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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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May 27, 2020
Start: 11:10 a.m.
Recess: 5:51 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 2)

B E F O R E: Mark Treyger,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Brad S. Lander
- Inez D. Barron
- Ben Kallos
- Robert Holden
- I. Daneek Miller
- Alicka Ampry-Samuel
- Joseph C. Borelli
- Justin L. Brannan
- Daniel Dromm
- Barry S. Grodenchik
- Mark D. Levine
- Farah N. Louis
- Deborah L. Rose
- Rafael Salamanca
- Jumaane Williams
- Eric Ulrich
- Kalman Yeger
- Keith Powers

A P P E A R A N C E S

1
2
3 Joshua Applewhite
4 Student at Liberation High School

5 Dr. Linda Chen
6 Chief Academic Officer of the New York City
7 Department of Education

8 Ursulina Ramirez
9 Chief Operating Officer

10 Cheryl Watson-Harris
11 First Deputy Chancellor

12 LaShawn Robinson
13 Deputy Chancellor of School Climate and Wellness

14 Adrienne Austin
15 Acting Deputy Chancellor of Community Empowerment
16 Partnerships and Communications

17 Christina Foti
18 Deputy Chief Academic Officer for the Division of
19 Special Ed Construction and Student Support

20 Michael Mulgrew
21 President of the United Federation of Teachers

22 William Diep
23 Member of Teens Take charge

24 Shadavia Burnett
25 Representing the New York Civil Liberties Union
Team activist project TAP

Babou Gaye

Donald Nesbit

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

1
2
3 Isa Grumbach-Bloom
4 Sophomore at Millennium Brooklyn High School

5 Marlen Mendieta-Cameron
6 In middle high school and a member of the team at
7 Teens Take Charge

8 Ann Cook
9 Executive Director of the New York Performance
10 Standards Consortium

11 Ellen Mc Hugh
12 Co-Chair of the Citywide Council on Special
13 Education

14 Leticia Reyes
15 Parent from PS/IS 157 District 14

16 Veronica Flores
17 Parent of a fifth grader

18 Jose Rivera
19 Community School Director with Good Shepherd
20 Services and Junior High School 292

21 Randi Levine
22 Policy Director of Advocates for Children of New
23 York

24 Lori Podvesker
25 Leads the policy work at Include NYC

Andrew Gerst
Special Education Attorney and Advocate at
Mobilization to Justice

Tasfia Rahman
Policy Coordinator at the Coalition for Asian
American Children and Families

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

Emily Hellstrom
Chairs the Students with Disabilities Committee

Anthony Tassi
Literacy Partners

Ashley Sawyer
Director of Policy and Government at Girls for
Gender Equity

Johanna Miller
Director of the Education Policy Center at the
New York Civil Liberties Union

Susan Horwitz
Supervising Attorney of the Education Law Project
in the Civil Practice to Legal Aid Society

Mariana Fitzgerald
Parent

Nancy Bedard
Brooklyn Legal Services

Anna Arkin-Gallagher
Supervising Attorney in the Education Practice at
Brooklyn Defender Services

Maud Maron
President of Community Education Counsel for
District 2

Kris Greene
Program Director at Good Shepherd Services

Jessica Caraballo
Program Director at Good Shepherd Services at MS
363

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

Maggie Moroff
ARISE Coalition

DeNora Getachew
New York Executive Director at Generation Citizen

Anna Fridman
Parent of three special needs kids

Kim Watkins
Harlem parent, mother of a fifth grader and an
elected leader in School District 3

Derwin Greene
College Success Counselor at Cambridge Heights
Community Center

Ted Leather
Manhattan Member of the Citywide Council on High
Schools

Amanda Blair
College Access Counselor for Good Shepherd
Services

Rachel Watts
Board Member of the New York City Arts and
Education Round Table

Chien Kwok
Parent of two public school children

Yiatin Chu
CC1 Member, SLT Member and Co-President of PLACE
NYC

Adriana Aviles
Parent

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

Mariana Fitzgerald
District 2 public parent

Waiching Chan
Member of the Alliance for Families

Donghui Zang
Parent

Nicole Cohen
Parent

Jennifer Rodriguez
Charter School Center

Rocky Bonanno

Patricia Laraia
District 2 Public School Parent

Jeannine Kiely
Chairs the Schools on Education Committee for
Manhattan CB2

Tamara Gayer

Arthur Samuels
Co-founder and Executive Director of MESA Charter
High School in Bushwick

Lisa Schwartzwald
New York Immigration Coalition

Naomi Goldberg Haas
Dances for a Variable Population Harlem

Christina Muccioli
Vice President of Education or AHRC NYC

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

Mya Fortuna
Attends PACE High School

Tyler Rood
Program Director at the Coalition for Hispanic
Family Services Arts and Literacy

Kaushik Das
SLT Co-Chair of PS 33

Nicole Hamilton
Director of School Based Programs and
Partnerships for Girls for Gender Equity

Ashley Jones
Coalition of Hispanic Families Services Arts and
Literacy program

Debra Sue Lorenzen
Director of Youth and Education at St. Nicks
Alliance

Luis Fuentes
Senior Program Director at the Monterey
Cornerstone Community Center

Clara Delgado
Program Director for Good Shepherd Services at
Franklin K. Lane Young Adult Borough Center

Anthony Caponera
Parent advocate for people with disabilities

Gregory Brender
United Neighborhood Houses

Chris Giordano
PTA Co-President at M.S. 54 in Manhattan Valley

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

1
2
3 Jim Manly
4 Superintendent at Kipp NYC schools

5 Madeline Borrelli
6 Teacher at IS 228 in Brooklyn

7 Caitlin Delphin

8 Carolyn Eanes
9 English teacher at Rachel Carson High School in
Coney Island Brooklyn

10 Paolo Martinez Boone
11 New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
12 Disability Justice Program

13 Ellie Baron
14 Student at Bard High School

15 Sheba Simpson
16 Special Education Teacher

17 Paulette Ha Healy
18 Member of the Citywide Council for Special
19 Education

20 Rosalia Borja
21 Parent
22
23
24
25

1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to
3 the Committee on Education. Will Council Members and
4 staff please turn on their video at this time.

5 Please silence all electronic devices. You may send
6 your testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov. That is
7 testimony@council.nyc.gov. We are ready to begin.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, [GAVEL] in this way.
9 Good morning everyone, welcome to the Committee on
10 Education's first remote hearing on the app we named
11 title, Remote Learning, the Impact of COVID-19 on our
12 City's Schools.

13 This year has turned education and the delivery
14 of education services on its head. Within the span
15 of a few short weeks, more than 1.1 million New York
16 City students went from learning in a classroom each
17 day to learning in their home. Home can mean an
18 apartment, a house, a shelter, hotel, crowded
19 dwelling, or some other accommodation other than a
20 classroom.

21 The impact has been immediate stark and strained
22 on an already inequitable system even for everyone.
23 This Administration, this Council, this Department of
24 Education and quite frankly the world have never
25 faced anything like COVID-19. COVID-19 has impacted

1
2 every single person in this city but some have been
3 impacted greatly more than others. It has impacted
4 our students, their families, our educators, and our
5 school leaders.

6 While COVID-19 presents great challenges, they
7 are not insurmountable. This pandemic is forcing us
8 to face and address the inequities in our education
9 system. We have a responsibility to ensure that the
10 social, emotional support systems that this Committee
11 has been championing for so long continue.

12 We have a responsibility to ensure that all
13 students have the right technological tools and
14 skills at home to better prepare themselves for the
15 21st century. We have a responsibility to examine
16 curriculum assessments, class size and a whole host
17 of other issues to ensure that all students receive
18 inequitable and high quality education.

19 Today, we will hear from the Administration on
20 how the provision and delivery of remote learning has
21 been going since March. The challenges remote
22 learning has posed. The solutions and lessons
23 learned, so remote learning moving forward leaves no
24 student behind.

1
2 I will be keeping my opening remarks limited to
3 provide space for the most important stakeholders in
4 this pandemic, our students. Let us hear now from
5 the most impacted. Joshua Applewhite is a student at
6 Liberation High School in Coney Island. I will let
7 his words speak for themselves and I'll ask the
8 Council now to play a video that Joshua has produced.

9 VIDEO OF JOSHUA APPLEWHITE: I see my myself.
10 How to start learning for me? It's not and in
11 general in school, I always felt like it wasn't for
12 me. Things that I learn and the things I do within
13 that environment, just don't resonate and I could not
14 be in an old classroom environment in which, I felt
15 like a robot. Coming to Liberation was a little
16 different because it was more like a hand-on
17 experience. There was more teachers, there was more
18 energies, there was more people I could relate to, so
19 I got things done a lot quicker and more efficiently.
20 But now being back in the comfort of my own home,
21 doing the work, the same work that I was doing, just
22 without the interactiveness, I feel like a robot.
23 And as a matter of fact, I feel like this whole
24 situation is handled as if we're robots and we're not
25 humans with different feelings and different

1
2 circumstances. In different situations, inner
3 conflicts, outer conflicts. There is so many
4 outliers, there is so many different things that will
5 affect the way in which we get this stuff done. And
6 I feel like we are handling an abnormal situation
7 normally, which is not you know, very reasonable or
8 rational.

9 We have students that have gone through all types
10 of different experiences, live in all types of
11 different environments, live with their own
12 struggles. So, to judge every student as if they
13 meet the same criteria and have the same equal
14 opportunity as well as the same life, is not fair.

15 There are some students that struggle with family
16 problems. There are some students that aren't being
17 fed enough right now. There are some people,
18 families that are struggling financially. This whole
19 pandemic has affected everybody but online remote
20 learning is so, the way in which it is being executed
21 is so flawed, especially the grading system. I'm not
22 saying to go and look at every student and see,
23 because you can't look at every student it is
24 impossible.

1
2 There is always going to be those few student,
3 you can't necessarily satisfy everybody but I can
4 say, you guys can be more reasonable and be more
5 understanding and take more time to adjust instead of
6 rushing things to try to return things to normal.
7 That's what I feel like needs to be done. Because I
8 feel like there was so much panic in order to get
9 things to restore and to get things back to normal
10 and make people feel as if school never stopped, that
11 there was a lot of error and there was a lot of
12 problems that were caused in the process.

13 And I feel like right now, it's hard when you are
14 stuck in a constant environment of just you in your
15 own house amongst your family and to be able to still
16 do things and act as if nothing is going on when
17 there is a lot going on.

18 See, when it comes to financially, when it comes
19 to same things, I might not suffer as much as the
20 next person but that doesn't mean I don't deal with
21 my own stuff. Someone has suffered financially or
22 doesn't have necessarily a stable environment work
23 in, that doesn't mean they are suffering the same
24 problems as me. But the point is, we both deal with
25 stuff. But there is internal and external, and to

1
2 handle the situation of remote learning as if it's
3 all fine and dandy and that everyone has – as if
4 everyone has an equal opportunity to get the work
5 done. It's just unfair. Because you can yeah, say,
6 oh, if the student struggles or if the student
7 doesn't understand the academic perspective of
8 things, confront the teachers. What if it's not an
9 academic problem and what about the teachers too.
10 You can't just look at the students and put the blame
11 on the students. The teachers struggle with their
12 own stuff too. Some of these teachers have to
13 provide for their families while also focusing on the
14 students that they have to focus on at school.

15 There are so many different things that you have
16 to take into account when doing things like this.
17 Because if you are rushing things to try and maintain
18 stability, you are actually doing the opposite and
19 you are causing chaos. This whole situation in
20 itself is already chaotic. We need to be together
21 and we need to come together and we need to talk and
22 discuss things. We can't be so separate in trying to
23 deal with everything. Because we're only one – we're
24 all human.

25 That's really all I have to say.

1
2 So, yeah, there needs to be a lot reformations
3 and fixes within the remote learning. Things that
4 are going on currently.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to thank Joshua and
6 I want to thank Principal April Leong at Liberation
7 High School for sharing for sharing that video and I
8 think actually some of the logistical issues with
9 getting even things sound, the sound right, just kind
10 of speaks to the whole remote learning system. As a
11 former teacher, I could tell you, you always had to
12 have plan A, plan B, plan C but this is the world
13 that we're in now but I think his story speaks
14 volumes that this is an abnormal situation for many
15 of our students and Joshua explained that very
16 clearly that many students are experiencing things in
17 very disproportionate ways. There are some kids
18 still battling food insecurity, housing insecurity.
19 And so, I think we need to enter this hearing and
20 enter this frame with that type of mindset.

21 I want to just acknowledge my colleagues who are
22 here and then we'll hear of an opening statement from
23 our public advocate.

24 I'd like to acknowledge my colleagues who have
25 joined us. Council Member Lander, Council Member

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2 Barron, Council Member Kallos, Council Member Holden,
3 Council Member Miller, Council Member Ampry-Samuel,
4 Council Member Borelli, Council Member Brannan,
5 Council Member Dromm, Council Member Grodenchik,
6 Council Member Levine, Council Member Louis, Council
7 Member Rose, Council Member Salamanca, and the Public
8 Advocate and with that, I will now turn over to the
9 Public Advocate for his opening statement.

10 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you Mr. Chair
11 and good morning. As mentioned, my name is Jumaane
12 Williams, Public Advocate for the City of New York.
13 I'd like to thank Chairman Mark Treyger and the
14 members of the education committee for holding this
15 oversight hearing on the Impact of Coronavirus on New
16 York City School System.

17 I just want to take a moment to thank you, Mr.
18 Chair for the leadership you have shown on this issue
19 and pushing this administration even at times when it
20 wasn't politically expedient or necessary. Thank you
21 so much for doing that and I look forward to continue
22 to work with you in doing that. And thank you for
23 starting off this hearing with people who are most
24 effected.

1
2 I also want to thank educators, social workers,
3 administrators, food service workers, who are all
4 still working during this pandemic to ensure our
5 students are getting the fundamental education they
6 need to leaders and providing needed services like
7 food to the greater community.

8 When the Mayor mandated for schools to close in
9 March, the Department of Education permits that
10 remote learning system to ensure students could
11 continue their education. I will be remiss if I
12 didn't mention that that closure came too late after
13 many folks – called this hearing pushed.

14 However, this distance learning program has
15 presented great challenges for many of our educators,
16 students, as well as their parents. It has also shed
17 light of the inequities of technology access. The
18 DOE failed to realize early on that many students
19 lack the devices necessary to participate in remote
20 learning, something that the probably should have
21 known and while DOE has tried to fill this technology
22 gap by providing remote learning devices through an
23 online portal there are still students who are
24 disconnected.

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2 My office sent a letter to DOE earlier this month
3 regarding reports of ACS investigations into families
4 who had difficulty obtaining or using remote learning
5 devices. It's my understanding from the response we
6 received that DOE issued guidance instructing school
7 staff to refer cases to ACS as a last resort.

8 The failure to ensure that access of any
9 technology needed for students to proceed with online
10 learning is not necessarily the fault of parents but
11 this Administration, we should make every effort to
12 make sure that it was not the fault of the parents
13 before we open any kind of case. No parent should
14 have to fear an ACS investigation simply because they
15 may not have stable internet access in computer or
16 any other device. That should be and still is very
17 much a responsibility of the DOE to help work out.

18 We need an update of many cases the ACS has
19 pursued of such families and what other proactive
20 approaches DOE has sought to ensure parents and
21 students get the resources they need to complete the
22 school year.

23 I also strongly urge the Administration to
24 coordinate with the state which manages the database
25 to expunge ACS cases that will open simply as a

1
2 result of remote learning difficulties. We have to
3 move away from this punitive telling folks to shelter
4 in place when they have no shelter or wear a mask
5 when they have no mask. Opening up an ACS
6 investigation when a person may not have access to
7 the things, they need to get to remote learning.

8 My office has yet to receive clarity on how the
9 DOE plans to better serve students with disabilities
10 and special needs as well as multilingual learners.
11 Two weeks ago, at the Educations Committee of
12 Education Committee Budget hearing, the Chancellor
13 said that DOE released a guidance on Teach Hub, where
14 teachers and principals can access resources
15 specifically created for teaching students with
16 disabilities and working with MLL students.

17 DOE has not determined if teachers are in fact
18 using those resources, nor has the agency
19 incorporated the year around special education
20 services, which serves nearly 39,000 students into
21 remote learning. Additionally, at last Thursday's
22 public hearing there were parents who were concerned
23 about the lack of slots for children with special
24 needs and Pre-K classes.

1
2 I look forward to hearing the DOE's plans to
3 incorporate special education services into remote
4 learning and offer accommodations in pre-K classes
5 with children with special needs. As I mentioned
6 during the budget hearing, I'm concerned about the
7 mental wellbeing of our students, educators, and
8 caregivers during this time. The city should do more
9 to support educators and students and expand
10 professional development to better equip them to
11 address and incorporate social, emotional learning,
12 remotely. The Administration should partner with
13 organizations to expand trauma informed practices,
14 social workers, mental health counselors, near peer
15 student counselors and guidance counselors to meet
16 the growing need for community healing.

17 I know the city is facing a public health crisis
18 that has forced drastic changes to be made. I also
19 want to just commend a lot of the work that has been
20 done because I understand this is a hurt community
21 effort and that there is 1.1 million students. We're
22 the largest in the nation but I also want to say that
23 each one of those students have a right to deserve
24 the best education that they have and I'm no longer
25

1
2 just speaking in theory, as my stepdaughter is a
3 member of that 1.1 million in public education.

4 So, we cannot sacrifice the education of our
5 children in our effort to protect their physical
6 health and wellbeing. I look forward to hearing from
7 the agency today on how they plan to ensure our
8 city's students receive a quality education during
9 this pandemic.

10 Thanks again.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Thank you to
12 the Public Advocate and now we'll have the Committee
13 Counsel acknowledge and swear in the first panel.

14 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you Chair
15 Treyger, I am Malcom Butehorn, Counsel to the
16 Education Committee of the New York City Council.
17 Before we begin testimony, I want to remind everyone
18 that you will be on mute until you are called on
19 testify. After you are called on, you will be
20 unmuted by the host. I will be calling on panelists
21 to testify. Please listen for your name to be called
22 and I will periodically announce who the next
23 panelist will be.

24 I'd like to remind everyone that unlike our
25 typical Council hearings, we will be calling

1
2 individuals one by one to testify. Council Members
3 who have questions for a particular panelist should
4 use the raise hand function in Zoom. You will be
5 called on after the panel has completed their
6 testimony.

7 We will be limiting Council Member questions to
8 three minutes. This includes both questions and
9 answers. Please note that for the purposes of this
10 virtual hearing, we will not be allowing a second
11 round of questioning.

12 For panelists, you will notice the letter P and
13 the number next to your name. As my email to all of
14 you last night stated, this will let you know what
15 panel you are on and you will be able to see where
16 you are in the queue throughout the hearing. Once
17 your name is called, a member of our staff will
18 unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms will give you the
19 go ahead to begin after setting the timer. All
20 public testimony will be limited to two minutes.
21 Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may
22 begin before delivering your testimony.

23 I will now call on the following members of the
24 Administration to testify, Dr. Linda Chen, Cheryl
25 Watson-Harris, LaShawn Robinson, Ursulina Ramirez,

1
2 and Gabrielle Frankel. I will first read the oath
3 and after, I will call on each panelist here from the
4 Administration individually to respond. If you call
5 could please raise your right hand.

6 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth
7 and nothing but the truth before this Committee and
8 to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

9 Dr. Chen?

10 DR. LINDA CHEN: Yes.

11 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: First Deputy Chancellor
12 Watson-Harris?

13 CHERYL WATSON-HARRIS: Yes.

14 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Deputy Chancellor
15 Robinson?

16 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes.

17 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Deputy Chancellor
18 Austin?

19 ADRIENNE AUSTIN: Yes.

20 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Ursulina Ramirez?

21 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yes.

22 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Nadiya Chadha?

23 NADIYA CHADHA: Yes.

24 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Emma Woods?

25 EMMA WOODS: Yes.

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COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: And Gabrielle Frankel?

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GABRIELLE FRANKEL: Yes.

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COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Dr. Chen,
you may begin when ready.

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DR. LINDA CHEN: Good morning Chair Treyger and
all of the members of the Education Committee here
today.

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19

I am Dr. Linda Chen and I serve as the Chief
Academic Officer of the New York City Department of
Education. Joining me this morning is Chief
Operating Officer Ursulina Ramirez, First Deputy
Chancellor Cheryl Watson-Harris, Deputy Chancellor of
School Climate and Wellness LaShawn Robinson, Acting
Deputy Chancellor of Community Empowerment
Partnerships and Communications Adrienne Austin and
Christina Foti Deputy Chief Academic Officer for the
Division of Special Ed Construction and Student
Support.

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21

22

23

Thank you for the opportunity for all of us to
discuss the significant work of the DOE in response
to the COVID crisis on behalf of the students and
families we serve.

24

25

Before I begin, I would first like to express our
gratitude to Speaker Johnson, Chair Treyger, and the

1
2 entire City Council for all you have done and
3 continue to do on behalf of the New York City schools
4 and our historically underserved students. Your
5 leadership throughout the COVID crisis is a testament
6 to you committed advocacy on behalf of the city
7 students in partnership with the DOE as we stood up
8 learning at 1,800 school communities.

9 Today's testimony will provide a clear picture of
10 the challenges this crisis pose to the DOE, along
11 with the accomplishments and new ground we have
12 broken as the largest public school system in the
13 country. My testimony will cover the distribution of
14 internet enabled devices, remote learning
15 instruction, policy, and summer planning. The social
16 and emotional support all student receive and the
17 extensive community engagement that the DOE has and
18 continues to conduct with families, students, elected
19 officials, and advocates throughout the five
20 boroughs.

21 This pandemic has had profound impact on the
22 lives of New Yorkers, the nation, and the world over.
23 Adjusting to this new reality has been arduous,
24 destructive, and painful with 77 DOE staff members
25 losing their lives. Our communities will never be

1
2 the same and we owe an immense debt to them and all
3 of our staff.

4 We are now more than two months into a health
5 emergency that has changed the way we have been
6 delivery learning since the closure of school
7 buildings on March 16th. We knew from the beginning
8 that the transition to remote learning would be
9 extremely difficult but we are proud of the work we
10 have done to make remote learning a reality across
11 the city for every student.

12 We are incredibly thankful to our staff and
13 families who provided critical feedback and we are
14 continually working to adapt our practices to meet
15 the needs of our students during these times. This
16 has been a heavy lift but essential lift across the
17 divisions within the DOE and we are committed to
18 ensuring the needs of our students are met.

19 First, I'd like to address device distribution.
20 One of the biggest hurdles we are proud to have
21 overcome was the digital divide. We knew that if
22 students could not connect to the internet, remote
23 learning would fail. We estimated needing about
24 300,000 internet enabled devices, so we contacted
25 several companies to determine which would provide us

1
2 with the scale production we needed in order to meet
3 our timeframe.

4 Apple was the only company that could fulfill or
5 requirements. To date, more than 290,000 internet
6 enabled devices have been distributed across the city
7 to students who now have access to remote learning,
8 regardless of their Wi-Fi capabilities at home.

9 The Council's longstanding and continuous
10 investment in technology for our schools made it
11 possible for the DOE to also distribute 175,000
12 school based laptops, tablets, and chrome books to
13 students at the onset of this crisis.

14 Prioritizing equity, we started distributing
15 centrally purchased and internet enabled devices
16 beginning with our most underserved students. 13,000
17 students living in shelter followed by students in
18 foster care, high school students, students with
19 disabilities and multilingual learners. Principals
20 and teachers continue to work with students and
21 families to ensure that they are aware of available
22 devices and assist them in filling out the device
23 request surveys. We were one of the first districts
24 in the entire country to provide remote learning and
25

1
2 are proud of giving our students the tools they need
3 to successfully participate.

4 Chancellor Carranza has emphasized to students,
5 staff, and families the importance of both
6 flexibility and patience as we navigate this new
7 reality. The shift to remote learning was sudden but
8 thanks to the incredible resilience of everyone in
9 the DOE, we have continued to adapt our approaches
10 and strengthen our practices while providing training
11 and resources to support the process. At the start,
12 we launched Teach Hub, a new remote learning portal
13 for New York City educators. That provides standards
14 align and structural resources for all grades in all
15 subject areas, including resources for multilingual
16 learners and students with disabilities, as well as
17 social, emotional learning. Those resources are
18 created by DOE central staff as well as third party
19 vendors who generously donated content for use during
20 this time.

21 All of those resources are free and easily
22 accessible by educators. We also trained thousands
23 of teachers on how to use remote learning technology.
24 We understood the range of experience and familiarity
25 teachers had with this new way of teaching and we

1
2 have worked to meet teachers where they are. We also
3 set up remote learning champions which provides
4 training and guidance on technical and pedagogical
5 aspects with virtual teaching platforms from 150
6 citywide field base personnel.

7 During remote learning, teachers have used many
8 approaches to ensure that students are engaged in
9 instruction. With support and guidance from
10 Superintendents and Principals, our teachers are
11 working more tirelessly than ever on tailoring live
12 teaching, recorded sessions, and other methods to
13 meet the needs of their students.

14 Recognizing that all schools approach remote
15 learning with different capabilities, DOE staff
16 worked to level the playing field by creating a DOE
17 G-suite domain for schools that may not already have
18 had one. This includes a Google classroom platform
19 for teachers, students, and families to connect
20 remotely. We also have teachers utilizing tools like
21 Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft teams to gather with
22 students in real time to deliver instruction.

23 To support teachers who develop central Google
24 folders organized by grade, unit and day and templets
25 that teachers can modify to customize lessons for

1
2 their students. Teachers have also used tools like
3 discussion boards to respond to student work and
4 enable students interact with one another. Our
5 educators have convened office hours for students and
6 their families to discuss the work and provide
7 whatever support students may need.

8 We have also partners with New York City
9 institutions to offer additional remote learning
10 support. For example, the DOE and the WNET group
11 have partnered on Let's Learn NYC, a new educational
12 public television program featuring lessons for
13 children in grades 3K through second grade. Let's
14 Learn NYC is hosted by DOE instructional leaders and
15 coaches with expertise in teaching young learners.
16 It offers age appropriate curricular content that has
17 aligned the standards and lessons for early childhood
18 education and includes foundational reading skills,
19 literacy, math and science and social studies.

20 In addition, all students can access tutoring
21 services through one of the three public library
22 systems across the city. Now, I'd like to address
23 our work with students with disabilities. This
24 transition has presented additional challenges for
25 our students with disabilities, including students in

1
2 District 75. To ensure that their needs are met,
3 schools developed a special education remote learning
4 plan for each student with a disability, which
5 communicates how services outlined in individualized
6 education program or IEP's will be provided in these
7 new educational settings. Each school has been
8 contacting families to enable them to provide
9 meaningful input in discussing how special education
10 programs and services can be provided.

11 Throughout this time, we have strongly encouraged
12 providing related services including physical
13 therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and
14 counseling through teletherapy where appropriate.
15 Recognizing that some students may benefit from other
16 different approaches.

17 When it is appropriate, students engage with
18 their provider through video, so that there is
19 continuity of their services. Our teachers and
20 providers, with the support of our paraprofessionals
21 are continuing to adapt and modify materials to
22 ensure they are accessible and tailored to the
23 individual needs of each student.

24 Our IEP teams continue to thoughtfully plan for
25 students who are referred for special education

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2 evaluations to ensure that appropriate services can
3 be delivered without delay.

4 Now, I'd like to move onto discussing our
5 multilingual learners. Similarly, every school
6 created and submitted remote learning plans to ensure
7 that multilingual learners and former English
8 language learners receive targeted instruction in
9 English with appropriate supports in their home
10 language. Our division of multilingual learners have
11 also initiated weekly meetings with advocates, parent
12 leaders, and community partners to collect
13 information and receive input on the remote learning
14 experience for multilingual learners and families on
15 an ongoing basis.

16 In addition, we have been posting multilingual
17 Monday's on a series of workshops aimed at helping
18 students and families engaged in the college search
19 process. As with everything we are doing, we are
20 constantly seeking feedback, reflecting on best
21 practices, and adapting to make sure we are serving
22 our students effectively.

23 Additionally, the DOE has partnered with the
24 Mayor's Office of Immigration Affairs to familiarize
25 school staff on programs and services available to

1
2 immigrant families, leveraging these resource to best
3 support families.

4 I'd like to now turn to wellness for all
5 students. We know that remote learning remains an
6 immense challenge given the stress and trauma facing
7 our students and families during the pandemic. We
8 know also that when students are healthy and feel
9 safe, they are better learners. Ensuring that we
10 have social emotional supports in place to help our
11 students and address the trauma has been a priority
12 since day one of this crisis. And we again, thank
13 City Council and especially Chair Treyger for being
14 key partners in this ongoing work of addressing the
15 needs of the whole child.

16 Through our wellness DOE work, we share guidance
17 with schools on how to conduct wellness checks.
18 Principals lead school staff in identifying students
19 who are less engaged to make sure they are contacted
20 and properly supported. We particularly focus on our
21 students in temporary housing and are providing
22 extensive guidance to our bridging the gap social
23 workers who continue to provide teletherapy to these
24 students. We also conduct multiple surveys of these
25 students to gain a comprehensive understanding of

1
2 their mental health and remote learning needs and
3 challenges.

4 We also continue to focus on social, emotional
5 learning, restorative justice, and mental health
6 clinical support. We have created resources to
7 promote SCL practices through remote learning and we
8 have provided direct clinical supports to students
9 since the day remote learning began. Every school
10 has a crisis team who are all receiving training on
11 how to serve their students and communities during
12 these troubling times.

13 Additionally, we are supporting our LGBTQ
14 students by providing resources and support to them.
15 Gender and Sexuality Alliance or GSA clubs continue
16 to thrive and in fact, teachers are attending
17 trainings at an all-time high, recognizing that
18 students need support now more than ever.

19 In turning to family support in community
20 engagement, during this time, we have asked our
21 families to step up in so many new ways and we are
22 grateful for their patience and resilience. Since
23 starting remote learning, we have proactively engaged
24 with families, offered a support line to respond to
25

1
2 their questions, and provided training for families,
3 schools, and community partners.

4 Through Learn at Home on our website, parents can
5 find everything from our latest messages on pertinent
6 issues to technical tools, to resources on curated
7 learning activities and guides for daily study
8 schedules.

9 At the school and district level, borough offices
10 have conducted translated webinar trainings for
11 parents on topics that include successful remote
12 learning at home, parent student activism and mental
13 health and wellness.

14 Parents can contact their schools to ask for
15 technical support as there is a designated staff
16 member responsible for assisting them and for our
17 Tech Ambassadors program in partnership with New York
18 Cares, this source and volunteers who speak the
19 languages of our families to provide one to one
20 technical support in their home language.

21 Additionally, all DOE family facing staff, including
22 parent coordinators and central based family
23 engagement staff have been trained in technical
24 assistance to provide support to parents using Google
25

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2 classroom, wellness, meal hubs, and language access
3 resources for families.

4 Earlier this month, we mailed a post card in
5 English and translated to all New York City public
6 school households, to ensure that families are aware
7 of the supports and resources that the DOE is
8 providing during remote learning. We have also been
9 holding weekly briefing calls with elected officials,
10 advocates, and student leaders. The family and
11 community empowerment team is supporting family
12 leaders with weekly updates, virtual meetings, and
13 training sessions.

14 DOE is actively engaging student voice on remote
15 learning, supports from remote college and career
16 advising, graduation, summer school and admissions
17 policy.

18 On May 14th, we hosted a live event moderated by
19 students in the discussion with the Chancellor and
20 cabinet members in which they asked questions and
21 touch on grading, emotional wellbeing, and planning
22 for post COVID schooling. We also created a remote
23 learning survey to collect information from our
24 families and students in grade 6-12 about their
25 remote learning experiences.

1
2 As of May 22nd, we had over 164,000 family
3 responses and over 125,000 student responses. The
4 survey is still open and we will be using this
5 information to continue to improve upon remote
6 learning.

7 Now, I will turn to summer school. As the school
8 year enters its final month, we are focused on ending
9 strong and getting students the support, they need to
10 return in the fall on track to succeed. We are going
11 to be providing academic support to approximately
12 177,000 students with summer learning remotely. Our
13 remote summer learning model offers education and
14 services to students with disabilities, while
15 providing academic support and additional time to the
16 students not yet mastering grade level standards.
17 Synchronous or live instruction will be part of a
18 student's day during summer learning. There will
19 also be social, emotional components embedded into
20 the day. Our remote learning approach is aimed at
21 keeping our students on track and ready to hit the
22 ground running come September.

23 To conclude, this pandemic has tested our systems
24 and New Yorkers in so many ways. Transforming every
25 aspect of what we do to rise to the challenges of

1
2 this moment, has been a testament to the
3 determination of our incredible staff, students, and
4 families. This shift to remote learning has been
5 astounding given the difficult unforeseen
6 circumstances of this crisis, which has shown a
7 spotlight on opportunity gaps we know have existed
8 for decades.

9 Our focus remains on equitably serving our
10 students and striving to close the gaps. We are
11 taking the lessons we learned every day to adapt and
12 improve the delivery of education to the students of
13 New York City.

14 On behalf of my colleagues, I thank you for your
15 time and we will be happy to answer any questions
16 that you might have. Thank you Chair Treyger.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Dr. Chen. I will
18 get right to questions. Not only was it at the
19 mandate from the Governor but providing access to
20 RECs firstly to children of essential workers was the
21 right move as it helped ensure that our first
22 responders and other essential workers can do their
23 jobs during this pandemic. However, the DOE
24 initially said it expected to serve up to 57,000
25 students at REC's. In subsequent DOE briefings, it

1
2 was clear that actual numbers being served was far
3 less.

4 With capacity seemingly not an issue, why have
5 REC's not been available to students in temporary
6 housing, especially those in shelters?

7 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you Chair Treyger. This
8 is Ursulina Ramirez, Chief Operating Officer for the
9 DOE. I first and foremost, I want to thank you for
10 grounding us today in the conversation with Joshua
11 needing this, I think that that was great and really,
12 the students perspective is at the forefront of our
13 mind. I also want to thank Public Advocate Jumaane
14 Williams for his insight and his feedback on the
15 process.

16 In terms of your question around the Regional
17 Enrichment Centers, as you noted, our original
18 capacity was in the 50,000 to 70,000 range and we
19 subsequently closed a handful of our enrichment
20 centers to make sure that we were only keeping sites
21 open that had a sufficient amount of students. To
22 your point, yes, we do have additional capacity in
23 these buildings. I would say right now, the
24 executive order is around essential workers and
25 making sure that we are providing childcare for those

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2 essential workers and it doesn't really include
3 additional populations.

4 We totally understand the concerns around our
5 students in temporary housing and our students in
6 foster care, and that's why we prioritized iPad
7 delivery for those student populations. But as of
8 right now, we are following the executive order that
9 was issued by the Governor that allows for essential
10 workers only.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And would you agree with me
12 that a shelter is no place for any child to
13 meaningfully learn?

14 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I would say that I think that
15 it's - I want to make sure our students have a
16 location to learn that is helpful and suitable for
17 them and their families. I think that a lot of our
18 families and not just our students in temporary
19 housing are in, you know, unfortunate circumstances
20 at home and make it really hard to focus. So, I
21 agree with that statement, that it is difficult to
22 learn in either crowded spaces and/or congregate
23 spaces. I do agree with that statement.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And has there been any
25 conversation with the Governor's office or with the

1
2 state about allowing children who are in shelters to
3 have access to REC's?

4 URSULINA RAMIREZ: We have not had direct
5 conversations or I have not had direct conversations
6 with the state around this population. We have
7 really focused on the essential workers and making
8 sure as the state is reopening, that we have the
9 capacity to serve those new families who might be
10 interested in sending their children to childcare to
11 one of our childcare centers.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Alright, how did the DOE
13 arrive at the number 300,000 for the number of iPads
14 to order?

15 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you for that. So, this
16 was a projection that we developed with the city's
17 chief technology officer around the digital divide in
18 the city as well as principles. It is not a hard and
19 fast role that we know that there are 300,000
20 families and students who do not have devices. It
21 was our best guess before we closed schools.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: We understand that DOE
23 sends out surveys to families regarding access to
24 technology before schools were closed, is that true?

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2 URSULINA RAMIREZ: We did ask our principals to
3 check in with their students to see what devices that
4 they had. And so, that was the beginning, I would
5 say the beginning phases of us trying to understand
6 the breath and scope of our need.

7 Just to kind of reiterate, so there was that
8 survey that we did with principals to see the devices
9 that were needed prior to closing schools. Then, we
10 did a survey for students who needed devices or did
11 not have Wi-Fi and then subsequently, we had a third
12 survey that was around I would say the substance of
13 remote learning and how it's working for them and how
14 families are engaging with their remote learning.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And how many responses to
16 the initial survey did you receive? The one that
17 principals gave to their school communities prior to
18 school closure.

19 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I do not have that number off
20 hand and I can get it to you as soon as possible.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I would appreciate that.
22 We'd also like to know the breakdown of that number
23 by school district as well.

24

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2 URSULINA RAMIREZ: And sorry, just to note, with
3 that survey, what principals used that for was to
4 hand out devices at their school level.

5 So, prior to us even delivering the 300,000
6 iPads, we handed out 175,000 devices and that was
7 school based devices based on that survey.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And the remote learning
9 survey's that were distributed after the iPads were
10 distributed, what common themes did DOE so far seeing
11 the results, how many people took the survey's
12 online? How many called 311 or completed the survey
13 by phone?

14 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you so much for that
15 question. I'm going to ask our Chief Academic
16 Officer Linda Chen to speak more about the remote
17 learning survey that we conducted. Can we unmute
18 Linda.

19 DR. LINDA CHEN: Thank you for the question. Was
20 your question regarding the survey for devices?

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, these were the
22 surveys that were distributed after iPads were
23 distributed. What common themes did DOE see in the
24 results.

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2 DR. LINDA CHEN: Yes, so, I also want to thank
3 you for the testimony that Joshua opened up with. I
4 think that is so important to put our students at the
5 center and in terms of our remote learning survey, we
6 did get quite a bit of a response and some of the
7 trends are that the students expressed some of the
8 things that Joshua expressed. The need and want to
9 be connected and they also expressed the importance
10 of being connected with their teachers and families
11 also expressed that importance.

12 We are continuing to improve to make sure that we
13 can take some of the lessons learned from that to
14 create better enhancements. Some of what we are
15 doing is to make sure that teachers have greater
16 facility with the technology. I have to say, our
17 teachers have done a really herculean in task being
18 able to do and transform all the way students learn
19 and that in home and connection is hugely important
20 in addition to access to academic opportunities
21 within remote learning.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Dr. Chen, how many teachers
23 took part in in person remote learning PD, which was
24 immediately during when the Mayor announced that
25 schools would close, teachers had to come in that

1
2 week for PD. How many teachers actually came in and
3 received the in person PD?

4 DR. LINDA CHEN: We can try to get numbers to you
5 but we know that it's in the realm of thousands of
6 teachers. What we did was during that following
7 week, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Teachers came
8 in, we had communicated with principals prior to that
9 and getting a sense of the types of needs that they
10 have. Whether schools already had an online platform
11 and what resources they had and then we developed
12 modules and units for schools to use based on their
13 particular needs.

