic Officer and her entire team in coordination
7 with other DOE departments, to get a baseline of what
8 has been lost to increase high quality digital
9 curriculum. To develop a one stop digital learning
10 hub to provide more professional development
11 opportunity to our teachers and school leaders in the
12 context of COVID-19. Expanding parent university and
13 what steps are being taken to help those who need
14 help in terms of real time remote learning
15 assistance. And addressing the ongoing trauma and
16 mental health crisis facing our students. Much of
17 what I have been highlighting since we began remote
18 virtual hearings in May of 2020.

19 The time is now for action and not just waiting
20 around for the next school year. Our students need
21 relief today. The learning loss is happening in this
22 moment and our students can wait no longer. I want
23 to thank everyone who is testifying today and I want
24 to thank the City Council staff for all of their work
25 that they have put into today's hearing. Malcom

1
2 Butehorn, Jan Atwell, Kalima Johnson, Chelsea
3 Baytemur, Masis Sarkissian and Frank Perez. I also
4 want to thank my Chief of Staff Anna Scaife, my
5 Policy Director Venessa Ogle and Director of
6 Communication Maria Henderson. I will now turn
7 things over to our Moderator Kalima Johnson.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair Treyger. I
9 am Kalima Johnson Senior Legislative Policy Analyst
10 to the Education Committee of the New York City
11 Council. Before we begin testimony, I want to remind
12 everyone that you will be on mute until you are
13 called on testify.

14 After you are called on, you will be unmuted. I
15 will be calling on witnesses to testify in panels.
16 So, please listen for your name to be called. I will
17 be announcing in advance who the next panel will be.

18 I would like to remind everyone that unlike our
19 typical Council hearing, while you will be placed on
20 a panel, I will be calling individuals to testify one
21 at a time. Council Members who have questions for a
22 particular panelist should use the raise hand
23 function in Zoom. You will be called on in the order
24 with which you raised your hand after the full panel
25 has completed testimony.

1
2 We will be limiting Council Member questions to
3 five minutes. This includes both questions and
4 answers. Please note that for the purposes of this
5 virtual hearing, we will not be allowing a second
6 round of questioning. For panelists, once your name
7 is called, a member of our staff will unmute you and
8 the Sergeant at Arms will give you the go ahead to
9 begin after setting the timer. Please listen for
10 that queue.

11 All public testimony will be limited to two
12 minutes. At the end of two minutes, please wrap up
13 your comment so we can move to the panelist. Please
14 listen carefully and wait for the Sergeants to
15 announce that you may begin before delivering your
16 testimony as there is a slight delay. Written
17 testimony can be submitted to
18 testimony@council.nyc.gov. I will now call on the
19 following members of the Administration to testify:
20 Dr. Linda Chen Chief Academic Officer; Donald Conyers
21 First Deputy Chancellor; Adrienne Austin Deputy
22 Chancellor; Lauren Siciliano Chief Administrative
23 Officer, Nadia Quddus Senior Advisor, Trevonda Kelly
24 Executive Director; Katherine Jedrlinic Chief of
25 Staff; Christina Foti Deputy CAO; Mirza Sanchez-

1
2 Medina Deputy CAO; Lawrence Pendergast Deputy CAO;
3 Alice Brown Senior Executive Director.

4 I will first read the oath and after, I will call
5 on each panelist here from the Administration
6 individually to respond.

7 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
8 and nothing but the truth before this Committee and
9 to respond honestly to Council Member questions? Dr.
10 Linda Chen?

11 DR. LINDA CHEN: Yes.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Donald Conyers?

13 DONALD CONYERS: I do.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Adrienne Austin?

15 ADRIENNE AUSTIN: Yes.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lauren Siciliano?

17 LAUREN SICILIANO: I do.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Travonda Kelly?

19 TRAVONDA KELLY: Yes.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Katherine Jedrlinic?

21 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: Yes.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mirza Sanchez-Medina?

23 MIRZA SANCHEZ-MEDINA: Yes.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Lawrence Pendergast?

25 LAWRENCE PENDERGAST: Yes.

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Alice Brown?

3 ALICE BROWN: Yes.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Dr. Chen, you may
5 begin when ready.

6 DR. LINDA CHEN: Good Morning Chair Treyger and
7 members of the New York City Council Committee on
8 Education here today. I am Dr. Linda Chen and I
9 serve as Chief Academic Officer of the New York City
10 Department of Education. I am humbled to provide
11 testimony on behalf of my colleagues, including those
12 joining me this morning: First Deputy Chancellor
13 Donald Conyers, Deputy Chancellor Adrienne Austin,
14 and Chief Administrative Officer Lauren Siciliano and
15 teams. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the
16 critically important issue of student learning and
17 academic progress during this unprecedented time.

18 Before I begin, I would like to express our
19 gratitude to Speaker Johnson, Chair Treyger and the
20 entire City Council for your continued work and
21 advocacy on behalf of New York City schools in
22 service of historically underserved students. While
23 the pandemic has changed much in our lives, one thing
24 that has not changed is this Administration's
25 commitment to our students, their families and our

1 staff. Our school communities have experienced true
2 trauma over the past year, including an abrupt shift
3 to remote learning, separation from familiar school
4 support systems, losses of teachers and loved ones
5 and fear and anxiety about health and safety. And we
6 recognize students will continue to be impacted
7 adversely until we fully return to in-person
8 learning. Clearly, all of this makes the process of
9 teaching and learning far more challenging.
10

11 In spite of this upheaval, schools have been
12 focused on improving teaching and learning, meeting
13 students where they are and providing continuity of
14 instruction and support. We are also clear-eyed
15 about the reality once all students and staff are
16 able to return to their school buildings, that we
17 will need to engage in a robust academic recovery
18 period.

19 Our 2021 Student Achievement Plan, shared by the
20 Mayor and Chancellor looks ahead to what students
21 will need next year and is rooted in healing and in
22 learning, because our students will need both. This
23 work will continue alongside our ongoing work to
24 close the digital divide and improve remote and
25 blended learning. The bottom line is that our

1
2 educators and staff members are focused on delivering
3 the highest-quality instruction possible, in a
4 supportive learning environment, so that every
5 student has what they need to thrive no matter where
6 they are learning.

7 Recognizing that virtually all of our students
8 were going to be involved in some form of remote
9 learning, one of the biggest hurdles we have worked
10 to overcome has been ensuring that students have
11 devices.

12 To date, we have delivered 450,000 iPads and have
13 ordered an additional 50,000 to distribute as needed
14 when devices break, become outdated or need to be
15 replaced. And that is on top of what individual
16 schools efforts have been. We will continue to work
17 with our schools using a combination of central
18 iPads, school devices and hotspots to identify
19 solutions to address individual needs over the
20 remainder of the school year.

21 We are proud of all the progress our schools have
22 made since our overnight transformation last spring.
23 We know that nothing can replace in-person learning
24 for students, which is why we have gone to such great
25 lengths to provide that option for as many students

1
2 as possible, especially our most vulnerable and
3 youngest children. Currently, we have approximately
4 190,000 students being served in person, with across
5 860 Pre-K to 5th grade and District 75 schools
6 serving some or all of their students five days per
7 week.

8 We continually adapted and improved our
9 approaches to student learning and strengthened our
10 teaching practice through instructional guidance,
11 robust training and high quality resources to support
12 educators. During remote instruction, students
13 receive at least two hours of live synchronous
14 instruction, plus asynchronous instruction that
15 include a variety of assignments, like working in
16 small groups, and one-on-one check-ins with teachers.
17 Teachers continue to be thoughtful and creative in
18 ensuring full days of learning for all our students.

19 Within this context, we have provided essential
20 supports tailored to students with disabilities and
21 multilingual learners. In terms of educator support,
22 we have worked with our union partners to create
23 guidance for both remote and blended learning to
24 identify how to structure the school day, design
25 effective educational experiences in each model and

1
2 working collaboratively to share best practices. We
3 have also offered hundreds of professional learning
4 sessions in all content areas as well as in academic
5 intervention services. Those include supports for
6 teaching multilingual learners and students with
7 disabilities in remote settings.

8 We created a DOE Google Master Class last summer
9 to provide teachers and administrators with an
10 immersive experience to learn best practices for
11 teaching remotely via Google Classroom. The Office
12 of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Learning
13 has offered hundreds of high-quality professional
14 development sessions to thousands of educators and
15 administrators covering blended and remote learning
16 in the core subject areas of math, science, social
17 studies, ELA, arts, libraries and academic
18 intervention services.

19 And through our Borough Citywide Offices, and at
20 the district-level through superintendents, teachers
21 also receive direct professional learning specific to
22 their school communities. Those teams hold office
23 hours and live Q&A sessions to support school staff.
24 Superintendents and Deputy Superintendents are also
25 monitoring the remote instruction through continued

1
2 visits to classrooms and offering feedback to
3 principals and teachers to strengthen and improve
4 remote instruction.

5 Our schools and borough-based staff are
6 continuing to closely monitor the progress of our
7 students throughout this period. Prior to the
8 pandemic, we assessed citywide performance primarily
9 through mechanisms such as the New York State 3-8
10 math and ELA exams and Regents exams, which the State
11 canceled last school year. The DOE does not
12 currently utilize another form of common assessment
13 because our schools know their communities best.
14 That knowledge is the basis for determining local
15 strategic assessments to inform teaching and gauge
16 student progress and growth. Schools are constantly
17 using engagement tools to measure student learning
18 throughout individual lessons and various diagnostic
19 tools to assess student progress at the beginning,
20 middle and end of the year. Data gathered from these
21 assessments inform how teachers design lessons and
22 organize student learning within the classroom.

23 The work is essential and will continue as we
24 look towards addressing any gaps that have resulted
25 from this difficult time. We anticipate there will

1
2 be disparate learning progress in both literacy and
3 math, with different needs at different grade levels.
4 As we continue to look ahead, we launched the Fall
5 2020 School Experience Survey this week to gather
6 valuable feedback from our students, families and
7 teachers to inform the spring semester and next year.
8 The survey will be open until Friday, February 5.
9 Schools, field and central staff will have access to
10 survey results in real time throughout the survey
11 administration, so they can begin to take action on
12 that feedback as soon as possible.

13 Last month, the Mayor and Chancellor announced a
14 vision for recovery across our system. The plan will
15 continue to be built and informed by the final months
16 of this school year but our framework gives us a
17 clear path forward: First, we are focused on
18 accelerating instruction to advance student learning
19 and mastery of the standards. While there is a
20 tendency to want to cover more content to make up for
21 learning loss, what is most important to make up for
22 lost opportunities and accelerating learning for
23 every student is seeking depth of knowledge.

24 To ensure students are on track, it is important
25 to capture a baseline of where students are given the

1
2 impact of the pandemic. In order to bring students
3 back on track and begin that process, we must focus
4 on how we can rapidly assess where students are in a
5 low stakes manner and develop plans to advance their
6 learning and mastery of the standards.

7 Looking ahead to next year, we know that every
8 school needs to have a common, comprehensive
9 assessment plan in place that includes both common
10 screeners and formative assessments. Those will
11 provide information for students, teachers and
12 families while also empowering central, executive
13 superintendents and superintendents with citywide
14 data trends that allow for comprehensive and targeted
15 school, district and citywide support.

16 From there, we will increase access to high-
17 quality, shared, inclusive and standards-based
18 digital curriculum at every school to serve as a
19 foundation for strong instruction. We want to
20 support our school leaders to make informed
21 curricular choices by understanding current gaps in
22 their offerings and how to support their schools in a
23 transition to a standards-aligned digital curriculum
24 that is culturally response. This work began this
25 fall as Superintendents engaged all principals in

1
2 curricular conversations about implementing a shared
3 and inclusive curriculum that is culturally
4 responsive and digitally accessible. We will
5 continue to deepen this work of supporting leaders at
6 all levels with the knowledge they need to make
7 informed curricular decisions and to ensure that all
8 schools have a curriculum in place for each core
9 content area that is high-quality, culturally
10 relevant and responsive to the students they serve.

11 At the heart of this work will be professional
12 learning to ensure that teachers and school leaders
13 are well prepared for the post-pandemic challenges we
14 face. We want our teachers to have the skills to
15 make adjustments to address unfinished learning and
16 provide students with robust opportunities to engage
17 in rich, grade-level work.

18 In a system as large as ours, we are cognizant of
19 the fact that teachers come into teaching with
20 varying skills. We will continue to expand our
21 immense efforts throughout the pandemic to support
22 educators and administrators. A critical part of
23 this plan is expanding the innovative and successful
24 practices in individual schools across the city.

1
2 To support this work, DOE will also be phasing in
3 a learning management system that houses lessons,
4 tools and activities for teachers and students that
5 can be shared across the city. Families play an
6 essential role in every student's education and this
7 has only been heightened during blended learning. It
8 is our job to support them and this fall we were
9 proud to launch Parent University, which we will
10 continue to expand.

11 Through their NYC Schools Account, families have
12 access to free courses, resources, events and
13 activities. Parent University seeks to educate and
14 empower all families from early childhood through
15 adulthood and help them advocate for the educational
16 success of their children. More than 93,000 people
17 have already visited Parent University and we will
18 continue to work on expanding the reach of these
19 programs, in part by adding more courses in different
20 languages on an ever growing range of topics.

21 In many of our districts, families receive
22 individualized support, such as one-on-one assistance
23 on how to access Google Classroom and other online
24 learning platforms, troubleshoot connection issues
25 and tend to student's social-emotional needs.

1
2 FaceTime sessions throughout the day and evening are
3 available to answer questions and address such
4 concerns. Teachers have collaborated to volunteer up
5 to two office hours per week to support parents by
6 appointment in the areas of homework help,
7 technology, content and/or translation. These office
8 hours afford parents with the opportunity to receive
9 guidance and assistance in their own language in
10 navigating student needs and supporting student
11 social and emotional comfort.

12 Also integral to this plan is a city-wide
13 approach for confronting the trauma and mental health
14 crises faced by our students. Our schools have been
15 employing a variety of strategies to support the
16 well-being of their students and staff members. Some
17 schools utilize individual wellness surveys for
18 students to complete or have daily check-ins with
19 students around attendance and wellness. Our
20 teachers integrate social-emotional learning into
21 lessons or at the top of each class, through
22 restorative circles.

23 All of this work is made possible by the
24 foundation we've built over the last two years, in
25 partnership with the Council, in social-emotional

1
2 learning and mental health supports. Our educators
3 were prepared to immediately provide critical
4 frontline healing and support to students because of
5 the work we did prior to the pandemic.

6 Additionally, we've built a partnership with
7 Health + Hospitals mental health clinics to provide
8 clinical care to students. This work will be
9 informed by the use of social-emotional screens that
10 empower teachers, who are the staff members who know
11 our students best, to identify at-risk students and
12 refer them to supports early. Using this
13 information, we can help direct supports where they
14 are needed most. That includes the 27 community
15 schools and 150 new social workers we will bring on
16 for next school year as part of this work.

17 These new efforts are the first wave of a four-
18 year plan to increase social workers and community
19 schools throughout the city, starting with the
20 neighborhoods most impacted by COVID-19. We are
21 amazed at the ways our communities have worked
22 together, supported one another and persisted despite
23 tremendous obstacles. And we remain committed to
24 building resilience through wellness and strong
25 school communities.

1
2 The pandemic has tested New Yorkers and our
3 school system in so many ways. As a community of 1.1
4 million students and their families and 150,000
5 staff, we have transformed every aspect of what we do
6 to rise to the challenges of this moment. This is a
7 testament to the determination of our incredible
8 staff, students and families. This shift to remote
9 learning and the efforts made to reopen schools in a
10 healthy and safe manner have been astounding given
11 the difficult, unforeseen circumstances of that
12 crisis exacerbated opportunity gaps that have existed
13 for decades.

14 Our focus remains on equitably serving our
15 students and striving to close those disparities,
16 which our Equity and Excellence for All agenda has
17 made great progress in addressing. We are taking the
18 lessons we learn every day to adapt and improve the
19 delivery of education to the students of New York
20 City in the face of the enormous challenge posed by
21 the pandemic.

22 On behalf of my colleagues, I thank you for your
23 time and we are happy to answer any questions that
24 you might have. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. I just want to
3 note that we have been joined by Council Members
4 Grodenchik, Rose, Brannan, Riley, Dromm. I also want
5 to welcome Council Member Riley, this is the first
6 Education hearing together. Welcome Council Member
7 Riley. Council Member Dromm, Council Member Ampry-
8 Samuels, Council Member Lander, Council Member
9 Ulrich, Council Member Louis, Council Member Kallos,
10 Council Member Levine, Council Member Rodriguez and
11 Council Member Miller.

12 If I am missing anyone folks could – Council
13 Member Borelli, forgive me. I saw you raise your
14 hand; you see as a teacher; I saw the hand being
15 raised earlier. So, I just wanted to get right to
16 questions. Thank you for your testimony.

17 Now, I know that some of the data has been handed
18 over to the Council. I think just for the record,
19 uhm, how many students in total received the NX
20 grade? An NX grade where there was not – they needed
21 additional time, additional support and so, they
22 received sort of a holding grade before a permanent
23 grade on their transcript. As of this moment, does
24 DOE have total number of students in our school
25 system that receive that NX grade?

1
2 DR. LINDA CHEN: Chair, I am just looking for uh,
3 as you know grades are constantly being entered and I
4 just want to make sure I have my fingers on the
5 numbers that we shared with you. Pardon my pause
6 here. Uh, 71,675.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: 71,600?

8 DR. LINDA CHEN: 75.

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: 75 and Dr. Chen, has that
10 list of students been itemized in a way where we are
11 taking stock of the reasons or the common reasons why
12 many of them have been assigned and NX grade? For
13 example, how many of them only recently received an
14 iPad or a device? Do we have that data?

15 DR. LINDA CHEN: So, uhm, Chair thank you for the
16 question. Uh, as you know during the pandemic in the
17 spring, we knew we had to make some changes to the
18 grading policy. So, the Code NX, course in progress,
19 is something that we had not used widely previously.
20 As you know, as a former high school teacher and I so
21 appreciate your experience on this Committee and your
22 leadership. Uhm, often, the alternative option would
23 be no credit for students, which really is a fail,
24 uh, a failing grade. And we knew that the impact of
25 the pandemic required some specific guidance, so that

1 students would have time to finish their courses.

2 So, that's the numbers that we gave you and what we
3 have been doing is uhm, we have been looking at what
4 are the reasons.
5

6 So, of course students had an opportunity to
7 complete the NX through summer school. And so, some
8 students took advantage of that time and schools
9 continue to monitor the progress of those NX grades
10 as we move forward.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well, Dr. Chen, if I may,
12 students from what I heard and from many teachers,
13 could not log on to connect with one another for the
14 first couple of weeks, week and a half summer school.
15 Those who had devices, there was issues with the I
16 Learn program. Is that correct? Are you familiar
17 with that?

18 DR. LINDA CHEN: Yeah, so the platform that the
19 DOE has used in the past with the former I Zone, the
20 I Learn NYC platform is a learning management system
21 and for the first time we were converting the system
22 to that. And so, you are correct Chair that there
23 were some delays for some students because there was
24 trouble logging into that. And so, we did learn a
25 lot of lessons. I know part of what the hearing is

1
2 about, one of the things that we learned and we
3 learned a lot from that experience. So, yes, that is
4 true and yes, I do agree with you in that there were
5 fewer students that probably took advantage of that
6 summer opportunity than we had hoped. And that's why
7 we continued to work to make sure the students are
8 completing these course.

9 So, yes, in terms of the why, uhm, our schools
10 are and I will also ask Donald Conyers my colleague,
11 as First Deputy Chancellor to give some more specific
12 details to represent the hard work that's happening
13 at schools but there are reasons for whether it is a
14 device availability issues or some of our young
15 people are working jobs as well that preclude them
16 from being able to have amount of time to complete
17 their courses. There are other trauma informed
18 considerations that we are also aware of and so, with
19 that, I want to just make sure I give Donald Conyers
20 some time to represent the good work of our schools.

21 DONALD CONYERS: Thank you and good morning Mr.
22 Chair and to all the Council. Thank you for having
23 me today. Just continuing with the responses of my
24 colleague. Schools have recognized right from the
25 beginning of this that students with NX grades

1
2 deserve the patience and the opportunity to resolve
3 those NX grades and have worked and continue to work
4 diligently to help student complete the course work
5 to engage the learning. Schools are setting up and
6 have set up NX Committee's. Schools have set up and
7 have accentuated the work of the guidance counselors
8 and even social workers to ensure that students are
9 both moving along, making progress and also feeling
10 confident about reaching the conclusion of an NX
11 grade in an affirmative way.

12 It is an ongoing process as you know as a high
13 school teacher, uhm, our determination is and always
14 has been to resolve the NX grades which really
15 emanated from a demonstration of mercy and
16 understanding as opposed to a failing grade.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right and I appreciate the
18 answers, I am just curious to know, do we have any –
19 for example, of the 71,000 students plus, how many of
20 them have IEP's? How many of them are multilingual
21 learners? Do you have that data Dr. Chen as well?

22 DR. LINDA CHEN: Yes, I do. Give me just – the
23 numbers are small, excuse me. So, for the number of
24 students with IEP's, that comprises 20,151 of that
25 total, which is 28.1 percent.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And how many of them are
3 multilingual learners?

4 DR. LINDA CHEN: Uh, 13,859, which comprises 19.3
5 percent.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, so it is important
7 to get this information because as we discussed in
8 previous hearings, there were challenges getting
9 devices to many of our kids, particularly students at
10 the beginning of this remote process where there were
11 barriers to signing up to even request a device and
12 many kids did not have a device even into the spring.
13 I mean, I don't want to kind of rehash the spring,
14 but we went through this already. Is it accurate
15 that these students have until the end of this month
16 to make up the work or else they have a permanent
17 failing grade on their transcript? Is that right?

18 DR. LINDA CHEN: So, our current policy is that
19 students have until the end of the month to complete
20 their courses and again, I want to just make sure the
21 public is clear that the NX policy was devised to
22 ensure that there was requisite, compassion and
23 consideration for students individual situations
24 while also holding to a standard to ensure that we
25

1
2 graduate our students with the skills that they need
3 with the courses.

4 And so, our current policy is that students have
5 until the end of the month and then teachers and
6 administration have a period, a window of time to be
7 able to post those grades.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, what happens with
9 students that for example, who live in shelter, who
10 still can't connect to a Wi-Fi signal?

11 DR. LINDA CHEN: So, I will ask that Lauren
12 Siciliano talk a little bit more about all the great
13 efforts she and her team have been doing around
14 connectivity but I will say that our students in
15 temporary housing, other students who have had issues
16 with devices, that is at the forefront of our lines
17 and we are collecting the information to determine
18 what those needs will be and what kind of extenuating
19 circumstances and considerations we need to have
20 beyond the end of the month.

21 Lauren, our Chief Administrative Officer.

22 LAUREN SICILIANO: Thank you. Thank you Linda
23 and good morning Chair Treyger. Uhm, as you know,
24 since the spring in terms of our device distribution
25 we have prioritized our students in shelter. They

1
2 were the first students to receive iPads and those
3 iPads are LTE enabled, so that students can connect
4 through the cellular network even if they don't have
5 Wi-Fi at home.

6 More recently for students that have been having
7 trouble accessing the T-Mobile cell signals in the
8 shelters, our team has worked closely with DSS and
9 with DoITT to survey all students in those shelters
10 and where any families were struggling with the T-
11 Mobile signal, we swapped out those devices for a
12 Verizon signal. We continue to follow up with those
13 families. We have a dedicated health desk, just for
14 students in shelter and have also deployed on site
15 tech support to those shelters.

16 In addition, the city has been working to install
17 Wi-Fi in the shelters. The current plan, the
18 Department of Information Technology and
19 Telecommunication and DSS are working to install the
20 Wi-Fi in all shelters by the summer and there is a
21 group of about 25 shelters with greater connectivity
22 issues that are first on the list and are actually
23 being completed right now.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Lauren, I mean, I
25 appreciate and I sense, I know that you care and

1
2 folks on this Zoom care, it's just the issue that I
3 want to flag is that doing survey's now and planning
4 to install things by summer, as mentioned, I am a
5 former high school history teacher and if my students
6 missed two or three days of instruction, that was a
7 lot. We are talking about kids in the same months
8 about almost a year now of meaningful consistent
9 continued instruction.

10 Uhm, that's devastating to them and this is time
11 that they are never going to get back folks and I
12 think uhm, you know there is no way to sugar coat
13 this and we have to act with a sense of urgency to
14 account for this learning loss and trauma and to come
15 up with action, actionable plans to address things
16 right now in the short-term and of course, in the
17 long-term. But I would say in the short-term and I
18 will be very clear about this, no child in New York
19 City should be assigned a failing permanent damaging
20 grade for something that they have no responsibility
21 for. The system failed them. Government failed
22 them. That's who gets the failing grade, not our
23 children.

24 And so, I think we need to work with these NX
25 Committees, sort of to speak and this is new to me

1
2 and if they formed it that's good but these kids need
3 support. They need internet device, they need
4 instruction, they need teachers, they need
5 connections. They don't need to be given a damaging
6 permanent grade, particularly of something that's no
7 fault of their own.

8 I also just want to ask a couple of questions.
9 Dr. Chen, you mentioned that now over 450,000 iPads
10 have been now delivered. Uhm, I just want to note
11 for the record, that when the Mayor initially
12 announced 300,000 devices last spring, I questioned
13 him on that number and he said over and over again,
14 that every kid who needs a device has a device. That
15 was obviously not true because the City of New York,
16 knowingly entered this school year with thousands and
17 thousands of kids still without devices.

18 When is the - does anyone know, when did the last
19 iPad shipment arrive to our students? Does anyone
20 know? Like, when did the last box get to our kids?

21 LAUREN SICILIANO: I can take that. So, we
22 obviously share your sense of urgency in ensuring
23 that students get the tools that they need as quickly
24 as possible. I think it's really important to keep
25 in mind that device need is a constantly fluid need.

1
2 There are students who have access to devices and
3 internet one day who don't the next because the
4 device stops working, it's out of date, a family
5 member needs it. So, that is a constantly changing
6 need and something that we are constantly monitoring.

7 So, a student who needs a device today it doesn't
8 mean that they haven't had one for the whole time and
9 it will continue to evolve. And that's why in
10 addition to the 450,000 that we have distributed, we
11 have also ordered another 50,000 that are arriving as
12 we speak for needs that will continue throughout the
13 school year.

14 So, in terms of the timeline that you asked
15 about. In the spring when we made the transition to
16 remote learning, we immediately ordered 300,000
17 devices. We worked with Apple to get and prep those
18 devices. In a matter of weeks, hundreds of thousands
19 of devices out to students and between the spring and
20 summer, we delivered about 320,000 devices. In the
21 fall, when students returned, schools worked with
22 families to confirm what their needs were and in
23 particular, they used some of those instructional
24 orientation days in September to confirm student need
25 and that continued of course to evolve.

1
2 Based on that feedback, we distributed another
3 30,000 in the fall and then placed the order for the
4 100,000 that were delivered before the end of last
5 calendar year. So, that's the sequence and as we
6 have seen demand increase, we then have been ordering
7 to meet that need.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I mean, I am reliving last
9 spring because as I mentioned at previous hearings
10 that last spring communities in wealthier zip codes
11 in New York were debating and arguing over Zoom
12 versus Google Meet and neighborhoods like mine in
13 Coney Island and other parts of the City were asking
14 where is my device? Where is my internet?

15 I also want to note, we heard about iPads, I hear
16 about Chrome books and laptops. A high school kid
17 cannot type up an essay on an iPad. It is not easy
18 to type anything onto an iPad. I am sure Council
19 Members and staff can attest to that as well. How
20 many requests have you received and you delivered on
21 in terms of laptops to our students with internet
22 service as well?

23 LAUREN SICILIANO: So, for the iPads, what we
24 have done is particularly for our older students as
25 you mentioned, we have ordered keyboard cases. So,

1
2 the iPads come with keyboard cases and then functions
3 very much like a Chrome book because the case becomes
4 the keyboard and you can use the iPad that way.

5 Schools of course are also distributing devices
6 that they have and we have done – we have worked with
7 the fund for public schools to purchase and
8 distribute some Chrome books as well. LTE enabled
9 Chrome books given the volume that we needed and the
10 price point, that's why we are going with the iPads.
11 We have done some distributions of Chrome books in
12 limited circumstance but also then order the
13 keyboards in order to make sure that we could have a
14 device comparable, more comparable to the chrome
15 book.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And how does a student know
17 that a keyboard is available to them if they want it
18 because many schools, folks I talked to didn't even
19 know that option existed.

20 LAUREN SICILIANO: So, we send it out
21 automatically with the iPad for older students.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And so, when did that
23 start?

24 LAUREN SICILIANO: That started – I would need to
25 check the specific date. It was after the initial

1
2 distribution in the spring. We heard the same
3 feedback that you are hearing, that's it is difficult
4 to type on the iPad particularly for older students
5 and at that point ordered keyboard cases.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, if you can get back
7 to me on when that started, I would appreciate it. I
8 also want to ask; how many students have never been
9 able to connect with whether it is virtual or in
10 person since March? Does anyone have that total
11 number?

12 DONALD CONYERS: Yes, I will answer that. I
13 believe and I will preface it by saying that of the
14 1.1 million. Our goal continues to be to connect
15 with every student as you know Chair.

16 To date, we are around 2,600 students that are
17 still being pursued and we are looking into the
18 social workers, attendance teachers and school
19 personnel to locate and to ensure that students
20 become connected, logged on.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And do you have data as far
22 as of that number of students with IEP's,
23 multilingual learner students who live in shelter,
24 any other type of data that you could share with us?

1
2 DONALD CONYERS: I do not at the moment Chair. I
3 don't have that specific breakdown.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And if the student only
5 recently received a device and is still dealing with
6 internet service but is dealing with a lot of trauma
7 you know, in their lives, how is the DOE providing
8 services for them? Because to my understanding,
9 whether it is a social worker or counseling services
10 are done virtually, how is the student without
11 reliable internet or a reliable device receive uh,
12 those types of counseling sessions?

13 DONALD CONYERS: Are we assuming - and I am going
14 to make the assumption that the students that may not
15 have devices also have the ability and the
16 opportunity for in-person instruction. Thereby
17 giving them at least two days during the week to be
18 in-person. If not more.

19 And to compensate for the device, there are
20 definitely some instructional materials that students
21 have received for the social emotional wellness,
22 students - uhm, we have schools that are making
23 telephone calls. We have schools that are utilizing
24 and maximizing the in-person opportunities, the time
25 the students are in to ensure the students both feel

1
2 a sense of consistency and understanding about how
3 they are able to navigate and move forward during
4 this crisis.

5 Which has been improving Mr. Chair every day.
6 Every time students – students are adjusting. They
7 are resilient and our teaching force, we are doing
8 everything possible to ensure that students are
9 feeling that – embrace with that comfort and
10 security.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Deputy Chancellor, just
12 to kind of you know, to add to this line of
13 questioning based on your comments and to Dr. Chen as
14 well, uhm, how many virtual classes have students,
15 over 30 students in a virtual class. It is my
16 understanding that they could go up 60 or even more.

17 How many virtual classes have over 30 students on
18 a roster?

19 DONALD CONYERS: So, good question. Given the
20 enormity of our district as a whole and you know that
21 every school, every district has its own identity,
22 its own way of completing the favorable business of
23 educating. It is impossible for me to sit here; I
24 was sworn in to tell the truth. It is impossible for
25 me to sit here to tell you how many on a school by

1 school, how many students are in virtual classes.
2 This I do know, principals want to optimize a
3 learning experience and principals will take every
4 and make every effort to reduce that ratio of student
5 to teacher where possible to ensure that students
6 have the quality time, care, feedback and the ability
7 to learn and ask questions.
8

9 So, to your specific question, I don't have a
10 number like that but I do understand the pattern and
11 the motivation of leaders in terms of the assignment
12 of staff and to teachers. Teachers to staff to
13 students in a remote setting.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I appreciate your
15 honesty and I would just appreciate if the DOE can
16 get me that data on how many classes in our school
17 system where we have virtual classes, over 30 kids
18 and Dr. Chen, do you know off the top of your head,
19 are there any classes with 50, 60 students virtually
20 in them right now?

21 DR. LINDA CHEN: So, Chair as part of that
22 partnership with the UFT in terms of class sizes, it
23 is possible of the scenario that you are talking
24 about of over 50 given the remote blended teachers.
25 That means the teachers that are teaching the

1
2 students who are in blended learning on their remote
3 days and that was an agreement that we had with UFT
4 that contractual sizes could be more than the usual
5 because of the nature of that kind of teaching is
6 different than the other mode.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I am going to put my
8 high school teacher hat back on for a moment, where I
9 had 34 students. That was the contractual limit back
10 in my day teaching high school and even with 34
11 students in person, in person it is a challenge to
12 account for every single need of every single child
13 in a class at the same time.

14 I don't say this with pride, to say that there is
15 no way that we are meeting the needs of all of our
16 kids under this system right now. Uhm, there is no
17 way a teacher and mind you, if the teacher has
18 reliable internet themselves, because many teachers
19 also don't have reliable internet but there is no way
20 a teacher could account for the needs of 50, 60 kids
21 in a virtual class. That is just not happening.

22 And that's why the purpose of this hearing is to
23 take stock of the academic, you know, of the learning
24 impact in our kids but I am finding it a challenge
25 here to believe that have actually taken that stock.

1
2 I don't think we have found the depths of how
3 much loss our kids have experienced yet. Because it
4 is very - almost impossible for an educator to
5 account for the needs of 50, 60 kids virtually. I
6 also want to ask Dr. Chen; do we know how many ICT
7 classes are missing the second teacher?

8 DR. LINDA CHEN: So, Chair I first want to
9 acknowledge what you said here. I think that every
10 day in terms of taking stock, because it is a very
11 critical issue. And we, not just New York City but
12 across the country, everyone's world has been turned
13 upside down by all of these things. We come back
14 with health and safety measures, we come back with
15 devices and this piece around learning, loss and the
16 ability to determine progress - we are absolutely,
17 there are no easy answers here. So, I appreciate
18 their hearing on this to be able to unpack some of
19 those things. What I will say is that every day we
20 learn more about both. I would say the places where
21 there is great need to accelerate and we also learned
22 every day, I know the first Deputy Chancellor and I,
23 go on virtual class visits together at times and I
24 also know, I see every day the hard work of teachers

1
2 and administrators actually gaining progress with
3 students.

4 So, I think taking stock includes all of those
5 things because we need to also take stock of the good
6 things that are happening in order to make them
7 available and across the system. So, yes, there are
8 a number of things that we may not have all of the
9 precise numbers for you because there is school level
10 management that happens.

11 So, in terms of your question around uhm, the ICT
12 model, as you also may know that State Department
13 also issued some guidance part way into the beginning
14 of the school year to clarify some things on the ICT
15 front. I will tell you that it's information in
16 terms of the numbers that you want, we will need to
17 get back to you on the numbers. I don't have those
18 numbers at my fingertips right now but I will tell
19 you that we have worked very hard to make sure that
20 we can provide the best education possible to every
21 student.

22 Yes, I am not going to stand here and say to you
23 that over class size or even at class size are ideal
24 numbers. I agree with the experiences that you have
25 expressed. However, we have to and continue to have

1
2 found ways to do the best with the circumstances that
3 we have.

4 Taking stock and continually getting better with
5 that. So, that was something that we agreed to in
6 the summer to be able to organize the logistics of
7 being able to do blended and all remote and blended
8 remote. We had to make some agreements to figure out
9 ways that I don't think any of us would say are ideal
10 conditions.

11 So, I want to say that on that front and on the
12 ICT front, we will certainly get to whatever numbers
13 we can get you for that.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Dr. Chen, I would
15 appreciate those numbers because I have heard from a
16 number of parents in a number of school communities
17 that because of staff shortages, their children are
18 not being given – and they have a right to. ICT is a
19 part of also an IEP mandate and they have a right to
20 have this and you know, the state could write
21 whatever clarifying language they want. The needs of
22 our kids don't disappear, they are still there. You
23 can't mend the needs of our children; they are still
24 there. And we do need this information but as I am
25 sitting here, I am thinking that there could be a

1
2 child with an NX grade that could be sitting in a
3 virtual class with 50 other students and they have
4 until the end of this month, a week, to make up work.
5 Otherwise they get a permanent failing grade.

6 Are you giving schools guidance and strong
7 recommendations to take stock of these situations, so
8 our kids do not get this permanent failing grade?
9 Are you allowing schools and pushing them to give
10 these kids more time for more support?

11 DR. LINDA CHEN: Yes, so we are - I will ask my
12 colleague Donald Conyers to say more about the
13 specific work that's been happening on the school
14 front, but I want to say a couple of things first
15 about the large class size piece that you are
16 bringing up.

17 I just want to make sure there is not some
18 misunderstanding. In those cases where there maybe
19 large class sizes, it is not the main mode of
20 instruction that the students are getting. That
21 condition is for students who are in person, blended
22 and on their off days, from being in person at home.
23 That's the only circumstance where those large
24 numbers - I just want to make sure Chair that you
25 have the right information on that. It is not the

1
2 main mode of instruction. So, if a student is fully
3 remote, they are not in these class sizes that you
4 are describing of 50 as the main mode of instruction.

5 But in terms of the NX and we agree with you, and
6 that's why we changed our grading policy for the
7 pandemic, because while we need to hold those high
8 standards because we owe students a solid education,
9 we also must be considerate of the depths of trauma
10 that individual students experience and devices use
11 that you are talking about.

12 So, students in those situations are not going to
13 be penalized here. I just want to make that clear.
14 So, let me put it over to Donald to talk about what's
15 happening at the school in terms of the NX.

16 DONALD CONYERS: I will give an example and I
17 will give an example that hopefully Chair will
18 resonate with you. Dr. Chen and I visited John Dewey
19 High School where they have approximately 2,400 NX
20 grades at the moment. This school not only has
21 structured itself -

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: 2,400 students.

23 DONALD CONYERS: I am saying 2,400 NX grades. I
24 don't know if they are students because it could be -

1
2 I could have received an NX in one course and two in
3 another for no student.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, I am sorry because
5 that sounds like their enrollment but go ahead.

6 DONALD CONYERS: It might be, so my numbers may
7 be off but I still want to you to get the value of
8 the illustration please.

9 These students are enveloped with the kind of
10 support and awareness, so they have not just an NX
11 grade but they also have teams of professionals,
12 teachers and assistant principals that are working
13 with students, touching base with them, talking about
14 the work, providing opportunities for them to express
15 challenge, to receive additional support.

16 They have carved out time for the students to
17 receive that support, not just saying they need help
18 but they have also found time to provide the support
19 to them. Every teacher and every principal starts
20 from the premise of the reality that they want all
21 students to begin this journey of NX and complete in
22 the affirmative.

23 So, we are working and have been working to your
24 earlier question, have schools been advised? Schools
25 have been advised from the very beginning by our

1
2 Chancellor and by our office as to making sure that
3 we maximize the opportunity. Our Chancellor used two
4 words, patience and understanding and/or grace. We
5 have been utilizing that but also pushing and gently
6 pushing the overarching need to begin to advance the
7 learning. To continue the learning, understanding
8 that the emotional wellness comes hand and hand.

9 So, the NX grade is just another part of the
10 machinery that schools are undertaking and I know you
11 have isolated that but I do have to tell you that the
12 students that have the NX grades are being embraced,
13 supported and being spoken to on a regular. There is
14 progress being made and schools are doing the very
15 best that they can to push and pull students along
16 that may have some additional difficulty with
17 completing.

18 That is the goal. That is what we signed up for
19 before NX was ever a reality in our system and they
20 have continued to do that even through this pandemic.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well and the reason Deputy
22 Chancellor, I mentioned NX is because as I mentioned
23 before, it is hard to take some stock of some data to
24 try to quantify what our — give me one moment. To

1
2 quantify what our students are going through. How
3 much loss they are experiencing.

4 So, we are looking at different type of data
5 points but it is also accurate that there are high
6 schools students with IEP's that don't go to District
7 75 that right now are not going to in-person. Is
8 that correct Dr. Chen?

9 DR. LINDA CHEN: That is correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, there are children with
11 IEP's that do not have right now, currently access to
12 in-person instruction that might be in a very large
13 virtual class. Do we have current data on the amount
14 of teachers our schools are short to provide five
15 full days of instruction for those schools that are
16 currently open for in-person instruction? Do we have
17 any data on the depths of the staff shortages our
18 schools are experiencing?

19 DR. LINDA CHEN: So, Chair I would like to ask
20 Lauren Siciliano, our Chief Administrative Officer to
21 expand a little bit more on that but I just wanted to
22 make sure - I want to make sure I am not
23 misunderstanding a statement that you made. The
24 middle school, high school students as you know,
25 noted are all virtual right now. I want to also make

1
2 sure we are clear that that 50, that class size piece
3 was only for remote blended students.

4 No one is blended in high school right now, so
5 there aren't the class sizes of 50 that you are
6 describing going on right now because they are all
7 virtual. I just want to make sure that that's very
8 clear. So, Lauren, can you provide a little bit more
9 on the staffing question.

10 LAUREN SICILIANO: Sure, happy to. Uhm, so thank
11 you for the question. Uhm, in terms of how we are
12 supporting our schools with staffing, since summer,
13 we have been working closely with schools,
14 particularly through our borough citywide offices to
15 ensure that they had the staff that they needed and
16 if that required additional allocation from us, we
17 did that. We have been fortunate that the
18 Administration has made reopening and the needs of
19 our students such a priority. So, we have been able
20 to allocate additional dollars to schools to hire new
21 teachers, use substitutes, use existing teachers to
22 cover more classes and we have continued to do that
23 as more and more schools have moved to five days.

24 We work closely with the First Deputy Chancellor
25 team to understand where that is an impediment for

1 schools, so we can give them the resources that they
2 need in order to extend to five days.

3 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, currently how many uhm,
4 how many ATR's are currently now uhm, working as
5 full-time staff in schools right now? Do we have
6 that data?

7 LAUREN SICILIANO: Uhm, I can get you the
8 specific number on that.

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay and do we have data on
10 how many ATR's are not placed right now?

11 LAUREN SICILIANO: I will get you the specific
12 numbers. All of our ATR's are deployed to support
13 schools, whether that's in long-term absence coverage
14 or a more permanent assignment but I am happy to get
15 you the breakdown.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And how many currently, how
17 many substitute teachers are working on long-term
18 full-time assignment? Do we have that data?

19 LAUREN SICILIANO: So, on any given day we have
20 on average between 3,800 and 4,000 subs working on
21 any given day in the system.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Are they working in the
23 same school with the same kids or are they moving
24 around the system?
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LAUREN SICILIANO: It's a mix.

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CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, we have students who are because of staff shortages, not having the same teacher. Is that right?

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LAUREN SICILIANO: Uhm, I think that it varies based on the needs of the school. The school may have a short-term assignment because someone is out for a shorter period of time versus a longer term need.

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CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And can you just - you might have mentioned and forgive me, I missed it. How many schools currently are open for five days a week?

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DONALD CONYERS: I will answer, I will jump in. Right now, for our elementary PK-5 in District 75, we have 247 schools that have students attending five day a week and we have another 259 schools where the majority of the students are in attendance five days and then like the 354, 355 where they have prioritized the attendance of students that maybe considered more of the needy population where they have been able to get them in for five days.