14 I want to really acknowledge the work of our
15 school leaders who acted very quickly to be able to
16 make sure that they would be able to select the types
17 of training that their teachers needed. I would also
18 like to say in addition to those three days, our
19 principals and school leaders have been working with
20 teachers to provide additional adjust in times
21 supports for teachers as well.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, can you just be clear,
23 for those teachers - well, first, I'd like to know
24 the number of how many were able to come in.
25 Understanding the gravity of the situation will be

1
2 helpful to know because it leads me to my next
3 question, those that were not able to come in in
4 person, what kind of training did they receive?

5 DR. LINDA CHEN: The modules were online, so,
6 part of the training was being able to help teachers
7 access these modules online. So, if a teacher was
8 not able to physically come in that material and the
9 information was still available to them.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And Dr. Chen, would you
11 agree that from your years of experience in schools
12 that there is a significant number of educators who
13 need support on how to use technology in the first
14 place?

15 DR. LINDA CHEN: Thank you for the question Chair
16 and as a former teacher, it's very stout to ask that
17 question. I think that we have really understood and
18 experienced during this period is the variety and the
19 variation to which we have capacities. And as you
20 know well, with professional learning more than ever,
21 the need for differentiation is huge.

22 And so, our school leaders have done an amazing
23 job trying to make sure they themselves have varied
24 experiences and expertise and their teachers have and
25 they have really stepped up to the plate to learn.

1
2 We also have trained our, we purpose about 150 staff
3 in the field offices to be these remote learning
4 champions. So, they are also connecting directly
5 with schools and school leaders to make sure that
6 they get the differentiated supports they need in
7 terms of technology support with this new
8 environment.

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I just want to note that I
10 am concerned that a number of educators still need a
11 lot of support on how to make all of this work. As
12 we know that they're also dealing with enormous
13 challenges and loss and pain in their own families
14 and their own personal lives, I speak to many of them
15 still to this day. They want to be able to better
16 support their students and I do commend educators for
17 you know, doing extraordinary work. I noted in
18 previous commentary that it would take me a summer to
19 plan ahead for the school year ahead and educators
20 really put together something in a matter of a week
21 or two in this unprecedented time. But I would just
22 like to just make sure that we are providing all the
23 support that we can to help them cope with this
24 because some of the concerns which we've heard about,
25 which we'll get to is the number of teachers who are

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2 providing live instruction versus not live
3 instruction.

4 I just want to point out to folks that there are
5 some educators that – we need help with this entire
6 setting who also are facing challenges in their own
7 home setting to. Some of them are primary care
8 takers for sick loved ones and so, it will be helpful
9 for us to know the full scope of supports, options
10 and services we have for our teachers.

11 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Chair, Chair, can I just add
12 in one thing there?

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, please.

14 URSULINA RAMIREZ: To add to Linda's comment.
15 So, in terms of the modules that we did that week of
16 3/16, we know that roughly 39,000 teachers engaged
17 with those modules. In addition to that and I just
18 want to note and we have the First Deputy Chancellor
19 Cheryl Watson-Harris here. All of our build support
20 offices are prepared to support teachers and
21 obviously our IT team on the technical side and if
22 you know of any teachers, please let us know or
23 schools that are struggling on the technical side, we
24 can definitely provide them supports.

1
2 I'm going to actually ask if First Deputy
3 Chancellor Cheryl Watson-Harris wants to add anything
4 on what the borough team is doing to support schools
5 right now.

6 CHERYL WATSON-HARRIS: Yeah, thank you so much
7 Ursulina and thank you Chair Treyger for the
8 opportunity to be with you today. Thank you, I just
9 echo my colleagues sentiments around having Joshua
10 into our space today and really center the
11 conversation.

12 As you know, I have two children in the school
13 system and also, responded to this crisis as the
14 First Deputy Chancellor but also as a mother. So, I
15 sincerely appreciate having Joshua's voice. As you
16 know, this crisis has really put a spotlight on the
17 opportunity gap and we remain laser-like focus on
18 supporting our PSI schools, our CSI schools as well
19 as our receivership schools and our Bronx plan
20 schools. And in partnership with our Executive
21 Superintendent and Superintendents, we are monitoring
22 the daily practices throughout all schools in
23 ensuring that the borough center offices are
24 providing the right and targeted supports.

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As you know, one of the things that I do and our Chancellor believes this and teaches us that a Chancellor in the field is worth two – I’m getting the expression wrong, but basically that we should be out in the field and one of our practices is really around field day. And today, I actually spent the morning in Queens North visiting classrooms alongside our Superintendents in Queens North, as well as our Executive Superintendents and debriefing with principals in the borough center offices around the right and targeted supports needed.

So, again, in addition to the 39,000 teachers who participated in that initial training, that was just to get us started. We know that we have to provide ongoing support to teachers and principals as we continue to learn more and do more for our students.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Deputy Chancellor. I’d like to learn, can the DOE please provide us a breakdown by district and school of student attendance, which on the May 4th, elected officials briefing call, DOE shared average 85 to 88 percent on any given day. And where is this information posted publicly. We’d like to know a district and breakdown, school breakdown.

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2 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you Chair. So, as you
3 know and as you noted, our engagement rate is roughly
4 86 percent in comparison to in person schooling is
5 roughly around 93 percent.

6 So, we're still seeing a fairly high engagement
7 rate. To go through specifics, I'm actually going to
8 hand this off to my colleague, Deputy Chancellor
9 LaShawn Robinson, who is going to talk through kind
10 of what makes up the engagement policy and some of
11 the numbers that you are requesting.

12 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you so much Ursulina.
13 It's a pleasure to be before Council today. Thank
14 you Chair Treyger. Also, to our Public Advocate
15 Williams and especially to our scholar Joshua who
16 opened us up today. I know Liberation Diploma Plus
17 well, it's a transfer school, I'm a former transfer
18 school principal and also serve as transfer school
19 superintendent.

20 So, Joshua, I hope that you are listening. You
21 know, we think about you and your needs and the needs
22 of your school community as we engaged in this work.

23 An important part of engaging in this work as we
24 transition to remote learning was ensuring that we
25 maintain contact with our students and our families

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2 in a very structured manner. As you all know, we
3 transitioned quickly to remote learning and in that
4 transition, we also had to transition to new systems
5 to support the work.

6 So, the attendance system that we utilized during
7 the school year is the ATS system or Automate the
8 Schools. The transition to remote learning made us
9 really have to change and build an entirely new
10 system through STARS classroom.

11 The goal of monitoring student interaction during
12 remote learning, is to as I shared, maintain daily
13 contact with students and families but also to have a
14 mechanism in place to monitor student general
15 wellbeing to ensure that you know, we are delivering
16 the right supports at the right time for the right
17 children and we took that framing and built out the
18 system through STARS classroom.

19 Monitoring interaction or to account for
20 attendance can be defined as student submission of an
21 assignment. As an example, student completion of an
22 online assessment, student participation in an online
23 forum, like a chat or a discussion thread. A family
24 initiated communication, like an email or a phone
25 call. Our newer learners, especially our learners at

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2 pre-K, kindergarten, first grade. All of that
3 interaction may happen between a family member and
4 the teacher, so we also accounted for that as well.

5 When we first shifted and started with remote
6 learning and utilizing STARS classroom, our initial
7 attendance was roughly about a little over 84
8 percent. We continued to make steady gains over
9 time. As was shared, our most recent percentage is
10 about 88.5 percent. So, we are making gains, we're
11 making meaningful contact with our young people,
12 utilizing the mechanism through the STARS classroom,
13 and ensuring that we are providing real supports in
14 real time.

15 Chair Treyger, we can certainly provide a
16 district breakdown for you as soon as possible
17 following this hearing.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Deputy Chancellor, I would
19 appreciate that data and that's very important. Does
20 anyone from the panel have the number, how many
21 students have never logged on once since March 16th?
22 How many students in our school system have never
23 logged on once?

24 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, I'm going to ask, first
25 and foremost, I'm going to ask Deputy Chancellor

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2 LaShawn Robinson to start that and also, Deputy
3 Chancellor Cheryl Watson-Harris because I would say
4 that all of our schools are making contact or trying
5 to make contact with students every single day and as
6 LaShawn mentioned, doing herculean effort to make
7 sure that students are engaged. LaShawn, do you want
8 to add anything there and then Cheryl?

9 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely. First, I'd like
10 to share that the transition to remote learning took
11 into account that we had to be flexible to meet the
12 needs of various school communities and schools who
13 selected various modalities for remote learning.

14 So, we have some schools that you know,
15 transition to virtual platforms, such as Google
16 classrooms. While we have some schools that continue
17 to provide instructional materials and utilize
18 telephone contacts is the primary means of
19 communication with families and with students.

20 So, I don't want to speak to never logging on
21 once because we have some schools that did not
22 transition in that manner virtually. So, we knew
23 that we would have schools in various places along
24 with continuum, all seeking to meet the needs of
25 their learners in different ways. So, we embraced

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2 patience and flexibility during this process fully
3 recognizing that you know, the task that we were
4 asking our teachers and school leaders to engage in
5 was really a herculean task and I just want to make
6 that distinction about logging on.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well, maybe I'll clarify.
8 So, recently, I was at a food distribution in my
9 district in a NYCHA development and a service
10 provider shared with me that she's noticing that a
11 significant number of immigrant families are coming
12 to her asking for help and assistance in obtaining a
13 device but they are fearful of filling out the
14 survey, in filling out the request form, forgive me,
15 because they don't want any information on that form
16 to compromise or hurt their immigration status. And
17 I can tell you as a former teacher, I remember this
18 occurring with the learning surveys, when many
19 families were nervous about returning those forms.

20 So, when I speak about students not being able to
21 log on, these are kids historically really kind of
22 marginalized, vulnerable for many reasons, that would
23 like to learn and participate but the process to get
24 the device was a problem and it remains a problem and
25 it is now nearing the end of May and they have not

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2 received a device and they have not logged on. And
3 so, have you heard of these types of situations and
4 how are we reaching those students that did not
5 submit a request form?

6 CHERYL WATSON-HARRIS: Yes, as I mentioned with
7 you before Chair Treyger, we have encouraged all
8 principals to do wellness calls to 100 percent of
9 their students. And this is something that we've
10 been doing on a regular basis. In addition to that,
11 individual superintendents supported by their
12 executive superintendents and borough center offices
13 have put in place additional outreach strategies and
14 I could just lift up some specific examples.

15 In PS 134 in District 1, under the leadership of
16 Kari Chang and Principal Perales, during the first
17 week of remote learning, 35 families had requested a
18 device. After five weeks, we had a total of 114
19 families that had requested a device that didn't do
20 it initially. But as a result of the outreach and
21 the calls to the families, the submitted the devices.

22 Just another quick example, in District 2, at the
23 start of this remote learning of the school 033 had
24 distributed 25 percent of the devices that they had
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2 at schools, eventually leading up to 100 percent of
3 the school based devices.

4 To date, that left about only 75 percent of the
5 students still without a device. As of today, we
6 have all but one student has a device in hand and
7 we're working very hard to secure an additional
8 device for that student.

9 The last thing I would like to say in terms of
10 our students, our vulnerable populations,
11 specifically students in temporary housing, we have
12 schools doing innovative things like something I was
13 able to share and in be a part of today called the
14 Alliance Zen, where we have teachers, bilingual
15 teachers that are creating online communities for
16 parents that are in shelters to work on their own
17 personal social, emotional health and parents to best
18 meet the needs of their students.

19 So, we have a citywide strategy and then each
20 executive superintendent with their borough center
21 office is also pushing in to support individual
22 schools with additional outreach efforts. And this
23 is a daily act, to ensure that all students have both
24 the devices, supplemental materials. Today we talked
25 and uncovered a group of students that didn't have

1
2 calculators that we wanted to get in hand, so that
3 they could better engage with their mathematics as
4 well as the social, emotional supports for both
5 students and families.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And Deputy Chancellor, just
7 to be clear, is there anything in the state order
8 that prohibits children in temporary housing from
9 being admitted into the REC's? Is there anything
10 that legally prohibits the DOE from allowing them to
11 have access to REC's if families are requesting that?

12 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I mean if there is a student
13 who is in shelter whose family is an essential
14 worker, they have access to the enrichment centers as
15 of right now.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: But if their parent is not
17 an essential worker, you are saying that the state
18 prohibits access for them?

19 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I'm not a lawyer, I'm a social
20 workers, so I won't ponder what the law says and I
21 will confirm with our lawyers later but our
22 understanding is that the executive order is solely
23 for essential workers and that's it.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, I'm not a lawyer
25 either, so I will start by saying that but I am not,

1
2 I don't think it prohibits children in temporary
3 housing and I'd like to follow up with the DOE
4 further on that.

5 How many wellness calls have been made to
6 students? Do we have that data? Total number of
7 wellness calls made?

8 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, as Deputy Chancellor
9 Cheryl Watson-Harris just said, that all schools were
10 required to do wellness calls and so, and that was at
11 her instruction to really make sure that students are
12 both engaging in remote learning, but just to make
13 sure that they are okay. You know, as Joshua said,
14 this is an incredibly difficult time for our students
15 and for our families and so, it was really important
16 that we were not just checking in on students to say,
17 are you doing your work but are you doing okay
18 emotionally? We know that our students have had
19 family members who have passed and staff members, so
20 we would say all of our students, or I should say,
21 all our schools have been told to have wellness
22 checks.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Ursulina, we were just
24 getting some additional information and it's our
25

1
2 understanding in the Council and the Committee
3 Council who is a lawyer -

4 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: His interpretation which I
6 value very much, is that the State Executive Order
7 does not prohibit the DOE from adding children in
8 temporary housing to have access to REC sites. They
9 set the floor, they don't set the ceiling, so it's
10 within the city's discretion and since you
11 acknowledge that there is capacity and room at these
12 REC sites, is this something that the DOE can
13 reconsider?

14 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I will definitely take this up
15 with our health officials and I love the legal
16 updates from your team, I appreciate that. I do want
17 to consult with the Department of Health. You know,
18 and as I mentioned before Chairman, I want to make
19 sure that we're serving our media students in person
20 if that is possible. It is I think the interest of
21 the entire agency to make sure that our students have
22 access and some are safe to be.

23 I think the conundrum I would say that we've been
24 in is making the choices of who gets to be in person,

1
2 if that is the case that some sets of students can be
3 and who needs it most.

4 And so, I think that that's just something, well
5 I agree that students in temporary housing do need
6 it. We have also been asked by advocates and by
7 parents directly what about my student who has a
8 severe disability? What about my multilingual
9 learner who really values in person learning?

10 So, I think that that's just as you know, we're
11 just grappling with all of these various needs and
12 trying to make a decision on what is best for
13 students and also what is the safest for students.

14 So, I will confirm with our lawyers and our
15 Department of Health to see what they think but I
16 appreciate you legal team and their guidance.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I appreciate that and will
18 definitely follow up further and just to be clear, I
19 heard that the expectation is that every school
20 conducts wellness calls.

21 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Correct.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Are you saying that the DOE
23 is not actually tracking how many calls have been
24 made?

1
2 URSULINA RAMIREZ: And I'm going to ask Deputy
3 Chancellor Cheryl Watson-Harris to talk about this
4 work but I would say that the Superintendents and the
5 Executive Superintendents are engaging with
6 Principals directly on this. Are you asking if there
7 is a direct tally of every single engagement? I
8 would say that at the system level, that's why we
9 have our engagement tracker and that's what LaShawn
10 was referring to earlier with the 86 percent
11 engagement.

12 Cheryl, do you want to add anything there?

13 CHERYL WATSON-HARRIS: I think that you really
14 hit on it Ursulina. Just a reminder that that is the
15 work of the Executive Superintendents. That is our
16 school support and supervision structure. The
17 Executive Superintendents and Superintendents are
18 monitoring those calls and that is their
19 responsibility but as we visit schools virtually and
20 that's still our work. We're in schools every day in
21 classrooms, meeting with principals. Last week I
22 visited schools on Staten Island and had the
23 opportunity to sit virtually with Principal Christine
24 Zapata and she showed me her tracker. How she is
25 monitoring that, how they are reaching out as our COO

1
2 said to check on the wellness of both the students
3 and the families with notations of specifically how
4 they need to follow up with a family to address any
5 issues that they have.

6 So, I do have a tally, centrally, that is the
7 role of the Executive Superintendent and
8 Superintendent to monitor and ensure that that work
9 is happening and we are seeing evidence of that
10 during our fields visits.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Deputy Chancellor and I
12 appreciate that feedback, as we've noted in previous
13 calls that we've had, there were cases where some, a
14 school did not conduct wellness calls until early May
15 and I am just asking the DOE, is it possible that we
16 have students in our system that have not logged on
17 once since March 16th and have not received one
18 wellness call from our school system since March
19 16th. Is that entirely possible?

20 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I think that it is possible
21 that there have been students who have not logged on.
22 I would also say that it is impossible that somebody
23 has not reached out to them.

24 We have an entire structure that is around
25 supporting students and I know that our principals,

1
2 if there is a student who is not logging on, that
3 that is their – that's probably their main concern,
4 to understand what's happening with those students.
5 So, I trust that our principals are doing that and I
6 trust that our teachers are doing that and I would
7 also say, we've got social workers, guidance
8 counselors, parent coordinators and a whole host of
9 people who are engaging with families.

10 So, I do believe that there are definitely
11 efforts made by the staff to contact families and I
12 am sure that there are some students who have not
13 logged on.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well, just to point out to
15 you, the immigrant families I was speaking about
16 earlier that went to a nonprofit service provider.
17 They went to a community based organization. what
18 they shared with the provider was that they actually
19 did not get contacted and they went to the CBO to get
20 help and assistance to see if they can get a device.

21 So, I'm just concerned about those kids and those
22 school communities that you know, historically have
23 been very vulnerable and marginalized and right now,
24 they are just not being seen, they are just not being
25 heard. And so, I would appreciate an overall tally

1
2 of how many connections we have made with families
3 and have it by a school district breakdown as well,
4 to make sure that those who are certainly hardest hit
5 are getting the type of access and outreach and
6 support which they need. Which leads me to my next
7 question. Does the DOE have data on how many
8 students in our school system are receiving live
9 instruction?

10 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, I would say that live
11 instruction is - I will say first and foremost that
12 you know, when we started this on March 25th, it was
13 a matter of you know, getting our system up and
14 running and making sure that our teachers you know
15 had the professional development to do this kind of
16 work. And I'll have Linda talk in more detail, but I
17 think it's been an ongoing effort to make sure that
18 we are having live instruction for our students.

19 We've heard directly back from both families and
20 educators themselves around this work.

21 So, Linda, do you want to talk about that in more
22 detail?

23 DR. LINDA CHEN: Sure. While we don't have exact
24 data in terms of how many students are receiving it
25 for how long in those aspects. Chair, I appreciate

1
2 the question, it's an important one, especially given
3 the comments that Joshua made. The human connection
4 when we are in such isolation is so incredibly
5 important and just like if we were in a physical
6 environment, teachers are doing things that they are
7 similar to the physical environment.

8 I was able to visit a classroom one day and the
9 teacher who was very immune to all of this, so, I
10 think this gets to the important question you asked
11 earlier about just the technical capacity. This
12 teacher had never done any Google anything and this
13 was a month ago. She actually post a morning video
14 to welcome her first graders every morning and so,
15 she does that real lifetime as well.

16 So, it went from being able to learn how to
17 record and post to also being able to doing it live.
18 And so, those kinds of things just like you would
19 have a morning meeting in a classroom.

20 Teachers are also able to work with students in
21 smaller groups and arranging or coordinating
22 schedules with families so that they are available
23 during certain times and be able to differentiate. I
24 think also feedback that we've been getting is also
25 students who enjoy not only the interaction with the

1
2 teacher but also with each other and so, if you think
3 about the capacity of technological skills, it goes
4 from anywhere from having a whole group class where a
5 really appreciated story that was shared with me from
6 a teacher which was, you know, you learn how to
7 unmute everybody and that just made a world of
8 difference now in terms of the classroom management
9 in the sort of virtual setting.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Now, Dr. Chen, this is an
11 issue I think that speaks to inequity in our system
12 and I'll explain. We heard before from the DOE that
13 before many students receive their tablets because
14 there were shipment delays and issues with Apple and
15 Fed Ex and UPS, those schools that had technology
16 available in their school buildings, immediately
17 distributed that technology to their students, is
18 that correct?

19 DR. LINDA CHEN: Chair, yes, the principals
20 mobilized very quickly to look at what was available
21 so that students would have devices right away.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, and that is not the
23 case for every school community because not every
24 school community has all the laptops and tablets to
25 immediately distribute to kids. So, there are

1
2 certain school communities you know, in certain areas
3 of New York City that were more familiar with this
4 technology, were more familiar with remote learning
5 than you know, communities that do not have you know,
6 multimillion dollar you know, PTA or private fund
7 raising sources that could supplement technology and
8 supplement you know, all these apps and Zoom and
9 Google Meet and that's why I know that because when
10 this was kind of all starting, there were certain
11 folks that were very angry about the DOE not wanting
12 them to use Zoom and that caused a whole stir within
13 some communities and in Coney Island, they were
14 trying to make sure kids still had access to laptops
15 and technology and that was the case in many of my
16 colleagues districts in the South Bronx and Central
17 Brooklyn and other parts of the city where the
18 stories were, where is my tablet as opposed to, why
19 can't I use Zoom.

20 So, some communities have had a head start on
21 remote learning. Some communities and what that
22 means is that they might be more able to receive live
23 instruction than those communities that still need to
24 adjust to just getting a tablet and knowing how to
25

1
2 use it and making sure teachers are getting the
3 adequate support.

4 And so, I really think that this is an issue that
5 just speaks the kind of built in inequities already
6 within the school system because certain communities
7 were already working a remote learning before the
8 pandemic while many others are just learning on the
9 fly.

10 But I would like to get that number of how many
11 kids are getting live instruction and a break down by
12 school district. Where is that happening, where is
13 it not happening.

14 Just to move on because of interest of time for
15 my colleagues as well, how many social workers
16 connections have been made with students? I know the
17 DOE has you know, social workers, both school based
18 and central. Just curious to know the number of
19 social worker – and that can be whether it can be an
20 email, it could be a phone call, it could be a
21 virtual teletherapy. How many connections had social
22 workers made with students in our system?

23 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you. I'm going to ask
24 Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson to speak to that.

1
2 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you so much for that
3 question Chair Treyger and I would first like to
4 thank the Council for providing us with the supports
5 to increase the number of social workers that we have
6 in the school system. This of course was done pre-
7 COVID but it really positioned us to be able to
8 provide critical support during this important time.
9 So, we've been able to increase the number of school
10 response clinicians, social workers, bridging the gap
11 on social workers and at this point, virtually all
12 schools have access to a guidance counselor or social
13 worker. We shared this information and our most
14 recent council report social records have
15 transitioned also through remote learning. They are
16 providing teletherapy, virtual care, they are also
17 participating in wellness checks, especially at
18 bridging the gap social workers and they've been on
19 hand as you know, staff members and schools that have
20 been able to reach out to students and families.

21 For our wellness checks with our students and
22 temporary housing. We've been tracking the bridging
23 the gap social worker interactions with our young
24 people. The last count for our students in shelter,
25 this was about a week and a half or two weeks ago,

1
2 was over 14,000 connections with our bridging the gap
3 social workers and our staff members that support our
4 students in shelter. We can certainly provide you
5 with an updated number of course.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Deputy Chancellor
7 and I would definitely appreciate, you know, and I
8 appreciate your focus on children in temporary
9 housing and would like an overall broader picture of
10 how many overall connections our schools have made
11 using their counselor or social workers. I think it
12 would be very helpful for us to have a broader
13 picture.

14 Last final questions then turning over to my
15 colleagues for their questions. Summer school
16 programming: if a student has fallen behind because,
17 no fault of their own, because of this pandemic and
18 the challenges in adapting to this remote setting,
19 how will support be different and better? And in
20 particularly, I think about students in District 75
21 children who require school services 12 months of the
22 year. I think about students with IEP's that certain
23 services right now cannot be met because of the
24 pandemic. How will summer be different for those
25 kids who are falling behind no fault of their own?

1
2 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thanks Chair Treyger. I'll
3 start and then I'll have Linda add in. So, we are
4 increasing our capacity for summer programs this year
5 to accommodate 177,000 students. 27,000 of that
6 being students with 12 month IEP's. We recognize
7 that it's been a very challenging semester for our
8 students and I would also say we have learned a lot
9 of lessons in remote learning for this semester. And
10 I think that we are taking those lessons learned and
11 trying to adjust for the summer to make sure that it
12 is something that is engaging for our students and
13 also for our staff.

14 So, I'm going to hand it over to Linda to talk in
15 more detail about how we're going to engage our
16 families and students to make sure that they are
17 ready to move onto the next grade.

18 DR. LINDA CHEN: Thank you for that question
19 Chair Treyger. As Ursulina said, we have learned a
20 lot of lessons so far from the last couple of months.
21 So, the summer experience, we plan exactly for that.
22 How will it be different when the mode is still
23 remote.

24 So, we work with our labor partners and we looked
25 very closely at curricular programs that were

1
2 available especially through a learning management
3 system. And so, a vast majority of our students will
4 be able to engage in this learning management system,
5 so that it will provide the ability to push out the
6 same content in curriculum but also be able to – we
7 will also be able to track the kinds of things that
8 you're asking so that we know what parts of the
9 system the students are using and it's much more
10 responsive and robust. And we will have training
11 specifically for teachers around how to deliver a
12 live instruction and we are working on that
13 particularly and I'm glad you asked, for our students
14 with 12 month IEP's because they will need more and
15 differentiated types of live instruction.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Just because I don't know
17 if I heard a full answer earlier from Ursulina. We
18 heard and forgive me if it wasn't clear. I heard the
19 number of 177,000 students are planning to receive
20 services in the summer. How many social workers are
21 budgeted to work in the summer?

22 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I have to get back to you on
23 the number budgeted for social workers in particular.
24 I know that we are budgeting for roughly 6,000
25 teachers. So, I will get back to you right away on

1
2 that but we are hiring social workers as we speak for
3 the summer. Sorry, hiring meaning that they would
4 get procession work throughout the summer but I'll
5 get back to you on the numbers on social workers.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I would appreciate that
7 number Ursulina and you know, just to kind or remind
8 the DOE that according to research, the adequate
9 ratio for social workers students is one social
10 workers for every 250 students. I think that's
11 already universally understood. If we're having
12 177,000 students, many of which need added support,
13 it makes the ratio that much more important to make
14 sure that that support is reaching these kids and
15 these students.

16 So, I really believe that you know, the biggest
17 challenge a school system is facing in addition to
18 obviously the health and wellbeing of our kids and
19 our staff, is how do you help kids catch up? How do
20 you make up for the you know, months of lost
21 instruction which they will never get back? How do
22 you help kids find baseline? Even though for many
23 kids baseline was still inadequate because they were
24 shortchanged before the pandemic.

1
2 So, I think that this is where we really need to
3 press the Mayor's Office and the Administration to
4 double down on more support for social workers,
5 counselors, school psychologists, more than ever for
6 this summer.

7 I'm going to now turn it over to my colleagues
8 for their questions and I will turn to the Committee
9 Counsel to begin to call them up.

10 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you Chair
11 Treyger. I will now call on Council Members in the
12 order they have used the Zoom raise hand function.
13 We will be limiting Council Member questions and
14 answers to three minutes. The Sergeant at Arms will
15 keep a timer and will let you know when your time is
16 up.

17 We will be calling on – the first few will be
18 Council Member Lander.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Council Member, your time will
20 start now.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you very much and I
22 want to start first, I want to just join the Chair
23 and everyone else in like appreciation for what our
24 teachers are doing, what our students are doing, what
25 our families are doing and what all of you are doing.

1
2 Like this is impossibly hard and I know all of you
3 really care about it and the questions we ask about
4 how to make sure we're doing it as well as we
5 possibly can and paying attention to issues of equity
6 are motivated by a goal that I know is shared.

7 So, following on the set of questions that Chair
8 Treyger was asking at the end. I want to ask, I mean
9 around these issues of social and emotional supports,
10 which I think we're always behind on but now are even
11 more necessary because like every one of us is
12 disordered right now. Like the level of trauma is
13 just through the roof and then so much more difficult
14 to deliver. Tell me a little bit more about how you
15 are tracking it, how you are making sure schools are
16 doing their best to deliver it, like what information
17 are you collecting to keep an eye on whether schools
18 are doing it to levels of your satisfaction and what
19 are you reporting to us and what do you think you
20 should be reporting to us so we can do our job of
21 making sure that the system as a whole is showing up
22 for our students social and emotional needs this
23 moment?

24 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you Council Member
25 Lander and I appreciate your comment. I do think

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2 that you know, as you noted, I think we're all you
3 know, learning as we go here to a certain degree and
4 understanding the traumas our students are facing and
5 our staff are facing in how to adjust our self and
6 our work to that. And I do appreciate you know, you
7 all holding us accountable to serve the students
8 because that's what we're here to do.

9 I'm going to actually hand it over to my
10 colleague LaShawn Robinson who oversees this
11 portfolio and can talk in more depth about what we're
12 doing around social and emotional learning.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Alright, and just because
14 I'm on the mic, the clocks going to run out while
15 you're giving your answer. I'm going to add slightly
16 to that question. I guess two things, one, I don't
17 want to hear another here is what we're doing because
18 you said what you're doing and I appreciate that, so
19 it's not that I don't think you are doing it. I want
20 to know how are you measuring it? What are you
21 looking at that helps you evaluate it and what are
22 you giving us or what might you commit to give us so
23 we can evaluate it because it's good stuff you are
24 doing but we need the ability to look at where it's
25 being provided. see where it's not being provided and

1
2 follow up with resources. And I guess, if you can
3 just include in that answer, the work with the
4 contracted restorative groups as well as – because I
5 asked the Chancellor about this and he said yes,
6 we're continuing it. But we don't know where to look
7 to really see it and we need to get enough
8 information to be able to drill down on it.

9 So, I'll stop there and just take your answer.

10 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you. LaShawn?

11 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes, thank you so much for
12 that very important question. I had the
13 responsibility of serving as a school principal in a
14 transfer high school. I'm also a former social
15 worker.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

17 LASHAWN ROBINSON: So, when I think about having
18 an opportunity to come to the work with both of those
19 lenses, I often think about my own school social
20 worker and how we work to provide clinical supports
21 for students to ensure their overall general
22 wellbeing and success in school and working with them
23 on the ability to meet their goals.

24 So, it's a very individualized plan when you are
25 working with a young person as a clinician.

1
2 Sometimes their goals can be related to overcoming
3 some type of trauma. Sometimes the goal is related
4 to getting back on track academically. So,
5 clinicians work with you know, young people to
6 establish and meet those goals.

7 Through the school response clinicians that were
8 provided through support with Thrive and the safe
9 resilient NYC package where we were able to bolster
10 supports through a lot of what was afforded to us by
11 Council, thank you so much for your continued
12 support. We have started this school year tracking
13 metrics. I had actually some of the metrics that we
14 utilized for our school response clinicians. We
15 continue to collect this kind of data even during
16 COVID, so we can certainly share that data.

17 But we track data such as unique students served
18 by our school response clinicians. We also track
19 response time, so how soon do we have our school
20 response clinicians responding ongoing support. So,
21 is this something that's going to require ongoing
22 clinical care, fast data that we collect. So, we
23 have metrics that we utilize and I would be happy to
24 share those updated metrics with Council.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: We'd be eager to get them
3 so thank you.

4 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely.

5 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Can I also add a note and this
6 somewhat gets to your point Council Member Lander but
7 also to Chair Treyger's question earlier which is, we
8 are hiring roughly 2,800 social workers in the
9 summer. So, that's about a 1 to 63 ratio and you
10 know, that is a metric that we are using to Chair
11 Treyger's point, we understand that caseloads are
12 very large in a normal school setting, so making sure
13 that we are able to support our student during the
14 summer is really important.

15 So, I just wanted to make sure I got that number
16 to both of you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you very much and I
18 hope to be around when Marlin and William and the on
19 screen school students testify to support their
20 advocacy, but if I'm not, please know that you have
21 my support.

22 Alright, thank you Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Sure, and before we turn it
24 over to colleagues, I want to just make one clear
25 clarification for folks, that when we talk about

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2 school buildings being closed, technically over 440
3 are still open. This past Memorial Day when many
4 folks were able to be home, our extraordinary school
5 food workers, our school cleaners, school safety
6 crossing guards, were all working providing vital
7 life and death food, meals and assistance, masks, and
8 support to our families in need.

9 So, I just want to give an extraordinary
10 heartfelt thank you and acknowledgment for our
11 amazing school staff that are still working, putting
12 their lives on the line for our city and for New
13 Yorkers. I just want to acknowledge that.

14 We are also joined, I just want to acknowledge
15 them, their presence, Ulrich, Yeger, and Powers. And
16 with that, I'll turn to the Committee Counsel to call
17 on the next member for their questions.

18 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Next, we will hear from
19 Council Member Barron followed by Council Members
20 Kallos, Holden and Miller. Council Member Barron.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Council Member, your time will
22 start now.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. I want to
24 thank the Chair and I want to thank the panel for
25 being here and I also want to add my comments of

1
2 thanks to all of the school personnel who are working
3 so tirelessly to help educate our children during
4 this very trying time.

5 We know that the COVID virus has exposed a lot of
6 the institutional racism and inequity that exists in
7 our system. People are saying oh, we're all in the
8 same storm, the same boat, but we don't all have the
9 same kind of boat. Some of us are in Ocean liners
10 and some of us are in row boats and we want to be
11 sure that when this crisis comes to an end, whenever
12 that is, that we don't go back to the same ports that
13 we were in when we got into our boats.

14 So, this is an opportunity now for the Department
15 of Education to take some drastic moves to make sure
16 that Black and Brown communities are not sent back to
17 the same level of underfunding and understaffing and
18 under equipment that we had at the beginning.

19 So, I have a couple of questions. First of all,
20 I am very troubled to know that you don't have an
21 exact number of children who have not yet received
22 the device. That's very troubling to me because we
23 know that every child counts. We can't have one
24 child fall between a crack.

1
2 So, that's very troubling that you don't have an
3 exact number as to how many children still don't have
4 their own individual device because I've been told
5 that other children were sharing, so that's very
6 troubling. And I also want to know, how you are
7 explaining to the parents the partnership that you
8 referenced with I think it was WNET and with
9 libraries and with libraries and additionally I want
10 to know, in terms of planning for the reopening of
11 schools in September, how are you justifying going
12 forward with co-locations of Charter schools to be
13 able to take space from the existing schools that we
14 now know that children have to be at least 6 feet
15 apart and we are talking about well, in order to get
16 this space, we may have to go to a staggered
17 instructional day.

18 I don't understand how you can justify moving
19 forward with that plan of bringing in New co-
20 locations with charter schools. I also want to ask
21 you have you gotten any numbers about any increases
22 in teacher retirement. Which would again impact on
23 the ratio of teacher to student classroom size and
24 how are we going to make sure that we have ongoing -
25 is there a requirement for professional development

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2 on an ongoing basis that teachers have to participate
3 in? And is the Department of Education going to
4 fight to continue to have college access for all
5 because it's my belief that all children are entitled
6 to free education from 3K through post-secondary
7 education for at least two years.

8 So, that's a lot of questions, I hope you wrote
9 them down. Thank you.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

11 URSULINA RAMIREZ: That was a lot of questions
12 but I'm going to try to drop them down and I
13 apologize if I forgot any of them.

14 So really quickly on call college access for all,
15 I do you know, note that we did receive a budget cut
16 when it comes to college access for all. It doesn't
17 mean the entire budget was depleted. We still have
18 an anticipation that we're going to be supporting
19 that program and elements of it. So, I just want to
20 note that for the record.

21 In terms of PD, it is 100 percent both our vision
22 and what we do in the normal school year is to
23 provide ongoing professional development and we will
24 be you know, more of that is forthcoming. We're
25 thinking through both of our PD planning for the

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2 summer but also for the end of this school year
3 thinking about next school year.

4 To your question around devices. So, I will say
5 this Council Member Barron, this COVID-19, there were
6 inequities before COVID-19 to your point and this has
7 highlighted it even more so especially within Black
8 and Brown communities and I think we are all aware of
9 that and working every single day to address it.

10 In terms of devices, every single principal has a
11 list of their students and has an understanding if
12 that student has a device or not. We are working
13 through that list and from my understanding we have
14 delivered or I should say, we have shipped out over
15 300,000 devices to date, in addition to the 175,000
16 devices that went out before we handed out iPads.

17 Obviously, devices break. We learn about new
18 issues coming up every single day. We are working
19 urgently to get those kids devices. If you know of
20 somebody who does not have a device, we need to know
21 that right away because we are working at rapid speed
22 to get them there. And just, I know that folks are
23 you know, concerned about how we don't know every
24 single individual student. I have high expectations
25 and I believe everybody does, that our principals and

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2 teachers actually notice information and they
3 escalate this up to us at the central level to make
4 sure that we get those iPads in hand.

5 But I do expect more needs to be coming down the
6 line, don't get me wrong and so, we are thinking
7 through our game plan for if there are broken
8 devices, if students you know, lost it, whatever it
9 may be to make sure that we can supply those both now
10 and in the summer and in the fall. Your other
11 question around co-locations and kind of planning for
12 the fall. I will say, you know, we're planning for
13 the fall right now. It is incredibly complicated as
14 you all know and are aware. Not only for the space
15 issues in our co-located schools but just in some of
16 our larger comprehensive high schools. You know,
17 Brooklyn Tech is obviously an outlier with how many
18 students it has but you know, thinking through 6 feet
19 of distancing with you know, 4,500 students plus
20 staff is kind of ridiculous. So, it's very
21 complicated and you will hear more from us on that in
22 the coming weeks.

23 Around your questions around co-locations, that
24 we do a heavy amount of community engagement around
25 our co-locations and obviously there is a state law

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that either says that we need to provide space or we could pay for it. And that is, you know, that is the law as it is right now and obviously, if there is any feedback on that or thoughts on that moving forward, that would be great.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I have some.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: I'm sure you do. But I will say, you know, we have to think through not only the policies for fall that impact our individual schools but also the charter schools and non-pubs who look to us for guidance as well.

So, you'll hear in more detail in the coming weeks kind of what some of the things that we're thinking in terms of scenarios.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. Any indications of increases in teacher retirement?

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Oh, teacher retirement. I will have to get back to you on that. I don't know the number off the top of my head.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you.

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2 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Next, we will hear from
3 Council Member Kallos followed by Council Members
4 Holden, Miller and Dromm. Councilman Kallos.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Council Member, your time will
6 start now.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you to Chair
8 Treyger for your exhaustive questioning on our mutual
9 issue of the iPads. I have only got three minute
10 unlike the Chair, so I'm hoping we can get through a
11 lot of questions, if you can please avoid running the
12 clock and just answer the questions I'm asking
13 directly.

14 I've invested over \$5 million in laptops for my
15 district. What is the inventory or just plainly
16 stated, how many laptops does DOE have?

17 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I don't have that specific
18 number off the top of my head. I will have to get
19 back to you and you are talking about both schools
20 and Central correct?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Yes, as in like laptops
22 you can hand to students to reuse in a classroom.

23 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yeah, so right now I just want
24 you to know we've been going through an inventory of
25 all devices at the school level, both laptops, Chrome

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2 books, iPads, think through every single device that
3 we have. We are going through the inventory as we
4 speak. I just don't have the number and I know my
5 team does but I can get back to you on that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: How hard would it be to
7 get to 1.1 million devices and replace all the - next
8 question, do you believe it is a valued statement
9 that it is more equitable for every child to have a
10 keyboard and not just the children who can afford
11 laptops and that if you are a low income child on the
12 Bronx side of the digital divide, likely in a Black
13 and Brown community like my colleague Inez Barron has
14 mentioned, that you should have to just poke away at
15 your screen to type out a 500 word essay. Is it
16 equitable for everyone to have a keyboard?