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CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And let's say from the start of this year so far, how many total school

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2 closures have taken place? Does anyone have that
3 data?

4 DONALD CONYERS: I don't have that data but I can
5 say that they were closed. Not because we wanted to
6 but because we had to.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Does anyone have a number
8 on that?

9 DONALD CONYERS: Just making a note to get that
10 back. But I will register once again that they were
11 closed out of an abundance of caution and because of
12 health and safety reasons.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Of course. Uhm and I would
14 just note that for those reasons also, it's just a
15 continued another interruption in instruction and it
16 becomes a greater, another challenge for those school
17 communities and for the kids.

18 I am not sure and I want to turn to my
19 colleagues, but I am not sure if I heard a direct
20 answer on the number of staff we are short in order
21 to make all the schools serve, open five days a week.
22 I am not sure if I heard an answer on that.

23 LAUREN SICILIANO: So, on the staffing front and
24 Donald of course, please feel free to jump in here as
25 well. The reason why I can't give you numbers is

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2 because as schools identify that as a barrier, we
3 work with the schools to solve that barrier. So,
4 it's a constant ongoing review uhm, in order to make
5 sure that the schools had the staff that they need.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well, I mean we still have
7 many schools not open, so obviously they are still
8 facing the barrier, so what is – what are the
9 barriers uhm that your – I mean, here is what I am
10 sensing and folks could feel free to correct me if I
11 am wrong. I don't think City Hall and I'm not saying
12 DOE, City Hall is uhm working in reality on the
13 severe staff shortage we have in the school system
14 right now.

15 I know DOE is aware of it because you have to
16 deal with it every day and I don't know how you could
17 advise a principal just to kind of – you know, you
18 can't make that need disappear. It's there unless
19 you are going to put more kids together in the same
20 class, which as you know, detrimentally hurts
21 instruction. Has DOE requested additional resources
22 from OMB and from the Mayor's Office for more money
23 to hire more staff so more of our young children and
24 children, our most vulnerable children can go to
25 school five days a week?

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2 DONALD CONYERS: Sir, I want to jump in and
3 Lauren, you can clarify or correct anything as
4 needed. First of all, the realistically, funds,
5 resources are being provided, have been provided and
6 as you know Chair, uhm, if you were absent as a
7 social studies teacher and you were in the middle of
8 a pandemic when people were a little unsure about
9 their own safety. So, we have educators that want to
10 do their best to come in but refuse to come in
11 because of the safety. So, having the funds
12 available does not always equate to having a body, a
13 live body in front of students.

14 Uhm, we know that on a daily basis as Lauren
15 indicated, we have upwards of 4,000 substitute
16 teachers. That is, it is a commitment being made and
17 these teachers are doing their work. They are doing
18 God's work to ensure that our students are educated.
19 It is not City Hall that is preventing teachers from
20 coming into our system. It is not City Hall that is
21 preventing the teachers to remain with the students
22 for the duration of a semester. It is the nature of
23 the business and you know yourself how substitute
24 teaching is. You know how ensuring the continuity of
25 instruction is important. We are endeavoring to do

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2 all of those things and we are – yes, we are standing
3 up a system that many, I mean, they are doing it.
4 They can't do it and I feel that. I am looking for
5 the positive in that and we are working to endeavor
6 to move others toward that positivity and stay there
7 as we improve.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So –

9 LAUREN SICILIANO: And if I could –

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah.

11 LAUREN SICILIANO: Just add on, on the funding
12 front to answer that part of the question as well,
13 uhm, as I mentioned the Administration has made uh,
14 opening of schools a priority and so, this year, we
15 have been able to give schools significant additional
16 dollars on top of their regular budgets to fund a
17 range of opening needs. It is about \$180 million in
18 total for a range of things like nurses and PPE
19 including \$80 million in additional funds for
20 staffing.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right but the Mayor also
22 said last year that every kid who needed a device had
23 a device and that wasn't true because we had to
24 subpoena information which was very damaging to City
25 Hall and we learned that over 77,000 kids entered the

1
2 school year still without a device after the Mayor
3 said that everyone who needed it had one. I have
4 never heard the Mayor use his [INAUDIBLE 1:14:01] and
5 his platform to put on a clarion call for additional
6 school staff to address the needs of our school
7 communities and look, I support every single educator
8 who made a request for medical accommodations, for
9 medical reasons. I support them but I also think
10 that we need to be mindful that because of the staff
11 shortages, that's why high schools could only offer
12 virtual study hall because there is not enough staff
13 in them. But no one ever put out a call for action
14 and substitute teacher, who I greatly value, having
15 them move around, what does that do to the stability
16 of the classes and of the children if they have a
17 different person coming before them all the time?
18 That's tough. And so, I am going to pause here
19 because I am mindful of time and my colleagues have
20 been very patient. So, I am going to now call on
21 some of my colleagues for some of their questions.
22 And I see a couple of hands raised uhm, and I want to
23 turn it over to actually to Council Member Riley.
24 This is his first Education hearing with us in the
25 Council. It is an honor to have him and we welcome

1
2 him. Council Member Riley, please you may ask your
3 questions.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Chair Treyger
5 and I just want to commend your leadership for
6 advocating for parents. I am a parent right now and
7 I have been home with my daughter doing remote
8 learning and it is very challenging, especially you
9 know, doing the hearings and working and trying to
10 help her work at the same time. And she is in
11 kindergarten and she is really a social butterfly and
12 the fact that she can't be around her classmates and
13 engage with them has been really a challenge for her.

14 So, I really do commend your leadership Chair
15 Treyger. DOE, thank you so much for being here and
16 my question really falls with the 2021 achievement
17 plan. It seems to be a mix of short and long-term
18 strategies and I am particularly interested in how
19 these investments will help us ensure equity for all
20 students now and in the future. And for example, the
21 DOE sees investments in things like high quality
22 digital curriculum, helping close the achievement gap
23 and ensuring equity after school operations return to
24 normal.

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2 So, I just wanted to see how we take that into
3 the long-term strategies to achieve equity amongst
4 our children, especially children of color within our
5 communities that have been struggling a lot during
6 this pandemic with education.

7 DR. LINDA CHEN: Council Member Riley, thank you
8 for your question and thank you for your partnership
9 as a parent in city schools to really work with us
10 and teachers in schools in the education of your
11 child.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you.

13 DR. LINDA CHEN: And we appreciate that direct
14 perspective to. So, uhm, yes, I think that the plan
15 of the Mayor and the Chancellor shared around the
16 student achievement plan – I would say, I appreciate
17 your characterization of short and long-term. I do
18 think that while it was explicitly stated that is
19 planned for next school year, we know the long runway
20 that it takes to be able to get the plans together.

21 So, while we are expressing a plan for the next
22 school year, a number of these things, the
23 foundations for these things to your point are being
24 laid as well.

1
2 So, I will start first with the curricular piece.
3 Uhm, part of that work has already begun and in
4 regards to your question around equity, it is
5 important for us while we are trying to bridge the
6 digital divide, it is also a moment that we are not
7 letting up on the DOE's commitment to culturally
8 relevant and sustaining education. As you may know,
9 we promulgated and policy or definition of that a few
10 summers ago, two summers ago, I think it was July and
11 that continues to be not just a value that we hold
12 but it is an education imperative to be able to
13 provide texts and materials that are culturally
14 relevant for students. And so, that continues to be
15 part of this plan, that's in the curricular aspects.

16 I would say also on the front of equity, it is
17 important for us to be able to have a baseline of
18 where every student is academically. That isn't left
19 to disparate resources or capacities at school levels
20 but that as a system, we are able to know where every
21 student is at and in terms of equity, then we can
22 really be able to place our resources and supports in
23 the places that need it the most.

24 And so, that another part of what you see in that
25 plan. The learning management system is a place

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2 where everything is, so we have heard, even in the
3 spring and continuing now, the great work of Adrienne
4 Austin and her team around Parent University has been
5 helpful but we know that it is helpful to have the
6 uniformity in the system that everyone can access
7 readily or all of these pieces of information and
8 that's why there is a commitment that you see in that
9 plan for learning management system.

10 All of these things would not, you know, these
11 resources would not be well spent if we didn't commit
12 to professional learning for educators in the system
13 to be able to use all of these things. To be able to
14 use the information on every student and tie it to
15 that culturally response tailored lesson and
16 materials in order for every student. To us it's
17 about equity and excellence right. It's access and
18 the ability to be able to know who a student is. Who
19 they are socially, emotionally; that's also why those
20 screens are part of our plan. It's not just academic
21 screening but knowing the wellness of every student.
22 We need to be able to connect with students on that
23 level in order to use that information about where
24 they are academically in order to engage and support
25 them.

1
2 And that's also why in that plan there is that
3 commitment to social, emotional learning and
4 community schools, over the course of several years
5 but beginning and committed to the greatest -

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 DR. LINDA CHEN: The most impacted communities
8 across the city.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you. I will come
10 back for a second round, if that's alright with the
11 Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Sure Council Member Riley.
13 I want to also just mention that we have also been
14 joined by Council Members D. Diaz and I welcome
15 Council Member Diaz and Council Member Barron and I
16 believe next for questions, I think we saw the hand
17 up of, I believe it was Council Member Kallos. Yeah.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I just want to follow up
20 on some of Chair Treyger's questions and ask that you
21 write them down because there will be at least four.

22 So, how many students don't have a device as of
23 this morning? Plain and simple. How many remote
24 learners didn't log in this morning? If you don't
25 know, would you let me build an app to do it? Do you

1 support legislation, Introduction 2138 to guarantee
2 every public student an iPad or a laptop moving
3 forward? That's the first question.

4
5 The second one, can we desegregate online
6 learning for this spring? By way of background on
7 August 7th, I sent a proposal to do so with Black,
8 Latino and Asian Caucus former Co-Chair Robert
9 Cornegy. On August 23rd, the New York Post endorsed
10 the idea. On October 16th, the Chancellor expressed
11 openness at the idea at an Education Committee
12 hearing. On the 22nd, the Chancellor said at a
13 Queens Parental Advisory Board meeting and I quote,
14 "In a virtual environment if you have some criteria
15 that a student could extensively with a very gifted
16 teacher have more students having experience of
17 gifted experience, not just in one classroom, let's
18 say you have a really gifted and talented teacher
19 that is willing to have 60 students across five
20 school in Queens, now you have the ability to give
21 that experience to more students. Where is DOE in
22 implementing a desegregated online education for this
23 spring if not now, then when? That's also from
24 [INAUDIBLE 1:22:55].

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2 Third question, do you believe in social
3 promotion? Would you allow parents and students to
4 choose to repeat a grade so that they aren't thrown
5 into a class where they start in September a year and
6 a half behind students with more privilege which
7 would only further the achievement gap along would
8 likely continue to be racial lines.

9 My last question is what is DOE doing to provide
10 parents who children would have a dedicated
11 paraprofessional in the classroom with those same
12 services in the home on remote learning days. Thank
13 you.

14 DR. LINDA CHEN: Thank you for the forewarning
15 about the pen. So, let me try to take some of these
16 and then I also want to include our Chief
17 Administrative Officer Lauren Siciliano on some of
18 the device and metrics questions that you raised.

19 So, uhm, okay, around the desegregation idea that
20 you raised, we really think that you know, obviously
21 it's a very worthy role and one of the challenges and
22 this came up quite honestly in a number of our
23 conversations in the spring even. How do we leverage
24 because now learning is beyond the four walls and one
25 of the challenges while that is a very valid idea and

1
2 a good one, is that a lot of things schools already
3 had to do to get school up and running and I think
4 this would be one of those things Council Member. I
5 think that would be a good next step to actually
6 operationalize. I think the reason why you haven't
7 seen it at scale is that there are number of things
8 that need to be operationalized for that. We have
9 been trying to get a sense of normalcy in terms of
10 staffing and what teachers have on their plate and to
11 add students from different schools and those kinds
12 of things. It becomes another thing that we want to
13 make sure logistically works and importantly that
14 teachers feel comfortable to training and I think the
15 other piece about that is, we want to make sure that
16 teaching ultimately is yes, teachers knowing their
17 content of their students. But also that ability to
18 connect with students is a huge piece and so, that's
19 also something that we want to ensure greater
20 continuity before -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: The record can reflect
22 that there were three minutes left when I asked my
23 questions and if used most of the time to not answer
24 the first question.

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2 The Chancellor said he wanted to do it. All you
3 have to do is start offering the program to the
4 students and connect them with the teachers. Will
5 you do it?

6 DR. LINDA CHEN: We have also had some of the -

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: And can we move onto the
8 other questions. Can we get a yes or a no and then
9 just move onto the rest of the questions, because the
10 Chair indulges me asking multiple questions but I
11 gave you the majority of my time to answer the
12 questions, so please take your time to answer.

13 DR. LINDA CHEN: So, I will pivot over, yes, that
14 is something that we will continue to do. There is
15 some evidence of that already but I don't want to
16 take up time.

17 Lauren, if you want to just go back to the top,
18 we will take it in the order that you asked them sir.
19 I think she needs to be unmuted.

20 LAUREN SICILIANO: Yes, thank you. Uhm, so in
21 terms of your questions about the number of students
22 who -

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 LAUREN SICILIANO: Students who still need
25 devices, uhm, as I said, we have delivered about

1
2 450,000 devices. We had about 5,800 open requests
3 that have come in recently in the past few weeks.
4 But as I mentioned, we had already ordered 50,000
5 more iPads, so we have already begun shipping devices
6 out to those students.

7 On the number students who hadn't logged in,
8 Donald, I think you shared that earlier, would you
9 mind sharing that one?

10 DONALD CONYERS: The number I gave earlier was
11 2,600. That's the number I gave concerning the log
12 in.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. I believe next
14 we will hear from Council Member Barron.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 LAUREN SICILIANO: Council Member you are muted.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Let's unmute Council Member
18 Barron.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, that was on my
20 part. Thank you so much. Thank you to the Chair for
21 this hearing and thank you to the panel for coming
22 and answering our questions. We heard a lot about
23 the efforts to provide devices to students but yet we
24 know that there are still students who don't have the
25 devices that they need. Or the ones that have

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2 devices are in fact devices that are not always
3 functioning.

4 My question is, moving forward, knowing that
5 there are thousands of students, predominantly Black
6 and Latino students who have not had the opportunity
7 to be in a learning environment and to gather the
8 instruction that's being given, what are the plans
9 moving forward to compensate these students? To
10 compensate the families that have lost out on that
11 time on task. What are the plans now to provide
12 additional resources, additional support, additional
13 instruction time and perhaps even additional
14 finances.

15 We heard about the students who have special
16 needs and really have been very much disadvantaged
17 beyond what their normal circumstances are. What are
18 the plans now so that we don't start scrambling when
19 we try to get back to what we call normal. What are
20 we doing now to put those plans and program and
21 resources and initiatives in place, particularly in
22 those schools where those students and in those areas
23 where students are living in temporary housing. What
24 are we doing now? And then I have some other
25

1
2 questions but I want to hear that one first. Thank
3 you.

4 DR. LINDA CHEN: Thank you Council Member Barron
5 for your questions. In the interest of time, I just
6 want to pivot over to Katy Jedrlinic regarding the
7 students in temporary housing.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Who are we waiting for?

9 DR. LINDA CHEN: Can someone unmute Katy
10 Jedrlinic.

11 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: Hi, sorry, I was muted.
12 So, uhm, I understand the question was about supports
13 for students in temporary housing.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: My question is what are
15 your plans now? What are you putting in place now
16 for that period of time or that point and time when
17 students do return, understanding that there has been
18 a tremendous loss of learning. There has been a
19 tremendous time where students have not been able to
20 benefit from instruction for a number of reasons.
21 What are we doing now to be able to provide for those
22 students? What are the plans? What are the
23 initiatives? What is the thinking? Who is being
24 involved in making those strategic decisions?

1
2 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: In terms of academic
3 support or overall?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Overall, everything.
5 Children have lost out. It's been a big year.

6 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: Yes, they certainly have.
7 So, I am going to talk about these supports that we
8 have in place for mental health and social, emotional
9 support particularly and then maybe other people want
10 to chime in more in the academic side.

11 Uhm, since the beginning of our transition to
12 remote learning in March, we knew that there was
13 going to be a tremendous loss for students. Not only
14 academically but also in terms of their you know,
15 social worlds, their you know, emotional support,
16 their mental health support and my division, which is
17 the division of school, climate and wellness under
18 Deputy Chancellor Shawn Robinson, sort of thinking
19 right away about how we could support kids both
20 during remote learning and in the return.

21 So, and we were very fortunate that we were able
22 to build on supports that we did have in place that
23 we have built up over the last few years, many of
24 them with the Council's support including a greatly
25 increased number of social workers and special ed

1 social workers to support with trauma in particular.
2 You know, being able to provide those remote services
3 to students was imperative. We also open the
4 beginning of this year uhm, with a mass training for
5 all staff in trauma responsive educational practices.
6 This is both for staff who are in-person and who are
7 remote. And we gave everyone at the beginning of the
8 school year a bridge to school plan to help bridge
9 that you know, gap between the time the students were
10 last seen and when they were now returning.

12 Uhm, you know, we were very fortunate and want to
13 thank again the Council for their support in
14 maintaining our level of support staff like social
15 workers throughout this school year and I am very
16 happy to say that moving into next year -

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: What we have done this year
19 with three key steps. One is going to be a what we
20 call a mental health screener for all students to get
21 a very, very brief assessment of where they are at
22 and determine the best way to direct services
23 including which I am very excited about, uhm, new
24 services we are able to bring on board starting next
25 year beginning with 27 new community schools and 150

1
2 social workers. These resources are going to be the
3 first – this is the first year in our plan for over
4 for four full years to continue to increase both of
5 those resources and we are going to direct them at
6 the neighborhoods that were hardest hit by COVID.
7 Those 27 districts that we know you know, had the
8 worst time during all of this.

9 Including many of our areas that tend to suffer
10 the most. And this way we will be able to direct
11 this to – these needs to where we know – these
12 resources to where we know the needs are greatest.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Mr. Chair, if I could ask
14 for the question about the academics as well.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Absolutely Council Member
16 Barron because I know that there was an issue with
17 folks unmuting, so you have extra time, absolutely.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you.

19 DR. LINDA CHEN: Thank you Council Member Barron.
20 So, in addition to I would say, what I am going to
21 describe and delineate are things that we are doing
22 now and had started already in the spring and we are
23 doing more of this work. So, a couple of things.
24 One is, what we are doing now is to ensure that there
25 is seamless engagement of students that they are

1
2 going in person and to remote. There has been a lot
3 of hundreds of thousands of teachers engaging in
4 professional learning to get better at the technology
5 engagement piece of this puzzle.

6 So, that continues on because we know that that
7 engagement is very important. And we also have been
8 making sure that there are grade level lessons on a
9 weekly basis uploaded in Teach Hub for teachers in
10 all content areas K-12. We started this in the
11 spring and this school year in September, we have
12 been uploading weekly lessons that are also ready for
13 Google Classroom. So, that we have been able to up
14 the ante a little bit on the quality of a digital,
15 digitally accessible materials.

16 And then, we have really been supporting teachers
17 from the very beginning. We knew there would be
18 great impact in learning progress. So, we have
19 created; the state has standards as you know I know,
20 as an educator you know, that teachers have to be
21 able to meet and student to learn. And what we did
22 was, we knew that there would be quite a bit of
23 flexibility in the in-person and remote and so, we
24 wanted to focus on priority learning standards. So,
25 what we did was we released those to schools in the

1
2 fall, that way teachers can be economize and make
3 efficient their planning on the standards that matter
4 the most. Because all of those anchor standards
5 would be supported by other supporting standards.
6 That way students are really able to get their best
7 ability to stay on track on grade level.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: My time is expired and I
9 thank the Chair and I just want to say, to me, that
10 does not respond to what I see are going to be the
11 needs. We know what students need. I wanted to
12 hear, how we are going to construct a school learning
13 environment beyond the regular 8:30-3 day, that will
14 give students additional time. You can't just cram
15 it into a regular school day and I am not hearing
16 that. With all due respect, I am not hearing that.

17 So, I hope that we can look further to make sure
18 that when we get back to normal or when the new norm
19 starts, there is designated time for students to make
20 up for this lost year. And finally, I just want to
21 say, I totally agree with my colleague Ben Kallos.
22 It should be in my mind, I am not a tech person, it
23 should be easy to design whatever you need to design
24 to allow students to sit online to sit in an auditing
25

1
2 capacity that advantage of instruction are more elite
3 and select schools.

4 Thank you very much Mr. Chair for the time.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Council Member
6 Barron. I want to note also we have been joined by
7 Council Member Dromm and I want to turn now for
8 questions to my colleague, Council Member Louis, who
9 has been a real champion and a real leader on the
10 fight to make sure that all of our kids actually get
11 devices and internet in their hands.

12 So, thank you Council Member Louis for your
13 leadership and we turn to you next for questions.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you so much Chair
16 Treyger for holding this hearing today and for the
17 opportunity to ask some questions and I want to thank
18 the panel for being here to answer some of our
19 questions and to take some of this back. I have two
20 quick questions; one is on English Language Learners
21 and the other one is on students with disabilities.
22 In regards to students that are English Language
23 learners, we have heard concerns and shared concerns
24 about the lack of instructional support that they
25 have not received. Particularly bilingual

1 instruction in some of our schools. So, I think you
2 know, this continues to perpetuate the digital divide
3 because some of them have devices, some of them do
4 not have devices. So, it is hard for them to get the
5 instructional support that they need.
6

7 So, I wanted to know what efforts were underway
8 to support ELL's with instruction? What is the goals
9 to identify who is having those concerns? How are
10 you tracking it and how are you going to continue to
11 support them as they enter the remaining part of the
12 school year?

13 DR. LINDA CHEN: Council Member Louis, thank you
14 for your question. Multilingual learners are of the
15 utmost importance to us and I just want to quickly
16 delineate a few things that we have been doing. So,
17 the division of multilingual learners has in part of
18 the discussion that I shared around priority
19 standards and curricular materials has also been
20 uploading and available for all teachers, information
21 that are specifically supporting students with
22 different levels of English language that lack
23 acquisition. Sometimes it is known as our nicest
24 flat levels in the state and some of that has also
25 been in Spanish as well in terms of filing the

1
2 programs. We are working to ensure more languages
3 but that is also part of how we are ensuring that our
4 bilingual learners and ELL's have access to the
5 curriculum and to learning. As you may know, because
6 of the pandemic, the state made some changes with
7 identification of our English Language Learners, so
8 we have worked very closely with schools to make sure
9 that we can identify who those students are and to
10 ensure that there is funding to support them.

11 On tracking our ELL's or multilingual learners,
12 as you may know, every year generally in the spring,
13 there has been [INAUDIBLE 1:39:52] Exam that's given
14 to determine the level that the students are in terms
15 of their English proficiency and then instruction is
16 matched to that level and so, because we don't have
17 that information from last year, our division of
18 multilingual learners has also been often
19 professional learning to support teachers and being
20 able to identify even without that test if you will.
21 How do they look for the characteristics of where
22 students are in the development of English and their
23 academic language and then providing supports to
24 differentiate for that.

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Alright, I thank you for
3 that response, I don't think that it is - whatever it
4 is that you guys are doing right now, it is not
5 working. I hear from Principals from schools where
6 students speak Urdu or Creole, even some people that
7 speak Yiddish and they are not getting the support
8 they need from the Administration.

9 So, they are very dependent on volunteers to come
10 in and support their children, so I think you guys
11 should consider another approach because it is not
12 working and we are really, really putting these kids
13 in a detrimental place.

14 The second question I had was in regards to
15 students with disabilities. There was a hearing that
16 Chair Treyger had last year where we heard about
17 students with disabilities who were turned away from
18 Learning Bridges, so I wanted to get an update
19 because we never received that report back from you
20 guys and you all said that you would provide us with
21 that information. I wanted to know what resources
22 were being provided to those that were turned away.
23 What is the new approach now and what do those
24 resources look like and has it expanded to all the
25 five boroughs? Thank you.

1
2 DR. LINDA CHEN: To just finish up on the
3 multilingual question, we hear your concern. Urdu
4 example is a good one that connects to other
5 questions that I was not able to complete answering
6 but that is where we are trying to leverage also the
7 online opportunity to teach students in multiple
8 schools because if you have a good Urdu teacher,
9 which is also hard to find, as you are noting. Then
10 more students can benefit. So, that's the work that
11 is certainly under way.

12 Regarding students with disabilities and Learning
13 Bridges, we have been working with the city agencies
14 that run it. Obviously we are a partner in this
15 effort and that is a concern that we have heard quite
16 a bit about in terms of making sure that students get
17 the kind of services, the supports that they need.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 DR. LINDA CHEN: I don't have an update for you
20 right now but I just want to check, to double check
21 to see if any of my colleagues have an update on that
22 front.

23 DONALD CONYERS: I do not. I don't have an
24 update but Mr. Chair, I would love to go back if you
25 allow me 35 seconds to Council Member Barron's

1 question. 35 seconds, 30 seconds even, just in terms
2 of the compensation that she asked for and as she was
3 speaking, I was making notes and have been heartened
4 by many of the visits that we have been making around
5 the city both virtually and in person. Principals
6 right now are doing things and making strides to do
7 things as simple as looping of classes so that
8 students have the familiarity both with their
9 classmates and in some instances with teachers if
10 they are looped and we will continue that going into
11 the immediate future.

13 Many principals that I am speaking to have
14 increased their coaching cycles of teachers because
15 the Council, Council Member Barron asked for a
16 comprehensive, more of a comprehensive view. There
17 is a coaching cycles that are going on with teachers.
18 They are small groups that have been formed. I have
19 witnessed kindergarten students going into small
20 group in a virtual setting using a platform and being
21 able to manipulate and also receive the services. I
22 have seen this in middle school. There are in
23 addition to the small groups, there is this
24 conscience and continued effort to continue building
25 community. Which you know is very important as well

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2 because that's part of the movement and improvement
3 of making up for the lost time, feeling confident,
4 secure. Superintendents continue to make visits as
5 Dr. Chen and I make visits, superintendents make
6 visits to provide feedback, to provide support. We
7 then also can allocate additional human resource by
8 way of professional coaching and also even some on
9 the ground support in hands of model teaching where
10 necessary.

11 Middle school, I want to call out middle school
12 in District 29, 355 where they do Saturday right now,
13 Saturday virtual after school - Saturday Academy and
14 virtual after school tutoring for the students to
15 begin to address some of the learning gains that we
16 need to ensure that we meet.

17 We are looking at revamping of advisory's. The
18 school I went to where they revised the advisory to
19 ensure that students were both getting the support
20 academically as well as the social wellness. So, I
21 know you are appropriately looking for Council Member
22 Barron an overall plan. We are in the midst of the
23 formulating plans that will concretized. However, I
24 want to assure you that right now, we have schools
25 all across the city engaging in things that you are

1
2 looking to hear more about in one little package, an
3 important package but we are doing the things – we
4 are making strides to thinking about summer planning.
5 We are thinking about how summer planning can look
6 different, should be different, will feel different.
7 We are connecting – our principals are now making
8 plans to connect with parents in a different way.
9 Parent university is one of the modalities but we
10 also have something as simple as a Google voice
11 number where a principal told me that it rings you
12 know on different phones simultaneously allowing for
13 parents to have the access and the contact that they
14 really want.

15 So, this compensation for student learning loss
16 is as you know, more – it's involved, it involves
17 parents, teachers, students, administrators, City
18 Council and we are taking those steps and making
19 those leaps right now. We are not waiting. We are
20 doing it right now so that we have a sense of
21 readiness for when we come back to what may be
22 considered more of a new normal and I hope that gives
23 you more of a response.

24

25

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2 DR. LINDA CHEN: Chair, could Christina Foti be
3 unmuted to answer Council Member Louis's question
4 about Learning Bridges?

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Sure.

6 CHRISTINA FOTI: Thank you so much. I just
7 wanted to quickly say to Council Member Farah, we
8 appreciate the question about Learning Bridges. One
9 of the concerns that we were hearing about support of
10 students with disabilities in Learning Bridges was
11 access to paraprofessionals. We have very recently
12 worked out a mechanism to help get that support for
13 students who require a paraprofessional to attend
14 Learning Bridges. That is the major concern I have
15 been hearing from families about Learning Bridges and
16 students with disabilities. I just wanted you to
17 know that that is something that we have worked out.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. I just also
19 want to just note that because we are allowing
20 Council Member Riley asked a second round of
21 questions open up to other members if they wish to
22 have a second round of questions but we will begin
23 with Council Member Riley.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you Chair. My
3 second question that I had was we heard a lot about
4 the mental and behavioral support that our children
5 will need when things get back to normal.

6 The last item on the 2021 Student Achievement
7 Plan seems to speak to this and I just want to know,
8 how do we intend on paying for this effort and how
9 would the increase in expenditures do the health
10 screenings, planning and delivery of services be
11 funded and which barriers will prevent us from
12 maximizing reimbursement?

13 DR. LINDA CHEN: Counsel, if we can unmute Chief
14 Administrative Officer Lauren Siciliano.

15 LAUREN SICILIANO: Thank you. Thank you for the
16 question. Uhm, as I mentioned, we have been able
17 this year to prioritize funding for our students and
18 for reopening but it's certainly clear that the
19 pandemic has had an extraordinarily detrimental
20 effect on our budget and on city's budget and I want
21 to thank you Chair Treyger and the entire Council for
22 your partnership and advocacy on this topic and we
23 are quite challenged by the fact that to date, the
24 state and federal response has not matched the
25 severity of the crisis and as we look ahead to the

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2 new year and new federal leadership, we are hopeful
3 that we will get additional stimulus and particularly
4 additional aid directly to localities.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Alright Lauren, just for
6 the second time, I just want to ask another question.

7 LAUREN SICILIANO: Sure.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: The Special Education
9 Student Enforcement System, is there any status on
10 the effort of replacing that?

11 LAUREN SICILIANO: I am sorry, can you say that
12 one more time. The Special Ed?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Yeah, the Special
14 Education Student Information System -

15 LAUREN SICILIANO: Ah, yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Yeah, is there any status
17 on replacing it?

18 LAUREN SICILIANO: Sorry, I heard the work
19 enforcement and that's where you lost me.

20 Uhm, yes, so, we released an RFP to replace that
21 system. As a reminder, we did that in two stages.
22 So, we did a stage one where we received proposals,
23 reviewed them and then did proofs of concept,
24 essentially demos with vendors and then short listed
25 a group of vendors for a round two, which we released

1
2 in early October. So, those respondents who were
3 short listed for the second round are currently being
4 reviewed for final selection.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay and Chair, if I could
6 just give my sentiments on the failing of students.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, absolutely please.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: We are going to about
9 mental and behavioral support. I think we really
10 need to focus on not failing our students because we
11 have been failing them throughout this entire
12 pandemic. It has been very challenging and everyone
13 here is to advocate you know, for our students but if
14 we are going to talk about that support, I think we
15 need to revisit failing any of our students being
16 that a lot of them don't have adequate services. Wi-
17 Fi or devices you know, to be educated.

18 So, I just wanted to emphasize that what Chair
19 Treyger brought up earlier. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Council Member
21 Riley and I want to kind of add to that a little bit.
22 Uhm, because I think Council Member Barron, Council
23 Member Riley, others have really raised very
24 important points about how best to support our
25 students and what is the plan ahead now and ahead.

1
2 To me, and I think I had spoken to Dr. Chen
3 previously about this. I am going to emphasize the
4 word connection and it is more critical than ever
5 that we increase, double down on connections to our
6 students. And connections to our students are more
7 than just in a classroom with a text book.

8 Uhm, you know, I repeat the story that I shared
9 where I taught in Utrecht with Anthony Ramos, a
10 student that the system labeled as underperforming
11 who now is one of the top performers globally quite
12 frankly. But he mentioned a baseball team and he
13 mentioned the performing arts program. How those
14 were connections to his school community and this is
15 where we need to, as we are taking stock of the needs
16 of our kids and the trauma, the learning loss and
17 finding ways to connect to them, more ways, deepen
18 connections, more ways than ever. This is where the
19 issue of equity really where rubber meets the road.
20 Because there are still schools to this day that have
21 the added resources. Whether it is \$1 million PTA,
22 whether it is alumni associations that could raise a
23 lot of money or private resources. That they have
24 all those extra – we call them extra; I actually
25 think that they are really integral part of a school

1
2 community. Whether it's the arts, music, sports.
3 They are very much weaved into the fabric of the
4 school culture. In the Utrecht High Schools sports
5 coaches checked in on their students in my class to
6 make sure that they were scoring well and doing well
7 on their grades. They were mentors to kids.

8 In many cases, the coaches kept kids in school.
9 Uhm, and so, but I know for a fact that not every
10 school community has access to the resources of all
11 these critical programs that do make a difference and
12 do help establish connections and maintain
13 connections, vital connections and that really add to
14 a school culture.

15 So, Dr. Chen and Deputy Chancellor and others can
16 weigh in. Are there plans in place as we are trying
17 to take stock of the needs of our kids right now and
18 as we are aggressively trying to meet their needs and
19 I know that a lot of this comes down to budget but we
20 are in budget season now. We have a new federal
21 administration that just got sworn in, thank goodness
22 and we have to now hold Albany accountable. We have
23 to hold City Hall accountable to get resources
24 because this is not going to be a normal year in any
25 shape or form and we can't use conventional ways of

1 thinking about how to rise to the moment. And so,
2 are there conversations? Are there plans? Are there
3 actionable plans in place with resources and tell me
4 where you need them because we will fight for them to
5 give our students, particularly kids who are
6 underserved, short changed at this moment without out
7 the multimillion dollar PTA's and alumni and private
8 resources to give them those opportunities as far as
9 arts and music and sports programs. All of the
10 things that we know help establish connections and
11 build a strong school culture to connect kids to
12 their school communities. I would be happy to hear
13 any thoughts on that.

14
15 DR. LINDA CHEN: Chair, you have expressed
16 something that is incredibly essential. Uhm, the
17 arts, physical education are also core subjects. I
18 know sometimes people don't see it that way and those
19 are incredibly important in supporting our young
20 people and we do; and I want to pivot to Lauren
21 Siciliano in a few minutes on this. But we do need
22 to ensure that there is funding to support robust
23 programming, right. I think about some of the things
24 that Council Member Barron spoke to about after
25 school. Some of this after school is not just about

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2 you know, the hardcore academic subjects right but it
3 is also that connection. That sense of using project
4 based learning also that every student should have
5 and not just for most privileged communities and
6 being able to – be able to engage with venues across
7 the city.

8 So, those are things that I do think we need uhm,
9 resources for. Robust programming that every student
10 deserves. Lauren, do you want to talk a little bit
11 more about fair student funding and such?

12 LAUREN SICILIANO: Yes, absolutely. I would just
13 add building off what I had shared earlier. This is
14 why we are so appreciative of past advocacy and
15 offers of current and future advocacy because to do
16 all of those things that we know are so critical, we
17 absolutely need additional federal stimulus dollars
18 and we need additional funding directly to
19 localities. We are reviewing the federal stimulus
20 proposal, the federal stimulus legislation as well as
21 presidents elect, now President Biden's stimulus plan
22 but in order to be able to do everything that you
23 have outlined, we absolutely need an infusion of
24 additional stimulus dollars.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I think we need to put a
3 number to the request because that's how we know what
4 to fight for. I know the fair student funding issue
5 is still very important because fair student funding
6 is what you know, funds our educators, our social
7 workers, our counselors. It is what funds our school
8 budgets but I do think that we need to look at this
9 and I appreciate Dr. Chen, your recognition that
10 these are not extras. These are not sort of throw-
11 ins. There are really important parts of the school
12 community, those that have them quite frankly because
13 not every school has those opportunities.

14 I also want to be clear that as we are pushing
15 for more federal and state aid, New York State cannot
16 repeat what they did last year. Where they used
17 federal money and basically deducted that amount in
18 state funds to the City of New York. The federal
19 government had an allocation of about \$700 million
20 for city schools. The state basically removed \$700
21 million in aid to the city school system last year
22 during our greatest moment of need.

23 Think about that for a moment. When we hear
24 about being New York tough and New York smart and New
25 York love. Think about that for a moment. You

1
2 remove \$700 million from New York City school
3 children going through the most challenging time in
4 modern city history, you deduct close to \$1 billion.
5 When you already owe our children money, you deduct
6 another almost \$1 billion on top of that.

7 So, I am not going to be lectured about New York
8 tough and New York love. You put your money where
9 your mouth is and we need to fight, not just for a
10 recovery but an equitable recovery. Because as
11 Council Member Barron always teaches and reinforces
12 us in the Council, everyone says they are in the same
13 boat but there are some folks drowning and there are
14 some folks high up, top level of the cruise. And we
15 need to be mindful that all of our children, every
16 kid from every zip code, their needs have to be met.

17 And I think that for me, finding baseline is
18 different for different groups of kids. As I want to
19 share with my colleagues, this is very important to
20 get out, people ask me, Chair Treyger, how do you
21 know about some of the issues happening in our school
22 system you know, on a day to day basis. Well, I
23 speak to school communities almost on a daily basis,
24 where educators shared with me that our kids needed
25 access to hot meals and I thank the DOE for moving in

1
2 the direction of giving hot meals to our kids. But
3 our students, they need more connections. More than
4 hot meals. They more than a device. They need more
5 than internet. We need a plan right now, an
6 actionable plan right now to help take stock of the
7 needs and it is more than just academic, it's the
8 social, it's the emotional. Our schools are not just
9 schools, they are lifelines. Social safety nets in
10 our school communities. This pandemic has proven
11 this once and for all, how vital our schools are.
12 Every school should be a community school. Every
13 school should be a community school. Open even after
14 school hours for after school programs and even
15 programs for adult education to help parents and
16 families try and get back on their feet with
17 additional education opportunities and job
18 opportunities.

19 So, we need to - I am not looking to how do we go
20 back to last February, no, no, no, no, no. We are
21 moving forward and we are not going to accept crumbs
22 as an answer.

23 Now, I saw that Council Member Cornegy has his
24 hand up. I want to be mindful of that. Council
25 Member Cornegy, do you want to ask a few questions?

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I think Council Member Cornegy, you may have stepped out. Is Council Member Levin here?

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I am Chair. Thank you and I apologize if the other members have asked this question already. Uhm, I want to talk a moment about uhm of children residing in shelter. I know that the Mayor has announced outfitting all shelters with Wi-Fi, I believe by the end of FY21. Uhm, obviously that does not do anything to meet the needs that they have between now and the end of this school year.

Uhm, is every child in shelter uhm, do they have access to uhm to a broadband mobile device?

LAUREN SICILIANO: I am happy to start. So, we have prioritized the delivery of the iPads to the students in shelters. The iPads can access either the cellular network or connect to Wi-Fi.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right.

LAUREN SICILIANO: And we have been working with DSS. We surveyed all of the students in shelter uhm to make sure that they could connect. There are some areas of particular shelters where the T-Mobile signal is weak. And so, for those families, we

1
2 swapped out the T-Mobile device with a Verizon
3 carrier. And we have continued to follow up. We
4 have a dedicated help desk for students in shelter to
5 trouble shoot any issues that come up and are
6 constantly working to resolve those issue as they are
7 identified.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Does every student in
9 shelter have access to a Verizon or a functional T-
10 Mobile or Verizon but a functional mobile iPad of
11 some kind? Do they have access to them?

12 LAUREN SICILIANO: So, it's a constant. It is
13 very fluid, so you know, issues constantly come into
14 the help desk across our system of students who are
15 struggling to connect. And there are all kinds of -

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I mean are students
17 struggling to connect with Verizon devices, with
18 Verizon wireless cellular iPads?

19 LAUREN SICILIANO: So, uh, there are many cases
20 where once we did the swap, the students have been
21 able to connect and then in some instances for
22 example, uhm, based on the number of people trying to
23 connect at any one time or uhm, you know if there
24 are, if there is lead in the walls of the particular
25 structure, that can all interfere with the signal.

1
2 So, we do get requests that come into the help desk
3 or issues called in where a family might still be
4 struggling. And then we look at different things
5 that we can do to help either boost the signal or
6 make sure that that student is getting what they need
7 on a case by case basis.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: How about the 60,000
9 backlog mobile devices, are those all in the hands of
10 students at this point? I know we spoke about that
11 prior to the holidays.

12 LAUREN SICILIANO: Yes, we ordered in the fall an
13 additional 100,000 devices. Those devices have all
14 been delivered. We have also ordered another 50,000
15 iPads for new requests that are coming in and to help
16 meet needs over the course of the year.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, so all - sorry, so
18 all those 100,000 then are in the hands of students
19 at this point.

20 LAUREN SICILIANO: Correct all were deliveries,
21 yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Are there students that
23 are still in need of devices?

24 LAUREN SICILIANO: Yes, so we have some requests
25 that have come in in recent weeks about 5,800 and as

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2 I mentioned, we had already ordered 50,000 iPads, so
3 we have already started shipping out devices to those
4 students.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, why would they have
6 requested devices so far along in the pandemic?

7 LAUREN SICILIANO: So, the device needs are very
8 fluid. A student may have access to a device one day
9 and then not have it the next, either because a
10 family member needed it. You know, mom or dad went
11 back to work, needed the device, a sibling needed it
12 or their personal device broke or it is outdated and
13 couldn't host a particular application. So, that's
14 why it is at fluid.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, uhm, okay, those are
16 the - I mean, I am just mostly particular concerned
17 about the students in shelter being that you know,
18 the Mayor's commitment to a Wi-Fi build out is - I
19 mean, I have been talking to the Welfare Committee
20 and talking to our providers, uhm, so you know,
21 homeless service providers you know doing a fit out
22 for Wi-Fi for some shelters is a very arduous task.
23 So, having that stop gap between now and then that is
24 really vital, so.

1
2 I guess the last question, do we have enough of
3 the Verizon SIM cards? Do we still have Verizon SIM
4 cards if students need to pop them out.

5 LAUREN SICILIANO: Yes, absolutely and I will
6 also add uhm, in terms of the Wi-Fi work that the
7 city is doing, there is a group of I believe about 25
8 shelters that were prioritized first to be done this
9 winter. So, many of those sites have already been
10 completed and are being completed now.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you so much.

12 LAUREN SICILIANO: Sure.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Council Member
14 Levin and I see that we have been rejoined by Council
15 Member Cornegy.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Good afternoon Chair.
18 Thank you so much for convening this hearing and
19 being the voice of parents across the city as it
20 relates to issues around education.

21 So, very famously I am a parent of six children.
22 I have a child in every facet of the department of
23 education school system. I will remind everybody
24 that I have had a child who has gotten his GED, a
25 child with an IEP, a child who is in the gifted and

1
2 talented and three children in Charter. And I know
3 how important it is for us to begin the conversation
4 around returning to schools and schools buildings. I
5 am confused though, is it true as I am being told as
6 a parent that the same protocols put in place or
7 traditional DOE students are not the same protocols
8 around COVID-19 testing and tracing for students who
9 are in the Charter networks even if they are you
10 know, sharing the same buildings.