17 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I think it is - I would like
18 all of our students to have a keyboard, yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Great, can we get to 1.1
20 million devices or just making sure every kid has
21 that keyboard in September.

22 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, when I mentioned the
23 inventory that we are doing currently, part of that
24 is to say how many devices - do we have enough to the
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2 one to one ratio, do we have enough devices in the
3 system as we speak to actually do that.

4 Also, we have funding coming down from the state
5 with the Smart Schools Bond Act. How do we use those
6 resources to make sure that that is also contributed
7 to the one to one ratio.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Amazing. Next piece,
9 we're currently burning \$3 million a month for the
10 it's Sprint or AT&T LTE cards. LTE is 5 megabits, so
11 it's fast for a cellphone but it's not actually
12 considered broadband according to the FCC is 30
13 megabits and in fact, anyone who has less than 100
14 megabits is going to be pretty unhappy. Spectrum, I
15 reached out to them, they are now offering free, as
16 in be free internet for 60 days, they've now extended
17 it to 120 days to any family that doesn't have it. I
18 let DOE know my daughter says hi and what do you call
19 it.

20 So, I think that the \$12 million we've already
21 spent or are planning to spend is more than free and
22 now, as we go into September and the possibility of a
23 second wave, we might have less. So, would the city
24 be open to a lower cost option that offers more
25 broadband -

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Working with folks to do that. I think the last piece if the Chair would indulge me. When I asked the Chancellor about this during the budget hearing, he indicated there were 20,000 iPads that haven't been distributed yet at a cost of \$700 plus each which is almost twice market. Is that opportunity to say, Apple, you can keep those 20,000 devices, we're going to take those \$14 million, we're going to use it to pay for SYEP, summer SONYC, after school. Just anything else other than these very expensive devices?

URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, thank you for that. So, I will be quick on my answers. So, one, we went through LT enabled because not everybody has access to broadband, as you are aware. Obviously, if there are cheaper options that actually get to an inequitable system where everybody has access to internet, I'm all ears and open to that. We're working with T Mobile to lower some of the pricing on the LT enabled devices.

In terms of your question on the iPads, we've actually now distributed over – or shipped out over 300,000 iPads to date. And to your questions on

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2 costs, yes, the costs, you know, are high and to me
3 that was just the price you had to pay to be able to
4 get students the devices that they need at the speed
5 in which we delivered them and I know that it's you
6 know, when we weighed all of the kind of
7 considerations and the vendors and what people had
8 available, Apple was the only folks who had 300,000
9 devices that I could quickly deliver. And in five
10 and a half weeks, we delivered 265,000 devices,
11 roughly 265,000 devices and that's bigger than most
12 school districts combined.

13 So, I just want to note that I understand the
14 costs and it is you know, as somebody who oversees
15 the financial arm and the IT arm, it's a big decision
16 but it was the right thing to do for our kids.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I agree and I think that
18 you were in a tough spot. I think the goal is just,
19 if we're heading into September, planning for the
20 best and also worried about the worst, we have three
21 months now to not be stuck with the only vendor on
22 the planet who could help us.

23 So, I think you were in a very tough position
24 with a specific goal in mind. My goal is to work
25 with you on inventory that – the laptops and get

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2 people the broadband so that we're not stuck locked
3 into one vender and one LT connection.

4 So, thank you. Thank you to the Chair for his
5 indulgence.

6 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Next, we will hear from
7 Council Member Holden followed by Council Members
8 Miller, Dromm and Rose. Council Member Holden.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Council Member, your time will
10 start now.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you Chair Treyger
12 for this great, great hearing. Can you explain what
13 updates Zoom made that caused the DOE to reconsider
14 its use early on?

15 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you so much. So, we
16 were really concerned about their end to end
17 encryption and this was early on and that was really
18 the thing that was able to have people doing Zoom
19 bombs, for lack of a better term.

20 So, they have addressed that and then
21 secondarily, we created a log in that is managed by
22 us at the DOE. So, we're giving out that log in to
23 schools, so that they can log in directly. That way
24 it's also a cost savings to the school level because
25 they were using their own resources to sign up for

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2 what we call the Zoom pro and now they don't have to
3 do that. But we work really closely with Zoom to
4 make these changes and they did it at a speed that
5 I'm very grateful for because we knew that our
6 schools and our students really enjoyed using Zoom.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, they did something
8 for DOE that they didn't do for anybody else around
9 the nation?

10 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I will say, you know, I don't
11 know what they were doing around the nation, I just
12 know that what we worked on with them and I know that
13 the AG's office had been working with them as well.

14 So, I believe that they made larger changes to
15 their platform.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, because we heard
17 from many principals, teachers, and parents that they
18 were frustrated with the alternatives to Zoom during
19 the period it was not in use. And with many opting
20 out of remote learning and using packets instead.
21 Some of the concerns were that the software, for
22 instance Microsoft Teams, Google Meets, Adobe Connect
23 were too clunky. Not user friendly and pose
24 problems. So, what did DOE do during the time that
25 Zoom was not being used to promote remote learning

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2 and fix whatever issues the educators and students
3 were having?

4 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, we offered, we provided
5 training on the IT side for Microsoft teams and
6 Google Hangs and Meets and that's what we were doing
7 at that time.

8 And then, obviously, we were subsequently working
9 really hard with Zoom to make sure that we can get
10 them back on one of our platforms as soon as possible
11 because we did hear a lot of feedback from teachers
12 and from principals around their usage of Zoom and
13 how important it was for them to their work.

14 So, you know, we were doing our best to provide
15 PD on those other platforms and understand that some
16 people took it up and some did not.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And you know, one common
18 complaint I've heard is that students are staying up
19 late and often did not wake up and show up to remote
20 classes. Do you think that changing the grading
21 policy contributed to the lack of incentives for
22 waking up and participating? Because that's the
23 major concern that we were seeing in the district.

24 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you so much for that.
25 I'm going to ask Deputy, or I should say, Chief

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2 Academic Officer Linda Chen to talk about the grading
3 policy. Go ahead Linda.

4 DR. LINDA CHEN: Yes, thank you for your question
5 Council Member Holden. As you know, we needed to
6 update the grading policy to respond to the
7 circumstance that we're in and every student responds
8 differently and we wanted to make sure that they were
9 duly engaged and also to make sure that it was fair
10 in consideration of a holistic assessment of the
11 students learning.

12 So, for high school, we kept the current grading
13 policies and made sure that a student would not fail
14 of course because of this but would have course in
15 progress so that they could finish this and the
16 expectation is still unchanged. That they would need
17 to complete their course knowing that students may
18 need some flexibility in how they demonstrate their
19 learning and what time they have.

20 We also know that some of our students are
21 working and taking care of families. So, we wanted
22 to make sure there is that flexibility for them to be
23 able to demonstrate their learning. And for our
24 middle school students, they would also be assessed
25 on whether to what degree they met the standards,

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2 where they needed improvement or if they also have a
3 course in progress that needs to be finished. And
4 for elementary students, whether they met the
5 standards or they needed improvement and those marks
6 would help us also identify to many of your
7 colleagues questions around the lack of access and
8 opportunity.

9 We wanted to make sure that also helps us
10 determine what our young people need for the summer
11 and so, for summer school, we do have additional
12 opportunities for learning for young people to
13 complete their course or to be better prepared and
14 ready for school in the following year.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Can I ask one second,
16 Chair, one other follow up to that? Am I muted?

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, you have a follow
18 question Council Member Holden.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, on the, because the
20 Chancellor did tell me that you were reaching out on
21 the grading policy, reaching out to several groups
22 and I asked my CEC, they weren't consulted on the
23 grading policy, nor was any PTA that I've been in
24 contact with. Can you tell me who you reached out to
25 on the grading policy? Because my district, we had

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2 no, actually, we didn't get any information on the
3 grading policy until it was handed down.

4 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I'm going to ask Deputy
5 Chancellor Adrienne Austin to make some additions
6 there. Thank you, Adrienne. Sorry, she is on mute,
7 oh, there we go.

8 ADRIENNE AUSTIN: Thank you. Hi, thanks for the
9 question. So, we did engage with parent leaders
10 before the policy was rolled out. We attended a
11 special meeting by the Education Council Consortium
12 which happened to have representation from all of the
13 CEC's across the city. We also had a meeting with
14 CPAC where we talked about the grading policy. Every
15 Friday, I have a meeting with the Executive Board of
16 the Education Council Consortium which again, are all
17 members of CDC's across the city and with the
18 leadership of CPAC. And so, I spoke with them about
19 it.

20 We also had a meeting with Place NYC which also
21 again has a lot of particularly in your district, CDC
22 members who are representatives of Queens and then
23 parts of Manhattan. So, that was the engagement, it
24 was a very sort of rapid engagement. The policy was
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2 implemented in a timeframe that will be helpful for
3 our principals and our schools and our parents.

4 I will say that we do have another engagement
5 that's ongoing on admissions and we are doing a
6 broader engagement for that and actually we are
7 kicking off bay the admissions policy engagement
8 today and we're doing a public meeting in all of the
9 boroughs.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you Chair for the
11 extra time, I appreciate it. Thank you all.

12 ADRIENNE AUSTIN: Thank you.

13 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Next, we will hear from
14 Council Member Miller followed by Council Members
15 Dromm, Rose, Ampry-Samuel, and Levin. Council Member
16 Miller.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Council Member, your time will
18 start now.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Thank you very much and
20 thank you so much to Treyger for your leadership and
21 this important hearing. Obviously, my community and
22 members of the Black community. I am very concerned
23 about the equity issues in DOE that have manifested
24 itself into this disparities that were seen.

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2 So, my line of questions is coming out of COVID
3 and what next year looks like, what have we learned
4 and what will we be doing differently. What support
5 are we going to have including, I know that the
6 Deputy Chancellor had mentioned that each school had
7 access to social workers and psychologists. What
8 precisely does that mean when we have schools that
9 share one social worker and psychologist between
10 three and four schools? What does access mean when
11 it comes to equitability and then in terms of also,
12 we talked about professional development, is there a
13 consistency and continuity in professional
14 development where schools are teaching and teaching
15 the method of teaching and what they are teaching may
16 be different. And so, which also in my mind
17 perpetuates those types of inequities.

18 What are we doing in terms of the continuity of
19 professional development and support for all of our
20 school community as we move forward into 2020-2021.

21 And I want to end by just thanking the entire
22 body of our school community from CSA, UFT, and DCW7
23 and 32BJ and everybody else who is in the building.
24 I want to thank them for getting our students, for
25

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2 continuing to support our most vulnerable and look
3 forward to your answers.

4 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you so much Council
5 Member Miller. I heard two major points and I will –
6 if I have missed any, I apologize and you can correct
7 me.

8 In terms of lessons learned, I think that
9 obviously we are learning every single day as you
10 know, remote learning continues on and one of the
11 major lessons learned I should say from my vantage
12 point was making sure that to earlier points, that we
13 really have access to technology for all of our
14 students. And so, making sure in the fall that we
15 are set up for success for all of our kids in the
16 case that we would continue in the remote learning
17 setting.

18 I would also recommend that you know, in terms of
19 lessons learned, how earlier on we can engage
20 families to make sure that they feel supported
21 throughout the remote learning process.

22 To your question around key D, I'm going to hand
23 it over to CAO Linda Chen to talk about what the kind
24 of continuity of professional development looks like.

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2 DR. LINDA CHEN: Thank you for the question as
3 well. It's an important one and we are working
4 closely with our labor partners that you've also
5 identified, to make sure that -

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

7 DR. LINDA CHEN: We are working together to move
8 toward the shared goal of all of our workforce being
9 ready and able to support our students, especially
10 during this time.

11 So, there are a number of kinds of professional
12 development that would occur anyway. Things around
13 learning their content. Learning things about
14 students and how to teach. In the specific
15 circumstance that we're in with COVID, we want to
16 make sure that more than ever, the social and
17 emotional learning affect are incredibly important to
18 be able to connect with students and to get to know
19 them and to be able to know, what are those standards
20 that they need to learn grade by grade.

21 And so, as we are getting ready for closing up
22 the school year, we are also working with our
23 teachers to think about what are those priority
24 standards of all the things that we need to learn and
25 be - to gain mastery and what are those things that

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2 are hugely important. Those are some of the
3 professional learning topics what we will provide in
4 the summer.

5 And lastly, the third part I would say in
6 addition to social, emotional learning and being very
7 efficient about the content and the most important
8 standards to learn is the piece around how to deliver
9 instruction.

10 So, as many of your colleagues have asked
11 earlier, that the importance of being able to be
12 comfortable with technology and the options that it
13 can provide to be able to virtually put students in
14 groups, for it to be able to connect personally,
15 those are all aspects and tools of the trade that we
16 are now ramping up as well as we move into the fall
17 knowing that these skills will be helpful and
18 whenever a scenario in which we return.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Thank you. Thank you
20 Chair Treyger.

21 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Next, we will hear from
22 Council Member Dromm followed by Council Members
23 Rose, Ampry-Samuel, and Levin. Council Member Dromm.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Council Member, your time will
25 start now.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very much. Can
3 you hear me?

4 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yeah.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Okay, great, good to see
6 you all. Thank you for attending the hearing. I
7 have some good news for you. I just got off of a
8 Zoom conference while we are still in this
9 conference. I'm learning how to do that now,
10 multitasking right.

11 URSULINA RAMIREZ: You could provide PD to our
12 teachers.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Yes, no, no, no, no, that
14 I can't do. So, if I were still teaching, I don't
15 know what I would have done. But anyway, and they
16 said that all of their computers have arrived. They
17 have arrived on time; they have been there with the
18 grab and go meals and they are very pleased with the
19 Departments response. You know, that's a very large
20 shelter, 800 people live in that shelter, so I
21 appreciate that effort on your behalf.

22 At the beginning of the testimony, I heard
23 reference to the LGBT programs, and I'm just
24 wondering if you can give me some more details on
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2 that and also, about payments to them. Can you give
3 me an update on what's happening with that?

4 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I'm going to defer to Deputy
5 Chancellor LaShawn Robinson on the substance of kind
6 of what's happening there. In terms of payments, I
7 will work with my team to see you know, what the
8 status update is to make sure that they get paid. We
9 were prioritizing COVID response payments first and
10 foremost and I will see if they have gotten – or if
11 there is a check on its way. I will confirm.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: And Ms. Ramirez, before we
13 go to Ms. Robinson, the payments, what I'm really
14 just concerned about is the transition to remote
15 learning.

16 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I see, okay.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: If it qualifies. Since
18 they were mentioned in the testimony, it would
19 obviously then qualify for the most part.

20 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yeah, yeah. I will get back
21 to you on that one Council Member Dromm. LaShawn, do
22 you want to talk about our work with LGBT students?

23 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Absolutely and thank you so
24 much Council Member Dromm for your continued support
25 for our LGBTQ students. We have indeed continued

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2 this very important work for our students and school
3 communities. We've continued our partnership with
4 the Yankees for the Stonewall Scholarship as an
5 example. We continue to review and interview for you
6 know to really be able to determine who the
7 recipients will be. We continue with support for our
8 GSA's and I would like to just give a shout out to
9 the Office of Safety and Youth Development and Eric
10 for his leadership. We continue to work with the
11 LGBTQ Center on virtual meet ups for students. We
12 are looking forward to pride month and we have some
13 exciting activities scheduled including Mindful
14 Monday's.

15 So, we can absolutely continue to prioritize and
16 support this body of work.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

18 LASHAWN ROBINSON: We are working with the
19 Stonewall Inn for our virtual tours. We have some
20 scheduled this month and next month. So, we are
21 creative, we're listening to our students and our
22 GSA's and we are responding with supports, resources,
23 and activities.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Okay, thank you very much.

25 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you sir.

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2 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Next, we'll hear from
3 Council Member Rose followed by Council Members
4 Ampry-Samuel and Levin. Council Member Rose.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Council Member, your time will
6 start now.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Okay, thank you. I'm
8 concerned about the REC's and what criteria was used
9 to determine the placement and location of them. The
10 only REC on the North Shore in Staten Island was
11 closed Friday March 27th, after being open only four
12 days. And on the same day that it was announced that
13 the criteria for eligibility was being widened.

14 Parents were asked to relocated with less than a
15 weeks' time burdening them and their hectic
16 schedules. Can you tell me currently how many
17 parents are utilizing REC's on Staten Island and how
18 many are from the North Shore and do you consider
19 this equitable distribution and serves the needs of
20 the most vulnerable?

21 And my next question is, what is the status of
22 the implicit bias and cultural competency trainings
23 and contracts that had been going on pre-COVID-19?
24 Has the DOE explored remote trainings and how have
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2 professional development trainings continued in
3 general?

4 And I want to thank Joshua for his articulation
5 of the realities of students learning remotely.
6 Thank you.

7 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you so much Council
8 Member Rose. So, when we opened up our regional
9 enrichment centers, it was based on a handful of
10 factors, access to trains, making sure that we had
11 them in every single district looking at the kitchen,
12 in terms of how the accessibility to make sure that
13 we have an accessible location for our students with
14 disabilities.

15 So, those are all kind of key factors in making
16 those decisions. When we decided to close the
17 enrichment centers as you mentioned, a few days, you
18 know, I would like less than a week before we
19 launched them. It was really based on what we were
20 seeing in terms of the demand. We sent out
21 enrollment to a lot of students and we didn't get a
22 lot of attendance and in the site that you were
23 discussing, we only had and I would say it was, I
24 think it was less than ten students who had showed up
25 that week.

1
2 Oh, oh, I could be incorrect. Okay, okay, and I
3 apologize if the number is wrong. I want to make
4 sure I get the right numbers and that I get the
5 breakdown for Staten Island for you. I don't have
6 that off the top of my head.

7 So, I mean, these are tough decisions for us in
8 terms of how we make decisions on when we're going to
9 close the enrichment centers.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Did you think that this was
11 an equitable distribution of the services and that it
12 served the most vulnerable population?

13 URSULINA RAMIREZ: That is served the most
14 vulnerable population in what sense?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Yes, that in terms of
16 essential workers that had to go to work.

17 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Time is expired.

18 URSULINA RAMIREZ: So, I mean, I think that we
19 were making a judgment based on both the enrollment
20 and the usage and the location to make decisions on
21 which enrichment centers we were going to close and
22 to your point, it was really important to us that you
23 know, our workers are essential workers as well. Our
24 food staff, the enrichment center staff. And I
25 wanted to make sure that when we were sending staff

1
2 there that we were doing it in a way that made sense
3 and that there were students there for them to serve.

4 So, we had to think about all those things to
5 make sure that we were not putting our staff at risk
6 unnecessarily when we had a location that was in
7 closer proximity and I understand your concerns
8 Council Member Rose around the closure of that site
9 and you know, I will say that the closure of all the
10 sites has not been an easy one for us. We still have
11 capacity in all of the enrichment centers and would
12 like to work with you to make sure that the families
13 that need it have access to other locations on Staten
14 Island.

15 To you question around implicit bias training, I
16 want to hand it over to my colleague LaShawn Robinson
17 to talk in more detail about the work that we're
18 doing on IB training for our staff.

19 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Thank you so much Ursulina and
20 thank you so much for that question Council Member.
21 We are excited to share that we have continued the
22 important work of implicit bias sessions and the
23 cultural responsiveness, professional learning
24 opportunities. We launched or relaunched I should
25 say last week on a virtual platform. We had over

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2 2,000 staff members who signed up teachers eager to
3 get back and you know, get involved.

4 The site that we launched, it has modules where
5 some of the modules educators have an opportunity to
6 progress at their own pace and then some of the
7 modules, the final module is facilitated by one of
8 the implicit bias staff members. We brought a lot of
9 that training in house. It's facilitated by DOE
10 employees and I really want to thank Council. When
11 we had the initial launch almost two years ago now, I
12 believe. Council certainly supported with providing
13 fiscal resources for implementation.

14 So, certainly, I'd like to thank Council for that
15 continued support. My time is up.

16 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Next we will hear from
17 Council Member Ampry-Samuel followed by Council
18 Member Levin.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Council Member, your time will
20 start now.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Good afternoon
22 everyone. I hope everyone is well. My question is
23 really related to of course, the transfer students as
24 well as the over aged junior high school students.
25 Many of our vulnerable students were, everyone knows

1
2 at a disadvantage prior to the pandemic and we
3 already talked about even during this hearing, the
4 challenges that so many of our students face during
5 the pandemic.

6 So, I'm not really talking about the students
7 that were already on track academically. I'm just
8 talking about the really vulnerable students who were
9 in communities like the ones I serve where they have
10 already been facing many challenges and trauma. And
11 so, I'm just trying to get a sense of what else are
12 you doing as far as engagement with the specific
13 students that work hard to assist and help last year?
14 You know the ones that were barely showing up to
15 school and are really struggling.

16 But now, you know, I know that the attendance
17 teachers you know are calling and there is a whole
18 engagement effort but can you just kind of talk us
19 through like what's really happening and what's the
20 feasibility of continuing with remote learning for
21 those individual students who are already struggling.
22 And you know, again, I mentioned the transfer
23 students, the transfer high school students were also
24 that overaged junior high school student. That 15
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2 year old student that's in the 7th grade going into
3 the 8th grade.

4 So, can you speak to what you are doing, what DOE
5 is doing with those particular students and their
6 families.

7 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you so much
8 Councilwoman. I'm going to have LaShawn Robinson
9 talk about what we're doing with in terms of
10 engagement. I'm also going to ask our First Deputy
11 Chancellor Cheryl Watson-Harris to talk about what
12 our transfer schools or I should say our transfer
13 school staff are doing to support those students who
14 are over age and under credited. Deputy Chancellor
15 Robinson?

16 LASHAWN ROBINSON: Yes. The transfer school
17 model and those school communities are certainly near
18 and dear to my heart and I really appreciate your
19 question Council Member because these are the
20 students that you certainly have to go the extra mile
21 for. Many of these schools are set up with support,
22 the support of a CBO partner. They have additional
23 resources on hand. I like to say they were some of
24 our very first community school models and we
25 leverage all of those resources and supports

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2 understanding that many of our older young people,
3 especially our young people in transfer schools maybe
4 shouldering additional home responsibilities during
5 this time.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

7 LASHAWN ROBINSON: When I was a transfer school
8 principal, many of my young people in addition to
9 their schoolwork, they also had jobs and you know, I
10 had moms who were a part of my school.

11 So, just additional responsibilities from that
12 lens. We have our counselors and our teachers
13 checking in for engagement through wellness checks.
14 Many of those schools have advocates who are part of
15 CBO'S or part of the school staff who serve as the
16 one point person for young people and sure enough,
17 they meet their progress goals towards graduation.

18 The young person who spoke earlier, Joshua, who
19 shared his story with us, which I really appreciate,
20 that school, Liberation Diploma Plus, has one of the
21 five school response clinicians, a high need social
22 worker place there to support their needs.

23 So, we have a plethora of resources and supports
24 that are available. I know that our Deputy
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2 Chancellor, First Deputy Chancellor Watson-Harris you
3 know, can share a little bit more.

4 CHERYL WATSON-HARRIS: Yes, thank you so much DC
5 Robinson for giving that huge overview and thank you
6 so much for the question. As DC Robinson shared,
7 schools are near and dear to our hearts and
8 definitely a priority.

9 I could just share another specific example, at
10 Brooklyn Democracy, which is a school in District 23
11 and some of the things that they've done quite
12 successfully over this time of remote learning,
13 they've actually increased their attendance by 33
14 percent. And they've done that by the use of success
15 mentors who have been partnered with individual
16 students, the very students that you highlighted in
17 your question and the success mentors have done this
18 work by actions such as parent check-ins,
19 conversation templates for families, wellness checks,
20 needs assessments and conferences, parent teacher
21 conferences throughout this time of remote learning.

22 This school has also created a re-engagement team
23 that's looking and tracking our highest needs
24 students and reaching out to them and developing
25 ongoing mentoring relationships.

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2 On a systemic level, we also are thinking about
3 how we are going to use summer school in the summer
4 months to re-engage any students who have been off
5 track and to make sure that we are providing the
6 necessary resources and services to fill in the gaps
7 to get them back on track.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Can you just speak
9 to the over aged junior high school students, because
10 that's the real challenge and clearly what we're
11 seeing with a lot of young people with the gang
12 activity and in different challenges in the community
13 overall, we find that as you know something specific
14 that I would love to be able to you know, help and
15 assist in any kind of way. So, can you speak to
16 whats happening with the over aged junior high
17 school?

18 CHERYL WATSON-HARRIS: Yes, and thank you for
19 your partnership and invitation to partner to support
20 that group of students. As you know, we have an
21 access Executive Superintendent Dr. Tim Lacante[SP]
22 as well as his ECL supports.

23 They also are utilizing some of the same
24 strategies that we just spoke about with Brooklyn
25 Democracy to really target those students to case

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2 manage them and to provide additional supports for
3 re-engagement, as well as supports for families but
4 we most certainly can follow up with you to discuss
5 the plans for supporting and re-engaging our over age
6 middle school students and would welcome the
7 partnership.

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you Chair.
10 Thank you.

11 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Our final line of
12 questioning comes from Council Member Levin.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Council Member, your time will
14 start now.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you, thank you very
16 much for your testimony. I wanted to ask about best
17 practices elsewhere because you know, every city in
18 America is dealing with the similar challenges that
19 you all are dealing with. Obviously, we're the
20 largest school system but that does not necessarily
21 mean that we can't learn from other jurisdictions.
22 What other cities, how are you communicating with
23 other cities to find best practices and what are you
24 learning, who is doing innovative things? Who has
25

1
2 shown real success and done things that we would like
3 to emulate?

4 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you Council Member
5 Levin. So, I would say that obviously across the
6 state, we talked to different school board members
7 and obviously the Regents and some superintendents
8 and in addition to that, we also have conversations
9 with the Council of great city schools to see what
10 they are learning throughout this process and
11 thinking through their plans for the fall.

12 So, we're definitely working alongside I would
13 say a lot of the larger districts in New York State
14 but also across the nation and learning about what
15 they are doing. I would say that, you know, my
16 assessment is you know, we're learning a lot about
17 what they are thinking about for the fall. In terms
18 of right now, I think that our teachers are doing
19 some really remarkable work in comparison to other
20 districts and I'm not sure I might be, you know, too
21 boastful of our own staff here but I think that folks
22 are all basically looking to us about what we're
23 doing.

24 In terms of other lessons, you know, learned from
25 them around kind of device purchases and you know

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2 what the one to one ratio looks like in those
3 districts has been really interesting for us. I
4 think the difficult part of for us is obviously our
5 size. It's hard to take a look at those districts
6 when they are significantly smaller in scope and have
7 just a different set of populations that they are
8 serving. But Linda, do you have anything to add in
9 terms of other lessons that you think that we're
10 learning from an academic standpoint?

11 DR. LINDA CHEN: Yes. So, as Ursulina said, we
12 have weekly meetings actually with different role
13 alike groups if you will. With the Council of the
14 Great City schools, so the Chief Academic Officers
15 have one as well as Special Education and English
16 Language learners and so, we talk about anywhere from
17 how do we provide services in better ways for our
18 special needs students.

19 And I would say that I echo Ursulina's comments,
20 we go to these meetings, we do lots of things but
21 people are also asking us what are the things that we
22 did because we were one of the first school districts
23 to start remote learning.

24 I would say on the instructional standpoint,
25 there is a certain infrastructure that other school

1
2 districts have. Again, partially because of size.

3 When they have a learning management system –

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

5 DR. LINDA CHEN: It provides the ability to get
6 information more rapidly and quickly and more
7 effectively as well as be able to track the kinds of
8 engagement that is being used.

9 So, that is definitely something we've been
10 learning a lot about from other districts as well as
11 within our own system. We have schools that have a
12 management system and that's also helpful to.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So, I'm just curious, so,
14 cities like say San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Los
15 Angeles that are in areas that have you know, where
16 there is a lot of tech innovation happening and you
17 know, a willingness with the industry to work with
18 local school districts. Is there anything in
19 particular that we're learning from on a technology
20 perspective that from those districts that we don't
21 have access to that we would like access to?

22 DR. LINDA CHEN: I think it's more along the
23 lines of what I mentioned to LAUSD for instance use
24 the schoology and they have a learning management
25 system and so, there is a mechanism in which we've

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2 been learning how they can push out curriculum
3 content and be able to track work. And so, what we
4 are doing is because we don't have that systemwide
5 across 1 million students in 1,800 schools, we are
6 trying to make our best proxies for that in terms of
7 how do we ensure that on the data end, we can build
8 some infrastructure to do the same things that their
9 systems are doing and also around digital content.

10 So, we have been learning a lot around how we can
11 - so we set up Teach Hub very quickly. Some of these
12 lessons were lessons learned from other places where
13 they were able to have all of this information at the
14 fingertips of teachers. And so, we learned some of
15 those kinds of things and we're trying to work with a
16 number of partners and funding that can help us do
17 some of those things and stand those things up.

18 And so, it's really been an incredible
19 opportunity to be able to share best practices in
20 terms of this institution.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank so much. I'll turn
22 it back to the Chair. Thank you all.

23 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Actually, we have
24 questions from Council Member Brannan.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you Chair.

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Council Member, your time
3 starts now.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you Chair. Really
5 quick, I just wanted to, I don't think anyone else
6 had asked it but I wanted to just get an idea, as far
7 as STEM programs and stuff like the Urban Advantage
8 program, with obviously, you know, social distancing
9 and remote learning makes hands on stuff a little bit
10 difficult. What is DOE doing to support the science
11 educators who might not have access to labs and other
12 scientific tools right now?

13 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you Council Member.
14 Linda, do you want to address that?

15 DR. LINDA CHEN: Thank you for the question.
16 It's a great one and we have been trying to learn all
17 different ways to be able to provide instruction
18 virtually and the good thing is, there are lots of
19 great resources out there especially around STEM.

20 So, during the week that we would have had a
21 spring break if you will, we had a FEMA day if you
22 will and CS, Computer Science was one of those days
23 and we had - our team worked really hard to make sure
24 that we could take simple items that can be more
25 commonly found in homes and in apartments to be able

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2 to do some of the hands on types of things. You are
3 absolutely right, it's very hard to completely you
4 know, reproduce a lab experience. There are ways to
5 do it if you have some other tools but that is what
6 we have across the system.

7 We've been able to partner with organizations
8 like Discovery that have a lot of digital content, a
9 vast amount of digital content. So, some of the
10 things we were able to do are also virtual field
11 trips and it's been great to hear from our teachers
12 because some of our young people have now been
13 virtually to some places that they hadn't been
14 before.

15 So, we are constantly scouring more information
16 and resources to be able to provide to our teachers,
17 especially around STEM. I think there are in some
18 ways some more opportunities because, even around
19 math if you will, there are lots of programs we also
20 partner with the academy where we are able to more
21 precisely understand where our students needs are and
22 put them into a learning pathway that is best suited
23 for what their needs are. In especially mathematics
24 where it's a very sort of cumulative set of skills
25 that you need to learn and part of what we are doing

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2 right now is making sure we help teachers understand
3 what certain key concepts are foundational to the
4 next set of concepts that the students would need to
5 learn and technology allows us the opportunity to be
6 able to make that more readily available.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay, thank you.

8 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Before concluding the
9 Administration testimony, I will turn it back to
10 Chair Treyger for closing words.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. I just – just
12 as I was listening to my colleagues who was asking
13 questions, some folks shared with me the survey that
14 the DOE gave out for folks to fill out on their
15 experiences with remote learning and I was just
16 taking some notes on questions that I did not see
17 asked. I'm going to list off some questions that I
18 think could have and should have been asked but were
19 not. And if anyone from DOE can reply to me or
20 respond why weren't such questions asked and I will
21 go through my list.

22 Do students have other home responsibilities?
23 Have their parents lost or has a parent lost their
24 job during the pandemic? Have financial
25 circumstances changed since the start of the

1
2 pandemic? How often do they speak with their
3 friends? Do they have a quiet space where they live,
4 so they can learn and do work quietly? Do they share
5 a device with others where they live? Have they
6 experienced any loss in their immediate family? Are
7 they working now as essential workers and are their
8 parents essential workers? And who for them to do
9 some self-reflection about their state of physical
10 and mental health and trauma.

11 These were items that were not asked and not
12 mentioned in the survey that was given out to
13 students and families to fill out. Can anyone from
14 DOE respond why?

15 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Well, I'll start and then I'll
16 have Linda add in. So, I think some of your
17 questions and I totally understand kind of the
18 rationale to ask them.

19 What I would fear if I saw a question around kind
20 of my financial status and about you know, my work or
21 my families work is that that's really sensitive for
22 a lot of families and I am nervous that that would be
23 a deterrent for some families to fill it out and
24 while I totally 100 percent the intent, I think that
25 you know to have maximum participation, we want to

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make sure that people feel comfortable with asking the questions.

With that being said, you did ask some additional questions that I think are interesting and you know, we should kind of think through what you know, in terms of how we can get that kind of information from our families.

Chief Academic Officers Linda Chen, do you want to add anything there?

DR. LINDA CHEN: Sure. So, Chair Treyger, I really appreciate the questions that you posed. I think those are important questions. We plan to do more surveys and we may consider doing that. This survey is still open, but I think those are critically important questions. Some of them as Ursulina said maybe a bit to sensitive. We ask questions more technical in nature of access to technology, communication, school support and student learning and I think that if we have the opportunity to reissue another survey, there are a number of questions here that were just very thoughtful that you raised as a next tier. Supports that would really help us have better considerations for how we plan for a return as well as a strong finish.

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2 So, I do appreciate those questions and we will
3 certainly keep you updated through our routine check-
4 ins in terms of if we are able to provide another
5 survey. Certainly, the ones that you pose are
6 incredibly important pieces of information to know.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, the reason why I raise
8 the issue of the financial circumstances in the home
9 and I am mindful of the sensitivities there. Is that
10 there was a recent Daily News story that highlighted
11 a student in my district who is an essential worker
12 and is working to support her family at home in a
13 grocery store but is being marked absent every day
14 you know, because she is not logging on to the
15 tablet. And so, I do believe that there is some
16 relevance on how finances are impacting our students
17 learning and outcomes.

18 You know, we have I think over 20 million or 30
19 million Americans unemployed in New York City. The
20 numbers are rising by the day. I do believe that
21 there is an impact that's taking place on our
22 students and some students in the high school
23 universe are now being asked to work to support their
24 families at home. They are essential workers. Some
25 students as we've heard from many parents and from

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2 other school communities require the help and support
3 of a parent or some other adult in the home but if
4 the parents themselves are essential workers, if mom
5 is a nurse, if mom or dad is a bus driver helping for
6 the city to function, I do think there is some
7 relevance. And I think that that is the balance we
8 should strike in asking these types of questions and
9 whether they experience loss because trauma is real
10 and I think we have a better scope of the full
11 impacts that our kids are experiencing. Would you
12 all agree?

13 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I mean, I 100 percent agree
14 with that statement and I think you know, it might be
15 best for us to engage students on how they want to be
16 asked these questions. Because I do think that you
17 are raising a fair point around the traumas that our
18 students are facing in terms of working and
19 supporting their families, I think that our students
20 are doing now and I also think that they were doing
21 that when we were in our normal instruction and how
22 do we accommodate those students who are really
23 trying to just make ends meet for their family. So,
24 I agree with that statement and definitely want to

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2 work with you to see how we can address that moving
3 forward.

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5 Can I just make one other point Chair Treyger
6 because I want to just correct the record and I
7 apologize. This is what happens when you are trying
8 to answer you and read your text messages at the same
9 time.

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10 So, I was in correct in my statement around 2,800
11 social workers. That is actually for the summer,
12 that's how many people we expect to apply for the
13 role. That that is the not the number in which we
14 plan on hiring. The hiring number is roughly 170
15 social workers. So, I do want to come back to you
16 and work with you around your question around the
17 ratio because I think that that is a fair point and
18 making sure that our students are being supported
19 throughout the summer. Because as you noted, you
20 know, it's a really difficult time for all of our
21 families. In particular these students who obviously
22 need improvement and have to go to summer school.

22

23 So, I'll circle back with you to work with you on
24 the ratio question.

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25 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well, I would say that
26 2,800 is much better than 170 even though we need a

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2 lot and what I would just note is that, and I
3 understand that we're in a fiscal crisis but I think
4 that these are the decisions that are more magnified
5 now. If that is going to be correct, that a 170
6 social workers for 170,000 or so kids, that's like a
7 1 to 1,000 ratio and you know, that is kind of where
8 things are at now and normal is not going to cut it.
9 We can't go back to that mentality; it's not going to
10 cut it. These are kids that if we don't double down
11 and add more support, we're going to lose them and
12 we're not going to get them back and I am the
13 optimist and I always want to be positive about all
14 these items, we're going to lose these kids. And so,
15 I will do whatever I can from the Council's end and
16 work with - we need to get these kids more social
17 workers and support staff. We cannot - this pain
18 could quickly become generational and that is where
19 we have to draw a line.

20 So, I would really like to work with you and the
21 Admin on adding more support for these kids.

22 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you so much.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Final question. In light
24 of the fact that the June Regents Exams were
25 cancelled due to COVID-19, the State Education

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2 Department is issuing the exemptions for students who
3 would normally have had to pass Regents Exams for
4 graduation. Exemptions are supposed to be available
5 for any student who have earned credit in a course
6 that culminates in a Regents Exam.

7 However, I have heard that DOE is interpreting
8 this exemptions as only applying to those who have
9 taken and passed a specific series of courses. Why
10 is DOE interpreting it this way when clearly this
11 will prevent many students from graduating?

12 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you for that question.
13 Linda Chen, do you want to take a shot at that
14 answer?

15 DR. LINDA CHEN: Sure. I appreciate the question
16 and it is hugely important to ensure that our young
17 people are able to be able to meet the graduation
18 requirements and especially under the special
19 considerations and guidance the New York State
20 Education Department has provided around Regents
21 waivers.

22 As far as we are understanding, we are working
23 very closely with them and have interpreted the
24 guidelines as written and we can circle back to them
25 again but that is our interpretation. We certainly

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2 are not working to create obstacles for students but
3 we want to make sure that we are not putting them at
4 risk if we are not following the guidelines closely.

5 So, I will certainly reassess that situation and
6 ask again to make sure that we are indeed in
7 alignment but as far as we understand, we are in
8 alignment with what the guidelines have been
9 provided.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I'd like to follow up
11 you Dr. Chen about some of the cases that we are
12 hearing about, where there is some contention around
13 this issue.

14 And with that, I thank the panelists. There is a
15 lot more work to do, a lot more information that the
16 DOE has to report back to the Council. We appreciate
17 it in a timely manner and we thank you all for your
18 service and we will call the public now to testify.

19 Thank you.

20 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you so much.

21 DR. LINDA CHEN: Thank you sir.

22 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: We have now concluded
23 the Administration testimony and we will now turn to
24 public testimony.

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2 Once more, I would like to remind everyone that I
3 will be calling individuals one by one to testify in
4 panels. Council Members, if you have questions for a
5 particular panelist, please use the raise hand
6 function in Zoom and you will be called on after the
7 whole panel has completed its testimony.