11 DR. LINDA CHEN: Council Member, I would ask if
12 Katy Jedrlinic can be unmuted for this response.

13 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: Hi, I just wanted to make
14 sure I understand your question Councilman. Are you
15 asking if they have to comply with the same health
16 and safety protocols?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: No, I am asking if they
18 are following or covered by the same testing and
19 tracing regimen, even if they are sharing a building.
20 It is my understanding that the tracing regimen
21 that's going to protect our students in the future
22 and its faculty is not the same regimen that the
23 Charter networks are following.

24 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: Okay, so anybody that uses
25 DOE space including charters at either space have to

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2 comply with our health and safety protocols including
3 contact tracing. Charter schools use DOE facilities
4 must like DOE schools call positive case, confirmed
5 cases into the situation room and those principals
6 must work with staff in the situation room, including
7 the test and trace team there to investigate the case
8 and take the interventions needed. So, they must
9 comply with those.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Okay, outside of the
11 resources, are they given the same resources that in
12 any DOE building that the DOE operated, traditionally
13 operated school would receive?

14 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: For tracing?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Yeah.

16 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: Tracing is done by the
17 situation, by the case and trace team in the
18 situation room. So, their staff must work with the
19 team there and that is the same as it is for the DOE.
20 I don't - maybe I am not understanding what you mean
21 by additional resources.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Meaning for example uhm,
23 there is a oh, what do they call it, the ability to
24 be randomly tested and those protocols that are in
25 place. Do they follow the same protocols and

1
2 obviously my question is, how do we stay safe in a
3 building where there are two different sets of
4 protocols for the same kids in different programs.

5 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: I see, so you are talking
6 about the in school testing.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Yes.

8 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: Yes, okay yes, they are
9 eligible to be in school tested as well. The testing
10 providers when they come to the schools, they do test
11 you know, a certain percentage of the school, so they
12 don't test everybody. So, it is possible that they
13 may not do a Charter staff or Charter student every
14 single time but they are eligible to be part of that,
15 yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: So, how do we ensure
17 though that everyone in that building, no matter what
18 program they are in is a part of that just as a
19 safety measure and a safety precaution.

20 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: So, you have to remember
21 that not everybody gets tested every single week or
22 two weeks or what have you. It is a certain
23 percentage of the building every time. Testing
24 providers work with school facilities to work up
25 those lists every week and make sure that there is a

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2 variety and if you have a specific site where that
3 doesn't seem to be happening I would be happy to work
4 with you and figure out what's going on there and
5 work with my colleagues at Health + Hospitals to run
6 the test and trace process, any testing to figure out
7 what's going on there.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: So, I just want to make
9 sure. So, the resources in the situation room are
10 available to both traditional DOE students and
11 Administrators and Charter students and
12 Administrators, the situation room?

13 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: Yes, as long as they are in
14 a DOE facility. If a Charter is in private space,
15 they are not obligated to follow our protocols in the
16 same way but if they are in a shared DOE or not even
17 a shared, just a DOE facility, they would be required
18 to yes and they would have access to that absolutely.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Okay, where we find that
20 is not happening or for whatever reason, we should
21 reach out to your office?

22 KATHERINE JEDRLINIC: Yes, I am happy to follow
23 up with you about that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Okay, thank you. Thank
25 you Chair.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Council Member
3 Cornegy. Uhm, I don't see any further hands but I
4 will just uhm, end on just one final question. The
5 issue of uhm, finding baseline and whether it is now
6 and moving ahead, what do we know at this point Dr.
7 Chen or Deputy Chancellor, anyone could answer. What
8 do we know at this point from the State of New York
9 NYSID, uhm, and I also want to congratulate Dr.
10 Young. We have a new Commissioner Chancellor, so I
11 just want to note that from the state. But what do
12 we know at this point about state assessments? And
13 for both this existing school year and the plan to
14 find baseline into the summer and folks planning
15 already ahead into September?

16 DR. LINDA CHEN: So Chair, so far as we know last
17 year they cancelled 3-8 exams in math, science and
18 also regents. They have only waived so far to
19 January regents but aside from that, they are still
20 asking us to tentatively schedule. To be prepared to
21 administer assessments April through June, which
22 would typically include the ELA math, science and
23 regents.

24 So, that's what we know so far from the state. I
25 think to many of the points you have raised, we don't

1
2 want to rely, I mean, that's information we have
3 relied on for years as one piece of information and
4 we don't have - we don't want to rely on how that
5 happens and we need to make sure that we also have a
6 baseline across the system.

7 So, right now, we are looking at a number of
8 different low stakes formative and diagnostic
9 assessments and part of that there are final
10 decisions at this point but part of what we are doing
11 is making sure that we are looking at what schools
12 already are using. And to be able to leverage uh,
13 the best available so that we can move to some
14 universal types of assessments to be able to have
15 baseline again. It is important to us that these be
16 low stakes assessments because they really are to
17 inform instruction and the types of resources that
18 students need, particularly students that need it the
19 most.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, if I am hearing you
21 correct, New York State is at this point still
22 considering state assessments for April?

23 DR. LINDA CHEN: They have you know, I think we
24 know also depending on what happens today in the
25 first Administration federally, uhm, the state is as

1
2 compelled to follow federal guidelines, especially as
3 it relates to funding around the assessment. And so,
4 that is part of the information that they are also
5 waiting for as well but they want us to be ready to
6 be able to administer assessments in the event that
7 we continue to need to do that. So, they have not
8 said that we are not giving them yet.

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I mean, we just spent a
10 good part of this hearing talking about trying to
11 take stock of the depths of learning loss and impact,
12 which we know exists and its - I don't know how all
13 of our children - I know some children with who you
14 know, maybe from some wealthier zip codes in New York
15 City who have the means to have five days a week in
16 person and in a private learning pod, which many kids
17 have and have never had any interruption. But many
18 of our kids have not been afforded the opportunity of
19 a private learning pod.

20 Has there been any lobbying of the state? Any
21 discussions with the state about different forms of
22 trying to find baseline data that does not do
23 irreparable harm to our students?

24 DR. LINDA CHEN: We continually engage with the
25 state and you know, they are and I don't want to

1
2 speak for them but I think they are in a difficult
3 situation as well in terms of federal funding and
4 federal regulations.

5 We will continue to partner with them but to your
6 point, we want to take action as a system, right. We
7 want to make sure that regardless of what the state
8 does or does not do, we want to take action and
9 responsibility for that baseline information which is
10 why the Mayor and the Chancellor made that as part of
11 the announcement a few weeks ago.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Has there been any lobbying
13 or discussions with our federal officials? Senator
14 Schumer who is the incoming Majority Leader, are you
15 aware of any of those conversations?

16 DR. LINDA CHEN: I cannot speak to that
17 personally. I don't know if other colleagues on the
18 call would like to do that but certainly, if it
19 hasn't been done yet, just because I know everyone is
20 not unmuted, uhm, you are right, that's work that
21 will continue to occur with our IGA folks.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah Dr. Chen, the
23 challenges before our federal officials must be how
24 to bring home resources to meet the needs of all of
25 our kids and not to just perpetuate standardized

1
2 testing and you know, Senator Schumer is from
3 Brooklyn New York and he is going to be – you know,
4 he is a very influential person in the Congress and
5 you know, I think we need to make our case
6 immediately. And also just note for the record, as I
7 mentioned in previous hearings, we have consortium
8 schools in New York City that are absolved from
9 state, regent state assessments and they do project
10 base assessments and kids from what I saw witnessed
11 it very well. And so there is a model to find other
12 forms of data without standardized exams. You know,
13 former Chancellor Fariña had an expression that I
14 quote her “the answer is always in the room” and you
15 know, I think that this is something that we can also
16 find internally.

17 But with that, I am just going to – I will close
18 here. I don't see any additional questions but if
19 you can kind of get back to me on some of the
20 requests for information that I have made. Because I
21 think we need to kind of really flush out this plan
22 for the short-term and for the long-term to take
23 stock of the needs of our kids and to provide them
24 with meaningful and equitable resources to really
25

1
2 move our school system forward and I thank the panel
3 for their time here today. Thank you.

4 DONALD CONYERS: Thank you Mr. Chair.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. For the
6 record, we have also been joined by Council Member
7 Levin and Council Member Cornegy.

8 We will now turn to public testimony. Once more,
9 I would like to remind everyone that unlike our
10 typical Council hearings, we will be calling
11 individuals one by one to testify. Council Members
12 who have questions for a particular panelist can use
13 the raise hand function in Zoom and you will be
14 called on after each panel has completed their
15 testimony.

16 For panelists, once your name is called, a member
17 of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms
18 will give you the go ahead to begin after setting the
19 timer. All testimony will be limited to two minutes.
20 Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may
21 begin before delivering your testimony. Written
22 testimony can be submitted to
23 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

24 The first panelist will be Tida Dukuray,
25 Wilhemina Amoah from the Brotherhood/Sister Sol, Mam

1
2 Fatau Dukaray from the Brotherhood/Sister Sol and
3 John Paul Infante from the Brotherhood/Sister Sol.

4 First, we will be hearing from Tida and I
5 apologize in advance if I mispronounce people's
6 names.

7 TIDA DUKURAY: Oh, hi, it's Tida. Okay.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 TIDA DUKURAY: My name is Tida Dukuray and I am a
10 youth organizer of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol and a
11 senior at Democracy Prep Harlem High School.
12 Students like me are stressed and exhausted over the
13 college application process, school projects,
14 homework and other extracurricular activities.
15 Teachers are giving us more work and shorter
16 deadlines to complete assignments since COVID
17 started.

18 I am currently taking three AP classes, Biology,
19 English and Calculus and a college Sociology prep
20 course. These classes require a lot of reading, note
21 taking and studying. Good grades require time and
22 additional help from teachers but now technology gets
23 in the way and my teachers are harder to find.

24 When a website crashes I cannot complete
25 assignments; when teachers change the format of a

1
2 website, I cannot see past assignments to use that to
3 study for future tests; when I am having technology
4 or internet issues, I am barely able to participate
5 and learn.

6 Considering COVID, some solutions that can be
7 implemented to lessen the pressures on students
8 include: Ensuring that students who need assistance
9 get it in a way that they need; assigning less
10 homework because we are already teaching ourselves
11 and now we're working twice as much with less time
12 given household responsibilities; requiring teachers
13 to have longer office hours with space for more
14 students; adjust the graduation requirements for
15 seniors like me which includes removing Regents
16 requirements because we could not take them. We are
17 all struggling to survive and the pandemic has made
18 it more difficult. There needs to be realistic and
19 healthy expectations of students so that the cost we
20 pay for graduating after spending our entire time
21 year learning remotely wouldn't affect us. Thank
22 you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
24 hearing from Wilhemina.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 WILHEMINA AMOAH: My name is Wilhemina Amoah and
3 I am a youth organizer of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol.
4 To address issues worsened by COVID-19, we have to
5 find money to create meaningful shifts in our
6 education system and, instead, create pathways to
7 student success. This will require police free
8 schools. Failure to divest from school police and
9 invest in student success will mean that our city
10 continues to fail us youth.

11 Today, New York City is far from where it needs
12 be to ensure student success as our schools face
13 troubling realities. School segregation leads to
14 chronic underfunding of schools in New York state
15 which has negative and disparate impacts for Black,
16 Latinx and low-income students given subsequent
17 resource disparity. Only 77.3 percent of the 1.1
18 million children in the DOE system will graduate on
19 time and only 55 percent of NYC high school student
20 graduates will graduate college-ready. One in ten
21 NYC public school students is houseless.

22 Additionally, in a nation in which 14 million
23 students are in schools with police but no counselor,
24 nurse, psychologist or social worker. New York City
25 has more school safety agents than any other school

1 district in the U.S. The presence of police in our
2 schools has disproportionately impacted students who
3 are low-income, Black and Latinx, who are more likely
4 to be the subject of exclusionary discipline and
5 police response at school than their white peers.
6

7 Everyone in the City Council, however, has the
8 power to shift this. Beginning with meaningfully
9 shifting funds from the police, reforming their
10 responsibilities and reinvesting in our communities.
11 We must deconstruct the school-to-prison pipeline and
12 end Broken Windows policing. Truly decriminalize
13 low-level offenses that lead to our youth having
14 negative contact with the state and carceral systems.
15 And we must do this now.

16 Our vision for education in New York City
17 includes safe, restorative, healing environments
18 where all students have the opportunity to learn and
19 grow. To meet this goal, we must pursue policies
20 that value –

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 WILHEMINA AMOAH: And respect the dignity of
23 students, caregivers and their communities. This
24 requires providing schools equitable resources,
25 adopting a culturally responsive curriculum,

1
2 preventing trauma, repairing harm and promoting
3 restorative practices. Thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
5 hearing from Mam Fatau.

6 MAM FATAU: Uhm, my name is Mam Fatau and I am
7 sharing on behalf of youth at the Brotherhood/Sister
8 Sol. There is little understanding of just how
9 stressful virtual learning in a pandemic. It is
10 because no one has experienced this before, no one
11 but us. I am here to say that students' mental
12 health is being negatively impacted like never before
13 and failure to resolve this puts us in further
14 damage.

15 City Council members must advocate on behalf of
16 students and increase the budget for student
17 supports. As a senior, I have been ashamed by
18 teachers when I ask for additional support. I have
19 less access to individualized learning support than I
20 really need. As my grades suffer, my parents become
21 more disappointed and I feel as though my college
22 acceptances are in danger.

23 I am further disserved when I am unable to
24 access private tutors and days previously scheduled
25 to make up work are canceled preventing me from

1
2 improving my grades. Moreover, students like me who
3 previously had extra time for exams are not being
4 granted this and it is leading many of us to randomly
5 filling out answers to finish by the allotted time,
6 especially when multiple tests are given in one day.

7 We are not robots and our schools neglect
8 neurodivergent students and students with different
9 types of learning and with disabilities.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 MAM FATAU: To better our schools, we need great
12 teachers and smaller classrooms. We also need to
13 stop student testing, fund tutors and mental health
14 support and to hire more counselors, therapists and
15 student support staff to help all students,
16 especially those who are falling behind and
17 struggling both mental and emotional. Thank you for
18 listening; please do more than just hear me. Thank
19 you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
21 hearing from John Paul.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 JOHN PAUL INFANTE: Hi, my name is John Paul
24 Infante and I am a Liberation Program Facilitator and
25 organizer of The Brotherhood/Sister Sol. As a former

1
2 New York City public school student and high school
3 teacher, I've experienced the inequities of the
4 public education system long before COVID-19. The
5 burden Black and Brown students, their families,
6 teachers and school administrators have been forced
7 to endure because of poor responses by
8 superintendents and school districts is par for the
9 course.

10 The reality of Black and Brown students and
11 teachers of color face in the classroom is rarely, if
12 ever, considered when decisions are made. The
13 process of entering school should not resemble the
14 process of entering a prison. Policing Black and
15 Brown children is criminal. Before COVID-19, Black
16 and Brown public school students were policed,
17 stopped and frisked by school safety officers if the
18 coins in their pocket sets off the metal detectors on
19 their way to first period.

20 Before COVID, while many Black and Brown public
21 school students were being suspended and expelled,
22 their White counterparts in specialized and private
23 schools were treated with the gentleness youth
24 deserves.

1
2 Now, creating a safe, restorative and healing
3 environment for all New York City public students,
4 means police-free schools that prioritizes healing
5 led by educators centering trauma informed approaches
6 and culturally responsive education armed with an
7 equitable distribution of technological resources to
8 all students and translation for all families. More
9 student support staff will make it so that educators
10 of color can teach while professionals address their
11 students' traumas and recognize unsafe home
12 environments.

13 Every child is entitled to a free and appropriate
14 public education that centers their experience and it
15 is the responsibility of the world's wealthiest city
16 that they have access to computers, Wi-Fi and any
17 other resources.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 JOHN PAUL INFANTE: Including food in order to
20 ensure this. Anything less is a crime. Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Thank you to all
22 of the panelists. Council Members, remember if you
23 have any questions, please use the Zoom raise hand
24 function to ask questions for this panel. I will
25

1
2 turn it to Council Member Treyger if he has any
3 questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I just want to thank our
5 amazing students, educators, once a teacher always a
6 teacher. I appreciate we do have more work to do.
7 It is not just about listening, it's about acting.
8 But this is about shaping decisions because these
9 hearings as we have shown before do absolutely shape
10 action and we have a lot more work to do and we
11 appreciate you very much. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Seeing that no
13 Council Members have their hand raised, I will now
14 turn it to our next panel, which will be Mary Vaccaro
15 From UFT.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 MARY VACCARO: Good afternoon. Hi, I am Mary
18 Vaccaro, I serve as the Vice President of Education
19 of the United Federation of Teachers and the
20 Executive Director of the UFT Teacher Center.

21 On behalf of the union's more than 200,000
22 members, I would like to thank Chairperson Treyger
23 and all the members of City Council Committee on
24 Education for holding this important hearing. The
25 UFT has been working since last March to improve

1 remote instruction for both educators and students.

2 Our tech support helped literally thousands of
3 teachers set up their Google classrooms last March
4 and holding Zoom workshops this fall on how to best
5 use remote teaching tools to improve instruction.
6

7 The UFT and its professional development
8 operation, our teacher center, has been helping
9 educators and students and their families navigate
10 remote teaching and learning. The reality is that
11 too often we have been doing this work solo without a
12 viable partner in the New York City Department of
13 Education. Although the DOE prepared lengthy
14 guidance and documents with descriptions of different
15 models and digital learning tools, few teachers I
16 speak with have even seen the documents. Raising
17 serious questions about the DOE's efforts at
18 communication dissemination.

19 The few who have reported a disconnect between
20 what the DOE provides and their curriculum used in
21 schools. Over the summer, the DOE asked for a new
22 position of virtual content specialists who could
23 create grade and subject specific virtual education.
24 We agreed to this position. This position was a
25 vital necessity.

1
2 Only now is the DOE interviewing accomplished
3 educators to fill this post which has been in
4 discussion for five months. So, the UFT through its
5 teacher center attempts to fill the gap. New York
6 City educators are thirsty for help. Our workshop
7 about English Language acquisition, which is
8 something that has been talked about today, filled up
9 with 1,000 educators within one day of the
10 registration being open.

11 Since school started this September, the teacher
12 center has provided -

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 MARY VACCARO: 300 hours of professional
15 development to over 8,000 teachers, para's and
16 support staff. The UFT recognizes that parents are
17 under great stress and we have also provided Saturday
18 workshops for our students. We will continue to
19 provide our educators, students and families what
20 they need and we know that the Council will be a
21 vital partner in this work and I thank you for your
22 time.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. This is another
24 reminder for Council Members, if you have questions

25

1
2 for this panel, please use the Zoom raise hand
3 function.

4 Seeing no hands raised, I will now call on the
5 next panel. The next panel will be Kaveri Sengupta
6 from the Coalition for Asian American Children and
7 Families and Holly Smeltzer from the Coalition for
8 Hispanic Family Services. First, we will be hearing
9 from Kaveri, Kaveri you may begin after the Sergeant.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 KAVERI SENGUPTA: Good afternoon. My name is
12 Kaveri Sengupta and I am the Education Policy
13 Coordinator at the Coalition for Asian American
14 Children and Families or CACF. The nation's only Pan
15 Asian children and families advocacy organization
16 leading the fight to improve inequitable policy
17 systems, funding and services. Thank you to Chair
18 Treyger and members of the Committee on Education for
19 giving us this opportunity to testify.

20 Excellent remote education is absolutely
21 imperative for the API community, since so many of
22 our students are fully remote. API students comprise
23 only 11.5 percent of all students in grades 3K-5 in
24 District 75 who opted for in-person learning in
25 December when they make up 18 percent of all students

1
2 enrolled in those grades. Moreover, nearly 60
3 percent of all Asian American students opted for
4 fully remote learning in October, the highest share
5 of all ethnic groups.

6 Students in our own student leadership program,
7 the Asian American Advocacy Project have reported
8 feeling deeply unmotivated but note that their grades
9 may not reflect the sentiment. They bring up an
10 important point. Traditional grades do not
11 necessarily reflect the academic health of a student
12 in terms of their interest, engagement or critical
13 thinking.

14 These stories expose a pressing concern, school
15 may not be truly cultivating students level of
16 learning at this time, which could very much impact
17 their lives after they leave the school system.

18 To truly understand our students' academic needs,
19 we need DOE to collect and make transparent accurate
20 data and disaggregation of data on the academic
21 outcomes of students by ancestry group, gender, home
22 language, L-status, ability and socioeconomic status.

23 We need them to provide the ability to cross
24 reference between categories and to analyze
25 disparities in these data. One thing all APA

1
2 together as though the community is a monolith is a
3 deeply flawed practice that perpetuates the harmful
4 minority myth. Because it ignores the disparate
5 impact that COVID-19 has very likely had on our
6 community. APA students including but not limited to
7 those from underrepresented ethnic and language
8 backgrounds and those with families facing linguistic
9 isolation due to requiring services in low incidence
10 languages may be experiencing pronounced academic
11 difficulties -

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 KAVERI SENGUPTA: Due to the pandemic but are
14 rendered invisible systemwide within aggregated data,
15 which is entirely unfair to them in their learning.
16 DOE must also provide tools and strategies for
17 instruction of L's, multilingual learners and
18 students with disabilities who generally find that
19 remote learning does not suite their needs and ensure
20 that educators implement them, even if these
21 professional development opportunities are being
22 offered, unfortunately our families are not seeing
23 them being utilized in the classroom.

24

25

1
2 As we continue to live in a COVID world, we must
3 be sure to center all of our decisions on our most
4 marginalized students. Thank you so much.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
6 hearing from Holly.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 HOLLY SMELTZER: A mentor once reminded me that
9 any one person can be a change maker in any other
10 person's life. The more positive role models a young
11 person has in their corner, the greater the
12 opportunity for the young person to meet a change
13 maker. Fair Futures coaches and tutors have been
14 these change makers for over 1,000 young people in
15 foster care in New York City throughout the COVID-19
16 pandemic.