8 For panelists, once your name is called, a member
9 of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms
10 will give you the go ahead to begin after setting the
11 timer. All testimony will be limited to two minutes.
12 Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may
13 begin before delivering your testimony and I will do
14 my best with pronouncing everyone's names but if I do
15 mess it up, I apologize in advance.

16 On the first panel, we will have Michael Mulgrew,
17 William Diep, Shadavia Burnett, Babou Gaye and Donald
18 Nesbit and we will first hear from Michael Mulgrew.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you Chair Treyger so much
21 for having this hearing. Sunday March 15th at 5:00
22 p.m. was a culmination of two of the most hectic
23 weeks in my entire career and it ended with us
24 officially with the Mayor announcing official closure
25 of the schools. And that was just the beginning of

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2 one of the toughest challenges that the New York City
3 public school system has ever been through as well as
4 New York City itself.

5 And from that point on, every teacher and every
6 school community administrative staff in New York
7 City had to learn how to go to remote learning.
8 There was no plan in place, there was no support
9 system in place. There was no training in place and
10 every school had to figure it out on their own.

11 Thankfully as always, everybody started reaching
12 out to each other sharing resources, sharing
13 knowledge, sharing different ideas and strategies
14 with each other, making things work and I am very,
15 very proud at this point to say that New York City's
16 remote learning even despite all of its challenges
17 has been an overall success. We still always have
18 more to do but it has definitely been an overall
19 success and it have been a success because we have
20 teachers like a Bronx High School teacher who has
21 turned his apartment into a green room because he was
22 doing film projects with his students at this point.
23 Or the PreK teacher in Staten Island who because our
24 students were so anxious started setting up all the
25 virtual play dates for all the students inside of a

1
2 class for every Friday and they would talk about that
3 throughout the week when they were doing live
4 learning with her.

5 Or Alternative High School Manhattan Night and
6 Day Comprehensive High School, who worked to make
7 sure that their students who face many challenges are
8 who are difficult to engage in the first place, that
9 they set up a school like project called the History
10 of Me. Where they started each student taking their
11 own - telling their own story about what they are
12 facing as they go through this pandemic. This is how
13 we get our work done and this is how our school
14 system is going to continue to work. However, we
15 know moving forward that the challenges we face
16 because we want to open again in September and that's
17 going to take a great amount of coordination and
18 time.

19 So many of the programs that this Council has
20 supported all worked to in switch themselves very
21 quickly to continue to do the work that we promised
22 you we would do in a virtual atmosphere. Our
23 positive learning collaborative has been invaluable
24 to so many students dealing with anxiety. Our
25 community learning schools, coordinating food

1
2 distributions throughout the different communities in
3 New York City as well as our BRAVE Hotline which has
4 really been quite busy at this point but it's not to
5 deal with bullying, it's really to deal with fear and
6 anxiety and also Dial-A-Teacher who thank God,
7 because of your support moved quickly to set up a
8 virtual online platform and is not being called, we
9 think more by parents than actual students.

10 But it's really not how we're going to move
11 forward and I think I would tell everyone plus I'm
12 testifying later today at the Governors Committee,
13 that you need to listen to what the teachers and
14 parents have found out. There is no play book that
15 works everywhere. I depends on the grade level, the
16 subject area. The parents capability, what does
17 family face. Can the child be self-directed? What
18 are the diagnosed difficulties if there is a child
19 with special needs. Our English new language
20 students need a whole different style at a different
21 strategy in terms of how we are approaching them.
22 Those answers now lay amongst the teachers and the
23 staffs in the New York City public school system.

24 I was listening to your questions before, what
25 have we learned from others, it's more that, what are

1
2 they learning from us? Many of the school systems
3 thought that if they had a learning management system
4 or they were trying to recreate the school day and it
5 really has not worked out well for the school systems
6 who have tried that.

7 Because of our size, our size actually turned out
8 to be part of our strength when it came to this
9 because our teacher center quickly started
10 coordinating and organizing. We found out certain
11 areas of the city or certain teachers were saying
12 they were having a problem with the technology or a
13 learning strategy, whether it would be synchronous
14 learning or A-synchronous learning we would quickly
15 put them in touch with another group of teachers who
16 were doing really, really well with it and it was
17 just that sharing of ideas. But now it's about
18 pulling these things together, because come
19 September, we can't say we didn't have the time to
20 plan and this is part of my frustration at this
21 moment.

22 We are way behind in our planning process and
23 we're trying to plan for a school year like no other
24 school year and that is really what we are now faced
25 as a school system. So, I' proud of what we have

1
2 done. We still have more challenges to overcome and
3 I would like to also thank the Department of Ed,
4 because their ability to get those, all of the
5 devices out, you know, there are still certain
6 students who were not able to get them but the idea
7 that over 250,000 or close to 250,000 devices were
8 delivered to students at the height of this pandemic
9 is something they should be proud of. But when it
10 comes to the instruction and reaching students and
11 helping the parents, that's where the teachers, the
12 guidance counselors, all of the clinicians and the
13 therapists, that's where they stood up and said,
14 nothing is going to get in our way, we are going to
15 figure this out. And that is what has happened here
16 in New York City.

17 And thank you again to Chair Treyger for all that
18 you have done and your very, very loud and advocate
19 on behalf of the children in New York City.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well, President Mulgrew, I
21 want to thank you and begin my just saying that I
22 consider educators family. This is a family and
23 begin by just acknowledging the fact that we lost
24 family members to this pandemic.

25

1
2 And so, when a lot of folks are asking about
3 remote learning and how you mentioned that it's
4 different you know depending upon school grade and
5 experience, I just, I remind folks that educators are
6 also human beings. They have experienced loss of
7 colleagues. They have experienced loss in their
8 families. They are in many cases the primary care
9 takers for families at home and when people say
10 schools are closed, I remind them that the work
11 continues now in this new setting and I told people
12 that when I was a new teacher, it would take me the
13 entire summer to plan for the school year ahead.
14 Teachers had a couple of days with no play book, no
15 guidebook. There was no Brooklyn college course for
16 this President Mulgrew that I took to prepare us for
17 something like this.

18 So, I absolutely applaud educators, they have
19 always been essential workers. They are the great
20 equalizers in our society. The question I have for
21 you, for those educators and everyone has been
22 impacted, some more than others. How can we better
23 support those educators who are experiencing trauma
24 as well? We hear about kids and we know kids
25 experience trauma. It's a real issue but if you are

1
2 a teacher, a guidance counselor, a power, or someone
3 that has experienced loss in your school community
4 and still working every day but going through that
5 trauma, how can we better support them to make them
6 stronger during this crisis President Mulgrew?

7 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you and thank you so much
8 for recognizing the stress and the anxiety and the
9 loss that we have all faced here in terms of our UFT
10 family. It has been very, very difficult for us with
11 so many that we have lost.

12 Our member assistance program is now beyond
13 anything we have ever thought it would have needed to
14 be. Thank God we have so many clinicians who are
15 volunteers. We now do a lot of – well, the
16 appropriate, we do group therapy sessions now
17 constantly, almost every day of the week and we have
18 over hundreds of volunteers as clinicians now helping
19 us through this. Because its not, it is the teachers
20 now are working 10,12,14,16 hour days depending on
21 the students needs.

22 You know, we have a teacher who is doing off hour
23 classes and she likes doing it because more than half
24 of her students can't get on during the regular
25 school day, so she is holding nighttime lessons with

1
2 parents and students. You know, there's thousands of
3 those stories all across the city and the anxiety, we
4 see people are just driving themselves because of
5 their need to try to figure out how to reach every
6 student that we're going to have to set up a system.
7 A more - it can't just be the union supplying all of
8 this. We are thankful that the Office of Labor
9 Relationships just recently expanded their member
10 assistance program for city workers but we need to
11 coordinate that better. But you know, we're going
12 into September and first and foremost, we think about
13 what we need to do in terms of the challenges, social
14 emotional challenges we're going to face with our
15 students but we also know that that's part of what
16 we're facing also.

17 The strange phenomena is that when we actually go
18 into a school building, we actually feel better.
19 There is some solace in seeing you know, seeing your
20 students and seeing each other. I'm not sure exactly
21 how we are going to face all of this at this moment.
22 We are working on some bills in Albany to help
23 certain families but in the end, it's really going to
24 take a long focused therapy program to really help
25 people for all that they've dealt with.

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CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And thank you President Mulgrew and before we let you go, I just want to note that as someone that again was in the classroom, I heard a lot from my colleagues and from advocates about the need for teachers to get more support to adapt to this new setting that's going to be here for the time being. Some of my colleagues referred to questions about what kind of PD is available to staff. What I want and this is where I'm going to put my Neutrik High School teacher hat on for a moment and I want the whole public social media world to hear me on this. The most effective professional development that I have ever received in my career was one that was lead by teacher. By teachers and for teachers through our teacher center at Neutrik High School.

Because when I was sent to professional developments in Manhattan you know, many of the coffee and muffins were great but the PD's were inadequate. When I learned from my colleagues and my teacher center, we were able to brief, unpack and speak amongst colleagues and so, the importance of teacher center, the importance of having a school based support for educators to adapt to this, I

1
2 cannot stress how more vital it is now more than
3 ever. Would you agree President Mulgrew?

4 MICHAEL MULGREW: You have nailed that point
5 because all of the different educational platforms,
6 the different companies we use for meeting places,
7 because they are not educational platforms. Some
8 are, some are not. They are looking at us right now
9 and trying to figure out what we have learned.

10 So, the idea, I mean, the idea, we don't want to
11 see a consultant coming near us right now because we
12 know more about this than they do. They might have
13 designed the platform but they never actually
14 utilized it in a remote setting like the way we are
15 doing it right now. The teachers have designed
16 things and came up with new applications that we are
17 constantly being questioned about by these different
18 companies. And I tell my staff this and you know, I
19 tell the Department of Ed this, yesterday I did a two
20 hour focus group where teachers from different grade
21 levels about what have we learned and where do we
22 want to take this? Phenomenal ideas, how do you flip
23 a classroom? How do you make sure that when you are
24 dealing with English as a new language students that
25

1
2 you are setting up different times with different
3 translation pieces already loaded into your system.

4 I mean, the stuff was off the chart which they
5 would teach. How are you going to teach us about
6 something you have never done? And this is my
7 constant theme I am always talking about but now more
8 than ever, what we have done here in New York City,
9 no one has ever done this.

10 So, you can't come teach us. You can help us
11 organize in terms of alright this can work. How do
12 we get this word out here? But in the end your
13 greatest resource are the folks that are doing this
14 work because anyone who is not in our shoes, has not
15 done this work. So, what relevance could they bring
16 to us in terms of, they might be able to tell us
17 about their technology but they can't tell us on how
18 to actually use it to reach each and every student
19 because they are all so different.

20 So, I completely agree with you and thank God we
21 had the teachers center, especially in this mess
22 because without them we wouldn't be at a level with
23 our attendance and everything being so hard.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And President Mulgrew,
25 which leads me to my final point and observation with

1
2 you that you know, we hear a lot about Bill Gates and
3 a lot about all these reimagining things, I want to
4 tell you technology can only supplement instruction.
5 It can never, ever, ever replace instruction. These
6 are tools, we have a tool belt as educators. It is
7 never the educator. We are the teachers; we are the
8 licensed professionals. As I told it to my
9 colleagues, if you have a cold, you go to a doctor.
10 You don't go to Bill Gates to tell you there is a
11 Microsoft app.

12 So, I want to just end by asking you this
13 question. Would you agree with me that there is no
14 full reopening of New York without a safe reopening
15 of schools. There are 50,000 task forces being
16 created but education can no longer be seen as a
17 silo. This is where kids are getting food. This is
18 where kids are getting education, getting healthcare
19 needs met, health clinics, social workers, social
20 support.

21 Every school should be a community school and
22 there is no reopening of New York without a safe plan
23 to reopen the school system. Would you agree
24 President Mulgrew?
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2 MICHAEL MULGREW: Absolutely. I wrote it up a
3 couple of weeks ago saying specifically we have to be
4 able to open the schools because it's the centerpiece
5 of each community, each neighborhood but at the same
6 time, we now have to open in a safe manner. Teachers
7 are reinventing their profession now on a weekly
8 basis. They have to drive that conversation. That
9 can't come from anywhere else. But we know that what
10 just has happened over the last nine or ten weeks,
11 parents and teachers working together, really heavy
12 duty nasty stuff. So many people, which so many
13 families faced and if you were able to hear the
14 different conversations I've had with parents and
15 teachers in talking about how they were each other's
16 support system. That is something that has happened
17 in every single neighborhood in New York City
18 throughout this pandemic.

19 So, it is clear, we need our schools open but we
20 have to make sure it is done safe and they can no
21 longer be thought about as a political decision, it
22 has to be the right decision.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well, President Mulgrew, I
24 want to thank you for your courage because you speak
25 up not just for the members, you speak up for kids,

1
2 their families and you always taught me when I was a
3 teacher it's about the kids. The kids are always the
4 most important thing and thank you for your courage
5 speaking up. I know that at times, you know we make
6 waves in this business but you always never forget we
7 are fighting for the kids in our communities.

8 So, thank you and the entire UFT for your
9 sacrifice, for your work and your courage throughout
10 this pandemic.

11 MICHAEL MULGREW: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you.

13 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Remaining on panel one
14 we'll next hear from William Diep.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 WILLIAM DIEP: Thank you City Council. Good
17 afternoon. My name is William Diep and I am a member
18 of Teens Take charge and a student at one of the
19 city's specialized high schools.

20 I am so grateful for the resources I have been
21 given to succeed. I am so thankful for the
22 opportunities that my teachers have given me to
23 expand my education and continue doing what I love
24 but my story is different from the students that go
25 to the school two floors above mine. My story is

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2 different from the students that go to school two
3 block away from my school. My story is different
4 from student from all over the city. This is because
5 high school admission screens are built to divide us.

6 I understand that the SHSAT of the state law but
7 I am frustrated and confused as to why Mayor de
8 Blasio and the Department of Education continue to
9 support racist and classes screenings used at
10 hundreds of other middle and high schools that are
11 within the city's area of control.

12 I, as a student who sees the harm firsthand of
13 current emissions screenings am begging for you all
14 to put an end to these discriminatory screenings that
15 "sort us like socks." At the end of the day, screens
16 should be used to block out bugs from a home, not
17 students from the education we all deserve.

18 So, unless you want to consider students "bugs",
19 then we ask you City Council to join Teens Take
20 Charge and dozens of other social justice
21 organizations in demanding that the DOE and the use
22 of these discriminatory screenings once and for all.

23 I know this is technically not a Q&A, but I ask
24 the Council Members on the call to please indicate
25 with a thumbs up or thumbs down. Will you support

1
2 the elimination of admissions screens to create a
3 more equitable school system?

4 Thank you.

5 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we
6 will hear from Shadavia Burnett.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 SHADAVIA BURNETT: Good morning everyone. Well,
9 afternoon now. I hope these past couple of months
10 have treated you okay as you are all trying to cope
11 with COVID-19. My name is Day, I'm 16, my pronouns
12 are she, her, hers, and I am representing the New
13 York Civil Liberties Union Team activist project TAP,
14 alongside the next famous novel.

15 I just want to take the time out to thank you for
16 listening to my testimony as well everybody else's.
17 COVID-19 has rocked the boat. Many could agree with
18 me. It has changed routines, cancelled opportunities
19 and for some, it has changed lives for the worst.
20 For me, it has been hard but fortunately I have been
21 getting by. However, I do have my harshest as well.

22 The transition was sudden and unexpected. Now
23 learning math is harder and the quantity of work is
24 overwhelming. I am a visual person, if you want me
25 to pick up on lessons fast, I need something I can

1
2 use. Something I can see, touch, and use in front of
3 me. Otherwise, as teachers usually say they don't,
4 they are talking for your own health.

5 My status at high school is tricky. I'm
6 technically a sophomore but I'm classified as a
7 junior because I am graduating next year. Meaning, I
8 have to plan Regents, SAT credits, extracurricular
9 activities, all in three years. Now, because of this
10 pandemic, question upon question overcomes you and
11 fear accompanies me. Questions like, will this
12 effect my early graduation? Will I be prepared
13 enough for the SAT? All of my credits will be
14 calculated correctly. All of these things come into
15 my mind when I have many other things to worry about.

16 You may be thinking you will be alright; you will
17 still have another year to graduate, but for me it's
18 different. My parents are ready to move to Georgia.
19 Meaning, once I graduate and go to college, they can
20 live their life. My dad is 65 and working two jobs
21 and my mom is working.

22 At this age, they should live where they want and
23 do what they want. COVID impacts me and has great
24 implications on my families future. So, please keep
25

1
2 in mind, families are struggling and it may not be
3 the way you think.

4 Thank you again for the City Council for taking
5 this time out to hear my testimony.

6 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we
7 will hear from Babou Gaye.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 BABOU GAYE: Thank you. Good afternoon everyone.
10 My name is Babou and I am here as a leader in the New
11 York Civil Liberties Union's Teens Act project. I am
12 a senior at the Bronx High School of Science, which
13 gives me a privilege I unfortunately do not share
14 with the vast majority of youth in my community as my
15 school gives me a unique sense of safety and security
16 at school.

17 For most students however, that look like me and
18 come from neighborhoods like me, this is not the
19 case. There is a rightful fear of the school to
20 prison pipeline, which comes in the form of
21 suspensions, police and metal detectors and dominates
22 the learning environment for them.

23 The transition into remote learning has effected
24 these students the most. During this pandemic,
25 students have lost access to a trusted development in

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2 their schools, which my put them at higher risk for
3 dangerous interactions with police in a time where
4 the NYPD has unfairly authorized forced social
5 distancing not to mention the event of a potential
6 return to even more heavily police schools this fall.
7 And while I'm on this subject, I didn't write this
8 but I think it would be great to acknowledge the
9 targeting of minorities without saying rest in peace
10 to George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and other victims
11 of such targeting in our communities.

12 Anyways, my journey leading to Bronx Science,
13 what some might call an escape attempt from the
14 school to prison pipeline, it give a little trip to
15 the social work at my struggling underfunded middle
16 school, not three blocks from where I lived in the
17 Bronx.

18 Being able to sit down and connect or foster a
19 connection that brought light to the unfair barriers
20 to a quality education and what steps I would need to
21 take to push pass these barriers. The next
22 September, I found myself in a specialized high
23 school, 2 percent of my class would be like me. I
24 say all this to say the students that need to be able
25

1
2 to connect with educators most and have been most
3 potential, are the most under resourced.

4 You all have a chance to help dismantle the
5 school to prison pipeline by making sure we hold on
6 to what little resources we do have and allow for us
7 to expand on them now that it has been shown.

8 Schools can afford to give their students laptops
9 and tablets and companies can afford to offer to
10 students that need Wi-Fi. All of these social
11 services we were told were implausible have been
12 proven otherwise, so what better time to shape the
13 future now, so that my neighbors son can end up with
14 a seat at one of these meetings and not be in and out
15 of the precinct.

16 The DOE must bridge the gap so evidently present
17 in our education system -

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 BABOU GAYE: Okay, sorry.

20 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: You can finish your
21 thought.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You can finish your final
23 yeah, thought please. Thank you.

24 BABOU GAYE: Make sure access to these resources
25 is not only expanded but here to stay.

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Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you sir, excellent.

COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and the final panelist on panel number one will be Donald Nesbit.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

DONALD NESBIT: Good afternoon Councilman Treyger. Thank you to Speaker Johnson, I saw the Public Advocate was on earlier. Thank you for being an advocate and thank you for your kind comments towards the Local 372 Members who are on the frontlines at this time.

So, during this time, school food workers, crossing guards, who are on the frontlines. During this time, the Union has had to fight for these workers to receive proper PPE from the beginning. I mean, it took us weeks in order to get the proper PD. We've even purchased some PPE on our own to make sure that these workers were safe. We thank the various members of the City Council who did donate masks and different things for the workers during that time. But these workers after anxiety and fear have risen to the occasion in serving and protecting by crossing families and maintaining safety. They are also serving to date, up to almost 30 million meals, have

1
2 been served to families across the city during this
3 COVID-19 pandemic and what they demand of the city
4 administration at this time and I say the workers,
5 because we don't demand. We've gotten phone calls
6 from workers who demand that they receive recognition
7 and respect for the work that they are doing at this
8 time.

9 Not to take away from any other worker, but they
10 feel like they are not equal with everyone else,
11 especially in the press conferences and things that
12 are happening. You don't hear the school food worker
13 and the school crossing guard who actually maintained
14 in the safety and serving our families.

15 But policy changes have during this time at the
16 DOE, also put workers at risk. There were 700
17 workers who didn't receive a paycheck for multiple
18 pay periods on the school food side and throughout
19 the DOE.

20 SERGEANT AT ARM: Time has expired.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You can finish please.

22 DONALD NESBIT: Okay. And that has caused a
23 challenge because those same families are part of the
24 vulnerable families in society who we are trying to
25 protect.

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2 Our parent coordinators make sure that the
3 necessary equipment gets to the parents but that has
4 been challenging especially when they are trying to
5 locate students during this time who may have lost a
6 family member and that is their reason for not
7 logging on.

8 I am sure that you asked that Councilman Treyger
9 earlier, so I called a few parent coordinators and
10 they said they do have families who for whatever
11 reason are not logging on. Either they don't
12 understand, they are not tech savvy. The parents
13 also have special needs and they are not able to
14 assist their kids, so their parent coordinators are
15 taking hours to train those families. In some cases,
16 it works, in other cases, they send the packages to
17 families.

18 The school aids, the family workers are also
19 contacting families during this time. I mean,
20 connecting with them, even volunteering to be in the
21 REC centers if they can. We have 270 SAPIS for 1.1
22 million kids. That's about 5,000 per one SAPIS.
23 SAPIS are definitely going to be needed at this time
24 as they are presenting to students virtually right
25 now to help them and prevent them from going on drugs

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2 or substance abuse or anything of that nature, but
3 going into the future and I will grapple with this,
4 going into the future, what we see in opening
5 schools, we need safe PPE. We need temperatures to
6 be taken, we need ramped up cleaning protocols and
7 public notification so the public feels safe entering
8 the buildings. We need policies that maintain social
9 distancing. We need to provide mental health
10 monitoring for staff and students including enough
11 SAPIS to go around. As mentioned, there is not
12 enough and those are some of the things that we need
13 moving forward.

14 And I thank you and President Shaun D. Francois,
15 he thanks you. He sends his greetings and his love
16 to the members of the Council.

17 Thank you for everything and for actually being
18 able to be heard before you today.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I want to say thank you, to
20 you and your entire brave courageous members who have
21 experienced loss, who are experiencing pain and who
22 continue to put their lives on the line. I mean, I
23 shared earlier that I saw many picture on social
24 media on Memorial Day of people waking up in the
25 morning, you know, preparing their grills and their

1
2 barbeque when your members were working on Memorial
3 Day at sites across the city to make sure that no
4 child, no family goes hungry.

5 And they do this every day with great pride and
6 service knowing that they are putting their lives on
7 the line and they were always essential workers. And
8 I visited one of the schools recently and I told the
9 workers there, that politicians, including myself, it
10 is not enough for us to just to say thank you to
11 them. We have to say thank you when it comes to the
12 budget. We have to say thank you when it comes to
13 pay and benefits and protection and PPE, that's the
14 least we can do for keeping our city and our society
15 functioning. Because this is the safety net. It's
16 interesting that schools right now are the lifeline
17 serving communities that would otherwise have very
18 great difficulties getting these types of food and
19 masks and other items which are available at the
20 school food site. So, I just want to say thank you
21 for just literally being the life for communities in
22 my district and across the entire city of New York
23 and it is not enough to say thank you.

24 And I mentioned before President Mulgrew, that a
25 safe reopening of the school system, that includes

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2 your members. That includes making sure that we have
3 adequate staffing to continue to serve our
4 communities. And so, I just point out to my
5 colleagues that if schools don't fully reopen and if
6 parents don't have confidence in schools fully
7 reopening, there is no reopening of New York. And
8 so, we have to get this right and that includes Local
9 372, that included 6037 and the extraordinary members
10 and the counselors, the SAPIS counselors who provide
11 also life and death support for those kids who need
12 help the most.

13 So, God bless you. Thank you for your service
14 and we have to have your back. I mean, this is to me
15 when it comes to schools, this is hands off. That's
16 the message to the leaders, so thank you again Mr.
17 Nesbit, thank you so much.

18 DONALD NESBIT: Thank you.

19 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Are there any Council
20 Members that have any questions, please use the raise
21 hand feature on Zoom.

22 Seeing none, that concludes panel one, thank you.
23 We will now turn to panel two to remind all Council
24 Members, we will hear an entire panels testimony
25 first. If you have questions, please use the Zoom

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2 raise hand feature and you will be called on at the
3 conclusion of the panels testimony.

4 Panel number two will be Isa Grumbach-Bloom,
5 Marlen Mendieta-Cameron and Ann Cook and Ellen Mc
6 Hugh. We will start with Isa.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 ISA GRUMBACH-BLOOM: Good afternoon everyone. I
9 am Isa Grumbach-Bloom and I am a sophomore at
10 Millennium Brooklyn High School as well as a policy
11 member at Teens Takes Charge.

12 I am here to ask you to fight education budget
13 cuts and to fight for the elimination of
14 discriminatory admission screens next year. The
15 proposed budget for 2021 cut hundreds of millions of
16 dollars from the New York City public school system
17 and \$169 million from the Department of Youth and
18 Community Development.

19 In this pandemic, 16 percent of students are not
20 participating in remote learning. That's 176,000
21 students or the entire Philadelphia school district.

22 In our segregated inequitable school system,
23 these cuts would take even more funding from students
24 that need it the most. I don't know how many times
25 we students need to say this. We need more

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2 counselors and more social workers in our schools,
3 now more than ever. It's a simple equation, get rid
4 of NYPD and metal detectors. Add counselors and
5 social workers.

6 I want to talk about one more issue that doesn't
7 cost any money but is absolutely critical right now.
8 The Teens Take Charge Education and Screen Campaign
9 calls for the elimination of discriminatory admission
10 screens. They systematically segregate students.

11 During this time especially, these academic
12 screens will only measure students access to
13 resources, not their potential. Plus, eliminating
14 screens is a cost free way to more equitably
15 distribute costs across schools. With more academic
16 socioeconomic and racial diversity that would come
17 from the elimination of discriminatory admission
18 screens. There will be less disparities between
19 schools and more consistency in things like PTA
20 funding.

21 It is so important that we make funding our
22 public education system our priority and that we
23 eliminate screens this year. Otherwise, the existing
24 inequities in segregation in our schools will only
25 grow. Thank you.

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2 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next we
3 will hear from Marlin.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 MARLIN MENDIETA-CAMERON: Good afternoon and
6 hello. My name is Marlin Mendieta-Cameron and I am
7 in middle high school and a member of the team at
8 Teens Take Charge.

9 My school, Midland High School is full of about
10 4,000 students and it saddens me to hear that the
11 next year there will only be one class of AP
12 environmental science, one class of AP physics and
13 who knows how many less in other departments.

14 Although I may not know what is going on inside y
15 our offices, I know what is going on inside my
16 schools hallways. I know that there are crowded
17 hallways that make it difficult to get to class on
18 time. I know that there are ambitious students who
19 are driven for higher education. I know that
20 students complain about not getting into the
21 attention because of the class sizes of 30 or more.
22 I know a lot of students who want to take AP classes
23 and want to go to schools despite the fact that they
24 may complain about it.

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I am asking that you place more funding in students now. Now, in a time where students need extra help. Now in a time where students are becoming more worried about family financial problems than test scores. Now in a time where you and I can see the disparities between communities becoming much more evident. The DOE has been trying and we see it. The distribution of iPads was something and as a member of a low income community, I am so grateful. But are you going to stop there?

Students are going to need even more investments the next school year. So, it's time to get our priorities straight. Stop investing in police and security and send that money to classrooms where it belongs.

COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next we will hear from Ann Cook.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

ANN COOK: I want to thank Chairman Treyger for the opportunity to speak today. I am Ann Cook, the Executive Director of the New York Performance Standards Consortium.

Why is it that the DOE has projected that more than 180,000 New York City students will need summer

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2 school this year? A more than 400 percent increase
3 over last year's number of children. Why did so many
4 children fail to succeed at online learning? It's
5 not only because of the equipment shortage or the
6 lack of access to a stable internet connection,
7 though both could use serious attention as we've
8 heard.

9 What we know now after eight weeks of online
10 instruction is that remote learning is simply no
11 substitute for person to person teaching. Yes, in
12 the crisis caused by COVID-19, it have been better
13 than nothing but it utterly failed thousands of
14 children and only partially served those who had
15 managed to show up enough to be counted.

16 Given this, isn't it fair to ask at a time when
17 the Mayor has proposed a future of fiscal austerity?
18 Why are we repeating what just failed? In
19 essentially managed online summer school undertaken
20 without the benefit of social workers, guidance
21 counselors and teachers that are familiar with the
22 children that they are going to serve, using the same
23 instructional scenario that apparently failed, is
24 this a really good use of GOE funds? Couldn't the
25 dollars allocated for a trial run of an essential

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2 recontroled system to slide into remote learning in
3 September, be better used to pay procession to
4 teachers to plan curriculum and figure out how to
5 support children as they return to real time school
6 under new conditions and social workers and
7 counselors as well.

8 As exhausted home schooling parents will tell
9 anyone prepared to listen, what their kids miss most
10 are the interactions with teachers and friends. The
11 social fabric of schools. The learning that comes
12 from being with peers in real time. With whom to
13 exchange ideas and thoughts and with grown ups who
14 can challenge, support, and respond to them as human
15 beings.

16 Observers have called attention to the disturbing
17 consequences of social isolation and pressures
18 brought on by online expectations. Experts at NYU's
19 Department -

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

21 ANN COOK: And Adolescent Psychiatry tell us that
22 our children face an unprecedented wave of stress and
23 anxiety, unlike anything New Yorkers have ever seen
24 before.

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So, while we may give well deserved kudos to teachers like those in the consortium, who against all odds, explored new ways to reach and teach their students, what we're told over and over is that most success stories were built on pre-existing conditions. That is strong, powerful relations between students and their teachers and healthy communities where students could relate to and learn from one another.

As Joshua emphasized, children depend on these in school experiences in real life relationships and become healthy human beings.

So, I urge the City Council to not assume that the road to fiscal solvency resides in turning over the education of our children to remote learning. Technology certainly has its place but it must never replace schools as essential learning communities. Down grading person to person contact will have serious consequences for our democracy.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I appreciate you Dr. Cook and I could not agree more. Thank you for your spot on words and I know that you speak with great respect and admiration for true education. And so, thank you

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2 for your leadership and thank you again for your
3 time.

4 ANN COOK: Thank you.

5 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Next, we will hear from
6 Ellen McHugh.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 ELLEN MCHUGH: Good afternoon. Thank you for the
9 opportunity to speak. My name is Ellen McHugh and I
10 am the Co-Chair of the Citywide Council on Special
11 Education and a member of the steering committee of
12 the Education Council Consortium.

13 Today, I am speaking for myself as we haven't
14 finalized our presentation. We are parents of
15 students currently receiving a vast range of hotline
16 remote learning services.

17 Some have been given devices immediately, others
18 have had to wait for weeks and deal with paperwork
19 packets. Our goal during the normal school year is
20 to bring research based strategies to our enable them
21 to have a meaningful education in this abnormal year,
22 we are wondering what's next. Synchronous or non-
23 synchronous education, it is a mystery to most
24 families.

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2 Will the proposed 177,000 students include
3 students with special needs who do not have extended
4 school year on their IEP's? Will there be
5 appropriate staff available during the summer program
6 to provide adapted research based methodologies that
7 can have a positive effect on a student.

8 In some cases, remote learning can be a positive
9 for some children who are visual learners. It is not
10 always the case. The real impact of learning comes
11 from the relationship between a student, his or her
12 cohorts, and the teacher who brings education to
13 them.

14 We, right now, as parents are the primary
15 educators in this situation and have little or no
16 supports on a consistent and helpful basis. We are
17 only consulted after the fact, when we are presented
18 with an already created program of services.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20 ELLEN MCHUGH: We'd appreciate your assistance in
21 being included actually and factually in the
22 development of any summer program or any opening in
23 September.

24 Thank you very much.

25 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much.

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2 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: We will turn to Council
3 Member questions starting with the Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. I just had one
5 quick follow up. I don't know if Dr. Cook left or if
6 anyone from Consortium is still there, about how
7 their assessments hand out for this school year in
8 lieu of the Regents are the Consortium use whats
9 called the Performance based assessment tasks. Can
10 anyone speak about that? I'm not sure if Dr. Cook
11 already left.

12 If not, we could follow up with Dr. Cook and I do
13 not have any further questions at this time.

14 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Okay, thank you panel
15 two. We will now turn to panel three. Leticia
16 Reyes, Veronica Flores, and Jose Rivera. We will
17 start with Leticia Reyes.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 LETICIA REYES: Hi, this is Leticia Reyes, I am
20 parent from PS/IS 157 District 14. So, as you know
21 we have had a lot of things happening, the school
22 stopped. I was PTA President for four years and a
23 SLT member, Title I Vice President. So, I would like
24 to know if we can do something like as SLT members,
25 if we can do something for the parents to help the

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2 parents or you know, planning to do something with
3 the SLT members or any others from the schools?

4 Thank you.

5 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next we
6 will hear from Veronica Flores.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 VERONICA FLORES: Hi, first and foremost, I would
9 like to thank you for the opportunity to voice our
10 opinions on this forum. My name is Veronica Flores
11 and I am a parent of a fifth grader, member of the
12 SLT of PS 15 which was a former Title I school. A
13 Product of the public school system in District 4
14 East Harlem and a member of PLACE NYC.

15 Although, I appreciate the strides made in school
16 to allow remote learning for our students, I must
17 agree that the social, emotional aspect that live
18 instruction provides is lacking from school to
19 school.

20 I believe engagement of students is important
21 when learning new material which is not optimal with
22 stagnant worksheets and pre-recorded videos. I
23 understand that there are challenges of tools and
24 availability of some students but there will be no
25 adjustment if there is no consistency, especially

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2 with almost everything being unknown, I think it's
3 time to give consistency to our students as we do in
4 physical schools in this new remote setting.

5 I am also concerned with the conversations I have
6 experienced regarding the new grading policies for
7 grades K-8. As much as I understand that there are
8 students who are unable to participate in remote
9 learning, through no fault of their own, I believe
10 the complete abolishment of grades is demotivating
11 for those students who go above and beyond to those
12 challenges to complete the work assigned on a daily
13 basis.

14 Those students who hand write essays and post a
15 picture to offset a lack of keyboards or those who
16 wake up a bit earlier than their families to get some
17 assignments done before their chaos begins. We have
18 all been effected by this pandemic in one way or
19 another but I fear that without a better
20 establishment of accountability and expectation,
21 students cannot be adequately ensured that they are
22 prepared for the next step of their learning journey.

23 It's also troubling to continuously hear Black
24 and Brown communities portrayed as incapable than the
25 fact that even before this pandemic, there are no

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2 opportunities for those students to accel above their
3 bare minimum in their communities.

4 Therefore, we lose them to Charters, private and
5 parochial institutions and only those who can take
6 advantage of those options. For many of these
7 students in these communities, education successes
8 and merit acceptance to highly rigorous schools is
9 the only method of getting out and improving their
10 social economic situations. And we should not forget
11 that we are making decisions.

12 Thank you.

13 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and we will
14 finally hear from Jose Rivera.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 JOSE RIVERA: Hi, good afternoon, my name is Jose
17 Rivera, I am a Community School Director with Good
18 Shepherd Services and Junior High School 292 in New
19 York for the past three years. My testimony will
20 focus on how community schools are supporting
21 communities in the Bronx and Brooklyn during this
22 pandemic.

23 Good Shepherd is common provider in the Bronx and
24 Brooklyn serving over 2,000 students. Good Shepherd
25 last week in my school 292, have distributed 65

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2 computers to Special Ed students in refuge and
3 immigrant students from Bangladesh, Yemen, Central
4 and South America.

5 These populations have been very hard to reach by
6 the DOE, whether it be because of the language
7 barriers or the fear of sharing personal information
8 with the authorities.

9 It is my role to connect students, families, and
10 school administration to report it. In East New
11 York, our school has been collaborating with Good
12 Shepherd services to connect parents to emergency
13 food stamps, unemployment benefits, access to food
14 pantry, housing, attorney, amongst other social
15 services.

16 At Bushwick High School, my colleagues for social
17 and emotional support with Wellness Wednesdays.
18 Since April 7th, our community school director at PS
19 297 back in best buy and his team has given 900 foot
20 packages responses resulting in over 3,000 people
21 served.

22 At Bushwick Leader's High School, my colleagues
23 have been providing college prep sessions and college
24 tours. My team and I call students to check on how
25 they are doing with remote learning app and home

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2 life. In the last two weeks of March, we made 250
3 phone calls. Of the last week, we have made 2,000
4 calls to our students and parents since remote
5 learning began.

6 Our work strides the fact that we have been able
7 to build trusting and lasting relationships with our
8 students and families. Which at our school, I
9 conducted a survey of 150 parents and we found that
10 43 percent –

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

12 JOSE RIVERA: Food insecurity or they can not
13 afford their rent. Another 30 percent of the
14 participants have shared that they have experienced
15 anxiety, depression, or emotional distress. The
16 three top services that they need are emergency food,
17 cash assistance and employment and career
18 development.

19 Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Good
20 Shepard remains committed to support and ensure that
21 students needs are met and they have a conducive
22 learning environment and that we provide the support
23 that families need to eat. The pain they suffered
24 before the pandemic.

25 Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Just a quick follow up
3 question to Mr. Rivera and I appreciate your service
4 and your great organization.

5 If I heard you correctly, you mentioned that you
6 conducted – your group did its own survey to students
7 and there were some questions on the survey that
8 related to the trauma and to the financial situation
9 or burdens that students were facing, is that
10 correct?

11 JOSE RIVERA: Yes, that is correct.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And did you receive any
13 feedback from parents or from students that any of
14 these questions they felt were insensitive in any
15 way?

16 JOSE RIVERA: No, in fact, I have done outreach.
17 I have delivered computers and gave part to myself
18 in East New York and we have always been welcome. We
19 have a strong relationship with my parents.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Well, I appreciate that
21 because I noticed that the DOE that their survey
22 questions lacked certain you know, topics that I
23 think we need to have a better understanding of, of
24 course in very sensitive and delicate ways but I do
25 think for example, it's okay to ask a student if they

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2 have now been forced to work to support their family
3 during this pandemic if someone lost their job. And
4 because that is the case across many communities, in
5 some cases the parent is an essential worker that
6 cannot provide that one on one support for the child
7 at home.

8 So, I think – and there are kids who have lost
9 loved ones and family and so, these are questions
10 that give us a better detailed picture of the trauma
11 and the hardships that our kids are facing.

12 So, I thank you and your organization for really
13 addressing the whole needs of the child, not just the
14 academic piece. So, I thank you so much for your
15 work.

16 JOSE RIVERA: Thank you sir. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you.

18 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you panel three.

19 We will move to panel four, before I do, I just want
20 to remind everyone that for panelists, you will
21 notice a letter and a number next to your name. This
22 will let you know what panel you are on and you will
23 be able to see where you are in the queue throughout
24 the hearing. Once your name is called, a member of
25 our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms

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2 will give you the go ahead to begin after setting the
3 timer. All testimony will be limited to two minutes.

4 Any Council Members have a question at any point
5 for any individual panelist, please use the Zoom
6 raise hand function. You will be called in the order
7 with which you raised your hands at the conclusion of
8 the panel testifying in full.

9 For panel four we have Randi Levine, Lori
10 Podvesker, Andrew Gerst and Maggie Moroff. Ms.
11 Maroff, if you are having issues with audio, we can
12 circle back to you.

13 So, we will start with Randi Levine.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 RANDI LEVINE: Thank you for the opportunity to
16 speak with you. My name is Randi Levine and I am the
17 Policy Director of Advocates for Children of New
18 York.

19 We recognize the immense challenge of quickly
20 transitioning a school system of 1.1 million students
21 to remote learning and appreciate the diligent work
22 of DOE staff and educators. Yet, like the pandemic
23 itself, school closures have had a disproportionate
24 impact on historically marginalized communities and
25 have magnified existing inequities.

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2 While schools have been closed AFC has helped
3 hundreds of families. We're concerned about students
4 who face technology barriers, students with
5 disabilities who are struggling without the supports
6 they typically receive at school. Students who are
7 not engaged in remote learning due to mental health
8 needs going unaddressed. Students who parents speak
9 a language other than English and are having
10 difficulty helping their children access and complete
11 assignments in English.

12 Students living in shelters who lack a quiet spot
13 to study. Students in juvenile detention who have
14 not had access to live instruction or regular access
15 to computers and related services. And older youth
16 caring for younger siblings or working to help
17 support their families, leaving them little time for
18 schoolwork.

19 While we have many recommendations, we'll focus
20 my limited time on just a few. First, in summer
21 school will be entirely remote, the DOE must redouble
22 its outreach efforts and provide individualized
23 supports to families of students who are not
24 regularly engaging in remote learning. Determining
25 individual barriers and implementing solutions.

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2 Whether that means helping with a technology fix,
3 providing instruction and assignments in a families
4 home language, connecting older students to an SYEP
5 stipend, so they can earn money and course credit.
6 Connecting students with mental health providers
7 offering telehealth services or offering a seat at
8 the regional enrichment center.

9 Second, the DOE should begin implementing
10 creative solutions this summer to help address gaps.
11 For example, as students are no longer limited to the
12 staff at their schools, we urge the DOE to offer one
13 on one or small group evidence based literacy
14 instruction to students using the universal literacy
15 coaches and IEP teachers that the DOE has already
16 trained.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

18 RANDI LEVINE: Finally, the DOE must plan to get
19 students who have fallen behind back on track when
20 school building reopen. To that end, we are counting
21 on the City Council to reject proposed cuts to school
22 budgets and work with federal, state, and city
23 officials to ensure our schools have the resources
24 they need, so that the current crisis does not have
25 lifelong consequences for a generation of children.

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Randi.

COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you Randi. Next,
we will hear from Lori.

LORI PODVESKER: Hi, my name is Lori Podvesker
and I lead the policy work at Include NYC. Thank you
Chairman Treyger and the rest of the entire Committee
on Education for holding this important hearing.

Include NYC has worked with hundreds and
thousands of families since our founding 37 years
ago, helping them navigate the complex special
education services support system. We testify today
with deep respect and gratitude to the City, the
Department of Education, school administrators,
teachers, related service providers, counselors,
parent coordinators, and all other school staff on
their commitment to ensuring our 1.1 million student
including nearly 300,000 students with disabilities
continue to learn during the pandemic and related
school closures.

However, during the last ten weeks since remote
learning began, hundreds of parents of children who
have suspected or known disabilities have called our
helpline looking for individual help and a thousand

1
2 more families have attended our online workshop, live
3 stream discussions with experts, webinars and
4 downloaded related resources on our website.

5 Persistence, issues, and areas of need include
6 difficulties accessing remote learning. Students and
7 families most pressing needs right now include
8 health, food, housing, and financial insecurities.
9 Many students do not have internet service or a
10 tablet or a laptop to which to access school and
11 class based learning platforms.

12 Other students do not know how to fix
13 technological problems themselves and often their
14 parents don't know how to use to troubleshoot them
15 either. At home, some student may not have adequate
16 space or the physical environment needed to support
17 productive learning and they are not benefiting from
18 the social and behavioral support typically available
19 tool.

20 There has been limited and no live instruction.
21 The absence of specialized instruction makes course
22 work inaccessible for many of our students. Parents
23 are concerned about regression in knowledge and
24 skills and do not understand how the child will make
25 up missed content. Related services are necessary

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2 for students with disabilities to meet IEP goals but
3 many sessions have not been delivered to students.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

5 LORI PODVESKER: We have – much of what I'm
6 saying, a lot of recommendations but we'll just say
7 to, which we think is really important which is that
8 schools should develop plans for compensatory
9 services for students now before schools reopen and
10 the city should offer special education support and
11 services during the summer to all students with ten
12 month IEP's who are not meeting their IEP goal, which
13 is known as Extended School year services.

14 This is different than traditional summer school
15 and we hope that the Department of Education does a
16 really good job communicating this for families right
17 now, so parents speak with their child's teachers and
18 their school administrators right now.

19 Thank you so much.

20 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you Lori. Next,
21 we will hear from Andrew Gerst.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 ANDREW GERST: Good afternoon. My name is Andrew
24 Gerst and I am Special Education Attorney and
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2 Advocate at Mobilization to Justice. A legal
3 services organization for low income New Yorkers.

4 I would like to briefly provide City Council with
5 some data on what we have seen with students with
6 disabilities. These students are supposed to be
7 receiving related services such as counseling or
8 physical therapy by remote learning. If you
9 remember one thing, please remember this, that 42
10 percent of families we spoke with reported not
11 receiving at least one IEP service by a remote
12 learning at all.

13 After COVID-19 forced schools to close, our
14 office spent weeks reaching out to many clients with
15 IEP's or individualized education programs. We were
16 able to have in depth conversations with a
17 representative sample of 33 of those clients as a
18 kind of spot check.

19 Of these 33 families, 14 of them reported that at
20 least one IEP mandated service such as counseling was
21 not being provided at all. That is a rate of 42
22 percent.

23 Some things have gone relatively well. For
24 instance, only 6 out of 33 families reported having
25 trouble receiving a working device, that translates

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2 to 18 percent. But many other things did not go
3 well. Of the 14 families not receiving IEP services,
4 in 4 cases the school had out of date contact
5 information for the family. One school reported that
6 they did not know they had to offer physical therapy
7 as a remote learning service at all. Twenty-seven
8 families have students with counseling on the IEP and
9 tragically during this time when counseling is
10 particularly necessary, 9 of these 27 families
11 reported the counseling was not happening. That is a
12 rate of 33 percent.

13 We are grateful to the DOE for moving mountains
14 to help educate students with disabilities remotely.
15 However, we want to ensure that counseling and other
16 related services are being provided.

17 Thank you for your time.

18 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and are we
19 able to get Maggie Moroff?

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Okay, we will come back
22 to Maggie. That concludes this panel. Chair, do you
23 have any questions?

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Just very quickly, if
25 either Lori or the attorney, I just took some notes

1
2 about the numbers I heard. Are there specific
3 service areas that are a common theme that are not
4 being met during the pandemic? When we're hearing
5 about certain services not being provided, which
6 service area are there, do we have any data on that?

7 LORI PODVESKER: So, we are hearing a lot from
8 families of kids in preschool who are transitioning
9 to kindergarten and Maggie can talk more about that
10 but a lot of the evaluations aren't happening with
11 just holding up placements and you do need to
12 acknowledge that sometimes it is the parent's choice
13 because they don't feel it will be meaningful and a
14 lot of times it is not and so that is a big problem
15 and independent related services, it is problematic
16 that kids and families are not receiving help on how
17 to make accommodations to the curriculum so kids can
18 access it. And the Department of Education is doing
19 a better job than in the past right now sharing
20 information with families but we have a long way to
21 go on what that looks like.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And anecdotally, from what
23 you are hearing, live instruction makes a difference,
24 yes, no explain.

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2 LORI PIDVESKER: I think it's a combination and
3 really contingent on the kid and the other things
4 that people brought up in the past in terms of, to
5 what extent is the child independent and to what
6 extent can the parents intervene to support their
7 kids. I will say as a parent myself of a 17 year old
8 in District 75 program, there is barely any live
9 instruction and it is really, I understand why but at
10 the same time, the social isolation that is happening
11 as a result of that for my child is going to hinder
12 his skills in being independent in the future and so,
13 there is a lot of different aspects of that other
14 than just the social connection right there and then.

15 It's the skills.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Excellent observation,
17 thank you for sharing that. Thank you all.

18 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you to this
19 panel. We will now call panel five. Maud Maron,
20 Tasfia Rahman and Emily Hellstrom. We will first
21 start with Maud.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 MAUD MARON: Why - sorry, nor have we heard you
24 know, why they need to have a one size fits all
25 policy. That is not something that I think makes a

1
2 whole lot of sense for you know, a university as
3 large as ours. So, I don't know Matthew if you want
4 to add anything else in.

5 MATTHEW: Yeah sure. I have a very different
6 I'll say perspective. More specially I haven't
7 gotten a lot of feedback that you guys received
8 directly.

9 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: We are going to turn to
10 Tasfia Rahman right now, we will come back to Maud
11 later.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 TASFIA RAHMAN: Good afternoon. Hi, my name is
14 Tasfia Rahman, I am a Policy Coordinator at the
15 Coalition for Asian American Children and Families.
16 Thank you so much for holding this very important
17 hearing today Council Member Treyger.

18 Today, I will actually be testifying on behalf of
19 Erica. A youth leader and a current public high
20 school student at CACS Asian American Student
21 Advocacy Project.

22 Hi, I'm Erica and I am an Asian Pacific American
23 here testifying for ASAP. That's right, I am Asian
24 and I am asked to speak about the Asian perspective,
25 the Asian experience. People want to hear about how

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it feels to be that smart kid in the corner

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scribbling away at math problems. People want to

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hear about how it's like to be the White mans best

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friend. Where relief in the 90's sitcoms. We make

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comfort food that hopefully slides down easier than

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the racial slurs thrown at us. Okay, I'll start

8

over.

9

I'm Erica, an Asian Pacific American. An Asian

10

Pacific American. I am not hear to talk about what

11

it means to be Asian or to have my blood stained

12

existence tokenized or answer that question of, are

13

Asians really people of color. Because truthfully,

14

the worlds confusion is contagious.

15

People seem to think that Asians are only one

16

thing or maybe they only want to hear one thing.

17

Speak up, my White teacher eggs me on and so I do. I

18

speak my mothers trauma. I speak coping with

19

suicidal ideation as my teacher hands back zero after

20

zero. I speak being trapped in a school with my

21

peers and feeling like not even a person. Compared

22

to their brown hair and blue eyes and interesting

23

lives articulated in perfect English.

24

I speaks lies to my friends and parents that the

25

failing grade that DOE is now calling an incomplete,

1
2 was actually just a printing error. The system tells
3 us to focus on the numbers. The numbers will get you
4 far. Our parents who have had to adapt to the
5 system, tells us we're only numbers to the people
6 here, so polish them. People say numbers don't lie.
7 Good smart students get good grades and thereby
8 entitled to the city's bulk of resources.

9 The rest of us are left -

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 TASFIA RAHMAN: This is the logic of our school
12 system and the logic of my parents. Not here to take
13 risks. I'd like the people who think that all APA's
14 are thriving in the system to meet my friends who
15 have been condoned to the label of bad Asian. I
16 would like them to meet my friends who feel
17 disengaged from academics, especially now. I prefer
18 to play ball but at the park, not at their
19 underfunded schools. I'd like them to see the glass
20 is shattering in families over report card on top of
21 frozen pizza dinners and the stress of essential work
22 during this time.

23 See how it feels to be rejected by the city and
24 your community at the same time by those who ignore
25

1
2 factors like language access, poverty, and mental
3 health.

4 COVID-19 has made it clear, made it loud and
5 clear that our school system is full of inequities.
6 More than ever before students are slipping through
7 the cracks like ghosts. As immigrants on top of
8 worrying about their schoolwork and dealing with
9 poverty, in a system full of language barriers and to
10 avoid a culture confidence, many APA youth are their
11 parents translators, their siblings teachers and
12 more. Yet, we are here and committed to working with
13 our fellow students of color, immigrant students and
14 marginalized students for equitable access to
15 resources and opportunities because truthfully, we
16 need it to.

17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you.

19 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we
20 will hear from Emily Hellstrom.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 EMILY HELLSTROM: Thank you so much. It is so
23 difficult to follow that beautiful testimony. My
24 name is Emily Hellstrom and I sit on the CEC for
25 District 2 and I Chair the Students with Disabilities

1
2 Committee. We've been meeting monthly since
3 September and hundreds of parents have joined our
4 sessions to support each other, share resources and
5 basically lament at the fact that it is so difficult
6 to have a student in the system who is suffering with
7 dyslexia, ADHD, anxiety, just to name a few.

8 Since remote learning has started, we have had
9 two meetings with over 100 people in attendance and
10 we have heard from so many parents that remote
11 learning is literally leaving these students behind.

12 If you cannot read, if you cannot sit still, if
13 you don't have a parent there at all times, the
14 wheels are coming off the bus. The teaching that is
15 delivered is not consistent across classes, across
16 grades and even across schools. Different students
17 respond to different remote learning supports but
18 there is just a check in in the morning and the rest
19 is left up to parents.

20 I would urge the DOE to offer supports over the
21 summer to make them available for all students who
22 have IEP's and frankly any students who want them.
23 We need proven OG supports available. They could be
24 paid for by DOE and there have been many that have
25 been proven to have tremendous success.

1
2 Lastly, in the fall, I urged the DOE to put into
3 place science based reading and writing programs that
4 are explicit, multi-sensory and systematic to be sure
5 that we don't lose another minute educating these
6 children.

7 Thank you so much.

8 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Council Member, do you
9 have any questions for this panel?

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Their testimony was
11 powerful and informative enough and I thank them for
12 their service. Thank you.

13 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Alright, thank you to
14 this panel. We will get ready to call the next one.
15 The next panel will be Debbie Meyer, Anthony Tassi,
16 Melinda Lee, and Ashley Sawyer. We will start with
17 Debbie Meyer.

18 SEGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 DEBBIE MEYER: Thank you for hosting this meeting
20 and inviting our testimony. Today, I am representing
21 all struggling readers as a Columbia Community
22 Scholar, researching poor literacy instruction and
23 its connection to social ills.

24 There is a literacy crisis underlying the COVID-
25 19 health crisis. Literacy is a widely recognized

1
2 determinant of health outcomes and associated with
3 many indices of academic, social, vocational, and
4 economic success.

5 With 73 percent of New York State eighth graders
6 are not reading proficiently at eighth grade levels.
7 And although we do not have literacy tests for
8 voting, clearly our ballot initiatives and
9 information that you need to read to understand them
10 are a candidates position to require literacy skills.
11 Struggling readers are disenfranchised.

12 I have testified in other hearings about the
13 dyslexia to prison pipeline and poor literacy
14 instruction and my sons journey in the public school
15 system from an illiterate fourth grader to a
16 specialized dyslexia school to high school early
17 college. Since there is no connection between
18 dyslexia and intelligence, and many are excluded from
19 private remediation, I see elite school segregation
20 as a symptom for literacy instruction as well.

21 Let's see if we can actually solve the crisis
22 systemically rather than continue to poke at it and
23 prolong it. Can we take advantage of remote learning
24 to find our struggling leaders in all schools and
25

1
2 offer them the best literacy instruction via the
3 internet.

4 During the COVID-19 spring, Nessy, an evidence
5 based reading curriculum usually meant for use with
6 teachers offer free subscriptions to districts,
7 teachers, and families nationally. Results from
8 online learning with Nessy were quite remarkable.
9 The students gaining a grade level worth of skills in
10 six weeks working remotely without a teacher.

11 Dyslexic students using Nessy for these six
12 weeks, made nine tenths of years progressed.

13 DEBBIE MEYER: Can we create policies aimed at
14 improving preservice education for teachers at CUNY
15 and other teaching colleges that get New York City
16 funds? And on the state level aimed at the licensing
17 of K-3 teachers -

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 DEBBIE MEYER: A teaching college and alternative
20 pathways to teaching that would ensure K to 3
21 teachers have a solid background in evidence based
22 literacy instruction. We would save professional
23 development class; the DOE spends on training
24 teachers in the science of reading developed in the
25 1940's and save the special education class in

1
2 schools and mediation class in high school and CUNY
3 and other colleges.

4 The mental health class that frustrated readers
5 create would be safe. The human potential would be
6 unleashed.

7 Thank you.

8 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you Debbie Meyer.
9 Next, we will hear from Anthony Tassi.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 ANTHONY TASSI: Good afternoon everybody, members
12 of the Committee, I really appreciate this
13 opportunity to chat with you today about such an
14 important topic. And let me first start by saying
15 what a powerhouse this Committee has been through the
16 years and especially this year and I want to commend
17 the Chairman for your particularly outspoken
18 leadership in this time. We've heard from many
19 corners, usual teacher bashing or the excuse making
20 for schools but I think you have found a particular
21 leadership voice here, where your aim is to support
22 all participants in the education process and hold
23 the system accountable for the results.

24 So, I can't tell you as a New Yorkers, as a
25 father of a public school daughter how much I

1
2 appreciate that personally and professionally from
3 where I sit at Literacy Partners. We are an adult
4 and family literacy program that focuses on low
5 income and immigrant parents but I wanted to just
6 bring the conversation just for these moments to the
7 role of parents and I know the Committee is very well
8 aware of the system of the role of parents and as is
9 everybody. Today, the role of parents and education
10 of children obviously is something many of us are
11 dealing with on an immediate basis all day long as we
12 try to maintain our jobs. But also, from a policy
13 prospective. I think it's abundantly clear the
14 important role of parents.

15 In our work in parent education, parent education
16 with Spanish speaking parents, we really aim to
17 bolster their capacity to promote early literacy
18 skills and what we found with our new Zoom workshops
19 that we have implemented in the past period of time
20 is that 61 percent of those participants expressed
21 more confidence in using their childrens remote
22 learning assets. 58 percent have looked up
23 additional resources online for themselves and their
24 children, 57 percent of participants expressed more
25 confidence in their own use of online resources. So,

1
2 I pose the question what does our policy have to look
3 like -

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 ANTHONY TASSI: To have 60 percent of parents
6 feel more confident and take more actions in support
7 of their childrens education. I think that would
8 really complete the piece of all the wonderful things
9 the department is doing. All of the important
10 priorities that you are focusing on for improvement
11 of education that can really complete the piece.
12 This puzzle of having a stronger, more resilient
13 framework to support parents in their essential work
14 today.

15 Thank you so much for the opportunity.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you.

17 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next, we
18 will hear from Ashley Sawyer.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 ASHLEY SAWYER: Okay, thank you Chair Treyger and
21 Committee Members for dedicating time to this really
22 crucial issue. My name is Ashley Sawyer, I am the
23 Director of Policy and Government at Girls for Gender
24 Equity and I'm also an attorney and I've spent most
25 of my career doing education civil rights work. At

1
2 some point doing special education focused on kids
3 who were most marginalized and I want to testify
4 today to point out the ways in which the issue that
5 we are dealing with is very much an issue that can
6 set precedence for the years to come and I thank you
7 Chair Treyger for mentioning that a number of times
8 today.

9 The decisions that we make in this moment will
10 impact us next year and could potentially impact us
11 for a generation. It could impact the overall safety
12 of our city if young people are disenfranchised and
13 it could impact each individual young persons
14 wellbeing.

15 I want to just note that after Hurricane Katrina,
16 for a very, very brief period of time, I went down to
17 New Orleans as a law student to help out some of the
18 students there and I can speak firsthand about the
19 ways that an interruption to education can have a
20 long term impact. I was there several years after
21 the hurricane but young people were at a much greater
22 disadvantage than anything I had ever seen. Reading
23 at a much – they were reading behind schedule and we
24 have to recognize that the choices that we've made
25

1
2 around remote learning are going to have a long term
3 impact.

4 My recommendation is that when we return, there
5 has to be a commitment to addressing the inequities,
6 commitment to particularly focusing resources on
7 schools where students had to take on a lot of
8 responsibilities. Schools in communities that were
9 disproportionately impacted by the pandemic,
10 particularly Black and Latinx communities. Those
11 students are carrying a great deal of trauma.

12 My written testimony will include some of the
13 studies in a research because unfortunately what we
14 are experiencing, we had examples to look to. We can
15 look to cities and states where they have experienced
16 natural disasters and we can look to those as
17 examples of how horrible education can be when we
18 don't step up in times of crisis. And so, my ask for

19 -

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 ASHLEY SAWYER: And while I will briefly
22 conclude, but my ask for this body is that we
23 sincerely prioritize those students who are most
24 marginalized and understand that while this isn't a
25 budget hearing, I understand that the resources that

1
2 will be available for those students are going to be
3 determined in the next few weeks and my ask is that
4 everyone on this committee continue to fight tooth
5 and nail to ensure that there is a budget that
6 allocates resources to the students who are most
7 marginalized. Otherwise, we will pay for it in the
8 years to come. We have to make space for their
9 healing, we have to make space for their recovery and
10 we have to know that some students had what they need
11 during this time and there are other students who
12 will be at a great disadvantage.

13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you.

15 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: That concludes panel
16 six. Chair Treyger do you have any questions?

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I think the testimony was
18 powerful and I thank them for their excellent service
19 and observations. Thank you.

20 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you panel six.
21 We will now move to panel seven. On panel seven will
22 be Johanna Miller, Susan Horwitz, Nancy Bedard, and
23 Anna Arkin-Gallagher. We will start with Johanna
24 Miller.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 JOHANNA MILLER: Hi, thank you so much. I'm
3 going to focus my remarks because so much has been
4 said already that I think the NYCLU completely agrees
5 with. But one thing that hasn't been talked about
6 much is digital privacy and so, I'm going to focus my
7 remarks on that given the time restrictions.

8 So, thank you so much for having me. My name is
9 Johanna Miller, I am the Director of the Education
10 Policy Center at the New York Civil Liberties Union.

11 We are more concerned than ever about threats to
12 students digital and educational privacy. Especially
13 now that their entire school day is taking place
14 online. Students are more exposed than ever, they
15 may be interacting with half a dozen or more tech
16 companies in pursuit of their daily class work or
17 homework, software and service providers website
18 hosts app developers and device manufacturers. Just
19 to give a sense of the breath, we conducted a survey
20 shortly after school buildings closed. We had more
21 than 500 respondents from across the state
22 representing 80 percent of New York's population
23 centers and the most commonly reported platforms that
24 students and schools are using were Google Tools.
25 And I think that that's really important because

1
2 Google has an incredibly checkered past in terms of
3 protecting young people's privacy especially.

4 The state of New Mexico is currently suing Google
5 for violating the Child Online Privacy Protection Act
6 for tracking young people via Google classrooms in
7 violation of federal law. Additionally, in 2019,
8 just a year ago, Google paid the State of New York
9 \$170 million and admitted to illegally targeting
10 children with ads and content on You Tube.

11 This February, just a couple weeks before our
12 school buildings closed, there was an avid in the
13 Dallas Morning News with the title, After Data
14 Breaches, It's Time to Kick Google Out of Public
15 Schools Before It's Too Late.

16 So, I think there is a lot of information that
17 Google is a troubling software platform and yeah, we
18 don't hear the DOE throwing its weight around to try
19 to improve things.

20 SERGEAT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 JOHANNA MILLER: I'll just say one more sentence
22 which is the DOE acted really quickly to work with
23 Zoom to make sure that Zoom was meeting security
24 standards that the DOE felt were necessary but we
25 haven't seen them do that with Google. As far as we

1
2 know, Google is just one and there are you know a
3 multitude of totally inscrutable privacy policies
4 that students and parents are having to accept.

5 And so, we really urge the Council and the DOE to
6 work together to make sure that students data is
7 being protected.

8 Thank you so much.

9 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next we
10 will hear from Susan Horwitz.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 SUSAN HORWITZ: Hi, thank you so much. I am the
13 Supervising Attorney of the Education Law Project in
14 the Civil Practice to Legal Aid Society and the
15 students who we represent are the most vulnerable
16 ones in our system, like some of the other advocacy
17 organizations have noted today.

18 I want to echo a couple of the comments made by
19 others and emphasize four quick points. As several
20 panelists have noted, all students with IEP's must be
21 provided with extended school year services. It's
22 difficult enough for students with disabilities to
23 receive appropriate services during in-person
24 schooling and the current remote system, while
25 acknowledging that this is an unprecedented situation

1
2 and DOE in many ways has really risen to the occasion
3 to meet some needs. But the current remote system
4 for students with disabilities is going to ensure
5 stagnation at the best and regression at the worst.
6 So, we urge the offering of extended school year
7 services.

8 Number two, students who were the subjects of
9 superintendent suspensions at the time schools closed
10 are currently in limbo as to whether they will be
11 able to return when schools reopen, which creates
12 additional stress and trauma on top of everything
13 that's already feeling worrisome and anxious about
14 the current situation.

15 We urge the DOE to offer in essence amnesty to
16 all students who were in this position and to let
17 them know now to permit them to reenroll as soon as
18 schools open and the uncertainty that they are
19 feeling about their current status.

20 And third, for some of our students, this is
21 something that I haven't heard mentioned yet. For
22 some of our students who have great challenges
23 attending school due to trauma related school refusal
24 issues, and it's a good number of the kids who we
25 work with at Legal Aid. Remote learning has actually

1
2 been a boom. We've seen a similar pattern in our
3 children who for being in a classroom full of kids
4 can be really distracting and stimulating and too
5 much to allow them to focus on learning. We are
6 seeing kids who really were not attending school at
7 all, who are getting great grades right now and
8 really engaged in the process of learning.

9 So, we urge DOE to continue to offer some level -

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

11 SUSAN HORWITZ: Of classroom based remote
12 learning opportunities to students who truly can't
13 attend school for certain periods of time based on
14 these types of challenges rather than limiting to
15 them to at most, a couple of hours of home based
16 instruction per day, when that's even approved.

17 Thank you so much.

18 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next, we
19 will hear from Nancy Bedard.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

21 NANCY BEDARD: Hello, this is Nancy Bedard from
22 Brooklyn Legal Services. Brooklyn Legal Services of
23 part of Legal Services New York City, which provides
24 free legal civil services to low income neighborhoods
25 throughout all the five boroughs.

1
2 Thank you very much for allowing me to testify
3 today. Today, I'd like to share information about
4 one of our clients who has contacted us and there is
5 a child with a disability of an IEP who has an
6 orchidism and he is in the third grade and he has at
7 a Brooklyn District 75 school. When I spoke to his
8 mother, she explained to me that she did get a call
9 from the DOE on the 20th of March in order for
10 assistance to order an iPad.

11 She received that iPad on May 10th. Throughout
12 this entire time that she waited, she tried to engage
13 her child over telephone which was not working. The
14 child would not engage on the telephone.
15 Unfortunately, the child also receives all types of
16 services, occupational therapy, speech, and language
17 and was to receive two types of counseling,
18 individual counseling, and group counseling. And the
19 entire time that the child's been on remote learning,
20 the child has only received one call from a speech
21 and language provider.

22 Also, the child is not able to socialize, it is a
23 very difficult process and we understand for the
24 safety of all, that the schools had to be closed but
25 she is now dealing with a situation in which her

1
2 child will not leave the house at all. The routine
3 has been broken and his inability now to socialize is
4 worse than ever and he is regressing. He also cannot
5 engage on the screen now that she has it because of
6 issues with the lighting that are creating serious
7 problems for him.

8 I really appreciate all the DOE has done but
9 there are some children as Susan mentioned who are
10 thriving in this environment -

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

12 NANCY BEDARD: And many, many more who are not.
13 She has an advocate in Brooklyn Legal Services and
14 Legal Services New York City but we ask that you
15 assist students who do not have advocates to go in
16 partial hearings, so they could get remote learning
17 for their disabilities.

18 Thank you very much.

19 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Finally, we will hear
20 from Anna Arkin-Gallagher.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 ANNA ARKIN-GALLAGHER: Hi, good afternoon. My
23 name is Anna Arkin-Gallagher, I am Supervising
24 Attorney in the Education Practice at Brooklyn
25

1
2 Defender Services. Thank you for the opportunity to
3 testify.

4 The transition to remote learning has been a
5 monumental effort and we applaud the efforts of the
6 DOE. In its current form however, the DOE system of
7 remote learning threatens to exacerbate the many
8 inequities that have long existed within the city's
9 education system. Many of the families we work with
10 lack access to the technology required to access the
11 DOE's remote learning platforms and after waiting
12 sometimes weeks to secure internet connected devices,
13 have continued to struggled with slow internet
14 connections, lack of private space and crowded
15 apartments or shelters and other logistical
16 challenges.

17 On top of this, many of the families we work with
18 come from the communities hardest hit by the COVID-19
19 and have experience profound trauma born from job
20 losses, financial insecurities and of course the loss
21 of close family members and friends.

22 With all of this in mind, we believe it is very
23 important for the DOE to formulate a plan that
24 provides adequate mental health and behavioral
25 support services for these students in particular.

1
2 We appreciate the work this committee and especially
3 Chair Treyger did to bring the additional social
4 workers on board even before this pandemic and it is
5 essential for schools to have attentive supports and
6 services in place when students return to school
7 buildings.

8 I want to highlight one additional respect in
9 which our clients are experiencing a disproportionate
10 impact, which is the involvement of ACS and the NYPD
11 in remote learning.

12 Parents and other caregivers we represent have
13 experienced new ACS involvement because of remote
14 learning delays and challenges. We confronted
15 instances in which schools have called ACS or the
16 State Central Register upon noticing students had not
17 logged into the remote learning platform, even when
18 these absences resulted from missing or delayed
19 devices, tech difficulties and internet connectivity
20 issues.

21 We also have concerns that absences due to remote
22 learning are inviting other kinds of unnecessary
23 surveillance and intervention into families lives.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.
25

1
2 ANNA ARKIN-GALLAGHER: It is often that schools
3 have sometimes been encouraged to contact the NYPD to
4 perform wellness checks of students due to struggle
5 to access remote learning services. Visits from the
6 police for this purpose are invasive, unsafe, and
7 unnecessary, especially during this time of social
8 distancing.

9 We hope that the Council can consider the impact
10 that ACS and police visits have on poor families and
11 families of color and encourage the DOE to act as a
12 partner with parents and caregivers adjusting to the
13 challenges of this pandemic.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: That concludes panel
16 seven. Chair Treyger?

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, very briefly and I
18 thank Anna for that powerful testimony and I
19 mentioned earlier that there is a student in my
20 district that was being marked absent because she is
21 working now as an essential food worker helping serve
22 the community and helping support her family at home
23 but they were still marking her absent and trying to
24 punish her for that.

1
2 I do have just a quick question for the panel.
3 You heard earlier my exchange with the DOE about
4 their survey questions and some areas that you know,
5 I raised that were not asked and I want to be just
6 very clear, I don't want to ask anything you know,
7 that is insensitive. I don't want to ask anything
8 that infringes upon privacy or personal issues.

9 I do however, believe we need to take better
10 stock of the trauma and of the burdens that many of
11 our kids are experiencing because what I'll share
12 with you anecdotally, is that I've heard from
13 families where it's hard to find a quiet place to
14 learn in crowded dwellings with people who are sick.
15 I have heard about students, high school kids now
16 having to work to support their family.

17 So, can the panel - what kinds of questions that
18 are appropriate and that are you know, sensitive to,
19 I don't want to cross any line, but what kind of
20 information do you think is appropriate to ask of our
21 school communities to take better stock of the trauma
22 and burdens our families are facing during this
23 pandemic and during this change to remote learning?

24 SUSAN HORWITZ: Hi, this is Susan here. I think
25 the way that I think DOE can take stock is by just

1
2 the way that they are framing the questions. So,
3 instead of specifically saying, Dear Student, have
4 you had to work to take care of your family, has
5 anyone died in your family? That they are making the
6 questions a little more open ended, like you know,
7 what types of barriers have you found? Are there
8 specific obstacles to logging in every morning? Are
9 there any challenges you find with your ability to
10 fully focus.

11 So, to sort of work around it as opposed to
12 saying, do you have to get a job and does that
13 prevent you? And you know, a lot of it is really
14 just framing and we talk about this a lot with my
15 team about how to just even ask question ourselves,
16 so that everyone feels comfortable and like, we're
17 not being too intrusive.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Excellent point, thank you.
19 Excellent points.

20 JOHANNA MILLER: I'll just share that 40 percent
21 of the respondents in our survey said that their
22 biggest struggle was that they or their child had
23 additional responsibilities now that they didn't have
24 before the pandemic. And those included, we sort of
25 left it open ended, we just called it additional

1
2 responsibilities and then let people type in and a
3 lot of it was caring for siblings and that was
4 something that impacted students of all ages. You
5 know, basically if you are nine and you have a five
6 year old sibling, you may be looking after them
7 during the day and that – the result was much higher
8 than we even thought it would be, 40 percent. It was
9 the highest of anything on the survey, so I think
10 it's well worth asking those questions and I agree
11 with the way that the questions are framed and maybe
12 just giving people the opportunity to offer as much
13 or as little detail as they want. But having the
14 opportunity to say, I really have more responsibility
15 now and then maybe someone following up in a more
16 human to human way, I think could go really far.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Excellent, thank you.
18 That's perfect and that's exactly what I needed to
19 hear because I am a lifelong learner and I want to
20 find that right balance of asking, taking stock of it
21 but being sensitive to individual cases.

22 Thank you so much for that excellent suggestion,
23 thank you.

24 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you Chair and
25 thank you panel seven. We will now move to panel

1
2 eight. Panel eight will consist of Maud Maron, Nuala
3 O'Doherty-Naranjo, Kris Greene, and Jessica
4 Caraballo. We will start with Maud.

5 MAUD MARON: Okay, hello, can you hear me?

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You time will start now.

7 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Yes, go ahead.

8 MAUD MARON: Yes, okay, thank you for returning
9 to me, I appreciate it. Good afternoon everyone,
10 good afternoon Chair Treyger.

11 My name is Maud Maron and I am the President of
12 Community Education Counsel for District 2. I am the
13 mom of four and my three eldest are New York City
14 public school students in fourth, sixth, and eighth
15 grade. I have some prepared remarks about remote
16 learning but I'd like to just remark on something I
17 heard earlier. I was troubled because in truth there
18 really wasn't outreach of any meaningful kind around
19 the grading policy. The ECC, the Deputy Chancellor
20 Austin referenced is a private organization that does
21 not allow parents to attend their meeting or have
22 public sessions where parents or students can share
23 their perspective.

24 So, talking to the ECC is not a substitute for
25 reaching out to CEC'S and PTA'S regarding the grading

1
2 policy. DC Austin also mentioned PLACE, which I am a
3 member of but PLACE was only consulted after the
4 grading policy was finalized and presented to elected
5 officials. So, that's not really the kind of
6 meaningful outreach and consultation that parents are
7 looking for and I certainly hope the DOE can and do
8 better around developing an admissions policy.

9 I will say that with regard to remote learning,
10 my children have had a very successful transition and
11 they are very lucky. They were using Google
12 Classroom prior to the transition in District 2. Our
13 teachers have had a 96 percent contact rate with the
14 students across our district. I am really grateful
15 too and enormously impressed by all of the work that
16 I've seen from teachers in our schools. And all of
17 my kids have had some access to a degree of live
18 instruction.

19 I know that not all families have had such an
20 easy transition. It took many weeks to distribute
21 devices to students and the health concerns and job
22 losses and other trauma brought on by this pandemic
23 have not been born equally by all communities. Pre-
24 existing inequities have worsened and the fact that
25 students are currently experiencing school or

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2 experiencing remote learning so differently, means
3 that when they walk through the doors of school
4 buildings when they reopen, they are going to walk
5 through with different needs and different levels of
6 trauma and different educational strengths and
7 weaknesses.

8 So, I think we have to acknowledge that we need
9 nuance plans for the educational success of the
10 students in our system and that one size fits all
11 solution is not going to work.

12 So, thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you.

14 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next we
15 will hear from Newalla.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now. Time starts
17 now.

18 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Okay, we have some more
19 panelists to go, so we will swing back to Newalla.
20 Next, we'll hear from Kris Greene.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 KRIS GREENE: Can you hear me?

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes.

24 KRIS GREENE: Good afternoon Chairman Treyger and
25 all City Council Members. My name is Kris Greene and

1
2 I am a Program Director at Good Shepherd Services.
3 Over both a COMPASS and SONYC DYCD funded after
4 school program at Brooklyn Scholar's Charter School.
5 And I would like to express the seemingly
6 insurmountable obstacles our program families will
7 potentially face this summer. This testimony
8 provides input from Mrs. Roxanne Thomas, the school
9 Principal.

10 We've learning that families in our school
11 community are experiencing food shortages and an
12 increase in technological needs for laptops to meet
13 the requirement for remote learning and anxiety
14 related to meeting the Center for Disease Controls
15 guidelines with limited access to personal protective
16 equipment.

17 As a result, we have connected families to food
18 pantries across New York City, distributed laptops to
19 families who can borrow them until work is back in
20 session and referrals were made to the City
21 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Resources
22 around mental health including NYC Well, as well as
23 we did also distribute resource maps and contact
24 information to resources provided by city agencies.
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2 Lastly, as it relates to remote learning
3 supports. We are supporting our families during this
4 hard time through regular communication between
5 program staff and families. These calls are
6 currently happening on a weekly basis via calls, text
7 messages, emails, and voice messages where we share
8 resources that make necessary referrals that families
9 need during this difficult time.

10 Our COMPASS and SONYC staff provide live
11 activities via Google Classroom on a daily basis
12 including stretches and basic beginner dance steps to
13 keep our youth active and moving and improving their
14 reflexes. Activities to reinforce base awareness,
15 discussions on decision making and making choices,
16 sports discussions about idolized athletes, how their
17 style of play effected the way they see themselves as
18 sports partitioners, research on said athletes, as
19 well as studying the history of sports.

20 Class offerings are also available for art,
21 drama, dance, problem solving, and expression for
22 music. Staff have also provided DIY or Do It
23 Yourself activities for families to try at home that
24 encourage family engagement.

1
2 All these activities have helped our families
3 keep students engaged. Better – the excess time at
4 home to remain in good health and continue to be
5 mentally stimulated.

6 Parents and guardians have shared their
7 appreciation for services such as these that have
8 alleviated the pressure unfairly placed them at a
9 time when the expectation is for them to be part time
10 educators.

11 These activities support closing the widening gap
12 being experienced by our young people, especially
13 during the summer season when services will be
14 nonexistent. We are committed to serving the needs
15 of our community and understand that this is a
16 difficult time. We can assist in ensuring the
17 families have what they need this summer to support
18 the growth of youth.

19 Thank you.

20 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next, we
21 will hear from Jessica Caraballo.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 JESSICA CARABALLO: Hi, good afternoon and thank
24 you for hosting this hearing and for the opportunity
25 to testify. My name is Jessica Caraballo and I am a

1
2 Program Director at Good Shepherd Services at MS 363.
3 A middle school SONYC program that's located in the
4 Bronx.

5 Since the pandemic, we have moved our programming
6 and supports remotely. Our staff has been working
7 with families and leveraging our strong relationships
8 to encourage students to remain engaged with their
9 schoolwork. We have created a series of remote
10 activities that students could do from home including
11 salsa, Liverpool, visual arts, and cooking classes.