17 Good afternoon, my name is Holly Smeltzer, I am a
18 New York City foster parent. I am also the Fair
19 Futures Program Director at the Coalition for
20 Hispanic Family services.

21 Amidst the crisis, Fair Futures coaches, tutors
22 and support staff continue to help youth stay on
23 track with academic and career goals, secure safe
24 housing, provide emotional support and much more.

1
2 We still do not know the full implications of the
3 COVID-19 pandemic on our youth as it relates to
4 education. However, we do know that children across
5 the city are struggling with the challenges of
6 learning remotely. They do not have access to the
7 technology Wi-Fi and other tools essential for
8 learning and they are struggling with stress,
9 isolation, anxiety and depression that this pandemic
10 has created for so many of us.

11 We also know that students with disabilities,
12 students who are recent immigrants and English,
13 Language Learners and students who are over age for
14 their grade level represent those at risk for falling
15 further behind because of the crisis. Now, consider
16 a young person dealing with all of these challenges
17 who represents one or more of these populations and
18 is also in foster care. For a young person like
19 this, young people like ours, Fair Futures is the
20 connection, support and lifeline they need now more
21 than ever.

22 As a member of the Fair Futures community and as
23 a foster parent, I have witnessed firsthand the
24 impact of the pandemic on our children. Fair Futures
25 has stood with New York City Foster Youth through

1
2 COVID-19 so these young people have the support they
3 need to not only survive the crisis but thrive. We
4 must invest in our children now to ensure they have a
5 fair shot at success later.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 HOLLY SMELTZER: Fair Futures coaches, tutors and
8 support staff continue to be change makers in the
9 lives of our young people, so they themselves can
10 become change makers for the next generation. Thank
11 you so much to the Chair and the Council for this
12 opportunity.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Seeing that no
14 Council Members have their hand raised, I will now
15 call on the next – Council Member Levin has his hand
16 raised. Calling on Council Member Levin for
17 questions for this panel.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I just wanted to thank
19 Holly for the work that she does with Fair Futures,
20 which is a big priority for me in this upcoming
21 budget as the Chair of General Welfare and the great
22 work that the entire coalition has done. So, I
23 promise you and all of the entire Fair Futures
24 Coalition that we will do whatever we can to make
25 sure that funding is not only protected but also

1
2 hopefully baselined, so that it is protected in
3 future years and future Council. So, thank you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member
5 Levin. Now calling on the next panel, which includes
6 Randi Levine from Advocates for Children, Maggie
7 Moroff from the Arise Coalition, Lori Podvesker from
8 Include NYC and Leonie Haimson from Class Size
9 Matters. First, we will be hearing from Randi.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 RANDI LEVINE: Thank you for the opportunity to
12 speak with you. My name is Randi Levine and I am
13 Policy Director of Advocates for Children of New
14 York. Since last May, we have appeared before the
15 Council describing the eminence barriers our clients
16 have faced to learning during the pandemic, despite
17 the hard work of many educators and DOE staff
18 members.

19 The road to recovery will be long but with
20 vaccines rolling out \$4.3 billion coming to New York
21 State Schools through the federal COVID-19 relief
22 package passed in December and a COVID-19 relief
23 proposal from President Biden with more than double
24 that amount of funding for schools, the city must
25

1
2 bolster its efforts to plan for an ambitious COVID-19
3 educational recovery effort.

4 In our limited time today, we would like to
5 outline a few essential principles. The recovery
6 effort must include targeted evidence based
7 instructional and social emotional approaches to
8 address the learning loss and trauma students have
9 experienced. The plan must have a focus on equity
10 and be responsive to the disparate impact of the
11 pandemic on communities of color and groups of
12 students who struggled with remote learning.

13 New supports or supplemental programming must be
14 accessible to students who have struggled with remote
15 learning including those who have parents with low
16 digital literacy or speak a language other than
17 English.

18 While remote programming may be part of the menu
19 of options, the city must not rely on parents to
20 service tutors for their children using a digital
21 internet based program after school hours. The
22 recovery efforts should include a summer school
23 component that is open to student of all grades and
24 has specialized supports for students with
25 disabilities in L's. Such summer programs should

1
2 include targeted supports such as matching students
3 who are struggling with reading, with educators who
4 are trained in evidence based literacy interventions
5 building on work the city did last summer. The
6 recovery effort must include a system for students
7 with disabilities to get the compensatory instruction
8 and services they have the legal right to receive
9 without requiring individual families to file
10 impartial hearings. And it must include specialized
11 support for L's.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 RANDI LEVINE: For ELL's who went without the
14 bilingual or English as a new language instruction
15 they have the right to receive. The recovery should
16 emphasize evidence based literacy instruction and
17 intervention and must also have a major emphasis on
18 and investment in mental health support and trauma
19 informed care with the city reimagining school
20 safety, allocating NYPD funding to support students
21 and ensuring students have access to staff who can
22 help support their social, emotional and behavioral
23 needs in police free schools. And the recovery
24 effort must address the needs of both our youngest
25 and oldest learners. It must ensure that students

1
2 who have not been able to earn course credit get the
3 support and time they need to make up the work,
4 including students who would normally be forced to
5 age out of school before they have turned, because
6 they have turned 21 years old.

7 Just to say quickly, we are counting on the
8 Council to play a leadership role in shaping this
9 education recovery package as the city budget process
10 moves forward and to advocate for the city to get the
11 federal and state resources needed, including
12 ensuring the state does not offset any federal COVID-
13 19 relief education funding with cuts in state
14 education funding.

15 We look forward to speaking with you more about
16 each of these points and others and working with you
17 to help ensure that the learning loss students have
18 experienced does not have ripple effects for
19 generations to come. Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
21 hearing from Maggie.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 MAGGIE MOROFF: Good afternoon. I am Maggie
24 Moroff and I coordinate the ARISE Coalition, which is
25 a group of several hundred parents, advocates,

1
2 academics, educators, all advocating together for
3 systemic changes to the day to day experiences and
4 long term outcomes for students with disabilities
5 here in New York City's public schools.

6 I am also the Special Education, Senior Special
7 Education Policy Coordinator at Advocates for
8 Children where I work alongside Randi. Today, I am
9 speaking on behalf of ARISE.

10 This past year, the many obstacles to instruction
11 and achievement typically faced by our students have
12 been magnified to unfathomable degrees that is
13 despite all of the work of school based and central
14 DOE staff. We want to use our limited time here
15 today to call your attention to four areas of
16 particular importance to our students as we move
17 forward.

18 So first, the need to considerably expand the
19 literacy supports offered to students and to provide
20 systemic evidence based core instruction and
21 appropriate interventions to ensure that students
22 learn to read, especially in light of the tremendous
23 learning loss that is taking place as a result of the
24 pandemic.

1
2 Second, the import of developing true partnership
3 with families seeking ongoing input in development
4 and inevitable to the inevitable modifications to
5 individual students special ed plans that the DOE is
6 currently using. NONO is a program and related
7 services adaptations documents.

8 Third, the need to provide parents with real time
9 information about the supports and services their
10 children are receiving pursuant to their IEP's.
11 Parents need to know whether or not their children
12 are now and continued to be offered the supports they
13 require.

14 And lastly, when it is safe for all children to
15 return to school, the learning losses will be
16 significant for all and magnified for those with the
17 greatest needs, including students with disabilities.

18 ARISE members -

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 MAGGIE MOROFF: And many other voices here in
21 calling for a well thought out, well resourced plan
22 to assess the academic and social emotional damage
23 done during COVID and to develop plans to address
24 those for all students including the over 200,000
25 students with disabilities here in the city. Such a

1
2 plan must include the makeup instruction and services
3 that students with disabilities have the legal right
4 to receive. Thank you very much for the opportunity
5 to speak today.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
7 hearing from Lori.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 LORI PODVESKER: Hi everybody, my name is Lori
10 Podvesker and I lead the Policy work at Include NYC
11 and I am also -

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Lori, there is a - can you
13 hear me Lori?

14 LORI PODVESKER: [INAUDIBLE 2:48:28] 18-year-old
15 boy which is in my program. Uhm, so [INAUDIBLE
16 2:48:40] Can you hear me.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes Lori, we can hear you.
18 Yes Lori, can you say a sentence again please?

19 LORI PODVESKER: Sure, so, I am going to start
20 and I am sorry about that. My name is Lori Podvesker
21 and I lead the Policy work at Include NYC and I am
22 also mom to a very funny 18-year-old boy who attends
23 District 75 Program.

24 Uhm, I am going to read testimony uhm and echo a
25 lot of what Maggie and Randi have specifically said

1
2 but what to emphasize more about the parent
3 perspective. So, when New York City quickly became
4 the epicenter of COVID-19 pandemic, the New York
5 school system was quickly and radically disrupted.
6 While students face significant barriers, we pivot to
7 full-time remote instruction. While some obstacles
8 were outside of the city's control, we were not and
9 sadly are still obstructing - [LOST AUDIO 2:50:03]

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: So, Lori, we - you are still
11 breaking up, so we are going to circle back to you
12 but if you don't mind to log off and log back on.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, if Lori can log back
14 on, I will give her the full time again, so she can
15 restart. I would like to hear her testimony but if
16 she wants to log off and log back on, I will be more
17 than happy to accommodate and if we want to move on
18 to the next person then wait for Lori to do that.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, sure, so Lori, when you
20 rejoin, we will circle back to you but next, we will
21 be hearing from Leonie.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 LEONIE HAIMSON: Hi, can you hear me?

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we hear you perfectly
25 Leonie.

1
2 LEONIE HAIMSON: Great. Uhm, I want to thank
3 you. My name is Leonie Haimson, I am the Executive
4 Director of Class Size Matters. Recent hearings in
5 the New York post, Wall Street Journal and Gothamist
6 have all reported that online class sizes this year
7 have grown to excessive sizes.

8 Unfortunately, the DOE failed to report on class
9 sizes by November 15th as legally mandated. After
10 you Chair Treyger, I want to thank you for your
11 letter sending it to the Chancellor in October
12 pointing out how this reporting is especially
13 important this year. The DOE responded that they
14 would not release any class size data till December
15 31st. December 31st came and went. On January 4th, I
16 heard that they delayed it more until earlier mid-
17 January. It is now January 20th and the date is
18 still not posted. Uhm, in your original letter Chair
19 Treyger, you asked for the data to be disaggregated
20 by online classes versus in-person classes, otherwise
21 the averages are not that meaningful, yet the Deputy
22 Chancellor said they would not report on
23 disaggregated class sizes until sometime in February.

24 It is really difficult to understand why they
25 couldn't do this by the deadline, especially because

1
2 in October, Chancellor Carranza spoke at a press
3 conference with the Mayor in saying they collect
4 attendance data and the class size data, literally
5 every day in three buckets: in-person classes, remote
6 blending learning class and full-time remote classes.

7 One has to suspect that the DOE just doesn't want
8 people to know how large the class sizes are. We do
9 have some data however, it is in my written
10 testimony, which I have sent to you Chair Treyger as
11 well as the staff. From a parent survey done by
12 special support services in October of parents of
13 students with special needs. It is disaggregated.

14 It shows many students in self-contained classes -

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 LEONIE HAIMSON: To 12-15, as large as 30-38 and
17 so on. Obviously, these class sizes are impossible
18 to provide kids with the services they need, the
19 attention that they need. There are even ASD Nest
20 classes for autistic spectrum kids in classes 30 or
21 more.

22 SO, what should be done next year?

23 Unfortunately, the Chancellor has put forward a plan
24 that doubles down on online commercially prepared
25 digital assessments and curriculum which are in

1
2 personal and mechanized. One would think that after
3 the disaster of this year, he would know that
4 students need more contact with actual teachers and
5 human beings rather than less.

6 Instead, with the help of federal and state
7 funds, New York City schools should focus on two ways
8 to make this happen. Class sizes should be reduced
9 to a small level as possible to provide the enhanced
10 support to all students but especially those whose
11 education has suffered the most from the pandemic and
12 there needs to be an expanded tutoring system for our
13 school based on the America Corp model of National
14 Service. I hope that somebody asks the Federal
15 Government, especially Senator Schumer. There is a
16 bill that has been introduced in congress on the
17 senate side to provide millions of dollars to school
18 districts across the country to provide this sort of
19 in-person tutoring. That's what the UK government is
20 doing, that's what we need here in New York City as
21 well and thank you for your time.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Seeing that Lori
23 has rejoined us, we will now turn it back to Lori.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.
25

1
2 LORI PODVESKER: Hi, thank you and I apologize
3 for that. I am on my third laptop since this
4 pandemic started.

5 So, during the spring when New York City quickly
6 became the epicenter of the COVID pandemic, the
7 school system was quickly and erratically disrupted.
8 Schools, teachers and students face significant
9 barriers as we pivoted to full-time remote
10 instruction. While some obstacles were outside of
11 the city's control, many were not and sadly are still
12 obstructing teaching and learning almost a year
13 later.

14 More than 100,000 school professionals did not
15 have the requisite skills nor access to evidence
16 based tools to effectively provide online instruction
17 in special education services. As a result, very
18 little specialized instruction was delivered
19 throughout the city last spring and summer.

20 This created additional learning barriers for
21 students with disabilities in the system that was
22 already failing our students and the same issue still
23 persists today in too many of our schools and
24 classrooms. Student learning cannot occur if
25 appropriate instruction is not delivered or cannot be

1 accessed. It cannot occur if students with
2 disabilities do not receive all or any of their
3 related services and individualized support. It
4 cannot occur if the city and schools don't provide
5 families with consistent, clear and timely
6 information.
7

8 I will say as a parent there have been many days
9 since the fall that I have had to tell my child's bus
10 driver that there is no school. I get texted with a
11 pickup time on mornings in which there is no school,
12 which shows you the disconnect between information.
13 As well as I do want to point out because I think it
14 is important that District 75 schools are parts of
15 District 75 organizations.

16 So, for example, my son attends a District 75
17 school in a collated building on the lower east side
18 of Manhattan. His District 75 organization is one of
19 8 different sites. But as a result, we get
20 communications about every single site within that
21 organization.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 LORI PODVESKER: So, it is typical on one day
24 like last night to get six different emails about
25 school closings for the organization and now, I am a

1
2 parent who does this full-time for a living and it
3 took me days to figure this out. And I just want to
4 put that on people's radar because it is not okay.
5 It could be a trigger for many families.

6 So, I don't want to take up more time than I have
7 already done but I do want to say that part of our
8 recommendations uhm, do include what Maggie and Randi
9 said with timelines. So, we believe that the city
10 should develop a citywide plan to address
11 compensatory services by the end of the school year,
12 June 30th. We believe that the city should
13 disseminate guidance documents for schools on the
14 implementation of the compensatory plan by the end of
15 the summer before school starts and we believe that
16 every students should be reevaluated who has an IEP
17 by the end of this calendar year in addition to their
18 annual review of IEP.

19 We also believe there is a strong need for data
20 that we have heard Council Member Treyger say many
21 times and thank you Council Member Treyger for all
22 that you do for students with disabilities and we
23 also believe that there needs to be more funding and
24 more school psychologists in District 75 programs and
25 that every District 75 organization should have their

1
2 own school psychologist because if we are going to
3 see an increase in students evaluated, the
4 psychologist working in District 75 programs should
5 have some kind of expertise on working with students
6 with developmental disabilities and emotional
7 challenges. It is incredible to me that my son First
8 Triannual has a – that there is a school psychologist
9 from a local community school who is coordinating
10 that.

11 Uhm and like my colleagues have said, we believe
12 that we do need to create an accountability mechanism
13 to measure social emotional instruction and learning
14 in schools. Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. This concludes
16 this panel. Seeing that no Council Members have
17 their hand raised, I will now call on the next panel.
18 The next panel will be Sandra Escamilla from the
19 Children's Aid, Abe Fernandez from the Childrens Aid
20 and then Daryl Hornick-Becker from the Citizens'
21 Committee for Children. First, we will be hearing
22 from Sandra.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 SANDRA ESCAMILLA: Good afternoon everybody, my
25 name is Sandra Escamilla, I am the Executive Vice

1
2 President at the Children's Aid. Thank you to the
3 Chair Mark Treyger and the Education Committee for
4 the opportunity to testify today.

5 For nearly 167 years, Children's Aid has been
6 committed to ensuring that there are no boundaries to
7 the aspirations of young people and no limits to
8 their potential. Our over 200,000 full-time and
9 part-time staff empowered nearly 50,000 children
10 youth and their families in New York City.

11 For over 25 years, Children's Aid has operated
12 community schools with DOE and currently partners
13 with 19 schools. During the pandemic, Children's Aid
14 and other CBO's who are also school partners in the
15 city's community schools initiative have been
16 providing crucial support to students during this
17 crisis. We have provided wellness checks, behavioral
18 health and social emotional support sessions. We
19 delivered food and PPE supported with remote learning
20 and device access. The list goes on and includes the
21 necessary one to one connections and programs that
22 Chair Treyger referenced earlier, that are
23 transformational.

24 We truly believe that community school strategy
25 removes the barriers to learning and success and

1
2 helps to build necessary bridges and we believe that
3 this strategy is needed now more than ever. One of
4 the premises of strategy is that it takes a village
5 to raise a child and CBO's are part of that village
6 and as such, you can't forge a path forward without
7 leveraging the services and supports and resources
8 that we all offer.

9 And yet the Mayor's Administration cut 9.16
10 million from the Community Schools Initiative this
11 summer. After months of outcry against the cuts, the
12 city issued a partial one year restoration of \$6
13 million but the status of the programs funding for
14 FY21 is unclear. We don't know whether we will be
15 starting the fiscal year with a \$9 million deficit or
16 if the upcoming RFP will be effected.

17 Despite the recent good news that the city aims
18 to expand community schools, we still have no word on
19 restoration of the cuts and are unsure how expansion
20 can happen without restoration.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 SANDRA ESCAMILLA: This is unsettling to CBO's,
23 our school partners and to the children, youth and
24 families we serve. We can't move forward and plan
25 for the necessary work ahead including the equitable

1
2 learning recovery and healing that our students need
3 and deserve and that I pause can only happen in
4 partnership with CBO's. We must be at the table, not
5 only to plan but to imagine what is possible.

6 As a result, we recommend full restoration of
7 these cuts because we believe that the strategy can
8 help ensure that the pandemic does not further derail
9 our young people's future. Students learn better
10 when their physical and social emotional needs are
11 met.

12 And they are dealing with many hardships this
13 year from the pandemic and the social and racial
14 inequities that they have experienced and witnessed.
15 It will only get harder to focus on learning.
16 Community schools largely serve the young people and
17 communities hardest hit by COVID that are
18 overwhelmingly low income and Black and Brown.

19 To cut extra services and staff that support
20 these communities right now is unconscionable.
21 Community schools must be fully funded and invested
22 for an equitable path to academic achievement and
23 student success. Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I just want to note very
3 quickly, I hear you. I am not giving up on community
4 schools.

5 SANDRA ESCAMILLA: Amen.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I am fighting for the full
7 restoration of them and we need to make our case to
8 our federal partners and state partners and to the
9 Mayor, all levels. Every school must be a community
10 school but we need to restore those cuts immediately.

11 SANDRA ESCAMILLA: That's right, thank you so
12 much.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And I am not giving up on
14 that. Thank you.

15 SANDRA ESCAMILLA: Thank you so much, I
16 appreciate that.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
18 hearing from Abe Fernandez, Abe.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 ABE FERNANDEZ: Good afternoon, my name is Abe
21 Fernandez, I am Vice President of Collective Impact
22 at Children's Aid and Director of the National Center
23 for Community Schools. I would like to add my thanks
24 to Chair Treyger and members of the Education
25 Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony

1
2 today and also a special thanks to the Chair for his
3 support of community schools.

4 In April 2020, after learning of the total
5 elimination of all summer camps and summer jobs
6 programs announced by Mayor de Blasio, Children's Aid
7 launched an effort that would later be called,
8 Recovery Lab. An initiative to mitigate the
9 devastating effects we feared the Mayor's decision
10 would have on New York City's most vulnerable young
11 people in summer and fall 2020.

12 Our grave concern was the degree of set backs too
13 many students would face in the fall restart after
14 six months or more of being remote and without
15 opportunities for engaged learning and healthy social
16 emotional development. 26 community based
17 organizations from across the city served on planning
18 groups we convened in June and July 2020, just right
19 before summer started and as it started and we raised
20 just over \$6 million from private sources that were
21 disbursed via the Robinhood Relieve fund to 29
22 organizations. We are now studying the lessons
23 learned from these organizations recovery lab
24 programs and will release a full report of our
25 findings and recommendations in March 2021.

1
2 In the interim, I would like to share three of
3 the major themes that are emerging. First,
4 technology was both a barrier and a bridge. Too many
5 participants struggled with access to devices and or
6 reliable broadband making it near impossible for them
7 to fully engage. At the same time, some CBO's
8 reported having greater engagement in contact with
9 students and families remotely as compared to in-
10 person programming the year before.

11 Number two, flexibility leads to innovation.
12 While recovery lab clearly articulated and emphasized
13 outcomes we were hoping to see -

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 ABE FERNANDEZ: Grantees were provided
16 flexibility on how to design their programs. This
17 feed them up to be more creative and responsive to
18 the needs of their young people.

19 And finally, when the city stepped back, CBO's
20 stepped up. CBO's provided services to some
21 constituents that the city was not able to provide.
22 Often going above and beyond their organizational
23 capacity.