12 Nonprofits across the city have stepped up to
13 support families with remote learning, distributing
14 laptops, assisting with Google classrooms, and
15 updating contact information, so they can be reached
16 by their teachers.

17 Students are dealing with complex trauma and now
18 more than ever we are helping them process the
19 feeling of loss. Of being away from family and
20 friends, the outdoors, and the absence of activities
21 they enjoy, while navigating remote learning. Our
22 work is critical to the recovery of our young people.

23 At MS 363 in the Bronx, it is important to name
24 that our community has been plagued with gun
25 violence, poverty and health and economic disparities

1
2 that have only been magnified by the COVID-19 virus.
3 This on top of youth navigating remote learning and
4 staying indoors. Our programs help children be
5 children and ensure that they have safe haven where
6 they can escape community violence, drug gang
7 activity, and other abuses that they are
8 experiencing. We are able to do this work because of
9 the trust we have built with family and youth.

10 As the weather is getting warmer and the
11 announcement of summer programs are being canceled
12 was made, our youth and families are feeling
13 abandoned. While we continue to create remote
14 activities to keep them engaged and off the streets,
15 we know that our communities need assurances of
16 what's going to be happening this summer soon.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 JESSICA CARABALLO: We know that if they are
19 engaged at home, this keeps them off the street and
20 safe and this is when we know that we have gotten the
21 job done.

22 Thank you for your time.

23 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and we're
24 going to swing back to Nuala O'Doherty-Naranjo
25 are you on?

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NUALA O'DOHERTY-NARANJO: I am here.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

NUALA O'DOHERTY-NARANJO: Can you hear me?

COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Yes, go ahead.

NUALA O'DOHERTY-NARANJO: My name is Nuala O'Doherty-Naranjo I am a grandmother of two [INAUDIBLE 2:36:36] attending our great local public school. But I live here Jackson Heights Queens where we really have been hit hard by COVID. We are kind of the epicenter of the epicenter and that's why I think it is so important that we really look at how this has affected our families, not only educationally but as a whole person. They really suffered in so many different ways. At IS 230, we have had families who have lost nine different direct family members in their household in just one school. So, I think we put it in that context of how jarring this is. I think we have to make sure when we talk about education, we talk about it as a whole person and specifically about how hard it can be to go through a normal education day. And that's why it's so, so important that we have a sense of normalcy and a sense of humor interaction.

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2 Normalcy, I mean just a regular schedule. A
3 schedule so people know what they can expect the next
4 day. When life has been turned so topsy turvy, it's
5 so important that kids know what to expect.

6 And secondly, that they can actually meet their
7 teacher and meet their fellow students and that's why
8 it is so important to have time everyday where they
9 see their teacher and students in real time, one on
10 one, so they can actually participate in classes.
11 Not only for the sense of normalcy but just for the
12 social interaction. So many of these kids have been
13 locked into small cramped apartments with many, many
14 relatives for so long, they really need that social
15 emotional time and I really implore the Department of
16 Education to really focus on that social emotional
17 needs to make sure kids can interact with their
18 teachers and with other students. Because we need to
19 make sure we educate the entire child and that we
20 really consider those needs in these traumatic times.
21 These kids have suffered and they deserve everything
22 we can give them.

23 Thank you.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
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2 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. That
3 concludes panel eight. Chair Treyger, any questions?

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: We're good, thank you.

5 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you everyone on
6 panel eight. We will now move to panel nine. On
7 panel nine, we have Maggie Moroff, DeNora Getachew,
8 Anna Fridman and Kimberly Watkins. We will start
9 with Maggie.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 MAGGIE MOROFF: My name is Maggie Moroff and I
12 coordinate the ARISE Coalition. ARISE members had
13 been on the frontlines as remote learning has rolled
14 out and I'd like to share some of what we've seen and
15 what we hope will come next.

16 This period of remote learning has been difficult
17 for students and their families. We know that Central
18 DOE staff and many educators have been working
19 incredibly hard to make remote learning and services
20 possible. But we've seen so many challenges and we
21 continue to hear far too many students with
22 disabilities who have only minimal services in place
23 at this point.

24 We worry that these represent systemic challenges
25 that remain months into remote learning. I'd like to

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2 offer a few examples. Some youth whose special
3 education needs mean they function well below their
4 chronological grade are being given work meant for
5 students at their age level. Work impossible for
6 those students. Some have had no live instruction or
7 meaningful teacher interaction despite their need for
8 support from a special education teacher. Others are
9 still not receiving all of their mandated related
10 services.

11 Staff at some schools continue to tell parents
12 that evaluations cannot be done until the buildings
13 reopen, leaving students without needed services and
14 families of students with a range of disabilities
15 from dyslexia to autism to behavioral challenges, to
16 hearing impairments worry that their students
17 specific needs aren't being met.

18 Students with disabilities are at particular risk
19 of falling behind during this time. Their needs are
20 greater and they are more likely to rely on in person
21 adult support making their parents role especially
22 important.

23 They will need instruction and services going
24 forward to make up those they've missed and we look
25 forward to working with the DOE and with the City

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2 Council to ensure that they get that support that
3 they need and to get them back on track.

4 Thank you and thank you again your staff for
5 getting me back on.

6 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you Maggie.
7 Next, we will hear from Denora.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 DENORA GETACHEW: Good afternoon. Thank you for
10 the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of
11 Generation Citizen. My name is DeNora Getachew, I am
12 the New York Executive Director at Generation
13 Citizen.

14 Generation Citizen is a ten year old national
15 nonprofit dedicated to demystifying democracy for
16 young people by bringing civics education back into
17 the classroom through action civics.

18 During the last few election cycles our nation
19 has been powerfully reminded of the potential of
20 youth political participation. While the trend we
21 see in favor of civics education is encouraging, it
22 underlines a necessity of reinvigorating civics
23 education in schools, particularly through programs
24 like the ones that the Council funds through
25 Generation Citizen where we bring project based

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2 learning and real world opportunities to engage in
3 democracy. At this critical juncture in our nation's
4 history, we need systems that will create sustained
5 youth participation.

6 Our program equips youth with the knowledge and
7 skills they need to participate and as we've seen
8 from the data, under resourced communities are the
9 ones most likely to be disproportionately impacted by
10 this pandemic and the very communities that now more
11 than ever need to understand how democracy works.

12 As this pandemic began to disrupt education in
13 New York and nationwide, we shifted to offering our
14 curriculum and programming to school partners in a
15 free way through grab and go lessons that they can
16 use to access in the classrooms through a synchronous
17 learning. We've been able to support teachers with
18 things like how to lobby a legislator, how to talk
19 about the Census, how to get your city to respond.
20 How do you write a [INAUDIBLE 2:40:09]. We recommend
21 the city consider using more project based learning
22 as an educational resource in this disrupted
23 educational environment.

24 Project based learning as we've heard others talk
25 about is effective because it maximizes learning in a

1
2 way that is efficient, especially at a time with
3 reduced instructional hours. It can easily be
4 adapted to a synchronous learning environments and it
5 develops the skills that promote 21st Century college
6 and career readiness, including critical thinking,
7 problem solving, etc.

8 We know that we need to motivate young people to
9 believe in themselves and their power to effect
10 change locally and to explore issues as they do so.

11 We believe that project based learning,
12 especially during this moment can allow educators to
13 connect and engage students and ensure that learning
14 does not feel so isolated, difficult, and
15 disconnected. It is now a more important tool than
16 ever as students and teachers engage with each other
17 to take meaningful action.

18 We have heard firsthand from educators that their
19 students want to use their voice and their
20 experiences to impact the communities especially
21 during this disruptive time. Including teachers like
22 Cynthia Muldrew in Council Member Eugene's district
23 who recently remarked that remote learning has
24 allowed for successful small group facilitation and
25 students to own more of the work. She has been able

1
2 to divide her students up to work independently in
3 small groups and join small group sessions to watch
4 them effectively collaborate without much
5 facilitation on her part.

6 In conclusion, young people are the present and
7 future of our democracy and if we can actually give
8 them the knowledge and skills they need to
9 participate, they will make their voices heard,
10 especially in this moment when young people are
11 feeling so disrupted and uncertain and in a crucial
12 election year they need to make their voices heard.

13 Thank you.

14 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next,
15 we'll hear from Anna.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 ANNA FRIDMAN: Hi, thank you. My name is Anna
18 Fridman and I am a parent of three special needs
19 kids. My twin boys are five years old and my oldest
20 is six. As per Department of Education, we started
21 remote learning in March. According to Department of
22 Education remote learning is working great however,
23 this is far from the truth for us and many of our
24 friends that have special need children.

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2 All three of my kids have regressed tremendously
3 due to lack of appropriate services and none of the
4 IEP goals are being met. Their regression is evident
5 in their behavior and it is more and more severe on a
6 daily basis. We have daily meltdowns, we have lost
7 social skills, we lost communication skills. My
8 twins have very severe developmental delays and
9 cannot sit for more than a few seconds. They have
10 zero understanding of how to use a computer or how to
11 use an iPad. The related services such as speech,
12 occupational therapy, ADA therapy and PT are expected
13 to be implemented by me.

14 I'm a single parent and cannot be a teacher,
15 occupational therapist, speech therapist to three
16 children. Remote learning does not work for us at
17 all. I sent many letters to the school as well as
18 the Department of Education with really, they are
19 doing their best, that's the respond that I got. You
20 know, I addressed it to the school, they are doing
21 the best that they can. Therapy must be done in
22 person with proper safety procedures. Summer school
23 and fall classes should be done in person. Their
24 IEP's are being violated and they are not getting
25 free appropriate education as required by law.

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That's all I want to say.

COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and finally on panel nine, we will hear from Kimberly Watkins.

KIMBERLY WATKINS: Great, thank you so much. Thank you for hosting this hearing Council Member Treyger, I really appreciate it and I want to thank our hardworking teachers, our principals, and our staff members for doing the best they can in this difficult period of time in our lives.

My name is Kim Watkins, I am a Harlem parent, mother of a fifth grader and I am an elected leader in School District 3 and I want to speak today in my prepared remarks about my two big concerns which have to do with remote learning, kind of as an end into itself. And then also what the future is going to look like and my concerns about that. But I just want to say regarding my co-panelist Anna was just saying that I think it's time for us to really start thinking about how our most vulnerable are being effected by this and use what we know about what is happening in our families that are most effected by COVID-19 to change the school system as a whole. I feel just awful listening to her experience knowing that in my own life, you know, home schooling or

1
2 remote learning is extremely difficult, but you know,
3 I don't have a child with a disability and I feel
4 just incredibly lucky that I don't have to - I'm not
5 in that position.

6 But I did want today to speak a little bit about
7 remote learning as an end into itself because the
8 thing that I think the DOE is focused on is that the
9 you know, remote learning is a stand alone
10 environment and what I think we need to accept is
11 that education isn't about sitting in front of a
12 computer screen or any screen. It's a useful tool as
13 part of an array of experiences that help young
14 people grow and develop the skills that they need in
15 their lives, whatever they are going to do but we
16 don't want to raise a whole generation of techno
17 addicts, which I think could easily happen if we
18 don't adjust the way that we're talking about this
19 period of time. And of course, what would be
20 happening in the future.

21 New Yorkers have suffered immeasurably because
22 our DOE, our government did not heed warnings about
23 the pandemic to close schools early enough and they
24 did not have a plan in place that would sustain
25

1
2 learning for our kids over a prolonged period of time
3 of shuttered school operations.

4 This entire saga has been made worse by the fact
5 that rather than shut the school down for a period of
6 time and allow teachers and hard working principals
7 and staff to start online learning plans in Ernest,
8 the DOE spent taxpayer dollars on a huge collection
9 of high tech learning programs and one of the most
10 expensive outlays of Apple products that probably
11 took place in history rather than take the time to
12 work with school communities and districts about what
13 they needed in each of their districts and
14 communities. iPads aren't even that user friendly in
15 terms of typing, which has really lead to frustration
16 in many homes including mine.

17 The path work of online programs has further
18 frustrated parents because in the first weeks of
19 homeschooling as many people have talked about
20 already today, you know, we cobbled together our own
21 individualized plans. Some by class, some by school,
22 some by grade, some by school and then the worst
23 manifestation of centralized bureaucratic control
24 happened when you know, the mothership, the DOE said,
25 no, you cannot use this one program, you have to use

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2 this other approved program. And then a few weeks
3 later, the ground, then the rules shifted again.

4 And now here we are in June. Now teachers and
5 parents and students may have stopped scratching our
6 heads with these varieties of programs. We're burned
7 out. Many students haven't returned to the learning
8 potential that they had even when we began to
9 shutdown in March. Live instruction also is a great
10 deal and I am so pleased that it was brought up a
11 couple of times today but this is one area that
12 parents consistently agree on, that the synchronous,
13 the live instruction has the most positive impact on
14 our student motivation and our progress during this
15 period.

16 So, you know, just like in a physical classroom,
17 a good teacher you know, the room that makes the
18 difference and I think the DOE is doing a good job
19 getting there but I am concerned that we don't have a
20 standard of instructional delivery in terms of live
21 teaching.

22 I think a long term remote plan turning to that
23 part isn't going to mean much if students don't have
24 an understanding and parents and families don't have
25

1
2 an understanding of that that standard of synchronous
3 or live instruction is supposed to be.

4 Remote learning therefore still has a long way to
5 go to be a part of our overall public school system.

6 The lack of a plan for this fall is also very
7 troubling. I'd argue that despite our hopeful desire
8 to reopen our schools, we may still need to face the
9 reality that parents won't feel safe sending our
10 schools and reopening school buildings in the fall.

11 Full time school nurses are still not being hired.

12 We all know that our budgets are being slashed and
13 communities all around the city are wondering how we
14 are going to transition our kids to new grades, to
15 new schools, and then deal with the public health
16 realities that we know we're going to have to – that
17 sort of conformity to new public health rules that
18 we're going to have to conform to in September.

19 So, those are my remarks. Thank you again for
20 hosting us and I hope everyone has a great day.

21 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Chair
22 Treyger.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, just very briefly, I
24 just agree with Kim and who has been a fantastic
25 advocate for kids and school communities across the

1
2 city that if parents and school communities do not
3 feel safe to return to school in the fall, the plan
4 is just not going to work and that's why we need a
5 clear and funded and safe school reopening plan
6 because otherwise, there is no reopening of New York
7 and I was on a panel yesterday where I made that
8 point clear with the Chancellor of State Education of
9 New York and my other colleagues that we can no
10 longer speak about education in silo terms. They can
11 create 50,000 task forces on different issues but
12 everything comes down to our school system. Our
13 economy, our healthcare system, our safety net, and
14 so, if there is not a plan, a funded plan to safely
15 reopen schools, it's just not going to work.

16 And this is not a budget wish list. This is
17 simply a fact that everything is connected to the
18 school system. So, Kimberly, thank you for your
19 advocacy. Nurses are definitely a part of that
20 conversation and so, I thank you for that. And for
21 Anna Fridman, I would like if someone from the staff
22 can get Anna's contact information, I'd like to
23 follow up with the DOE on how we can better support
24 Anna's situation with her children because that story
25 was very, very painful and we ask questions about

1
2 that. About which IEP services are now not being met
3 and children who are not getting back lost time of
4 instruction and these services.

5 So, if we can get Anna's information, I'd like to
6 follow up with her following this hearing and I thank
7 the panel.

8 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you panel nine.
9 Before moving onto panel ten, I just want to remind
10 everyone for Council Members that are still logged
11 into the hearing, there are a number of you. If you
12 do have a question for a particular panelist, please
13 use the raised hand function in Zoom. You will be
14 called on after the panel has completed its testimony
15 in its entirety.

16 For panelists, you will notice the letter P and a
17 number next to your name. This will let you know
18 what panel you are on and you will be able to see
19 where you are in the queue throughout the hearing.
20 Please wait to start your testimony until the
21 Sergeant at Arms gives you the go ahead to begin
22 after setting the timer.

23 All testimony will be limited to two minutes.
24 When time is called, we please ask all panelists to
25 wrap up their testimony. Again, I will do my best

1
2 with pronouncing everyone's name, so if I do mess it
3 up, I do apologize in advance and continue to
4 apologize.

5 Now we will move to panel ten. Panel ten will be
6 Derwin Greene, Ted Leather, and Amanda Blair. Derwin
7 Greene.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 DERWIN GREENE: Good afternoon everyone. I just
10 want to say thank you for allowing me to be here. My
11 name is Derwin Greene as I previously stated, I am
12 from the Cambridge Heights Community Center where I
13 am a College Success Counselor.

14 I just wanted to speak on behalf of my
15 organization and other community based organizations
16 in regards to the upcoming city budget where de
17 Blasio is planning to cut summer funding to SYEP and
18 to summer camps, school programs like SONYC and
19 Cornerstones and Beacon and so, I just want to say
20 that if these cuts were to happen, it would
21 definitely create another sense of loss in a time
22 where students have already lost so much.

23 Through community based organizations that are
24 capable of providing some you know, enriching
25 resources and training and valuable opportunities to

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2 the youth. Through our organization we have CARA
3 right, which is the College Access and Research
4 Action Center where we help to train youth in the
5 summer time to go into schools and implement the
6 college access model where they are training, you
7 know, where they are assisting their peers through
8 the college process. You know, helping them with
9 applications, providing them with training around
10 CUNY's and SUNY's and as well as you know, advisement
11 as well as through life, as well through these
12 actions.

13 When these budget cuts take place, this will not
14 only allow you know, this will take away
15 opportunities for these students to gain valuable
16 appointment but also skills that will help them you
17 know, in their goals going forward in life and also
18 too, just knowing that summer funding does not exist,
19 idle hands are the devils workshop and knowing that,
20 you know, in marginalized communities that they will
21 not likely stay inside and that they will come out
22 and that will lead to other you know, other issues
23 and problems that will take place. And so, we're
24 just asking that these cuts do not take place besides
25 the fact that many of these nonprofit organizations

1
2 will not be able to come back and be able to sustain
3 themselves which only will add to you know, other
4 negative numbers that will effect the city in
5 reopening.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

7 DERWIN GREENE: Thank you.

8 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you Derwin.

9 Next, we will hear from Ted Leather.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 TED LEATHER: Good afternoon. My name is Ted
12 Leather, I am a Manhattan Member of the Citywide
13 Council on High Schools. I want to focus on one
14 word. The word is lack. I see a lack of consistency
15 in live instruction. Some students do not have any
16 or not enough. Some teachers pile on homework. I
17 see a lack of a plan for students mental health,
18 their emotional health, their physical health, and it
19 isn't just students who are suffering, it's all of
20 us. Parents, staff, teachers, it's the whole planet.
21 I could attest to helping parents in both English
22 and Uzbek, who are frustrated in trying to figure out
23 the iPad. So, remote learning leaves a lot to be
24 desired and this lack of a vision be it citywide,
25 schoolwide, districtwide, is evident.

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2 So, the question is what will be enacted in the
3 next few weeks, so that the fall is not lacking.
4 September is four months away and the way that we
5 have constructed remote learning is not viable as a
6 long term solution.

7 Thank you.

8 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we
9 will hear from Amanda Blair.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 AMANDA BLAIR: Good afternoon everybody and thank
12 you for hosting this hearing. My name is Amanda
13 Blair. I am a College Access Counselor for Good
14 Shepherd Services. I'm also a mother of three
15 children, one in elementary school and one in high
16 school.

17 Brooklyn Frontiers High School is a partnership
18 between the DOE and Good Shepherd Services. We serve
19 9th graders who have been held back at least twice in
20 elementary and or middle schools. We also serve
21 students who have attended high school for at least
22 one year and are looking for a fresh start and a new
23 opportunity to complete their high school diploma.
24 We know that all students regardless of their past
25 experience in schools, can be successful.

1
2 Our school as designed to help students get back
3 on track and to graduate ready for college and
4 career. We at Good Shepherd operate in full
5 partnership with the Department of Education across
6 the system. Fulton Community Brooklyn Community High
7 School, West Brooklyn High School and Research and
8 Services. Combined we serve a total of 1,000
9 students throughout Brooklyn.

10 As a result of COVID-19, all our support remote
11 in March. It became immediately clear that students
12 needed access to equipment and broadband at home.
13 Our GSS accessed with what students needed across our
14 community based programs. We provided over 500
15 laptops to students in need. While our teachers
16 worked to create a new way of doing high school
17 instruction, within 24 hours, GSS team focused on
18 teaching students and their families how to commit to
19 the class work.

20 Our staff had been critical in linking students
21 to the classroom and maintaining that human
22 relationship that is fundamental in our school.

23 Beyond –

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.
25

1
2 AMANDA BLAIR: Okay, I'll wrap it up. Our team
3 as always is focused on emotionally supporting our
4 students. We help youth to restore faith in
5 themselves.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: If you could just wrap up
7 your final comments and we'll take your emailed
8 testimony if possible.

9 AMANDA BLAIR: Okay, what we are doing right now
10 is seeing the glue that holds all of our schools
11 together. That one on one attention, keeping the
12 dialogue going even when someone hasn't been able to
13 face or just needs time to talk with the team. Our
14 students are facing the summer without any of the
15 normal fabric of our city. No SYEP funds because of
16 remote summer school for makeup work. We know that
17 our connection to our students, that they will be
18 most successful in school and that their families
19 will be able to get the support and the information
20 they need. This summer is going to be unlike we you
21 have ever seen but we are committed to support our
22 youth and the community.

23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you.
25

1
2 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: That is all for panel
3 ten. Chair Treyger.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much.

5 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you everybody
6 from panel ten. Next, we will call up panel eleven,
7 Rachel Watts, Chien Kwok and Yiatin Chu. We will
8 start with Rachel Watts.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 RACHEL WATTS: Hi, thank you for the opportunity
11 to testify. I'm just trying to find my document. My
12 name is Rachel Watts and I come to you today as a
13 Board Member of the New York City Arts and Education
14 Round Table and as someone who has worked with
15 schools in New York City for over 20 years.

16 I am here to highlight the importance of
17 immediately investing in arts education and the arts
18 education community and our ability to support
19 schools and positively engage young people remotely.

20 The New York City Arts and Education Round Table
21 is a member organization whose main purpose is to
22 support the Arts Education Communities work in New
23 York City public schools. We represent over 200
24 organizations that provide more than 1,200 schools
25 with vital arts programming. The member

1
2 organizations fill the gaps in arts education and a
3 long standing partnership with the Department of
4 Education, to help see that every child has access to
5 quality arts learning.

6 The creative thinkers from these organizations
7 quickly pivoted at a pace far faster than many
8 schools. The designing and gaging remote arts
9 learning curriculum. The arts learning opportunities
10 have given students space to process their current
11 reality and build important life skills that will
12 help them move beyond the pandemic.

13 As New York City schools work to go through the
14 process of recovery from the COVID-19 crisis over the
15 coming months and years, the arts and culture sector
16 is poised and ready to play a crucial role in the
17 process. The City Council must put their faith in
18 the arts and culture sector to help process trauma,
19 restore joy, support physical fitness, and support
20 schools in online learning or when we can, be back in
21 the classroom in person.

22 The Chancellor and Mayor need to make it clear
23 that arts instruction can and must continue as part
24 of every child's learning. We need you, the Council
25 Members who understand that the arts are essential to

1
2 ensure organizations that with art space vendor
3 contracts for the DOE are included in the remote
4 learning and transition plan moving forward.

5 Thank you for your time and consideration.

6 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you very much.

7 Next, we will hear from Chien Kwok.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 CHIEN KWOK: Yes hi, my name is Chien Kwok, thank
10 you very much. I am a parent of two public school
11 children, PTA Co-President and a members of PLACE NYC
12 and a graduate of Brooklyn Tech and my comments are
13 my own.

14 Scarce city waste and corruption. In the
15 nation's most costly education system with a \$34
16 billion budget, but yet has a profound scarcity of
17 resources for our children, there unfair race and
18 corruption that has robbed all the children of the
19 future.

20 All of these have been exposed and worsened by
21 COVID-19. We don't have the same funds anymore but
22 we need to help our children overcome even greater
23 challenges. The screen school admissions debate is
24 rooted in shortage of programs that support all types
25 of students. Every school needs an academic rigorous

1
2 program for high performing students as much as
3 special education for students with disabilities,
4 regardless of race, income level or other factors.
5 No child should commute long distances to access
6 sound and appropriate education.

7 At the PP meeting last week, I had the
8 heartbreaking experience of listening to students
9 from different schools collocated in the same
10 building disparage each other simply because there is
11 not enough space. School space is a fundamental
12 right for all students and the most basic job that a
13 Chancellor must get right.

14 And we know that DOE has had that \$34 billion
15 budget after years of uncontrolled growth. It's
16 \$31,000 per students double the second most expensive
17 school system. Yet, we're told it is still not
18 enough money. The PP approval process, the media
19 reports informs us about the waste and corruption in
20 DOE. And just yesterday reports surfaced that
21 confirms that what we have longed suspected. The
22 Chancellor secretly it's fellow ID log special
23 interests groups and ignores the views of parents
24 across the city. This is yet another example of the
25 corruption rampant throughout the DOE.

1
2 The connections are clear. The scarcity our
3 students face and the harm that it does is directly
4 related to the waste and corruption of the DOE. This
5 has been ongoing for years and now made worse by the
6 COVID crisis. Chair Treyger and all city Council
7 Members, please do your duty, hold the Mayor and
8 Chancellor accountable.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you for your
11 testimony and next we will hear from Yiatin Chu.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 YIATIN CHU: Good afternoon Chair Treyger and
14 City Council Members. My name is Yiatin Chu, I am a
15 CC1 Member, SLT Member and Co-President of PLACE NYC.
16 I am here speaking for myself today.

17 I want to talk about my school, PS184 on the
18 lower east side. It is the only dwelling which
19 Mandarin school in the city. We are a Title 1 school
20 with a 70 percent Asian student body and mostly from
21 new immigrant, non-English speaking homes. I am
22 thankful to our teachers who started live instruction
23 in the first week of remote learning. With the
24 exception of the Zoom ban hiccup, my child has been
25 receiving daily live instruction. Her Chinese

1
2 teacher an enunciate new vocabulary words and hear
3 each student try to do the same.

4 Our teachers have worked tirelessly to make
5 remote learning as productive as possible and I am
6 grateful. As an education activist, I have been busy
7 speaking out on the unfair K to A grading policy that
8 the DOE decided without first engaging with parents
9 or PLACE NYC.

10 Even with many challenges that they face before,
11 during and after the pandemic, families in my school
12 count on their child's report card as feedback on how
13 their child is doing.

14 There is a sense of accomplishment and pride when
15 they see their child progress and excel despite their
16 circumstances. In the midst of this pandemic, the
17 DOE wants to implement a top down citywide change to
18 screen school admissions. My school, the only non-
19 GNT recognition school in District 1 sends two-thirds
20 of our eighth graders to academic screen high
21 schools. Our students have prepared for and set
22 their sites on the selective high performing high
23 schools to further their academic growth and a path
24 for socioeconomic mobility.

1
2 It is unconscionable for the Mayor, Chancellor,
3 and the anti-education activists to seize this crisis
4 to eliminate this education opportunity for the
5 families at my school.

6 Lastly, I have been helping a student in my
7 school that requested a device on March 16th and
8 still has not received it as of last week.

9 Yes, it's been over two months. She is not Black
10 or Brown. She is an Asian fifth grader who has been
11 managing remote learning on her mom's cell phone. In
12 September, she will start middle school at [INAUDIBLE
13 2:56:34], a citywide academic screen school.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Chair
16 Treyger.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I thank the panel for their
18 testimony and I think there needs to be a whole lot
19 more outreach and a whole lot more conversations
20 about many of the pressing issues that have been
21 raised and it's even challenging now to have
22 effective conversations in these remote settings but
23 make no mistake, every community, every district must
24 be heard and the DOE has a lot more work to do on
25

1
2 that front and I thank you all for your time and your
3 testimony today.

4 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you for the
5 panelists, for panel eleven. We will move to panel
6 twelve. Panel twelve will be Adriana Aviles, Mariana
7 Fitzgerald, Waiching Chan. We will start Adriana
8 Aviles.

9 ADRIANA AVILES: Thank you to City Council for
10 allowing parents and families this space to listen to
11 how remote learning is going for all of us. I am not
12 here to speak badly against any group, so my
13 statement should not be held against any school
14 district, any specific school, the UFT, CSA, or even
15 the DOE.

16 I am here on behalf of my children. I am not
17 speaking on behalf of any school community group. I
18 am here as a parent to three children within the New
19 York City public school system. So, I will tell you
20 what is going on with us now with remote learning.
21 Excuse me for my language but if I can sum it up in
22 the words of my ten year old son, remote learning
23 sucks.

24 It sucks because kids can't physically be with
25 their friends. It sucks because they are home all

1
2 day with this new principal who has three different
3 devices on three different floors trying to go back
4 and forth to help in any way I can. Maybe even teach
5 once and a while and still try to manage a household.

6 We are truly blessed, while so many are
7 struggling with just life's essential needs. But it
8 sucks for my kids when this new principal has
9 absolutely no answers for their questions. When are
10 we going back? Is it going to be forever? How are
11 my friends doing? They miss school and as a parent
12 that sucks.

13 It sucks because it seems families are kept in
14 the dark consistently when it comes to the decision
15 making in regards to our childrens schools. It sucks
16 because so many are making decisions for our families
17 yet they have no children within the New York City
18 DOE school system.

19 Remote learning, we know will be the new norm,
20 yet the lack of consistency across classrooms,
21 schools, districts, and the city itself, reflects on
22 the core levels of engagement with all the parties
23 that have the invested interest. This city is
24 incredibly diverse and has so many different school
25 communities. Once again, DOE need to take into

1
2 account the needs of each school district, each
3 school, and each family community. One size does not
4 fit all. Only then, can we make a plan to set in
5 place so that remote learning just isn't another
6 failure or disaster we can look back on.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

8 ADRIANA AVILES: Thank you so much.

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You can wrap up Adriana.
10 You've been very patient and if you want to have a
11 final thought there, please.

12 ADRIANA AVILES: Thank you Chair, thank you so
13 much.

14 Well, I just have two paragraphs left. So, going
15 back to the city is incredibly diverse and has so
16 many school communities, once again, DOE need to take
17 into account the needs of each school district, each
18 school, and each family community.

19 One size does not fit all. We have to look back
20 at this and say, this was a time for everyone to
21 engage. All parties need to sit down and listen to
22 each other but most importantly families need to be
23 heard. Our children need to be heard. Can we sit
24 down and agree on making our childrens education for
25 the new year an open conversation for all. I don't

1
2 want to agree with my son that remote learning sucks
3 but it has for all.

4 Thank you so much Chair. Thank you so much
5 everyone.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And thank you to principal
7 and teacher and great parent Adriana as well. Thank
8 you for your service.

9 ADRIANA AVILES: Thank you.

10 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we
11 will hear from Mariana Fitzgerald.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 MARIANA FITZGERALD: Hi, thank you to the Council
14 and Chair Treyger for this opportunity to be heard.

15 My name is Mariana Fitzgerald. I am the parent
16 of a beautiful brilliant fourth grader who attends a
17 New York City public school. I'm a member of
18 Community Board 2, School on Education Committee,
19 Chair of the VID Education Committee. I sit on the
20 democratic county committee in the 66AD and served on
21 Executive Board of my daughters PTA for years.

22 I speak today only as a District 2 public parent
23 in support of the DOE's grading policy in response to
24 COVID-19 and to encourage the removal of the
25 discriminatory admissions screens that keep our

1
2 schools segregated and failed to include Black,
3 Brown, and low income New York City students for
4 decades.

5 I don't need to repeat what so many others have
6 already testified to regarding the inequities in our
7 schools. It's not secret that screens are not a
8 measure of a students ability but rather their access
9 to resources and parents income, but let me just say
10 that a 2013 audit of high school admissions conducted
11 by then Comptroller, now Senator John Liu found that
12 the screening process was fought with questionable
13 student rankings and extremely susceptible to fraud,
14 favoritism and manipulation.

15 To impose these bias and defective admissions
16 requirements only furthers the barriers and burdens
17 that our most vulnerable students and families suffer
18 every day and have been exacerbated by this crisis.

19 In 1954, the Supreme court decree that schools be
20 desegregated with all deliberate speed and that the
21 separate but equal doctrine violated the
22 constitution. New York City has been in violation of
23 that Supreme Court ruling every day for the past 66
24 years. I want also to address the current
25 educational climate in District 2. As parents we

1
2 expect those tasks and serving our students to do so
3 in an honest and unbiased manner. Unfortunately,
4 affluent, and politically connected New Yorkers have
5 strategically placed themselves in PTA's, SLT's and
6 community education councils as the overseers of
7 education policy.

8 Our CDC allows anti-integration special interest
9 groups like PLACE to dominate meetings and promote -

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

11 MARIANA FITZGERALD: Promote a careful agenda
12 with dog whistles and coated language. These
13 meetings feel increasingly more like clan rally's
14 than a safe place in which to participate in
15 discussions about the educational wellbeing and
16 opportunities for our children.

17 Additionally, the presidents council recently
18 issued a restricted poll on grading and admissions,
19 similar to the one's created by the group PLACE.
20 Sent only to PTA presidents and designed to exclude
21 regular families and students by depriving them the
22 opportunity to be heard.

23 I ask that you help to address the disparities
24 that exist within New York City's education system by
25 supporting the end of exclusionary admissions screens

1
2 in the middle and high school level and to support
3 our Chancellor's courageous work towards equity in
4 our public schools, which is needed now more than
5 ever.

6 This country was built on the foundation of
7 racism and until we address these deeply routed
8 systematic issues, nothing will change.

9 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next, we
10 will hear from Waiching Chan.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 WAICHING CHAN: Good afternoon everybody. Can
13 you hear?

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes, go ahead.

15 WAICHING CHAN: My name is Debbie Chan; I have a
16 70 year old diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.
17 [INAUDIBLE 3:01:24] the kindergarten. I'm also a
18 member of the Alliance for Families with [INAUDIBLE
19 3:01:31] of over 500 members. Many of our parents
20 members are monolingual Chinese with limited
21 education and no income. Remote learning has
22 significantly interrupted the special education
23 service that our children request.

24 Consequently, our children have showed different
25 levels of regression in terms of physical, sensory,

1
2 emotional, behavioral, as a dynamic and daily
3 functioning. Our concerns include, number one, make
4 a face to face interaction as [INAUDIBLE 3:01:55]
5 teacher, peers, and classroom environment.
6 Particular children with autism and non-verbal.

7 Number two, due to short attention span special
8 class student do not pay attention to virtual class.
9 They exhibit behavior problems due to poor
10 instruction online. For example, my son will easily
11 meltdown and got frustrated as he was not able to
12 achieve what he usually did in the school.

13 Number three, Not English speaking parents have
14 problems handling high level technology used in
15 learning. They exhibit a problem with remote
16 learning. Virtually purpose as well as the child's
17 emotion and difficult behavior. They are not able to
18 communicate with schoolteachers and school counselors
19 for help immediately.

20 We request that state and city government should
21 not cut the budget on education particularly and
22 special education service 200,000 New York City
23 school children specialists with specific teachers
24 and school professionals to take an active vote to
25 content and support non-English speaking parents

1
2 dealing with remote learning when students return to
3 school in September. DOE should be aware of all
4 aspects of all students functioning and review their
5 IEP for appropriate services to address the concerns
6 of regressions.

7 Thank you.

8 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and the final
9 panelist that just joined us is Donghui Zang.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 DONGHUI ZANG: My name is Donghui Zang and I am a
12 parent. So, I strongly - hello, can you hear me?

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes, go ahead.

14 DONGHUI ZANG: Okay, so I think, by converting
15 the grading into a binary grade was already a big
16 mistake made by DOE. We thought consulting the CC
17 without consulting the parents, so that will greatly
18 discourage the teaching and the learning process.
19 Having made that mistake, I hope the DOE not making
20 another mistake by attending the screen the school
21 admission. So, we have one 195 high school and 125
22 middle schools on the screen program make them strong
23 and robust and they stimulate the kids to learn.

24 So, we sincerely hope that there will be no
25 drastic change because of the COVID-19. So, you will

1
2 be in the time of the wall, the learning had been
3 stopped. So, in this crisis, we shouldn't discourage
4 any learning but encourage the students to learn.

5 So, that's how we make our country and make our
6 city competitive. So, don't say that we don't have
7 any grades anymore. So, we do. We have the three
8 marking period actually and please just use them.
9 No, I mean the first and the second of marking period
10 grades was not touched. Was not impacted by this
11 crisis, so there is no reason was not touched, was
12 not impacted by this crisis. So, there is no reason
13 that why don't we use them and also for the status, I
14 strongly suggest that you know, in September or in
15 October or whenever the school restarts, please make
16 up one.

17 Thank you.

18 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: That concludes this
19 panel. Chair Treyger.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I thank the panel for their
21 testimony.

22 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you everyone from
23 panel twelve. We will now move to panel thirteen.
24 On panel thirteen will be Nicole Cohen, Jennifer
25 Rodriguez, Rocky Bonanno, Jeannine Kiely, and

1
2 Patricia Laraia. And we will start with Nicole
3 Cohen.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 NICOLE COHEN: Thank you for the opportunity. I
6 am the parent of a nearly seven year old boy who goes
7 to PS 154 in Windsor Terrace Brooklyn in District 15.
8 I want to commend the leadership of our school
9 especially Jason Foreman, our Principal and our first
10 grade teachers Ms. Hamon and Ms. Toombs[SP?]. Their
11 leadership is incredible and helped us a family
12 immensely during this trying time.

13 I am here to say that technology is not the
14 answer to the question. How do we educate our
15 elementary students next fall? Emergency remote
16 learning as I read it described in an article has
17 been useful as a work around during this unthinkable
18 situation.

19 Our teachers have done a great job at parsing out
20 the modules and to daily and weekly assignments and
21 giving my son the opportunity to engage one on one
22 with them. Despite having access to this and the
23 opportunity to self-pace as the interest has waned
24 and our fights have increased. It turns out part of
25 what my son loves about learning is sharing what he

1

2 has learned with other kids. He, like me, does not
3 like video conferencing.

4

5 In the past few months, my precocious curious kid
6 went from being zealous about school to having
7 frequent melt downs and yelling. I want to quit
8 school forever and us crying together on the floor.
9 I don't blame video conferencing alone; this is an
10 exceptionally lonely time for a child. But it
11 assures me that teaching a child in isolation through
12 a computer is not the answer and placing the burden
13 on parents is equally difficult.

14

15 For us, a well-resourced family, it have been
16 difficult for a number of reasons that remind us each
17 day why in person instruction, reduced teacher
18 student ratios, increased emotional curriculum, PE,
19 recess, art, and music are essential to children's
20 educational development.

21

22 Also, if you ask any parent in the neighborhood
23 how they are doing, they will remark in the first few
24 minutes, they are failing at home schooling.

25

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

26

27 NICOLE COHEN: And feel terrible about it.
28 Letting themselves down and their kids down. It is
29 discouraging. We're all feeling discouraged. We

1
2 need a safe solution but screens are not the answer.
3 Bringing kids and teachers safely back to the
4 classroom will take work no doubt. Ingenuity,
5 creativity, compassion, patience, and extra hands
6 even grave counselors I imagine. But I believe that
7 the same result that we, as rugged proud New Yorkers
8 brought to flattening the curve can bring to solving
9 this problem of opening the schools for our kids this
10 fall.

11 Schools around the world are opening up to allow
12 kids the opportunity to learn. We should hold
13 ourselves accountable to our children safely
14 obviously because we have suffered so much loss
15 already and plan for the same outcome if we can.

16 Trust is the bedrock of community. Responding to
17 this pandemic with further isolation and relying on
18 technology to teach our children sends the message
19 that we are not resilient enough to face our fears
20 and find a way to reconnect. Above all, I want to
21 raise a resilient and community minded person. For
22 that, he needs to be at school with other children,
23 not in front of a screen.

24 Thank you for this opportunity.

25

1
2 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next, we
3 will hear from Jennifer Rodriguez.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 JENNIFER RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon Chair Treyger
6 and Members of the City Council Committee. my name
7 is Jennifer Rodriguez and I am the Inclusive
8 Education Specialist at the Collaborative for
9 Inclusive Education within the New York City Charter
10 School Center.

11 Thanks for this opportunity to present today.
12 The Charter Center and the collaborative work to
13 support Charter schools to ensure they can
14 effectively serve students inclusively and equitably.
15 Over the past five years, Charter schools have
16 expanded their continuum of special education
17 services and enrollment of students with disabilities
18 has grown by 35 percent. Only a one percentage point
19 difference between Charter and district schools.

20 With schools transitioning to remote learning, we
21 here at the Charter Center have moved out programming
22 from in person to online and have emphasized the need
23 to prioritize our most vulnerable students as schools
24 move forward.

1
2 Just recently, we had over 100 educators and
3 leaders participate in a four core online series on
4 education equity and were impressed with the
5 commitment participants showed in reflecting on how
6 their practices could cause othering of students and
7 what they could do to change that.

8 Throughout my tenure as a special educator for
9 over a decade, as both a teacher and leader in both
10 district and charter settings, I remain deeply
11 committed to the idea that access is a right and not
12 a privilege especially during this time of remote
13 learning. We have emphasized the need for student
14 center instruction and multiple entry points through
15 universal design for learning as well as trauma
16 informed practices that support students social
17 emotional development.

18 We have seen continued commitments from our
19 member schools to engage in developing both mind sets
20 and skill sets.

21 While Charter schools are autonomous in many
22 aspects, the DOE is the LEA for special education in
23 New York City Charter Schools. This means all
24 decision about the provision of special education
25

1
2 services for Charter school students are made by the
3 DOE's Committee on Special Education.

4 For years we at the Charter Center have advocated
5 for teletherapy and praise the DOE for –

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 JENNIFER RODRIGUEZ: Of remote delivery of
8 speech, PT, OT, and counseling during remote
9 learning. However, we know that students are not
10 receiving all their services to which they are
11 entitled during school closures and the need for
12 compensatory services will be huge when we get back
13 into school buildings. This is particularly true of
14 Charter school students who are mandated to receive
15 support from a paraprofessional.

16 While students with disabilities in district
17 schools have been receiving supports from
18 paraprofessionals throughout this time, charter
19 school students have not at all. Denying access of
20 this service mandated on IEP's for our most
21 vulnerable students. This disparity between students
22 under the same LEA is clearly inequitable and we
23 advocate for the immediate institution of
24 paraprofessional support for students with
25 disabilities attending Charter schools.

1
2 Additionally, we would like to remind all that
3 Charter students are public school students and we
4 respectfully request that the same data that is
5 available on district school special education
6 services be made available to parents and the
7 community about the provision of special education
8 services for Charter school students.

9 Thank you so much for your time.

10 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we
11 will hear from Rocky Bonanno.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 ROCKY BONANNO: Good afternoon everybody. Since
14 schools closed in March, the DOE has failed in
15 several aspect of addressing remote education,
16 particularly grading and admissions policies. Led by
17 Chancellor Carranza, who in my estimation has been a
18 poor leader. The DOE continuously harps and what has
19 changed and what has been exposed by the pandemic.
20 Rather than seek normalcy by reminding students,
21 parents, and teachers that New York City public
22 schools are still in session and always have been.

23 Every proposal over the last two months paints
24 all students with a broad brush that is the
25 supportive of those who lack resources or who are not

1
2 dedicated to learning. And harmful to those students
3 who are continuing to do great work in advancing
4 their education in a meaningful manner during this
5 global crisis.

6 I'm disheartened by every pandering action from
7 the DOE to help only the students they previously
8 have neglected before COVID-19 arrived. The neglect
9 is now further magnified and how students who are
10 academically unprepared for the next grade are
11 advanced without the necessary knowledge to succeed
12 the following year.

13 It is not a surprise in the city of 8 million
14 people we have financial and social divides that go
15 far beyond the scope of what the DOE can accomplish.
16 Yet they try and try and we hear this at every
17 meeting and we always come back to the same issue,
18 actual education ultimately becomes a secondary
19 issue. The DOE only needs to put the educational
20 opportunity in front of the student, then they can
21 demand the parents to partner with them and get the
22 learning done and let's stop making excuses.

23 Thank you.

24 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next, we
25 will hear from Jeannine Kiely.

1

2

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

3

4

COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Just bear with us one moment. Okay, so, we will come back to you Jeannine.

5

We're trying to figure out why we can't unmute you.

6

so, we will go to Patricia right now and then we will

7

go back to Jeannine. Patricia?

8

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

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PATRICIA LARAIA: Hi, my name is Patricia Laraia.

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I'm a CB2 Member and Vice Chair of Schools and Ed's

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Committee. The ID in Community and County Community

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Member 6680. I am speaking today as a District 2

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public school parent who fully supports the

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elimination of the current admissions screenings.

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COVID-19 has exposed the raw and ugly truth of

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whats been wrong with the NYC education system, which

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is discriminatory and unresponsive to two-thirds of

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the students in the city's school system.

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The groups being effected are students of color,

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immigrants, those from low income households, ELL

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students with disabilities. These are the groups who

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are unable to engage in remote learning. Any

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admissions requirements imposed during this time will

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become and continue to be obstacles that prevent our

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kids from moving out of this bubble.

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2 The screening process has many issues that make
3 it meaningless as a factor to assess and select
4 children. There has been incomplete data, no
5 consistent published rubrics and it has caused undue
6 stress and emotional harm to students and families
7 navigating the system. 66 years after Brown versus
8 Board of Ed, we are still struggling with the idea of
9 separate but equal. DLA and math assessments have
10 many problems associated with them. Such as unequal
11 access to tutoring, inherit bias and standardized
12 testing. No constant scaling system for course
13 grades across the district.

14 I'm troubled to learn that a group of parents
15 called PLACE is asking to maintain a system that
16 clearly discriminates against Black and Latino
17 students. It seems to me that the deck is already
18 stacked against these students. These inequities
19 have been fully revived by the epidemic which has
20 only exacerbated the divide.

21 At a time when we should be working together to
22 improve the outcomes for all students, it saddens me
23 that there are some who would use this opportunity to
24 pick on a group against the other. Now is not the
25 time to maintain the status quo to protect the rights

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2 of the privileged few. Now is the time to develop an
3 education system that is fair and equitable to our
4 entire student body. Please urge the DOE to continue
5 their efforts to develop a system that is inclusive
6 and balanced. District 15 sets an example we should
7 follow. If we want better for our children and keep
8 equity at the forefront, we need to push for more
9 culturally responsive teaching in the school and
10 curriculum, equitable admissions process, and more
11 relatable teachers -

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 PATRICIA LARAIA: That better accommodates our
14 students. Please end the use of discriminatory
15 screens, it's the right thing to do.

16 Thank you.

17 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. We will now
18 go back to Jeannine.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 JEANNINE KIELY: Good afternoon. My name is
21 Jeannine Kiely and I Chair the Schools on Education
22 Committee for Manhattan CB2.

23 This month 242 parents and educators attended a
24 joint Manhattan CB1 and 2 meeting on remote learning
25 and they submitted 200 questions to our panel and 6

1
2 principals and senior DOE staff. With this feedback,
3 we unanimously passed two Resolutions with 3 broad
4 recommendations.

5 One, we urged the DOE to incorporate hybrid model
6 for fall 2020, that permits both remote and in person
7 learning and provides clear policy for more live or
8 synchronous instruction in pre-recorded classes, more
9 small group instruction and increased feedback
10 between students and teachers. Training technology
11 and time to increase uniformity of instruction within
12 schools, within grades, and across schools guidelines
13 for academic intervention and remediation and
14 delivery of content beyond written material. Best
15 practices for teaching reading and writing that are
16 science based, systematic explicit and multisensory.
17 In school resources for social, emotional and trauma
18 support. Resources to implement social distancing
19 and other safety measures and much, much bolder
20 strategies to reduce the digital divide, so every
21 student has access to a device and broadband.
22 Including laptops with keyboards for middle and high
23 school students and partnering with the private
24 sector to make this happen.

1
2 Number two, we insist that the DOE communicate
3 its fall plans or range of plans publicly as soon as
4 possible and that each school communicate more
5 frequently with parents and students, even if they
6 simply say they don't know the answer. Parents
7 appreciate this.

8 Finally, we implore our city's leaders to
9 aggressively seek additional funding for our public
10 schools, not cut fair student funding. Limit in
11 school budget cuts and instead cut nonessential
12 contracts and central DOE spending.

13 Thank you.

14 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Chair
15 Treyger?

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I thank the panel. Thank
17 you very much for your testimony.

18 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you everybody
19 from panel thirteen. We will now move to panel
20 fourteen. On panel fourteen will be Tamara Gayer,
21 Arthur Samuels, Lisa Schwartzwald, and Naomi Goldberg
22 Haas. We will start with Tamara.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 TAMARA GAYER: Hello, can you hear me?

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes, go ahead.

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TAMARA GAYER: Oh, hi. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak both to the Chair Treyger and to the Committee. I am fourth grade parent and the President of our Parent Association. I am also a member of our SLT and it's really because of these commitments to public education that I and so many other parents have felt the need to come to all of the forums and really let you guys know what is going on at home.

So, first of all, I want to add my voice in support of the many eloquent testimonies on how this pandemic has exposed and exacerbated inequities in our education system.

The DOE has invested in the remote learning model which requires the number of days of assignments to meet the notion of standards and assessments. And this is how we wound up with a system with so much discussion of devices and connections and nearly no discussion of the human connections. With teachers, with classmates with staff and the relationships in which true education is predicated.

So, somewhere along the line we lost the focus of teaching our children to be critically imaginative learners and we've exchanged it for some kind of much

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emptier notion of grades and technology. And you know, my son wakes up every morning with a progressively resounding no. Why are we doing this? So, after ten weeks of isolation, have only born mounting frustration and in transients and the DOE emotional supports were like, mostly on platitudes, they don't hold much weight with a fourth grader whenever he hears one of the things that are recommended.

Well, we are in the middle of a crisis on a global scale and I think it is unrealistic to think that our children aren't aware of it and I don't understand why we aren't engaging them. This is a time where we could both revamp our educational and in part really necessary skills that are necessary to every student, including mutual aid and mutual care including collaboration, which is one of the number one 21st Century job skills and certainly of course -

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

TAMARA GAYER: Thank you so much.

COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we will hear from Arthur Samuels.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

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2 ARTHUR SAMUELS: Good afternoon and thank you so
3 much for having me. I hope everyone's loved ones are
4 healthy and safe in this difficult time.

5 My name is Arthur Samuels, I am the Co-founder
6 and Executive Director of MESA Charter High School in
7 Bushwick. We are a community based school on our
8 seventh year. We currently serve 480 students in
9 grades 9 through 12.

10 The challenges to our community boggle the mind.
11 While we have loaned out over 160 laptops, many of
12 our students still lack the technology or internet
13 access necessary to regularly complete assignments.
14 A large portion of our families either have lost
15 income or are essential workers who risk their lives
16 everyday to continue to put food on the table.

17 Most tragically, seven MESA students or alumni
18 have lost their parents COVID. The escape of the
19 devastation is hard to fathom.

20 Based on our experience trying to navigate this
21 challenge, I want to share what I believe we will
22 need if we are going to continue educating our
23 students. First, as much in person instruction as we
24 can safely provide. We know that everyone, parents,
25 students, teachers, administrators are working as

1
2 hard as they can to support the switch to remote
3 instruction but as many others have said, it is no
4 substitute for being in a building.

5 Even leaving aside for a moment the myriad of
6 technology and access issues, it is simply not like
7 being in the classroom with your teacher and your
8 peers. Our students are social creatures and they
9 thrive on that interaction. What ever success we've
10 been able to have with online instruction this year
11 only works because it is built on a foundation of
12 relationships that were forged in person. This will
13 not work at all if we go into the fall and needs to
14 teach online, we'd never laid physical eyes on.

15 Second, in 2020 internet needs to be a basic
16 utility. If we are going to have to move to remote
17 instruction at some point in the 2021 school year,
18 everyone needs to have access. It needs to be the
19 same as electricity and running water. This is not a
20 luxury, it's necessary for communication.

21 Three, educators must know that no matter what is
22 going on, we are still teaching.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 ARTHUR SAMUELS: The last thing I just want to
25 say, I will leave most of it but the last thing I

1
2 want to say is I know that the Council is considering
3 a Resolution of posing the reissuance of the so-
4 called zombie charters. MESA is a community based
5 Charter school that would be blocked from opening if
6 the legislature were to follow the recommendations of
7 that Resolution.

8 The structural inequalities that still exist in
9 this city have been laid bear by the pandemic. While
10 the neighborhoods hardest hit have been those to
11 lower income people of color, the most affluent New
12 Yorkers have fled the city. At a time when our
13 citizens who have the least have suffered the most.
14 I ask the Council and legislature not to deny them
15 further the right to choose the school that they
16 considered for their children.

17 Thank you so much for your time.

18 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we
19 will hear from Lisa Schwartzwald.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 LISA SCHWARTZWALD: Hi, my name is Lisa
22 Schwartzwald actually, from the New York Immigration
23 Coalition.

24 Thank you for the opportunity to testify. The
25 NYIC has worked with our partners to identify major

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2 inequities in the DOE's current approach and outline
3 recommendations for immigrant families. Families
4 with limited reading and digital literacy skills have
5 faced the most severe disconnect from their schools
6 and are disproportionately facing trauma, sickness,
7 food insecurity and financial hardships as a result
8 of this crisis.

9 Immigrant students without devices have suffered
10 significant loss of instruction time. Families
11 report a continued lack of troubleshooting tech
12 support in their languages as well as difficulty
13 accessing mental health support at time when the need
14 is growing. Many immigrant families worry that their
15 children won't be promoted or will fail to graduate.

16 To address these issues, we have four
17 recommendations at the NYIC. First, the City Council
18 should demand that the DOE collect and make publicly
19 available systemwide data on the impact on the
20 pandemic for all student subgroups to effectively
21 target supports to youth who have not been engaging
22 during the pandemic.

23 Second, the City Council should demand that DOE
24 do an additional sample survey by phone of at least
25 500 New York City limited English proficient families

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2 and L's by the end of the year. Targeting a small
3 but significant number of LEP and L students through
4 direct one on one calls, would better identify the
5 academic and basic needs of immigrants and L's.

6 Third, the City Council should support a three
7 year transfer school pilot to increase newly arrived
8 high school aged immigrants access to programs that
9 meet their needs. To address the over 4,000
10 immigrant youth who are already out of school before
11 the COVID crisis because of a lack of programs that
12 met their needs.

13 And finally, we ask that the Council restore the
14 \$12 million for DYCD funded adult literacy services.
15 A lack of digital literacy knowledge and access has
16 meant some students of immigrant parents have lost
17 weeks to months of valuable education time and
18 support because their parents did not themselves have
19 the access and knowledge to connect and these gaps
20 are only going to grow large if the city does not -

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 LISA SCHWARTZWALD: For adult literacy funding.

23 Thank you so much.
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2 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you Lisa, sorry
3 about messing up your name. And next, we will go to
4 Naomi Goldberg Haas.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 NAOMI GOLDBERG HAAS: Am I on? Thank you for the
7 opportunity to submit testimony in support of Arts
8 Education, the Education for the Arts.

9 My name is Naomi Goldberg Haas and I am Founder
10 and Artistic Director of Dances for a Variable
11 Population Harlem.

12 The mission of Dances for a Variable Population
13 is to bring strong creative movement to older adults
14 and also families that support wellness and happiness
15 and health. Dances for a Variable Population serves
16 over 5,000 older adults and families in New York City
17 with weekly classes and large scale performances.

18 We are advocating for critical funding to be
19 sustained for the arts and so that we and many other
20 organization could provide these programs to people
21 of all ages is especially critical at this time.

22 The older adults we serve are primarily alone and
23 are highly vulnerable to COVID-19 and lack other
24 allies for exercise and social connection similar to
25 their school aged children.

1
2 Even before this pandemic pushed society into
3 social isolation, academic levels and loneliness,
4 effecting 60 to 80 percent of the population,
5 recognizing that loneliness is associated with
6 decreased life span and illness increased in terms of
7 obesity and lack of physical exercise and air
8 pollution, arts programs that mitigate this life
9 threatening condition are essential at this time.

10 This really moved very rapidly to provide remote
11 programming. We offered over 350 seniors this
12 through a week through Zoom classes and on telephone
13 classes that were widely popular for adults that
14 don't have access, which goes also as children who
15 don't have access over the internet. Our free access
16 videos have had nearly 4,000 views.

17 At this critical time, programs like ours are
18 maintaining the physical and mental health of New
19 York City's most vulnerable populations.

20 We rely on discretionary funding from the New
21 York City Council through the Department of Aging and
22 the Department of Cultural Affairs -

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 NAOMI GOLDBERG HAAS: To sustain these programs.
25 As we work in low income communities that can't

1
2 afford to pay for them. The loss of the New York
3 City funding would have a devastating effect on our
4 communities we serve. They promote the sense of
5 safety and sense of possibility, which is so
6 important.

7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you.

9 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: This concludes panel
10 fourteen. Thank you everybody. We will now move to
11 panel fifteen. On panel fifteen, we will have
12 Christina Muccioli, Mya Fortuna, Tyler Rood and
13 Kaushik Das. So, we will start with Christina.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time begins now.

15 CHRISTINA MUCCIOLI: Good afternoon. I want to
16 take this opportunity to thank you for today's
17 opportunity to give testimony.

18 My name is Christina Muccioli and I am the Vice
19 President of Education or AHRC NYC, the largest
20 nonprofit in the United States that supports
21 approximately 6,000 individuals with intellectual and
22 developmental disabilities.

23 AHRC NYC is also approved to operate schools
24 citywide to students with disabilities, commonly
25 known as Chapter 853 or 4410 programs by the New York

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2 State Education Department. Additionally, we are a
3 New York City Department of Education vendor
4 contracted to educate approximately 1,000 students
5 between the ages of 3 and 21.

6 Our students are public school students. They
7 reside in New York City and their parents are
8 taxpayers and constituents. However, due to the
9 nature, severity, behavioral, and challenging issues
10 related to their disabilities, their needs cannot be
11 met in a public school setting. Most of our students
12 have a diagnosis of autism. As a consequence, the
13 students are placed by the New York City DOE's
14 Committee on Special Education in the AHRC NYC
15 schools.

16 AHRC schools must follow all of the regulations
17 as set forth by the New York State Education
18 Department, as well as the requirements outlined in
19 our contract with the New York City DOE. Our
20 teachers therefore must hold the appropriate
21 teaching, special education, certifications and
22 follow all the regulations and requirements outlined
23 in our New York City contract. We are required by
24 Commissioner's regulations to maintain mandated staff
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2 to student ratios and only certified teachers can
3 fully implement a students IEP.

4 Due to an inability to provide compensatory
5 packages like our public schools counterparts –

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

7 CHRISTINA MUCCIOLI: AHRC faces unprecedented
8 vacancies in staffing. When we do successfully
9 identify a respective candidate, they are required to
10 clear the New York City DOE's personnel eligibility
11 tracking system, affectionately known as PETS.
12 simply stated, they are required to undergo a
13 background check and must be fingerprinted before
14 they can be hired.

15 We applaud New York City DOE's policy's to clear
16 and check all candidates. Unfortunately, we find
17 ourselves in quagmire.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Christina, can you wrap up
19 but you can email the testimony so we have it and put
20 it in the record. Wrap up final thoughts please.
21 Thank you.

22 CHRISTINA MUCCIOLI: Okay. We need to hire staff
23 and what we are basically asking is to opening up the
24 PETS office. It is currently closed because of pause
25 and because of that, we are unable to bring on highly

1
2 qualified and credentials people. And our children
3 just like public school students, and they are a
4 public school residents, deserve qualified and
5 credential people.

6 Thank you for the opportunity and your assistance
7 in this matter. Thank you.

8 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next, we
9 will hear from Mya.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 MYA FORTUNA: Good afternoon. My name is Mya
12 Fortuna and I go to PACE High School. As a junior in
13 high school, virtual learning hasn't been the best.
14 I had trouble finishing my work in the morning, as it
15 takes me hours to complete an assignment because I
16 live in a household with five other people, one being
17 a one year old baby.

18 This paired with effectively teaching myself made
19 the semester all the more difficult. Applying to
20 college next year, I am concerned that this semester
21 will poorly reflect the kind of scholar I am. I am
22 certain that this semester will not show that I did
23 my best to teach myself, even while helping to teach
24 my sister, raise my nephew and without much help from
25 many teachers. Remote learning isn't as easy as

1
2 people put it. It is effectively virtual learning
3 when we have never before had to do that.

4 We're often struggling to do this in environments
5 not built to be formal schools. Virtual learning for
6 me, also the not involved much classroom learning. I
7 am taking an AP biology class. When virtual learning
8 began, I failed the test because I wasn't getting the
9 information that I was supposed to during class time.
10 Failing that test has caused my grade to drop to a
11 failing grade. I have never seen my grade – a grade
12 like that on my report card.

13 In order to get my grade back up, I have to work
14 ahead, go above and beyond, and teach myself. With
15 everything I did this semester, my grade still wasn't
16 as high as it was before. While it's easy to assume
17 that my grade dropped because of my difficulty with
18 the subject. The reality remains my grades dropped
19 because I, a high school student taught myself a
20 subject I had not learned before. My teacher did not
21 actually teach students. My AP biology teacher sent
22 us slides and assignments for us to do on our own.
23 We were then expected to turn in the assignments even
24 though they did not actually teach the material
25 needed to complete the assignments.

1
2 We are also expected to take the AP exam, which I
3 did last week.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time has expired.

5 MYA FORTUNA: This combination of things, was
6 unjust and an example of one of the major problems
7 with virtual learning, teacher absence.

8 Lastly, remote learning takes a toll on our
9 mental health because we are working in the same
10 place that we would normally relax in. There is no
11 such thing as me time. While virtual learning, there
12 is not such thing as a school space in my house.
13 Yes, some school provide counseling, so that students
14 who are overwhelmed can try to rest or better
15 navigate this. That, however, does not work. We
16 still have to do work in order to get it in on time
17 during a day off. We are struggling to navigate
18 this. All that this has done to our families, our
19 communities, and our world.

20 While my school has Wellness Wednesdays, it took
21 a pandemic for people to actually care about our
22 mental health and the care does not go far enough.

23 We deserve more and yet, what we do now in school
24 will still be used to determine our lives post-
25 graduation.

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Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Mya. Thank you for sharing your very powerful story as well. I really appreciate you and I wish you everything, the very best and we want to be here to support you in every way we can and all of your peers. Thank you so much.

COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we will hear from Tyler.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

TYLER ROOD: Thank you to the City Council for this opportunity. My name is Tyler Rood and I am a Program Director at the Coalition for Hispanic Family Services Arts and Literacy program at PS7 in Elmhurst Queens.

Through our Arts and Literacy program we have continued to provide our services during this pandemic. Some of these services include homework help, art therapy and art space classes. In the past couple of months, our organization has conducted multiple wellness checks with the families we serve and through these calls, we have provided step by step guidance on how to register for DOE remote learning devices. Provided information on where

1
2 families can get food to feed their children and we
3 have sat and listened to the worries and concerns our
4 families are experiencing.

5 While providing these wellness checks, we still
6 continue to meet with our amazing students through
7 synchronous learning on a daily basis. In a matter
8 of two months, we created new lesson plans to best
9 serve our students in a remote learning environment.
10 We recently held a virtual art event that displayed
11 awards from all ten sites we provide services.

12 Students ranging from elementary to middle
13 school, showed their responses on being quarantined.
14 This event mainly provided the students a safe outlet
15 to express worries and struggles, all while creating
16 art. It was also a call to action to help save
17 funding for summer programs, such as our organization
18 provides.

19 Community based organizations are the bridge
20 between the Department of Education and the families
21 we serve and my request is to not make budget cuts to
22 the Department of Youth and Community Development as
23 this will compromise the relationships our
24 organizations have built in the communities that we
25

1
2 serve. Ultimately effecting the social and emotional
3 learning of the youth we serve.

4 To the Committee, Chair Treyger, and all who are
5 present, I thank you for your time and attention.

6 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next we
7 will hear from – I hope I am pronouncing it right
8 Kaushik Das.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 KAUSHIK DAS: Kaushik Das. Thank you Chair
11 Treyger and all others. I'm Kaushik Das, I'm the SLT
12 Co-Chair of PS 33 and the parent of a fourth grader.
13 I am also a member of PLACE but I am speaking largely
14 on behalf of my school after consultations with my
15 Principal, Vice Principal and PTA Co-Presidents.

16 First, I'd like to thank all the teachers, staff
17 and principals who rolled remote learning within a
18 week. They have gone above and beyond learning
19 technology and have shown tremendous flexibility.
20 However, my praise for the DOE in this regard stops
21 there, especially towards those at the highest
22 administrative levels, who like to pat themselves on
23 the back for what a good job they have done, starting
24 with the Chancellor himself.

1
2 The DOE Chief Academic Officer said, she values
3 critical feedback from staff on remote learning and
4 other issues. However, to date, there have been
5 little to no communication with school principals and
6 other school leaders, Vice Principals, PTA and SLT's.
7 Certainly not in my school and certainly hearing from
8 others in my district.

9 The Deputy Chancellor Austin, or to the ECC which
10 I would remind is not a DOE entity but is a private
11 group that is well connected to the Chancellor
12 himself. It is not a substitute for more diverse
13 use, the CEC's offer which have passed several
14 Resolutions that have all been ignored. The PTA is
15 ignored, SLT's are ignored and they are probably
16 closure to curriculum issues and they include
17 principals and teachers. Principals have routinely
18 been informed about key decisions, not consulted.
19 They are often informed from parents who happen to
20 see or hear press releases first. This has started
21 with the shift to remote learning and more recently
22 the changing in grading policy.

23 This is particularly troubling to me because
24 principals should be the DOE's eyes and ears. They
25 are certainly the executors of their policy, whether

1
2 they are well intentioned or more typically
3 misbegotten.

4 School leaderships want more in the remote
5 learning policy. They want one that supports more
6 live instruction, not less. Why is this not a
7 mandate? We are aware that there are challenges but
8 if remote continues in some form into September and
9 beyond, children will need some form of consistency
10 and support.

11 School leaderships say small groups -

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

13 KAUSHIK DAS: Have worked particularly well.

14 Especially when they are grouped by similar ability
15 levels. This points to more differentiated learning,
16 not less. This is why parents clamor for both
17 screening, high performance screening, high
18 performance schools, as well as schools that cater to
19 special aids. Any remaining policies should reach
20 kids in as many ways as possible.

21 What they really want is a mandate, any mandate.

22 Ted Leather earlier said, there was a lack of a plan.

23 I agree. How will policies support school leadership
24 going forward? PTA's and SLT's are not even allowed
25 to hold elections. Kids graduate and families move

1
2 out of New York City, yet PTA's are not allowed to
3 vote in new members nor SLT'S nor are PTA's allowed
4 to even write checks.

5 It is not surprising to me because my opinion is
6 this all stems from the Chancellor himself.

7 [INAUDIBLE 3:27:06] of 100,000 parents asking for
8 \$100,000. Which leads to delay, which leads to in
9 part with 72 DOE deaths.

10 What is crazy is it only points to the policies
11 that will be temporary under this COVID crisis.

12 These policies will not be temporary for my fourth
13 grade daughter who is going through middle school for
14 the next three years. It is not temporary for whole
15 class of high schoolers who are going to school for
16 the next four years. And if I may, I would like to
17 also personally address, it is my personal view, not
18 from my school the comments on racism.

19 We always hear about inequity and equality.
20 Well, my children are Brown, very Brown, not
21 Hispanic, Indian. Me and my family find neither
22 equity or excellence in the Chancellors programs or
23 the new policies he wants to enact. I in fact, on
24 his policies racial divisive.

25 Thank you.

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2 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. That
3 concludes testimony for this panel. We will now move
4 to panel 16. We have Nicole Hamilton, Ashley Jones,
5 Debra Sue Lorenzen, and Greggory. And we will start
6 with Nicole Hamilton.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 NICOLE HAMILTON: Good afternoon Chair Treyger
9 and Committee Members. My name is Nicole Hamilton
10 and I am the Director of School Based Programs and
11 Partnerships for Girls for Gender Equity. For more
12 than 11 years I've run GGE's after school programs
13 and school day partnership programs for six
14 Department of Education schools and I continue to
15 serve as a liaison between school educators and
16 students.

17 I'd like to say that this is more that meets the
18 eye. There is more to everything than we see right
19 now that meets the eye. While physical structures
20 remain intact, we may not see the fallout of the
21 pandemic the way that we would from a national
22 disaster. We cannot downplay the impact of what is
23 happening and how it is effecting students. A
24 colleague Ashley Sawyer testified earlier to the
25 dispiriting implications experienced by youth in New

1
2 Orleans following the devastation of Hurricane
3 Katrina and I just want to say that this is – we're
4 in the same boat. The young people that I work with
5 have been trust into roles that they may not have
6 been otherwise. Caretakers, homeschoolers for
7 younger siblings, nurses for sick parents and loved
8 ones, administrators and teachers are wearing many
9 hats as well, risking their own safety to travel on
10 trains to deliver hot spots that they purchased with
11 their own money, so that young people can log on for
12 class. Young people have been experiencing loss,
13 hunger, poverty, loneliness, abuse in their homes
14 despair and depression.

15 How can we ensure that there is continuity of
16 learning when there are conditions such as these.
17 GGE is continuing to hold youth programming online.
18 We have moved all of our programs online and young
19 people have had shared their experiences with us and
20 they are dealing with a lot. A lot of trauma and
21 managing to go to school and handle all of these
22 responsibilities and log on for after school
23 programming for some safe space at the same time.

24 There are some instances where young people have
25 what they need. Where their principals have the

1
2 capacity to check up on them, some students have a
3 quite place to study, a fridge full of food. In
4 other instances, many young people are sharing one
5 device with several siblings. Trying to work while
6 sharing space with aunts and uncles and grandparents
7 who are sick. All of these issues perpetuate
8 inequity.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 NICOLE HAMILTON: There are schools that are
11 taking care of – having administrations that take
12 care and really have robust PTA's and have culturally
13 responsive curriculum and have guidance counselors
14 and have all the things and there are schools that do
15 not. And young people are facing barriers based on
16 their schools pre-COVID standings and their readiness
17 to respond to the pandemic and the demands of their
18 home lives and that is compound trauma.

19 Finally, I will just say that when we return to
20 school, we should have a pause on academics and
21 attend to the emotional and mental needs of young
22 people. And a young person said, when asked what do
23 they need, they said, we need therapy. And every
24 young person on that call and our program agreed, and
25 when asked why they said that counselors are good but

1
2 they are already tapped and they don't have the
3 capacity and everybody that is coming back, the
4 schools is going to need something. Something deeper
5 than what we already have. No disrespect to
6 counselors but this is deeper. I don't need
7 counseling, I need therapy. And that's the words
8 from the young person themselves.

9 And so, now is not the time to cut any programs
10 or any supports or anything that young people will
11 need. They are resilient and full of promise but
12 they will need the support of every single resource
13 we have at our disposal and to the efforts of making
14 them whole in the face of this pandemic.

15 Thank you.

16 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we
17 will hear from Ashley Jones.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 ASHLEY JONES: Thank you to Chair Treyger and the
20 Education Committee for the opportunity to speak
21 today regarding remote learning in CBO youth
22 development programs and remote summer youth
23 development.

24 My name is Ashley Jones and I work for the
25 Coalition of Hispanic Families Services Arts and

1
2 Literacy program as a Program Director at PS 92Q in
3 Corona Queens.

4 For over two decades, CHFS summer programs have
5 served communities throughout Brooklyn and Queens by
6 providing save, structured creative programming for
7 over 2,500 youth. Many of whom are among our city's
8 most vulnerable.

9 The arts and literacy program was founded to
10 build literacy through the arts during the school
11 year and the summer. And during the pandemic, has
12 helped children and families remain connected and
13 develop crucial life and social emotional skills
14 throughout the shelter in place order. Through live
15 virtual arts classes, tutoring, art therapy,
16 counseling, cooking classes and more. During any
17 other normal school year, we are a much need resource
18 for families to require social services and have
19 childcare but since COVID-19 has hit our city, we
20 have become a lifeline for so many students and
21 families.

22 We have created a successful and thriving remote
23 after school learning platform that is serving over
24 550 students weekly across our elementary and middle
25 school program, all through live instruction. It's a

1
2 haven, a way for kids to be able to be. In an
3 uncertain time and world, we have given students
4 familiar faces, time to interact with their school
5 friends, consistent classrooms, even if they are
6 small boxes on a lit screen and avid advocates who
7 have walked with them and their families to get
8 internet, translation instructions for many missed
9 days of assignments when a family was struggling to
10 read the assignment or the ask. Whether they could
11 read English or if maybe they could not read at all.

12 We have helped families get food from food
13 pantries. But we have been a bridge but with funding
14 cut from DYCD programs, we will not be able to be
15 there. If we deprive families and students of this
16 bridge, they will not walk into the school year ready
17 to face a changed system. They will be left behind
18 and the attempt to regain that footing -

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

20 ASHLEY JONES: Will prove for many to be
21 insurmountable. Youth programming and development as
22 we have all learned in a very fast crash course over
23 the last two months, comes in all shapes and sizes
24 and can be molded to serve families and children and

25

1
2 keep them safe and foster a comprehensive state of
3 wellbeing.

4 So, on behalf of myself and CHFS youth
5 development programs, I implore you to not cut that
6 funding. The young people of our city are the
7 future. They will become the change makers, the
8 pillars of the community, the gears of our economy
9 and the beacons of culture and we must do all that we
10 can to provide them with the needed services to
11 continue to grow, learn and become.

12 Thank you so much for your time today.

13 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we'll
14 hear from Debra Sue Lorenzen.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 DEBRA SUE LORENZEN: Good afternoon. Thank you
17 Chair Treyger for your leadership and for valuing the
18 role of community based organizations and supporting
19 remote learning and thank you Ashley for that
20 wonderful commentary.

21 My name is Debra Sue Lorenzen and I am the
22 Director of Youth and Education at St. Nicks
23 Alliance.

24 As the largest youth services provider in north
25 Brooklyn, St. Nicks Alliance has offered critical

1
2 remote learning services to over 4,000 students ages
3 2 to 21 since March in Community School District 14
4 alone. These services have delivered through our
5 extensive network of school partnerships in early
6 childhood center, afterschool centers, community
7 centers, transfer schools and community schools.

8 Our children and families depend on St, Nicks
9 Alliance as an integral part of remote learning,
10 especially for struggling students. Through daily
11 recorded and live lessons, we are shoring up their
12 academic learning through literacy and homework help.
13 Keeping alive their creativity through visual arts
14 and performing arts. Cultivating their wellbeing
15 through selfcare workshops and cooking classes,
16 reinforcing their emotional strengths through mental
17 health counseling and daily check ins. Looking to
18 their futures through career development courses and
19 friendships.

20 These essential services are having a profound
21 impact on our students and families, from improved
22 engagement to shared persistence. St. Nicks Alliance
23 is very well prepared to continue remote learning
24 during summer camp and SYEP. Yet both were excised
25 as a result of radical cuts to DYCD. Their

1
2 elimination will severely compromise children and
3 youths ability to stay engaged in remote learning
4 whether part of or independent from DOE summer
5 school.

6 Further, St. Nicks Alliance will be forced to
7 furlough more than 250 staff on July 1st. All of
8 whom would have been supporting remote learning in
9 addition to our 2,500 SYEP interns who would be
10 helping remote learning and would be earning wages.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

12 DEBRA SUE LORENZEN: Thank you so much for
13 hearing my testimony.

14 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and the last
15 person on this panel, we will hear from Gregory
16 Brender. Gregory are you on the line.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: It looks like he's on but I
19 don't think he is speaking.

20 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Okay, we can move to
21 our next panel and then we will put him in the next
22 panel.

23 So, thank you everybody who just testified. We
24 will move to panel seventeen. We will start with
25 Jibal Ahmed, Luis Fuentes, Clara Delgado, Anthony

1
2 Caponera and then we will also add Gregory Brender
3 back on at the conclusion of this.

4 So, we'll start with Jibal.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 JIBAL AHMED: Thank you for hosting this hearing.
7 My name is Jibal Ahmed and I work for Good Shepherd
8 Services as a Program Director for Beacon M.S. 45 in
9 the Bronx.

10 At our Beacon, we partner with over 750 community
11 members in District 10. About 600 of those were
12 under 21. Beacon programs are a school based
13 community center serving children age 6 and older and
14 adults.

15 There are currently 91 beacons located throughout
16 the five boroughs of New York City operating in our
17 schools and evenings. On weekends and during school
18 holidays and vacation periods, including the summer.

19 Good Shepherd operates two beacons. The beacon
20 at M.S. 45 in the Bronx and beacon at P.S. 15 in
21 Brooklyn. When DOE shifted to remote learning in
22 March, we at the beacon shifted to remote programming
23 and to support the whole schools in identifying ways
24 to increase attendance of students in Google
25 classrooms. We quickly coordinated a series of

1
2 outreach efforts to contact families and identify
3 students that needed additional supports.

4 We provide support with school assignments, one
5 on one supports, have place intention to ease our
6 immigrant families who have language barriers.

7 In the Bronx, one of the 100 systems that we
8 currently enrolled in beacon, we have actively
9 engaged 110 students to date.

10 The beacons have been regularly calling families
11 to provide social and emotional support. Our ability
12 to be productive and be responsive to the needs of
13 our students, families come from strong bonds and the
14 relationship we have with them and the community.
15 There has been relationships that have been built
16 over time. They trust us and they know we are here
17 to support them. Beacons connect families to local
18 resources, including food access.

19 In the Bronx, we have helped our schools increase
20 the number of families to complete DOE's laptop
21 survey and we distributed 5 laptops. Staff at the
22 Beacon have created a series of videos and powerful
23 lessons plans on the topics of art, dance, and
24 fitness. We have shared these in Google classrooms
25 for which we updated weekly. We communicate this by

1
2 personalized phone calls our staff makes to family
3 regularly.

4 Beacon staff are prepared to support youth over
5 this summer, but with funding being cut, we fear our
6 families will be alone.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

8 JIBAL AHMED: The other supports we provide
9 daily. Thank you for your time.

10 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we
11 will hear from Luis Fuentes.

12 LUIS FUENTES: How are you doing? My name is
13 Luis Fuentes and I am the Senior Program Director at
14 the Monterey Cornerstone Community Center in the
15 Bronx. I have worked for Good Shepherd Services for
16 12 years and during that time I have been a group
17 leader, team service coordinator and now a director.
18 Good Shepherd Services runs two cornerstone programs,
19 Monterey in the Bronx, and the Miccio in Red Hook.