24 In closing, I want to urge that the lessons we
25 are learning via recovery lab are being integrated

1
2 into the city's approach going forward. The
3 opportunity to recover, that is to accelerate
4 learning for children and youth is here now. Our
5 strong recommendation is that summer planning and
6 decisions about investing in nonprofits for summer
7 programming happen immediately. Not when the school
8 year is nearly over.

9 Many thanks for the opportunity to submit
10 testimony for the record. I am happy to answer any
11 questions you might have.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
13 hearing from Daryl.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 DARYL HORNICK-BECKER: Good afternoon. My name
16 is Daryl Hornick-Becker and I am Policy and Advocacy
17 Associate at Citizens' Committee for Children of New
18 York. I would like to thank Chair Treyger and all
19 the members of the Education Committee for holding
20 today's hearing. For a full set of recommendations,
21 I refer you to our written testimony. Today, I will
22 highlight just a few areas where action is needed.

23 First, the city must work towards more equitable
24 live instruction. A significant disparity in live
25 instruction has emerged in New York City this school

1
2 year. According to data from the Census Borough,
3 between September and November of last year, Black
4 households in New York were almost three times as
5 likely as White households to report zero days of
6 live contact with a teacher in the past week.

7 Hispanic households were almost twice as likely.
8 The discrepancy of live contact is a result of many
9 factors that all begins with remote access. Learning
10 devices, hardware like key boards and headphones and
11 most importantly access to Wi-Fi continue to warrant
12 ongoing prioritization by the Administration and the
13 Department of Education. But the remainder of the
14 school year, no matter how many schools are offering
15 in person learning.

16 Second, vulnerable student populations continue
17 to need targeted supports and interventions. Efforts
18 for English Language learners should include grants
19 for CBO's who work in immigrant communities. In-
20 person or a virtual systemwide offerings to help
21 ELL's catch up. And a robust communication plan that
22 prioritizes the way immigrant families receive
23 information.

24 CCC also urges the Administration to take several
25 actions to support students in temporary housing,

1
2 including expediting Wi-Fi installation at shelters,
3 immediately fulfilling any outstanding device
4 requests, providing reliable and consistent
5 technological support and filling the more than 20
6 vacant positions dedicated to students who are
7 homeless within the department.

8 Lastly, the city must restore funding and prevent
9 any future cuts to extracurricular programs that help
10 students. Community schools, afterschool and summer
11 programs have always played a pivotal role in
12 combating learning loss and they must be an integral
13 part of the city's plan to enhance student
14 achievement. Already the Mayor has proposed
15 eliminating SONYC summer programming for middle
16 school students -

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 DARYL HORNICK-BECKER: In his preliminary budget.
19 These programs absolutely cannot sustain any cuts in
20 funding in the current year or in the city's 2022
21 budget. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. This concludes
23 this panel. Seeing that no Council Members have
24 their hand raised, I will now turn to our next panel.

1
2 Our next panel will be Robert Robinson from the
3 Student Leadership Network and Sandra Sheppard from
4 WNET-NY Public Media. First, we will be hearing from
5 Robert.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 ROBERT ROBINSON: Good afternoon all. My name is
8 Robert Robinson, I am the Senior Managing Director of
9 the College Bound Initiative at Student Leadership
10 Network formerly known as the Young Woman's
11 Leadership Network.

12 I am a Brooklyn Native and a proud New York City
13 public school alumnus. Shout out to Edward R. Murrow
14 class of 1996. I am fortunate to be in a position
15 where I get to work to increase college enrollment
16 for first generation students from underserved
17 communities like myself. CBI has today nearly 14,000
18 students and 25 New York City public schools
19 impacted. What is our secret sauce? We place a
20 full-time director of college counseling in the
21 schools, much like at a private school. Where
22 students have the opportunity to work one on one and
23 in small groups, large groups, with this person, soup
24 to nuts to help them with the college application,
25 financial aid and enrollment process.

1
2 Since 2001, we have helped more than 18,000
3 students enroll in college and helped these same
4 students garnish \$736 million in financial aid
5 excluding loans.

6 When our partners schools closed in March 2020,
7 our students lost daily structure, stability and the
8 in-person connection for all the programming that we
9 typically will provide for them. Many of the
10 students had to take on jobs and additional roles to
11 support their families. Students talked about
12 depression, anxiety, trauma, burnout, low morale, all
13 the things that our staff members have had to you
14 know, take heed in dealing with our students who are
15 facing these many different things. Connectivity
16 challenges, students not having the devices, but when
17 they got the device, not having the internet
18 connectivity to be able to log on and get the program
19 and services that we are able to offer to them.

20 What we did was we quickly pivoted. We moved our
21 services from in-person to online platforms.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 ROBERT ROBINSON: We have been able to continue
24 to support our students virtually to ensure that our
25 classes are getting what they need for the next steps

1
2 and so that all our students graduating will have
3 post-secondary options. We want to thank the
4 Department of Ed and the New York City Council for
5 supporting us, for supporting Student Leadership
6 Network and in turn, supporting the students in New
7 York City public schools to ensure that one day it is
8 not a secret sauce and that every student in New York
9 City public schools will have a dedicated college
10 counselor to help them get into college. Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
12 hearing from Sandra.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 SANDRA SHEPPARD: Well, good afternoon Chair
15 Treyger and members of the Education Committee. My
16 name is Sandra Sheppard and I am the Director of Kids
17 Media and Education at 13. We are New York's PBS
18 station.

19 In response to COVID-19 school closures last
20 spring, 13 quickly mobilized to produce two broadcast
21 series for children. Let's Learn was developed in
22 collaboration with the New York City DOE to
23 supplement remote learning for children ages 3-8.
24 Each program features teachers engaging viewers in
25

1
2 learning activities focused on literacy, math,
3 science, the arts, music and more.

4 Then in June, we produced Camp TV. It's a fun
5 new broadcast series for kids ages 5-10, which aims
6 to bolster student learning during the summer months.
7 It's hosted by a head counselor and Camp TV features
8 content from some of the city's best educational and
9 cultural organizations.

10 Now, despite the best efforts of New York City's
11 teachers, research tells us the pandemic has set back
12 learning for all students but especially for students
13 of color. While Let's Learn and Camp TV were
14 launched at the height of the pandemic, to mitigate
15 learning losses from school closures, the two series
16 have become powerful tools to provide equitable
17 access to unique educational enrichment
18 opportunities.

19 To date, Let's Learn and Camp TV have garnered
20 nearly 1 million views. Both on broadcast and
21 online.

22 And in closing, I want to share a brief story
23 from a January 3rd New York Times article. Valentin
24 Davar[SP] is a five year old boy from Queens whose
25 sporadic access to remote learning has been through a

1
2 single iPhone he shares with his sister. Now,
3 Valentin needs speech therapy and he has struggled
4 with remote -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 SANDRA SHEPPARD: A teacher told Valentin about
7 Let's Learn and Valentin began watching every day.
8 He is engaged and his sister reports he has been
9 reading books by himself and is writing new words.

10 We are making plans now to continue broadcasting
11 Let's Learn and Camp TV during Fiscal Year 2022, so
12 we can help make a difference for all children like
13 Valentin out there.

14 Thank you very much for the opportunity to
15 testify.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Seeing that no
17 Council Members have their hand raised, we will now
18 turn it to our next panel which will be Sherrie
19 Jackson from the Opportunity Charter Schools,
20 Jefferson Pestronk from New Visions and Ambreen
21 Qureshi from Educational Video Center. First, we
22 will be hearing from Sherrie.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 SHERRIE JACKSON: Thank you Chair Treyger and the
25 members of the Committee on Education for this

1
2 opportunity to testify. My name is Sherrie Jackson
3 and I am one of seven Social Workers at the
4 Opportunity Charter School in Harlem where I worked
5 for the past 12 years.

6 OCS is an independent Charter school focused on
7 serving high needs students with disabilities in 6-
8 12th grade. 63 percent of our students have
9 disabilities. Providing each grade with a social
10 workers was unheard of to me and spoke to my belief
11 that addressing the social emotional needs of the
12 student is as much as important if not more at times
13 than educating them academically.

14 Most OCS students have high emotional behavior
15 and social difficulties and through their hard work
16 at OCS, almost every student is able to graduate.
17 Our 2020 graduation rate for all students was 94
18 percent compared to 79 percent citywide. Providing
19 high levels of social and emotional supports to our
20 students has been a crucial element of the success of
21 OCS since its founding in 2004.

22 Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of
23 these emotional needs have been intensified making
24 the work that we do even more important. OCS social
25 workers trained behavioral specialists, teachers,

1
2 guidance teams, school psychologists and secretary
3 staff all serve as mentors to support students and
4 families to maintain connectedness.

5 Our social workers often make themselves
6 available to speak with families late into the
7 evening and on the weekends providing emotional and
8 even academic support. While providing support,
9 individually and in groups, we are seeing increased
10 levels of anxiety, depression, insomnia, stress
11 related somatic illnesses, feelings of isolation and
12 now Zoom dysmorphia.

13 A stressful mental preoccupation with how one
14 looks on Zoom and the belief that one is ugly or
15 looks wrong. Thus making it more difficult for
16 students to engage in live lessons. We are learning
17 that while COVID-19 did not create most of these
18 problems, we know that it has exacerbated them and we
19 must prepare for the long-term effects on the mental
20 health of our students and –

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 SHERRIE JACKSON: With that said, increased
23 resources and financial support just to strengthen
24 social and emotional support services in all schools

1
2 is crucial for the continued success of all of our
3 students in the city and members of our community.

4 Thank you for your time.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

6 SHERRIE JACKSON: You are welcome.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Next, we will be hearing from
8 Jefferson.

9 JEFFERSON PESTRONK: Good afternoon. My name is
10 Jefferson Pestronk and behalf of New Visions for
11 Public Schools, I thank Chair Treyger and the
12 Education Committee for the opportunity to testify
13 today.

14 We partnered with the Department of Education and
15 public school stakeholders for more than 30 years and
16 for the past seven years we built tools that help
17 educators use data more effectively to support
18 student success. Improvement Expert Tony Brike[SP?]
19 notes that it is difficult to sustainably improve
20 what we do not measure. This is particularly
21 challenging during this crisis when many traditional
22 measures of student engagement are unavailable. But
23 is more critical than ever to support students. We
24 collaborate directly with schools to address
25 challenges like this. Last spring, we worked with a

1
2 small group of schools to understand how Google
3 Classroom, which many schools were using to
4 distribute and manage remote course work could help
5 illuminate student engagement during remote learning.
6 We identified key data points like how frequently
7 students were turning in assignments but painted a
8 richer picture than just remote attendance.
9 Incorporating these data into the portal by new
10 visions, a tool already available to every high
11 school citywide made it possible for schools to use a
12 single tool to examine patterns of student
13 engagement, identify which students were disengaging.
14 Understand why based in part on multiple other
15 factors, like whether students had access to remote
16 learning devices or low pre-COVID attendance and plan
17 and monitor support for students. We since partnered
18 with nearly 300 schools to integrate this data,
19 directly responding to requests from school leaders.

20 Schools that gained access to this actionable
21 information increased their use of the portal and
22 freed from the need to build their own tools could
23 focus on sustaining relationships with students and
24 supporting their needs.

1
2 We are only beginning to understand the impact of
3 COVID-19 on learning but there will be much work
4 ahead to support every student to regain lost ground.
5 It will be more important than ever to empower
6 educators with actionable data and there is clearly a
7 demand for it. We look forward to continued
8 partnerships with students and families, educators,
9 the DOE and elected officials like the Council on
10 this critical work. Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
12 hearing from Ambreen.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 AMBREEN QURESHI: Good afternoon, my name is
15 Ambreen Qureshi and I am the Executive Director of
16 EVC, the Educational Video Center. Founded in 1984,
17 EVC is a youth media and social justice organization
18 that teaches documentary film making as a means to
19 develop the artistic, critical literacy and career
20 skills of historically marginalized young people from
21 low-income communities.

22 Over the last 35 years, we have supported
23 positive life and career paths for over 27,000 young
24 people in New York City shared our proven media arts
25 methodology with over 15,000 practitioners and

1
2 directly trained over 1,000 teachers in our student
3 centered culturally responsive pedagogy.

4 COVID-19 has negatively impacted historically
5 marginalized youth that we serve in so many ways.
6 Mental health strain increased digital divide
7 exacerbated inequity and funding cuts. Many critical
8 youth programs and funding initiatives including SYEP
9 learn to work. CASA, cultural immigrants, digital
10 inclusion and other initiatives have undergone
11 serious budget cuts which have disproportionately
12 impacted low-income youth of color. Often, our
13 students are the sole breadwinners in their families
14 and they rely on stipends for basic needs like food.

15 The community, trusted relationships and social
16 emotional learning support and structure the EVC
17 provides are extremely critical for our students at
18 this time.

19 We recommend that you hear from our students
20 directly. I have included links to four documentary
21 films that our students have produced in our written
22 testimony. Our students are demanding systems to
23 support a high needs students who are struggling with
24 a variety of systemic issues. Specific
25 recommendations could include continuing food

1
2 assistance programs, public options for taxpayer
3 funded broadband internet for New York City public
4 school students, taxing the richest in New York and
5 companies and corporations here to fully fund our
6 educational system. Systems to support students
7 after they graduated including fully funding CUNY
8 programs. Culturally responsive trauma –

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 AMBREEN QURESHI: Centered pedagogy moving
11 forward across all schools in New York City and
12 opportunities for youth to expand their reach of
13 social justice documentaries. Thank you for this
14 opportunity to testify. We look forward to working
15 with the City Council to ensure that all young New
16 Yorkers particularly historically marginalized youth
17 from low-income communities have access to services
18 and support they need to thrive in their education
19 and beyond.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you and thank you to
21 this panel. Seeing that no Council Members have
22 their hand raised, we will now call on our next
23 panel.

24

25

1
2 The next panel will be Andrea Alejandra Ortiz
3 from the New York Immigration Coalition, Vanessa Luna
4 from IMM Schools, Tydie Abreu from the Hispanic
5 Federation, Jennifer Salgado a Community Organizer at
6 MASA. We will first be hearing from Andrea.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 ANDREA ALEJANDRA ORTIZ: Thank you Chair Treyger
9 for your tireless support and this opportunity to
10 testify. I am Andrea Ortiz, Manager of Education
11 Policy at the New York Immigration Coalition.

12 The current public health crisis has exacerbated
13 the inequities in the city's public school systems.
14 English Language Learners continue to have the
15 highest drop out rate of 23 percent of any subgroup
16 in the city. Meanwhile, less than 4 percent of
17 eligible immigrant adults have access to adult
18 literacy programs which have been critical for
19 parents trying to navigate the COVID crisis and
20 remote learning.

21 Our families are extremely resilient and deeply
22 committed to their education, due to a lack of
23 meaningful access to remote and blended learning and
24 faulty communication, immigrant students have
25 experienced significant gaps in their learning.

1
2 Therefore, we are hear to request that the city and
3 the DOE make significant investment in immigrant
4 families and implement the following recommendations.
5 The city and the DOE must urgently develop and
6 implement a plan to catch up ELL's and students with
7 limited English proficient parents that includes ELL
8 summer school for students in K-12th grade that fully
9 incorporate students and kids through second grade
10 and ELL's with disabilities. It must also offer
11 grants to community-based organizations and schools
12 already well positioned to support ELL's and
13 immigrant families including for after school
14 Saturday program and family engagement.

15 It must implement and fully fund the education
16 collaboratives communication plan and avoid sole
17 reliance on online and email communication and
18 restore in baseline \$12 million for adult literacy
19 funding so that thousands of immigrant adult learners
20 do not lose their seats at English Language programs
21 across the city.

22 Throughout this crisis, schools have admitted to
23 our member organizations that they are not providing
24 the full set of ELL service students are legally
25 entitled to and that they need to meet their full

1 potential sharing the following issues. One, ENL
2 instruction is not yet in place due to COVID. Two,
3 there is a lack of bilingual staff to offer pre-COVID
4 services. Three, bilingual special education
5 services are not available during this time. And
6 four, they are really struggling to communicate with
7 immigrant families.
8

9 Unfortunately, many immigrant families have not
10 been meaningfully engaged or supported to understand

11 -

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 ANDREA ALEJANDRA ORTIZ: And important
14 notifications such as requesting a device, returning
15 to in-person learning and receiving meals and other
16 services. It is important to note that the pandemic
17 has been particularly difficult for immigrant
18 families who speak languages with limited diffusion.
19 Those with low literacy and low digital literacy.
20 Those with children who are ELL's with disabilities
21 or undocumented, low wealth and homeless immigrant
22 families.

23 It is clear that across the board, immigrant
24 students are disproportionately struggling and we
25 know that the New York City education system has

1
2 historically been underfunded and sadly before and
3 during this pandemic, the DOE has faced the decision
4 to steal from Peter to pay Paul but we can't keep
5 making immigrant students the Peter in this story.
6 The upcoming budget is a moral document and we must
7 show that immigrant students are an important part of
8 the New York fabric in our future.

9 Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
11 hearing from Vanessa.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 VANESSA LUNA: Thank you to the Education
14 Committee for the opportunity to testify today. My
15 name is Vanessa Luna and I am the Cofounder and Chief
16 Program Office of IMM Schools. An immigrant lead
17 nonprofit working closely with educators and
18 undocumented students and families in New York City
19 public schools.

20 Over the course of this unprecedented school
21 year, we have witnessed the tremendous work of
22 immigrant students, families, as well as educators
23 and school staff. We have also witnessed the exiting
24 inequities that have been exacerbated by this moment.
25 IMM schools recommends that the New York City Council

1
2 work closely with undocumented students and families
3 and community based organizations to urgently develop
4 a plan of academic support for more trilingual
5 learners. The Centers, the need of those that are
6 undocumented and in mixed status families. We urge
7 to have a clear communication plan that informs
8 immigrant students and their families around
9 opportunities, resources and supports regardless of
10 immigration status.

11 Working closely with ten high school undocumented
12 students and over 500 immigrant families, we have
13 witnessed their commitment to career and educational
14 opportunities beyond high school. But a lack of
15 access to resources and information on their post-
16 secondary options has been the reality in New York
17 City public schools.

18 All of our students were unaware of financial aid
19 opportunities, including the New York State Dream
20 Act, state and private financial assistance and had
21 various questions related to their status. Many
22 referred to the fact that they went to a very large
23 school and cannot receive one on one support.

24 One of our students, born in Dominican Republic
25 and who now calls Harlem home and has a dream of

1
2 becoming and doctor shared being in a Zoom classroom
3 with over 50 students, receiving college guidance and
4 assistance. Without a safe space to speak on
5 sensitive topics, such as immigration status and
6 without one on one support.

7 The college resources she received –

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

9 VANESSA LUNA: Not only for those who are
10 citizens, not for students like her. In addition,
11 inconsistencies around language access have continued
12 to occur during this moment. Many families have
13 cited lack of translative materials and were most
14 spaces that do not account for multiple languages.
15 This all impacts our students' academic achievement
16 and leaves students and families to have to be
17 extremely resilient and figure out their own pathway
18 to success. We cannot allow this to be the reality.
19 While we have been able to provide the support, there
20 are thousands of undocumented students in New York
21 City classrooms who do not have that.

22 As a former undocumented student and former
23 documented New York City teacher, I urge you to
24 center the needs of our immigrant students and
25

1 families as you pursue educational equity in New York
2 City public schools. Thank you for your time.

3
4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
5 hearing from Tydie.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 TYDIE ABREU: Thank you Council Member and
8 Committee Chair Treyger and all the other committee
9 members for taking the time to listen to the
10 testimony drafted by the Hispanic Federation. A
11 nonprofit organization seeking to empower and advance
12 Hispanic communities through programs and legislative
13 advocacy.

14 My name is Tydie Abreu and as the Policy Analyst
15 for the Hispanic Federation, I am here to advocate
16 for Latinx students in New York City who are
17 struggling to face the challenges that COVID-19 has
18 posed since the full shutdown of schools mid-March
19 2020.

20 It has been almost a year since our students had
21 their academic learning interrupted and initial data
22 shows the inequities that have been exacerbated due
23 to the health crisis. It is clear and alarming there
24 are students that are falling behind, most
25 specifically, Latino and Black students.

1
2 The pandemic has changed the landscape of NYC's
3 educational system and highlighted the inequities
4 faced by schools and students. Advocating for
5 equitable funding is critical to providing additional
6 resources to schools that have been most impacted by
7 the pandemic.

8 The Hispanic Federation recommends prioritizing
9 most impacted schools that need additional funding by
10 analyzing whether or not they need or experience the
11 following factors.

12 A significant number of the student body has no
13 or low engagement during remote hybrid learning. The
14 majority of the student body needs and utilizes
15 school meal services. A significant number of the
16 student body needs school laptops and internet
17 devices to participate in remote learning. A
18 significant number of the student body is composed of
19 multilingual learners. Students who are academically
20 at risk, low income and/or students with
21 disabilities.

22 In schools that one, identifies a struggling
23 school or persistently struggling. And two,
24 experience one or more of the above that I just
25 mentioned. Moreover, we believe the following

1
2 services make the greatest impact on students
3 educational outcomes particularly when considering
4 the additional needs to close the achievement gap
5 exacerbated by the novel –

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 TYDIE ABREU: Uhm, the following services include
8 those formality lingual learners, parent engagement,
9 socioemotional supports, academic and transitional
10 supports and summer programming.

11 For the sake of time just to wrap up, we believe
12 a continuous trajectory toward justice and fairness
13 and education is rooted in meeting the immediate and
14 long-term needs of our students and families and I
15 thank you for your time and we emphasize how critical
16 it is to focus on these priorities for the benefit of
17 many students and communities and in turn, the entire
18 city.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
20 hearing from Jennifer.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 JENNIFER SALGADO: Good afternoon Chair and
23 Council Members. My name is Jennifer Salgado and I
24 am a Community Organizer at MASA. A community-based
25 organization that works with Mexican and Latin

1
2 American immigrant children, youth and families in
3 the South Bronx to develop strong learners and
4 leaders who fully contribute to the broader
5 community.

6 The testimony I am sharing today is from one of
7 our parent leaders from MASA [SPEAKING IN SPANISH
8 3:31:25] or MASA parents in action. A parent led
9 community organizing group that focuses on improving
10 the educational outcomes and experiences of children
11 and families in the South Bronx, especially in
12 District 7.

13 My name now for the testimony; my name is
14 Orpheum Yenetti[SP?] I am a mother of four children;
15 a 16-year-old teenager, two 9 and 6-year-old girls
16 and then my youngest boy who is 4. My experience
17 with the quarantine has been very difficult because
18 we had many learning and emotional problems with my
19 children. The oldest was an excellent student before
20 the pandemic. I never had a complaint from the
21 school about him but when this disease came, change
22 came. We all had trouble sleeping and eating and
23 this effected the oldest because there were times
24 that he got up late for class but what also hurt him
25 was that for his classes, he had to submit work using

1
2 video and he does not like to take photos and much
3 less videos. These things ended up affecting him a
4 lot and the school never called us to let us know
5 that something was wrong. It was very stressful
6 because we couldn't help our children as much as we
7 would have liked.

8 When my sons school finally called, they told me
9 that my child was falling behind in three subjects,
10 which used to be easy for him. I remember that when
11 the Advisor said that he was low on three subjects, I
12 could not believe it because my child has always been
13 very diligent with school.

14 I then made a decision to talk to his advisor
15 about the issues that were happening to see how we
16 could help him and how the school could help us but
17 it wasn't much. Meanwhile, we were also having
18 problem with the other -

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 JENNIFER SALGADO: She didn't want to do her
21 homework because she said it was too much work for
22 her and she cried before all of her classes every
23 day. This does not take into account that it took us
24 months to receive a tablet and there was increased
25

1
2 stress at home for the children and for us as
3 parents.

4 As you can imagine, we sometimes had to share
5 technology among the children and there were many
6 times where we had to work from our cellphones. My
7 husband and I were beyond stressed with the
8 situation. I just want to say again that the school
9 did nothing to communicate with me and still, we
10 continue to struggle with a lot of the same issues.

11 At this time, I would like the DOE to help us
12 with more support for mental and emotional health for
13 our children and for parents. In addition, it is
14 very important that the communication streams between
15 families and schools are improved, so that families
16 do not continue to go through what my family has
17 experienced. Thank you for your time.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Uh, one moment. Ms.
20 Salgado, has the school communicated with you now
21 about the needs of your children?

22 JENNIFER SALGADO: So, it is not my case, it is
23 one of our members.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah.
25

1
2 JENNIFER SALGADO: He has been able to now get a
3 tablet but again, it took months for her to even get
4 in contact with the schools. It took sometimes us
5 calling the schools to get a hold of someone and
6 there were many times where no one was able to talk
7 to her. So, many miscommunication issues and this is
8 just one parent and I would just like to highlight
9 that this happened with many other parents throughout
10 the district.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, feel free and my staff.
12 I will give you my email mtreyger@council.nyc.gov. I
13 read my emails as soon as I have a chance to catch up
14 with them but this, when I hear of a school not
15 getting back to a parent, when I hear of a school not
16 following up to meet the needs of kids, that's very
17 personal and that is an issue you can't just put on a
18 shelf. You have to deal with it right away.

19 So, I definitely, I welcome you to send over any
20 types of cases like this to me personally, to my
21 office and I will follow up directly.
22 Mtreyger@council.nyc.gov. Reach out to me anytime
23 please. Thank you.

24

25

1
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Seeing that no
3 other Council Members have their hand raised, I will
4 now turn it to our next panel which will be Christina
5 Reyes from the Inwood Academy for Leadership and
6 Reyes Claudio from Brilla Public Charter Schools.

7 First, we will be hearing from Christina.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 CHRISTINA REYES: Hi, good afternoon everyone.
10 Thank you so much Councilman Treyger and for the rest
11 of the Council for allowing me to speak today. I
12 have never done this before; it is my first time.

13 I wanted to tell you a little bit about myself.
14 I am the CEO of Inwood Academy. We are a Charter
15 School in uptown Manhattan. We serve 960 students.
16 24 percent of our students are ELL's or former ELL's
17 and 80 percent of our students speak a language other
18 than English in the home and 24 percent of our
19 students have IEP's. A number that is larger than
20 the District, which is District 6.

21 First of all I just want to acknowledge everyone
22 on this call just listening to everyone today and the
23 work that they are doing. It has been the most
24 trying 11 months of our lives and I think just
25 hearing all the good work that everyone is doing is

1
2 so encouraging to me as an educator who has been on
3 this work for 20 years and has never faced anything
4 like this. And we all know that we are all in this
5 struggle together, so just thank you for everyone for
6 sharing.

7 When we closed in March, along with all the other
8 schools in the city, we made it a priority to ensure
9 that our families were the priority at all times.

10 Our families and our children and so, the first thing
11 we did was made sure that we had the availability of
12 a food supply and then of course, Chrome books for
13 all of our students so that we could at least meet
14 their basic needs.

15 By the middle of May, all of our students who had
16 wanted a Chrome book had been able to get a Chrome
17 book. We felt that was the priority. At that time
18 Wi-Fi was free. When Wi-Fi was no longer free for
19 our families, we were able to then get them hotspots.

20 We then focused on our academics, which of course
21 like many other schools, we have made changes
22 throughout the last 11 months to try to best support
23 the needs our students. We took into several
24 considerations over –

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

1
2 CHRISTINA REYES: The summer to ensure that we
3 were making the best choices for our families and we
4 decided to stay remote but we did open the Family
5 Support Center which served close to 100 of our
6 families with in-school support by Pod leaders by
7 grade level and that was in order to ensure that the
8 families who needed that childcare support were able
9 to be supported in that way.

10 And so, I just want to say uhm, one thing is that
11 we have not as Charters had access to testing. Yes,
12 we do use the situation room as noted before but we
13 are located in a non-DOE space, we rent space. But
14 from my understanding of my colleagues at the DOE who
15 rent DOE space, who are offered DOE space I should
16 say, are not able to get testing either.

17 And so, that is something that is concerning
18 because we are all trying to do our best with the
19 resources we have. And so, we just wanted to note
20 that. Thank you so much for your time.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Just a quick
22 follow up on that, who did you speak with from DOE
23 when you made requests for testing?
24
25

1
2 CHRISTINA REYES: We have asked the Charter
3 office and at that time, we were told that we did not
4 have access to that. This is true of other things,
5 like professional development and other things as
6 well. Even though we are a DOE authorized school, we
7 have not had access to those kinds of resources as a
8 Charter and so, we have had to pay all of those
9 things. Even if the DOE was offering really good
10 professional development, we do not have access and
11 the same is true of the COVID testing.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: If you would like because I
13 think we heard earlier testimony from the DOE that
14 they were providing access and maybe there is some -
15 we need some further clarification from them but if
16 you want to send me an email,
17 mtreyger@council.nyc.gov, we will get answers as to
18 what's going on here, okay.

19 CHRISTINA REYES: Absolutely, we will. Thank
20 you.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
23 hearing from Reyes.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

25

1
2 REYES CLAUDIO: Good afternoon Chairman and
3 Council Members. I am very honored to be here today.
4 My name is Reyes Claudio and I am the Chief Operating
5 Officer of Brilla Public Charter Schools. We are a
6 network of five free public Charter schools in the
7 Bronx. I am a proud Bronx Native, a community board
8 member. I live in the South Bronx and I am a Brilla
9 parent as well. Very strange to have a Chief
10 Operating Officer testifying today.

11 I wear a lot of hats, I am a jack of all trades
12 and firmly believe in our community, the community
13 that we serve. I echo Ms. Reyes in her concerns. I
14 submitted a written testimony, so I won't read that
15 word for word but in a jest, we were give the
16 opportunity of a lifetime to reopen our schools.
17 Reinvent what schools look like post-pandemic. And
18 then the added emotion of being a public charter
19 school and a private you know, space. And so, what
20 that meant is that we were kind of standalone, left
21 alone even though we are serving the same population,
22 the same students with the same needs.

23 Actually, just this week, we started onsite COVID
24 testing that I had to personally coordinate. We are
25 paying for ourselves in order to remain open because

1 asking for negative results of parents, they don't
2 have the resources and they don't have the time to be
3 able to do that themselves.
4

5 When the pandemic hit, we had three schools in -
6 the midst of a pandemic we opened up two more schools
7 and moved a school. So, we are now also in District
8 10. We were serving 920 students when the pandemic
9 started and now 1,360 students across these two
10 districts and we asked our staff to be frontline
11 workers just like everyone else. A lot of our
12 families, 32 percent of them are of -

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 REYES CLAUDIO: [INAUDIBLE 3:42:27] and more than
15 90 percent of them of economically disadvantaged
16 backgrounds, we also distributed Chrome books 750 of
17 them at the time, over 300 hot spots. We have had
18 over 90 percent attendance rates through the pandemic
19 and have served our families and so, thank you for
20 the opportunity to speak today.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Seeing that no
22 Council Members have their hand raised for this
23 panel, I will now call on the next panel, which will
24 be Edwin Cespedes from the Charter Schools, Valerie
25

1
2 Marquez Edwards from KIPP. We will first start with
3 Edwin.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 EDWIN CESPEDES: Good afternoon everyone. Thank
6 you so much to Chair and Council Members and all the
7 staff for organizing this hearing. My name is Ewin
8 Cespedes; I serve on the Board of Success Academy as
9 a Parent Representative and I have to say this COVID-
10 19, it is being hard on all of us New Yorkers. It
11 has brought the city to a standstill, especially in
12 the education system.

13 For as with families with school aged children,
14 we are effected with the household responsibilities
15 and that is exacerbated by the school closures. But
16 I will say that aimed at this outlook at Charter
17 schools and specifically uhm, Success Academy, there
18 have been this what I will call an oasis in our
19 public education system.

20 I have two kids, one in first grade and second
21 grade and back in March last year, Success was the
22 first one that decided to go remote and that was when
23 the DOE was still debating about keeping their
24 schools open or closed. And since then, Success
25 announced that they were going to have remote

1 learning through at least March of this year. So,
2 will extend the uncertainty of either remote learning
3 or in person. We already know what to expect. And
4 even though we in public Charter schools, we receive
5 less funding than District schools. We were able to
6 equip all 20,000 students with Chrome tablets and
7 Chrome books and all the necessary apps for a full
8 experience.
9

10 And so, and this is something that happened right
11 away. Middle school students, they already have
12 their Chrome books and this is before the pandemic
13 and in elementary schools, within the two week
14 period, we already received all the Chrome book
15 tablets. So, they were able to use Cam-18's to do
16 math exercises daily. We already have the libraries,
17 books, amazon, audio books, all the materials for
18 them to succeed. We also have a full schedule with
19 live instruction five days a week.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 EDWIN CESPEDES: And the same teachers on the
22 same section of students. We have electives like
23 Chairs. We already have school class trips virtually
24 obviously and we also have free optional virtual
25 after school programming.

1
2 I will say also throughout this period, the
3 quality of teachers have been preserved. They have
4 been hard working, working hard to maintain academic
5 integrity and they always focus in on what the kids
6 are doing in class making sure that they are actually
7 following the material and we as parents, we are able
8 to see where the performance is going through with
9 Council updated information with the grades. And
10 from the teachers itself about their behavior and
11 things like that.

12 And the final thing that I will say is that
13 families are reasonably concerned about the children
14 that are falling behind academically but also about
15 the consequences of separation from others.

16 So, these social gains are hard to replicate when
17 you are not in campus but at least when it comes to
18 academic performance, Charter school ensures success
19 and have managed to create an exemplary virtual
20 program that I will say that it could be replicated
21 and other schools can learn from. Thank you so much
22 for your time.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
24 hearing from Valerie.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 VALERIE MARQUEZ EDWARDS: Good afternoon. My
3 name is Valerie Marquez Edwards, I am founding middle
4 school English Teacher and Advocacy Advisor at KIPP
5 Middle School in the Bronx's District 15.

6 Our school educates 247 of New York City's middle
7 schoolers and I teach English to 87 of them. As a
8 teacher and as an advocate, I am committed to
9 ensuring that all children and all teachers in our
10 city, not just those with whom I work in my own
11 community, receive equitable access to a safe
12 learning space.

13 In the context of this global pandemic, a safe
14 learning space means providing all children, their
15 families and their teachers with a physical space to
16 learn in which the spread or lingering threat of
17 COVID-19 exposure and all the tribulation that comes
18 along with that, is eradicated to the best of our
19 science and our ability.

20 Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, I have
21 allotted KIDD New York City my employer for ensuring
22 that all families whom we serve have access to food
23 and technology necessary for remote schooling.

24 Alongside us the city has done very well to
25 ensure that a testing and tracing protocol be

1
2 implemented in its public schools. However, a
3 disparity between access in district schools versus
4 access in public Charter schools to testing still
5 exists.

6 I would like to underscore that Charter school
7 students are indeed public school students and as
8 such, I implore that the City Council please include
9 KIPP New York City and the children and families whom
10 we serve and the teachers and staff whom we employ in
11 the robust testing and tracing protocols and efforts
12 afforded to children and staff in District schools.

13 Over the months of teaching and working remotely,
14 I have become acutely aware that many of my students
15 and some of my colleagues suffer from preexisting
16 conditions that discourage them from feeling safe or
17 returning to school building. Ubiquitously,
18 scientists and law makers alike agree that a more
19 robust testing system –

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 VALERIE MARQUEZ EDWARDS: To ensure safe
22 reopening. Mayor Bill de Blasio has spoken about
23 this before in fact. The growing body of science of
24 evidence that exists around the globe, particularly
25 in Europe or countries like Germany and France who

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2 were able to keep their schools safely open with
3 staff and students and testing protocols, supports
4 the Mayor's insistence on testing within our public
5 schools as a necessary action for ensuring health and
6 safety in our community.

7 I appreciate your time and consideration and in
8 conclusion, I urge the City Council to enact and
9 enforce basic equitable public health practices that
10 protect my students, their families, or communities
11 and me from further devastation. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Seeing that no
13 Council Members have their hand raised, I will now
14 call on the next panel.

15 The next panel will be Gregory Brender from the
16 Day Care Council, Marc Merino from USS and Shawina
17 Garnett-Evans. We will start with Gregory.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Gregory, is your mic on?

20 GREGORY BRENDER: Can you hear me now?

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes.

22 GREGORY BRENDER: Okay, uhm, our 93 members
23 currently operate 216 programs, most of which are
24 working under contracts with DOE.

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2 As early childhood educators, Day Care Council
3 Members engage families at the crucial earliest
4 stages of their childhood development. The first
5 years of a child's life are the only opportunity to
6 provide them with the social emotional development
7 and early skills development that supports them
8 throughout their education and throughout their
9 lives. As such, Day Care's Council Network of
10 community based early childhood educators have long
11 recognized that access to strong and stable early
12 childhood education programs has profound effects on
13 students learning and their academic achievements.

14 However, as you know, the rapid changes required
15 to both the program models and the funding models
16 that have come about with COVID-19 are unprecedented
17 and at the same time, community-based organizations
18 role in providing support to students achievement has
19 increased dramatically. This has included launching
20 of emergency childcare centers alongside the regional
21 enrichment centers. The development of remote
22 programming options, which is a particular challenge
23 in early childhood, not just due to the lack of
24 options but also due to dealing with young children
25

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2 who often wouldn't have the same level of literacy
3 with computers and then, uhm, opening learning
4 bridges most recently with a very short time period.

5 We want to recommend that the city ensures as
6 part of its work to maintain academic achievement to
7 do as much as it can to maintain the stability of the
8 early childhood sector because during COVID, we are
9 facing dramatic instability.

10 The first of this is for contracted programs, we
11 urge the city to maintain full funding based on
12 contract value, not on enrollment because we
13 recognize that enrollment at this point is
14 artificially low due to the very factors of parents
15 having either staying at home or fearing for help as
16 well as issues with the DOE's centralized enrollment
17 system moving slowly. And I see my time is wrapping
18 up, so the -

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 GREGORY BRENDER: Just one other quick point. We
21 also want to guarantee that community-based programs
22 have equity and access to help in safety protocols
23 which includes onsite nurses, professional cleaning,
24 training around health and safety protocols and
25

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2 incentive pay for staff who put their own health at
3 risk by coming in during closures.

4 Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Next, we will be
6 hearing from Marc.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 MARC MERINO: Good afternoon everyone. My name
9 is Marc Merino and I want to thank the Education
10 Committee and Chair Treyger for allowing me to speak.
11 I am the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for
12 University Settlement.

13 We have been around for 134 years. We service
14 over 40,000 youth and seniors. We provide
15 educational support, mental health, early childhood
16 education, youth and community services [LOST AUDIO
17 3:53:16 - 3:53:23] the small lower east side in
18 Brooklyn.

19 So, I just want to speak to what I have heard. I
20 don't like a lot of people as I have been listening,
21 there are some common threats that I just want to
22 speak to that a lot of people have been talking to.

23 So, the challenges we face in our space we do
24 afterschool and provide like summer camp. We do
25 Learning Labs which is kind of like a support system

1
2 for families that need childcare for their young
3 people while they go to work.

4 So, just I would say three things that I have
5 just heard some common threats. One, is definitely,
6 we are in the midst of an educational crisis for our
7 young people. Like, I mean, just from what I am
8 hearing, it is the truth.

9 Uhm, we don't have the necessary access to the
10 technology that our young people need in order to be
11 successful. We are working in diverse underserved
12 disenfranchised communities. That needs to be
13 addressed. I would also say especially for myself
14 and I am speaking as a parent and an educator that I
15 have been doing this for 25 years, is the ability to
16 address the need for our -

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 MARC MERINO: Alright, I will speak now, so my
19 last piece is just, I just want to know what the long
20 term commitment could be towards still maintaining
21 these essential services.

22 Ms. Levine mentioned like summer programming, so
23 how do we close the gap? Like, as an afterschool
24 program, afterschool provider, we are there to
25 support people who are in the classroom day to day.

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We need to maintain that. So, I thank you for your time.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Our next panelist will be Shawina.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SHAWINA GARNETT-EVANS: Hi, my name is Shawina Garnett-Evans and I am Head Start Assistant Teacher as well as a parent of three scholars who attend uncommon schools. Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony with you today.

I want to share how COVID-19 has impacted the education of children and the staff that serve them. At the sight of the pandemic, no one knew what to expect. My Head Start Center closed but fortunately, I was able to work at a Regional Enrichment Center.

This is a center for the children of first responders and essential workers. Even though our students were highly exposed, we are fortunate to have a COVID-19 free fight for six months of operation due to the diligent staff at the Center.

I am currently back at Head Start, which is remote only because our building is not yet cleared to open. Being remote only is hard, especially for

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2 such young children because I think they need hands
3 on teaching.

4 Being a parent on the other hand, proved to be a
5 lot more difficult. I fear for my children every
6 day. Working on the frontlines of my students and
7 also making sure that my children are safe is a
8 delicate balance.

9 My number one concern was safety because of a
10 COVID-19 death at one of our collocated schools,
11 which hits close to home. The loss of life due to
12 this virus is concerning because staff and students
13 share the same entrances, staircases, bathrooms,
14 ventilation and sometimes floors. This is why I
15 along with many other parents are confused as to why
16 Charter schools were not included in testing and
17 tracing to protect all that share the same space.

18 The layer of safety and protection that testing
19 and tracing offers should not exclude people that
20 share so many common spaces. We have to show grace
21 for one another because this virus has shown us no
22 mercy.

23 [INAUDIBLE 3:57:06] what they can to persevere
24 and continue to educate their student throughout this
25 pandemic And I as a parent, I will do all that I can

1
2 to support my children and keep them safe. In-person
3 instruction is what is best, no matter the age or
4 grade of the child. I can tell you first hand that
5 my children miss and need it and as a parent, so do
6 I. But it has to be safe, responsible and equitable.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 SHAWINA GARNETT-EVANS: All schools need that
9 support, resources and funding as well. I am asking
10 that the City Council does all that they can to
11 ensure that all children and all schools have what
12 they need, so that we can all reopen safely. Thank
13 you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Seeing that no
15 Council Members have their hand raised, I would like
16 to acknowledge that this was our final panel. If we
17 had inadvertently missed anyone that would like to
18 testify, please use the Zoom raise hand function and
19 we will call on you in the order your hand is raised.

20 Seeing none, we have concluded public testimony
21 for this hearing. I would also like to remind
22 everyone one last time that written testimony can be
23 submitted to testimony@council.nyc.gov. I will now
24 turn it to Chair Treyger for some closing remarks.
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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to begin by thanking
3 Kalima for doing a phenomenal job helping policy,
4 moderate, you name it, a jack of all trades. Thank
5 you Kalima for your guidance and for your leadership
6 and your partnership. I thank all the Council staff.
7 I want to just acknowledge the staff that we have
8 both my staff in my office and then Council staff
9 work really hard to prepare for hearings and then
10 debrief afterwards to get answers to push for action
11 on behalf of our students in our school communities.
12 I want to thank all of the students and educators,
13 school leaders, parents, advocates who testified
14 today because we are not going to go back. We are
15 moving forward and we need to now shape what that
16 looks like and center the needs of our kids,
17 particularly kids who have been historically
18 underserved. That's the center right now. Keeping
19 our kids safe but also meeting their needs and I
20 thank everyone for your time and thank the entire
21 Council staff, Sergeant at Arms, everyone for your
22 partnership in making today's hearing possible.
23 Thank you all. This hearing is adjourned.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you Chair Treyger, we
25 will now end the live stream.

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date February 7, 2021