20 Since March 25th, the Miccio has distributed over
21 2,000 meals and Monterey has distributed another
22 1,000. On most days, we have also been able to
23 distribute additional items including a mask, bags of
24 vegetables, art kits, hot meals among other items.

1
2 This is only made possible by the partnership GSS
3 has in the community. During this crisis, Monterey's
4 paramount concern has been reaching out to over 200
5 families and getting the much needed resources. We
6 conduct the weekly check ins and establish the
7 homework helpline for our families. Today, our 80
8 elementary participants in grades K-5 calls staff to
9 get homework help. Since the crisis, all elementary
10 participants have called in at least once for help
11 for homework help and resources.

12 When DOE operates remotely, this summer and the
13 Mayor successfully eliminates summer programming,
14 there will be a gap in supports for families. GSS
15 wants to fulfill that gap. We routinely reach out to
16 our 200 families and with our supports this summer,
17 they will be left without much needed resources. The
18 Chancellor understands the values that nonprofits
19 have been providing to students during this time.
20 The Chancellor himself has said that kids need
21 academic social emotional supports.

22 Please let us do that. Today, we are providing
23 that support, not only through our check-ins but also
24 through our SALSA Congress Initiative. As an agency
25 we had begun producing dance videos for kids to

1
2 practice at home. Our master dance director Gary
3 Adams has led the initiative and provided activities
4 that strengthen childrens skills and have allowed us
5 to support childrens hobbies in a fun and safe way.

6 These activities have also provided an outlet for
7 youth who have experienced trauma as a result of this
8 pandemic. SALSA Congress allows kids to master
9 complex skills and embrace their cultural heritage.
10 These videos have been posted on our agency website
11 and our you tube.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

13 LUIS FUENTES: Studies have shown the importance
14 of the arts on the youth development and our SALSA
15 Congress follows in this vein. This initiative is
16 just one example of what GSS is capable of providing.
17 We hope to continue this initiative as well as others
18 through the summer but recognize that funding is not
19 available.

20 There is old mantra that states it take a village
21 to raise a child, GSS is a member of that village and
22 if we are not funded, our children and families will
23 suffer. Thank you.

24 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we
25 will hear from Clara Delgado.

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CLARA DELGADO: Good afternoon. Thank you, Council Member Mark Treyger, and the Members. My name is Clara Delgado and I am the Program Director for Good Shepherd Services at Franklin K. Lane Young Adult Borough Center in Cypress Hill Brooklyn.

I've been with Good Shepherd Services for 15 years. I was an internship coordinator at the Lincoln YABC before becoming a YABC Program Director four years ago.

YABC's high school programs for young people ages 17 to 21 that support them to complete their graduation requirements while in their fifth to eighth year of high school. Good Shepherd services runs 10 YABC's in Brooklyn and in the Bronx serving over 2,500 students each year.

And I want to tell you their stories. The first is 19 years old and lives with an older sister and her boyfriend. Since their mother moved out of state last year and the three equally contribute to maintain their household. When we transitioned to remote learning it was difficult to get in contact with them and they would submit work outside of school hours. I later learned that they were

1
2 juggling schoolwork with working a 12 to 16 hour
3 shift at a local store. Because they were over 18,
4 they are not subject to the labor protections of
5 underaged high school students. This student much
6 choose between completing schoolwork and working to
7 support the family and have selected work, another it
8 20 years old.

9 Before remote learning, this student made use of
10 a life center for childcare while they attended
11 classes. Now the student is home and the childcare
12 facility is closed and the student is unable to get
13 family to babysit. Because they are home caring for
14 the child, they have fallen behind on their remote
15 learning assignments.

16 With the two examples I have shared, I urge the
17 Council to consider that there are students in the
18 DOE system that are pulled in multiple directions.
19 On the one hand, employers and childcare providers
20 assume that these young people are home and with free
21 time on their hands.

22 School assumes that they have no other
23 responsibilities outside of their schoolwork, but
24 this is wrong. Our kids are pulled in multiple
25

1
2 directions. They are essential workers, they are
3 parents, bread winners, and they need more support.

4 It is the reason that learning to work programs
5 were created. To support youth to graduate high
6 school. In the last two years, YABC and LTW programs
7 have been hit with devastating cuts.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

9 CLARA DELGADO: And program closures leading us
10 all stretched to meet the needs of these students.
11 They have children, they are the breadwinners of
12 their family. They have serious social emotional
13 obstacles to graduation and we must support them to
14 ensure their success.

15 I think that the Council needs to understand that
16 more supports are needed for them and other students
17 with new circumstances and the current remote
18 learning does not work.

19 Thank you once again to Council Member Treyger
20 and the Committee for allowing me to share these
21 young people's stories here with you today. Thank
22 you.

23 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next we
24 will hear from Anthony Caponera.

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2 ANTHONY CAPONERA: Good afternoon Mr. Chairman
3 and fellow members of the Council. My name is
4 Anthony Caponera. I am a parent advocate for people
5 with disabilities and an invited member to the
6 citywide council for District 75's Committee on
7 Outreach. I speak on my own behalf today.

8 First, I want to commend the tremendous efforts
9 of the Department of Education for transforming our
10 entire school system over to digital platform. It
11 was a tremendous endeavor and they have to be
12 congratulated on that.

13 I submitted a document signed by clinicians
14 calling for the resumption of hands on therapy for
15 students with disabilities. therapists who are
16 already considered essential workers and also, are
17 still operating seeing patients.

18 In our District 75 population, the most
19 vulnerable student population in New York City and
20 all across the nation we are hearing of significant
21 regression in this population due to the
22 ineffectiveness of remote therapy.

23 Once verbal students are now nonverbal, some have
24 stopped toileting. Some have reverted to self-talk
25 and self-stimulating behaviors. One parent reported

1
2 their child having multiple seizures in one day.
3 Some are stemming and have become incoherent and
4 there has been severe aggression.

5 One student from New Jersey ripped the retina out
6 of his eye and was hospitalized. The New York City
7 Special Education Department and others, they are
8 totally ignoring that remote therapy and learning is
9 not working for this population and instead painting
10 a rosy picture of its successes. Now, while the US
11 Department of Education refused to issue IDEA -

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

13 ANTHONY CAPONERA: The school lobby continues to
14 challenge this all across our country.
15 Simultaneously, schools refuse to issue RSA letters
16 to parents, so parents can elect to resume these
17 medically necessary services.

18 This is a blatant conflict of interest and
19 possibly a breach in school fiduciary obligations
20 under the law. And I will just conclude that I asked
21 this committee to diligently research this and also
22 request our clinical panelists to give testimony on
23 this subject as time is of the essence and the
24 schools have been put on notice regarding the
25 potential irreversible effects of regression.

1
2 So, the Department of Education wants to issue
3 RSA letters to parents that elect to use them for the
4 disabled children. Equity, which has been stated a
5 number of times does not exist for these students.

6 Thank you.

7 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and now we
8 will try to hear from Gregory Brender again.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 GREGORY BENDER: Can you hear me?

11 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Yes, go ahead.

12 GREGORY BENDER: Thank you so much and thank you
13 for the flexibility. Thank you to Treyger and
14 members of the City Council Education Committee for
15 the opportunity to testify on remote learning.

16 I'm here on behalf of United Neighborhood Houses,
17 a policy and social change organization representing
18 43 neighborhood settlement houses that reach 765,000
19 New Yorkers from all walks of life.

20 Community based organizations including New York
21 City settlement houses have been carrying out remote
22 learning activities in beacon community centers,
23 cornerstone community centers, Compass and SONYC
24 programs since COVID-19 began. But the FY 2021
25 budget cuts these city programs will make it

1
2 impossible to these remote learning activities
3 continue in July and August. We urgently plea with
4 the City Council for their support in ensuring the
5 city maintains services for youth this summer.

6 DOE does plan to conduct centralized remote
7 learning activities in the summer through the public
8 schools. However, this plan will not address the
9 issues of social isolation and disengagement that
10 youth and development organizations often – that
11 youth development is especially keen to address.

12 Centralized programs do not have the hard earned
13 community connections and credibility that CBL Youth
14 Service Provider offer and without durable social
15 bonds and connections to both their peers and caring
16 adults would be even harder to maintain social
17 distance.

18 Community based organizations are currently
19 offering online tutoring, support, art, and
20 recreation programming as well as behavioral
21 healthcare and additional supports to youth and
22 families through grab and go meal provisions and
23 grocery delivery for many households.

24 On May 12th, the Campaign for Children and the
25 Campaign for summer jobs released the summer recovery

1
2 plan which is detailed in my longer written testimony
3 for school aged youth.

4 Recognizing that services in the summer would
5 likely be a combination of remote learning programs
6 and socially distant in person programs for the
7 families of essential workers. The summer recovery
8 plan contains plan for remote and socially distant in
9 person programs as well as a plan for remote summer
10 youth employment program. This plan was developed
11 after eight weekly convenings of over 100 youth
12 services providers.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

14 GREGORY BRENDER: Thank you.

15 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. This
16 conclude this panel. Thank you everyone for your
17 testimony. We will now move on to panel 18. Panel
18 18 will consist of Jillian Gedaan, Jim Manley, Chris
19 Giordano, and Jason Kanter and we will start Jillian.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

21 JILLIAN GEDAAN: Hi my name is Jillian Gedaan and
22 I am a teacher in East New York. I have served as a
23 New York City Public Educator for the last 13 years
24 and I think I am one of the only teachers that has
25 spoken today since eleven o'clock.

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I want to thank you for this time and this opportunity to speak and I want to talk about how this is effecting my students in East New York and Canarsie. As a history teacher, I have built my relationships with my students by dressing up as historical figures, taking them on field trips, engaging in debates, and none of that can happen through remote learning. One of my students cried when he found out school was being cancelled for the rest of the year because he was concerned about how he was going to make progress without his teachers present. So, I call him every single day to talk to him about how he is doing but it still is not enough.

One of my students, she does her work at five o'clock p.m. until nine o'clock because her mom is working and she is watching her four younger siblings and she is not able to share a laptop. She has to share a laptop with her other sisters who are in middle school.

One of my students was stressed out because he couldn't stock up on groceries in advance because his family is on food stamps and my students who took the AP exam, their connections were timed out with their essays because the technology that they had at home

1
2 despite my Charter school network giving out laptops
3 to every school and every child that needed one.

4 One of my students was moved to a shelter the
5 night before the AP US exam and she could not take
6 the test and did not know how to access this. So,
7 literally my students in east New York and Canarsie
8 are losing money and college credits because of this
9 pandemic.

10 We need to make sure that our students in these
11 neighborhoods get the funding that they deserve and
12 our teacher budgets are not cut. We are going to be
13 asked to do more with even less. This is not the
14 case for students in other neighborhoods.

15 I spoke to a mom who lives in Fort Greene, she
16 sent her children to live in their second home to be
17 homeschooled by her mother.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

19 JILLIAN GEDAAN: My students do not have that
20 opportunity. Our white families in this city live in
21 a very different city than low income students of
22 color and we need to make sure that my students are
23 protected. That all of our children have what they
24 need during this pandemic and that our teachers who
25 love them dearly, can support them.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Jillian. Thank
3 you so much.

4 JILLIAN GEDAAN: Thank you. I can tell you are
5 an educator. I appreciate seeing that.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I appreciate you and your
7 stories really hit home and I know you are fighting
8 for your kids like hell and we have a lot of work to
9 do to better support them. Thank you for your
10 service. Thank you.

11 JILLIAN GEDAAN: Thank you.

12 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Next, we will hear from
13 Jim Manly.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

15 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: We will come back to
16 Jim in a moment. Chris Giordano.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

18 CHRIS GIORDANO: Hi, I am Chris Giordano. I am a
19 PTA Co-President at M.S. 54 in Manhattan Valley and
20 Executive Board Member of the District 3 Presidents
21 Council. I am speaking on behalf of myself and our
22 experience in District 3. The other city agencies
23 have pandemic plans, the DOE had none.

24 And here is how we learn that. The principal of
25 M.S. 54 had the presence of mind to call an emergency

1
2 SLT meeting for Friday March 13th. We gathered for
3 the meeting and were shocked to learn that DOE had
4 provided no direction for the remote learning that we
5 all knew was imminent.

6 A committee at the school was assembled to
7 develop a plan that would support learning when the
8 schools would be closed, if such a plan would be
9 allowed.

10 Our school wrote and signed on to letters urging
11 to closing its schools and members of our community
12 youth and adults joined in solidarity with the UFT
13 and President Mulgrew, the afternoon of the 15th
14 urging the Mayor to do so. The announcement that NYC
15 schools would be closed came later that evening. But
16 the DOE had no emergency plan in place even after 911
17 and Hurricane Sandy and was unable to deliver remote
18 learning direction in advance to the inevitable
19 decision to close schools is deeply troubling.

20 And when the Mayor and the DOE continuously to
21 use the size of the system as an excuse or have some
22 indication that the City Council needs to pay a
23 larger role advocating for our children and school
24 communities.

1
2 This last year, District 3 asked Chancellor for
3 guidance on equity issues and received none. In
4 light of that, the conversation would have included
5 the inequitable allocation of resources that this
6 pandemic has exacerbated.

7 That the DOE is considering delivering universal
8 admissions mandates is beyond ironic in our
9 experience. District 3 has unique middle school and
10 high school admissions issues. District 3 is one of
11 the few district with a middle school diversity
12 initiative. That initiative lays on standardized
13 test scores. District 3 has no zone to priority high
14 schools and priority barriers in surrounding
15 districts cause our students to rely on specialized
16 high schools.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

18 CHRIS GIORDANO: Please confirm provisions are
19 being made for the DOE to administer and please ask
20 the DOE to give admissions guidance but confirm that
21 individual schools and districts have the autonomy to
22 establish their own criteria. One size fits does not
23 fit all.

24 Thank you so much.
25

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2 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: We will go back to Jim
3 Manly and try one more time. Jim, are you there?

4 JIM MANLY: I am, thank you. So, sorry to -

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

6 JIM MANLY: I appreciate the opportunity to
7 testify. My name is Jim Manly and I am the
8 Superintendent at Kipp NYC schools. We currently
9 educate and collaborate with over 7,000 students and
10 their families throughout 15 schools in the
11 neighborhoods of the south Bronx, Washington Heights,
12 and Crown Heights and Harlem. I have been in this
13 work for about 30 years, first as a Department of
14 Education teacher and now as a Superintendent of
15 Charter Schools and as all of you know, these times
16 are unlike anything we have ever experienced.

17 We know that the challenges ahead of us are going
18 to be hard, perhaps harder than the one's we've
19 traveled since our buildings closed in March. Many
20 of us know people who are sick. Many of our staff
21 members have been sick. We have lost team and family
22 members. A few of our students have lost parents.
23 It has been a very challenging time. And the
24 divisions that separate our country into
25 socioeconomic tiers are being exposed in a way that

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we all recognize but seems to be an even greater relief during this time as evidence by even recent events outside of our city and within our city that have broken down upon racial lines in the past few days making this time even more challenging.

7

8

With respect to our own experience in remote learning, we have listened to our families and tried to fill the gaps where we could.

10

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We have sent out over 3,216 chrome books and Wi-Fi devices in order to let our families participate in online learning. We started a community pantry at our high school where families can come and grab a weeks' worth of food.

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20

When we saw that our families of Harlem need a greater access, our principal stepped in and brought that food down to Harlem and to Washington Heights. We also are aware of the mental burden that many of our families have experienced. We've stepped up our coaching, our social workers are providing -

21

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

22

23

24

25

JIM MANLY: Regular support. And so, in all of that, I'd like to ask that we think about three things going forward that the City Council can help us with. One is that we recognize that our schools

1
2 are an important and integral part of the community
3 they work in and that we continue to have support to
4 find families the food and educational needs that
5 have arisen during this time. And that Charters and
6 DOE schools get that support to continue to provide
7 for families. That we continue to connect online.
8 If there is a way to provide more free access to Wi-
9 Fi and to the internet, it is key for our families,
10 even those who have been remiss on some of their
11 payments to Optimum and other places.

12 And then finally, that when we come back in
13 person, we have the PPE and the resources we need to
14 keep our kids safe and our teachers safe. And so, we
15 ask for all of those considerations as we do this
16 work. We appreciate all that the City Council is
17 doing during this difficult time and please know that
18 Charter schools are with you in this effort to combat
19 all of the challenges we have seen.

20 Thank you so much.

21 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next, we
22 will hear from Jason Cantor.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

24 JASON CANTOR: Hello there and I just want to
25 thank the Councilman as well. My name is Jason

1
2 Cantor, I am an Assistant Principal at Rachel Carson
3 High School. I had the pleasure of meeting the
4 Councilman in December at our career night. He spoke
5 there, it was great. It was great to have him there
6 and he has been a big advocate for us and our
7 community and I appreciate that.

8 I want to talk a little bit about something that
9 Joshua talked about when he started this meeting a
10 couple of days ago. She spoke about equity and
11 fairness and being understood. And I want to connect
12 that with the Regents. We have a policy that the
13 Department of Education and the state have come up
14 with. What they are saying is that all of the
15 students in order to receive that waiver need to
16 complete all of the courses in their study.

17 So, for example, I work in a semester school, so
18 they would have to complete Algebra one and Algebra
19 two, pass those classes to get the algebra waiver.
20 The problem is, is that there are plenty of schools,
21 mostly throughout the state that are annualized,
22 which means that those students don't have the
23 opportunity to fail in January and I know Councilman
24 Treyger and there are other people hear that are
25 educators have taught for many years, myself included

1
2 and have had students fail for a multitude of reasons
3 in the first semester but passed their second
4 semester and of course passed the Regents exam. It
5 happens all of the time.

6 And Joshua is in Liberation, which is a trimester
7 school which means he has to pass three trimesters
8 before he can qualify for a Regents waiver.

9 So, my question and something that I would love
10 to pose with people in Department of Education and I
11 can't seem to get an answer is, how is it fair that
12 two students could be failing in January and one
13 student is not qualified to get a Regents waiver but
14 another student who is in an annualized school, still
15 has that opportunity. Five more months of an
16 opportunity to get a pass and a Regents waiver.

17 That seems to me the definition of unfair,
18 unequitable and it goes to Joshua's points.

19 Sorry, my daughter is singing Let it Go, I
20 apologize.

21 But I feel like this also goes back to another
22 point you know, most of the city our semester and
23 trimester schools and there are the majority -

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.
25

1
2 JASON CANTOR: Of the state and that divide needs
3 to be addressed.

4 So, I thank you. Thank you very much Councilman
5 and all the members here. I appreciate all that you
6 do and that's it, thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And I thank you Jason and I
8 did pose a question earlier to Dr. Chen about this
9 Regents exemption, so I am going to follow up with
10 her about this case here, Rachel Carson and others.

11 Thank you for your service, appreciate it.

12 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you everyone from
13 panel eighteen. We will now move on to panel
14 nineteen. Panel nineteen will consist of Madeline
15 Borrelli, Caitlin Delphin, Toff Sutton, and Carolyn
16 Ems. We will start with Madeline.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

18 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Madeline, you are
19 unmuted. Okay, we will come back to Madeline. We
20 will switch to Caitlin Delphin.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

22 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Okay, actually it looks
23 like Madeline, oh, oh, okay, Caitlin is unmuted so
24 why don't you go ahead and then we'll come back to
25 Madeline.

1
2 CAITLIN DELPHIN: Okay, hi, I am Caitlin Delphin,
3 I am a teacher at Leaders High School in Bensonhurst
4 Brooklyn. Thank you for this opportunity.

5 So, I am a Special Education teacher and I just
6 want to talk a little bit about what I've seen during
7 this pandemic. We have seen that the role that
8 schools play in our communities providing food,
9 technology and support for students and their family
10 has grown and we are sometimes now the only non-
11 family connection for our student.

12 We need to invest in supporting our students and
13 their families through more teachers and counselors
14 and to do this by divesting from the NYPD.

15 Online learning is not equally accessible to all
16 students in the same way. Some of my students are
17 caring for sick family members or who have family
18 members who have died.

19 Some of my students are caring for younger
20 sibling and can't focus on schoolwork. Many of my
21 students have had to move to new houses or move in
22 with other family members. Some are working to earn
23 money for their families or support the family
24 business. Some are still waiting for technology or
25 have inadequate access to technology or the internet

1
2 and a lot of my students have disabilities that make
3 it very difficult to access online learning.

4 This pandemic and the resulting online learning
5 has shined a very bright light on the inequities that
6 exist in the NYC DOE. This could be a wonderful
7 opportunity for us to recalibrate our schools to
8 better support our students and families but instead
9 it seems like we're choosing to perpetuate the same
10 inequitable systems that have always existed.

11 We don't know for sure what schools will look
12 like next year but we do know that our students and
13 their families are going through a range of traumatic
14 experiences.

15 We need to be able to provide the necessary
16 supports so that our students can focus on learning
17 including more counselors to provide emotional
18 supports and more teachers to help students learn.
19 We don't need more NYPD, scanners, or surveillance in
20 our schools to further criminalize students who need
21 care and healing now.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

23 CAITLIN DELPIN: Okay, so the schools in the
24 areas of the city hit hardest by COVID-19 and its
25 economic impacts are the same schools in communities

1
2 who have been over criminalized historically. We
3 need to welcome our students back with open arms and
4 targeted support when we return to schools rather
5 than with more police and surveillance.

6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Caitlin for your
8 service and for always speaking up for all of our
9 kids.

10 CAITLIN DELPHIN: Thank you for continuing to
11 listen.

12 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Okay, now we will go
13 back to Madeline.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

15 MADELINE BORRELLI: Hi, good evening Chair
16 Treyger and Council Members. My name is Madeline
17 Borrelli and I am a mother of two and a teacher at IS
18 228 in Brooklyn. I am also a member of Teachers
19 Unite, which is an organization of public school
20 teachers working to dismantle the school to prison
21 pipeline.

22 I chose a comment today in regards to the budget
23 as it relates to COVID-19 because I cannot stand by
24 and watch Mayor de Blasio's proposed cuts funnel more
25 children into the prison industrial complex. We

1
2 cannot provide the youth of the city, the free and
3 appropriate public education they are intitled to.

4 If we are striped of our funds and subjected to
5 violent policing and surveillance. If the city
6 passes these plans, it will place a hiring freeze on
7 teachers and social workers at a time when they are
8 need the most.

9 Students will return to school carrying the
10 grieve and trauma of this pandemic only to be
11 welcomed back by metal detectors and more cops
12 instead of new teachers and counselors. To take \$641
13 million from our schools next year alone is
14 indefensible. Yet, despite gutting the DOE, the NYPD
15 remains virtually untouched.

16 While the NYPD represents 3.6 percent of the
17 entire - I'm sorry, 6.3 percent of the entire city
18 budget, they will only see 1.2 percent of the cuts.
19 And in fact, the subcontract from the DOE budget to
20 the NYPD is set to increase by \$4 million despite
21 there being no funds to hire new teachers and social
22 workers for the next five years.

23 Many of our students are already exposed to
24 constant harassment and violent policing in their
25 communities. Recently, one of my seventh graders

1
2 from Coney Island told me that throughout this
3 outbreak, the police have continued to harass his
4 neighborhood, only now, they wear masks.

5 What message is de Blasio sending to the youth
6 and families of our city? Why should we place the
7 city's financial crisis on the backs of our students?
8 Lets let the NYPD share the burden. With the trauma
9 and disruption of this pandemic, our schools now more
10 than ever need to be fully funded and it's time for
11 the city to do the right thing, divest from policing,
12 invest in healing, and fully fund New York City
13 schools.

14 Thank you, City Council Members, and thank you to
15 Chair Treyger for your time.

16 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. Next, we
17 will hear from Tajh Sutton.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

19 TAJH SUTTON: Hi everyone, can you hear me?

20 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Yes.

21 TAJH SUTTON: Okay, so I'm Tajh Sutton, I'm a
22 proud member of the Education Council Consortium,
23 President of CEC 14 and founder of my own arts and
24 adequacy org, Young People of Color Incorporated.
25

1
2 In addition to that, I am the mother of two
3 public school students, Title 1 Rep for my sons motor
4 school and the PTA delegate and Arts Committee Chair
5 at my daughters school.

6 Aside from those endeavors and the work I've done
7 at the educational structure that I worked at the
8 past year, I have been both Black and woman my entire
9 life. And what that means in the context of
10 schooling is that I've often been painted as
11 controversial when I ask a simple question. Asked to
12 be quiet when I wondered where I was in the lesson.
13 And soon to be somehow out of control but
14 simultaneously inadequate when it came time to make
15 decisions and make my voice heard.

16 I see the same arguments being implored against
17 students, educators, advocates, and parent leaders
18 fighting for equity in the midst of a global
19 pandemic. That as many people have mentioned, is
20 exacerbating the inequities that already existed and
21 that is how I know that these arguments are rooted in
22 racism.

23 What I didn't mention earlier that I'm also a
24 graduate of Brooklyn Technical High School. I've
25 been tracked for honors classes since the third

1
2 grade. My twelve year old is currently on the honor
3 roll and my seven year old scored a 92 percent on the
4 gifted and talented test with no prep. But you know
5 what I did? Nothing.

6 I didn't go searching for bigger at the expense
7 of my child's culture, mental health, or childhood.
8 I allowed her to stay with her friends at a wonderful
9 public school currently working it's way off the CSI
10 list.

11 Why? Because our political choices reflect our
12 personal values and the position that we need to
13 conflict out of our educational system is exactly why
14 it is in the state of disarray it currently exists
15 in.

16 When we choose to ignore the historical context
17 of Black and Brown students living in the most
18 segregated school system, and we choose to ignore the
19 historical content of our immigrant communities and
20 wonder why we have issues with translation and
21 interpretation. When we choose to ignore our
22 disabled students at the intersections that we live
23 at because many of our students of color also have
24 IEP's. When we choose to allow a select group of
25 schools to have all the resources that all New York

1
2 City students are entitled to and have our children
3 feel like it is okay.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

5 TAJH SUTTON: Then what are we really teaching
6 New York City's children to value? When we hook up
7 metal detectors and ensure policing over tutoring and
8 resources and socioemotional support, what is the
9 message that we are sending?

10 I am asking our City Council, our Mayor, our
11 Governor, and everyone in a position to do better.
12 To do better, and the first step we can take with
13 that is divesting in our policing which we are seeing
14 is being carried out violently inequitably and invest
15 in our schools.

16 Thank you.

17 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next we
18 will hear from Carolyn.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

20 CAROLYN EANES: Thank you Chair Treyger for
21 facilitating this meeting. I want to thank you
22 personally for your advocacy for our public schools.
23 I have seen your investment firsthand since I teach
24 in your City Council district.

1
2 My name is Carolyn Eanes, I am an English teacher
3 at Rachel Carson High School in Coney Island
4 Brooklyn. I am also a members of Teachers Unite, an
5 organization of New York City Public School Educators
6 working to dismantle the school to prison pipeline.

7 Today, I want to speak specifically about the
8 budget cuts the city is proposing for the upcoming
9 school year. Teaching through the pandemic has laid
10 bear the impact of trauma on our young people and
11 communities. Even before this, our schools were
12 under resourced. Too many of our schools did not
13 have full time social workers or nurses on staff even
14 before the pandemic, even before the catastrophic
15 proposed budget cuts.

16 As we come out of this pandemic, our school
17 communities will need even more support, financially,
18 emotionally, instructionally. As our schools move
19 toward reopening, we will need more social workers,
20 more trauma counselors, more support for youth,
21 families and educators who have been traumatized by
22 this pandemic.

23 This brings me back to what we have heard at the
24 beginning of this meeting and the student produced
25 video by Joshua of Liberation High School. We are

1
2 not robots. Our students don't want robotic online
3 instruction that prioritizes efficiency over
4 humanity.

5 To heal from the trauma of COVID-19, our school
6 communities need a greater investment in the people
7 who can humanize learning. Social workers, trauma
8 counselors, restorative justice practitioners are not
9 extras in our school. They are integral to the
10 health and wellbeing of our communities.

11 As an educator, I am seeing firsthand the people
12 who will be harmed by the budget cuts proposed by the
13 Mayor. It is unconscionable that our Mayor can
14 proposed such significant cuts to our educational
15 system while leaving the NYPD and school security
16 apparatus intact. We need fully funded schools now
17 more than ever. Thank you for your time.

18 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: That is all for this
19 panel. Chair Treyger?

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I just want to thank
21 educators for their service because I know they are
22 speaking really on behalf of their kids in their
23 classrooms and they are at the frontlines of this.
24 Thank you so much for your service.
25

1
2 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you everyone from
3 panel nineteen. We have two panels left, panel
4 twenty and panel twenty-one. On panel twenty, we
5 will have Paolo Martinez Boone, Tom Shepard and Ellie
6 Baron and we will start with Paolo.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

8 PAOLO MARTINEZ BOONE: Good afternoon. My name
9 is Paolo Martinez Boone and represented in New York
10 Lawyers for the Public Interest Disability Justice
11 Program. We have been providing free legal services
12 for families of students with disabilities for more
13 than 40 years. Thank you for the opportunity to be
14 here today. I want to foreclose about the school
15 closures were necessary due to the pandemic and an
16 emergency plan was put in place. This plan
17 absolutely is affecting students with disabilities,
18 particularly students in low income communities that
19 classify as an emotional disturb.

20 These students who are classified as emotionally
21 disturbed, need a lot of us daily supports from the
22 staff in order to make it through the day. These are
23 students classified as emotional disturbed are likely
24 to spend a lot of time receiving supports from staff,
25 therefore remote learning has presented a great

1
2 challenge and disproportionately impacted their
3 education. These students are already facing many
4 barriers to get a quality education. We have heard
5 from our families that number one, the failure of the
6 New York City Department of Education to provide with
7 a consistent remote learning experience.

8 Some of the students are receiving paper packets,
9 others are receiving tablets, others are using their
10 families telephone, others are using all computers.
11 Some families are using some other Google Meets
12 Microsoft team making it extremely difficult for
13 these families to make it through the day.

14 I just want to focus that these students are
15 having an extremely difficult time to concentrate,
16 therefore accommodations are not in place.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

18 PAOLO MARTINEZ BOONE: Thank you. They need
19 redirection and often are not provided with that
20 during the remote learning and this is leading
21 student disengagement and loss of interest.

22 I have submitted testimony in writing and I hope
23 that you read it and consider also some of the things
24 that we have recommended such as providing emotional
25 support for these students, also we're having a great

1
2 deal of issues with evaluations. So, students who
3 are at this time receiving inappropriate programs and
4 services will continue receiving inappropriate
5 programs and services in the fall, which will put the
6 student far behind.

7 Thank you so much for having me today.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you for your service.
9 Thank you.

10 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next, we
11 will hear from Tom Sheppard.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

13 TOM SHEPPARD: Hi, how are you? I want to say
14 thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak.
15 It's been kind of tasking listening to 80 people, so
16 everything I had sort of written down, I kind of
17 threw out the window and just been taking notes all
18 day. But there is a couple things that I really
19 wanted to touch on.

20 The first is, I believe in taking things back and
21 putting in context right. So, the first thing that I
22 would ask everybody to consider in all of this, is
23 how do you expect children who are hungry, scared,
24 and tired, to master anything right, especially
25 academics. I know myself personally, if I'm awake

1
2 for 18 to 24 hours, you know, I'm no good to anyone.
3 So, I just wanted to bring that up.

4 I do feel that this has all been, not this
5 hearing but remote learning in general, a big
6 exercise in technical difficulty. When we consider
7 that there are almost 20,000, I think the number is
8 19,000 that haven't been received yet and then you
9 consider that the entire population of District 1,
10 that the DOE has spoken about is 10,000. Then the
11 number of kids who need these iPads the most actually
12 doubles that of the entire school district of
13 District 1. So, I wanted to bring that up.

14 Then if you consider that if we go from Zoom to
15 Google hangouts to Web X to Microsoft Teams back to
16 Zoom. So, your parents trying to figure out. The
17 students trying to figure it out and teachers trying
18 to figure it out and then like, rinse repeat.

19 You know, this is all just a recipe for disaster.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

21 TOM SHEPPARD: Okay, I will just wrap this up
22 very quickly and just say that any decisions that the
23 City Council makes, I would hope that we just take
24 into consideration that we're talking about real
25

1
2 people and real circumstances and this is not
3 strictly just an academic exercise. Thank you.

4 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next, we
5 will hear from Ellie Baron.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

7 ELLIE BARON: Hi, thank you for allowing me the
8 opportunity to testify. My name is Ellie and I am a
9 student at Bard High School Early College Queens and
10 I am in eleventh grade.

11 I am very concerned about the affects of remote
12 learning on students. Many students through no fault
13 of their own have not been able to fully participate
14 in remote learning. In the next school year, we need
15 to invest more money into students, especially the
16 most vulnerable students to ensure that they are
17 supported in this hard time and are academically
18 caught up from the period of remote learning.

19 However, the Mayor's proposed Executive Budget does
20 the opposite of this. \$100 million have been cut
21 from fair student funding and a hiring freeze on
22 teaching staff has been implemented. Cuts to
23 education will be 2800 percent greater than cuts to
24 policing and we must prioritize educating students
25 over policing them.

1
2 Teachers have had a profound impact on my
3 learning as a student. Many of my teachers know me
4 not just as a student in the classroom but also as a
5 person outside of school. If teachers had more
6 students, I know that my relationships with them
7 would be a lot less meaningful.

8 These relationships are critical, especially for
9 students who might not have a stable home life or an
10 adult to talk to, especially in the time of COVID.
11 Teachers are needed more than ever to support
12 students.

13 I'd like to thank the Education Committee for all
14 the work that you have done to push for equitable
15 funding for students and to push back against these
16 budget cuts. Chair Treyger, I'd especially like to
17 thank you for the advocacy that you are doing and I
18 am very grateful for you fighting for students like
19 me.

20 Thank you.

21 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you everyone and
22 that concludes this panel. Next, we are going to
23 hear from Sheba Simpson, Paulette Ha and Rosalia
24 Borja. And we will start with Sheba.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

1
2 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Shiba, actually if you
3 could stop one second, you haven't been unmuted yet,
4 sorry. Okay, go ahead and try again.

5 SHEBA SIMPSON: Good afternoon. My name is Sheba
6 Simpson. I am a Special Education Teacher currently
7 teaching remotely and supervising a regional
8 enrichment center in the afternoons. I am also the
9 parent of a middle school student with a disability.

10 This is my sons remote learning plan that I
11 created after witnessing my son have a meltdown from
12 being overwhelmed trying to navigate Google
13 Classrooms for the first time without prior
14 instructions. I had to advocate for my son in behalf
15 of all the students in New York City who have
16 disabilities, to find a way that best supports his
17 unique learning style. Thankfully, his teachers
18 worked with me as I created this schedule, which
19 includes whole groups, small groups, and one on one
20 instructional time.

21 I realize that my sons situation is unique but it
22 shouldn't be. Many families are struggling to
23 provide their children with assistance in completing
24 enormous amount of work that their children are being
25 required to complete especially in households with

1
2 different age groups and abilities. Most children
3 need human instruction to learn. That does not
4 easily happen over computer or via telephone. I am
5 asking as the conversations about reimagining schools
6 happen, that the unique and special needs of students
7 with disabilities be at the center of the
8 conversations.

9 One possible solution could be creating schedules
10 for groups of special needs students and general ed
11 students with similar learning styles and needs in
12 small group instruction, via online instruction and
13 to disrupt the impact of COVID-19 on our city schools
14 and our students with disabilities.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

16 SHEBA SIMPSON: Thank you.

17 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next, we
18 will hear from Paulette.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

20 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Paulette, just hold off
21 one moment please. Okay, go ahead and start again.

22 PAULETTE HA: Can you hear me?

23 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Yes.

24 PAULETTE HA: Okay. Greetings esteemed Council
25 Members, my name is Paulette Ha Healy and I am a

1 member of the Citywide Council for Special Education.

2 I thank you for the opportunity to express my
3 concerns as a parent and as a member of the Special
4 Education community.
5

6 We just heard testimony from my fellow panelists
7 on the affects this has had on her son. And with
8 students of District 75 are regressing in an
9 exponential rate in this remote learning environment.

10 Teletherapy has been inconsistent and parents are
11 forced to implement therapy they do not have training
12 for, nor do they have the tools or access to the
13 equipment that would normally be available in therapy
14 sessions at school or have the expertise to know
15 whether the sessions are even being executed
16 properly.

17 Our children are exhibiting behavior issues, such
18 as tantrums, self-harm, seizures, and loss of speech.
19 Not to mention the emotional toll the isolation
20 itself has taken during the quarantine.

21 Our students with developmental delays need hands
22 on face to face therapy which has been impossible to
23 execute during the pandemic and because of that
24 shortfall, our students progress has been arrested
25 and the backward slide will continue well into the

1
2 new school year making the transition back to brick
3 and mortar, a more tumultuous task than further
4 general education counterparts.

5 We are failing our children now in remote
6 learning in this remote learning environment and will
7 continue to fail our children is not an option. Our
8 special education students make up one-fifth of the
9 total number of students enrolled in our school
10 systems yet, are almost always an afterthought when
11 it comes to policy decisions that affect our city's
12 children. I urge the Council to continue supporting
13 our fight for our city's forgotten children.

14 Lastly, I want to thank Council Member Justin
15 Brannan for recognizing the needs of his district and
16 creating a joint committee on Special Education to
17 find solutions to the deficiencies our families have
18 been forced to endure.

19 I urge the Education Committee to please reach
20 out to their constituents within their residing
21 districts and allow parents raising children with
22 special needs a seat at the table.

23 Thank you for all of your support. Thank you for
24 this opportunity. Be well and stay safe.

1
2 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you and next, we
3 will hear from Rosalia.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time will start now.

5 ROSALIA BORJA: Good afternoon. Thank you for
6 the opportunity to testify. My name is Rosalia, I am
7 a hardworking single mother and the afterschool and
8 summer program have helped me a lot. My son is 11
9 years old and my daughter is 9 and both of them are
10 literacy after school program at PS 123 in Brooklyn.
11 The afterschool program is very good for them because
12 it does not only help them with their homework but
13 also teaches them other things like art and dance.

14 Since they work very hard during the school day,
15 their art activities helps them to relief their
16 stress and do something different that they wouldn't
17 get the chance to do otherwise.

18 In my opinion, I really like the summer program
19 because it gives them the opportunity to continue to
20 learn and socialize with other people. Also, since I
21 have to work, this gives me the piece of mind that my
22 children are somewhere safe. They love the different
23 activities, especially the trips that they go on.

24 I understand that COVID-19, it's not good to go
25 outside and have the same kind of program but even if

1
2 it's virtually, it will keep them busy and not to be
3 bored all day instead of playing video games. They
4 will socialize and have communication with other
5 people during their virtual activities.

6 The afterschool program that my children are in
7 is based on the arts and it helps them forget about
8 school and have fun. They have strong relationship
9 with staff and other students in the program. They
10 did not just think of the afterschool and summer
11 staff as their teachers but also as their friends and
12 they would love to be able to continue with the
13 program during the summer.

14 Thank you for listening to my experience and I
15 hope the City Council will strongly consider
16 restoring the funding for summer activities.

17 Thank you.

18 COUNSEL MALCOM BUTEHORN: Thank you. If we
19 inadvertently have missed anyone that would like to
20 testify, please use the Zoom raise hand function now
21 and we will call you in the order your hand was
22 raised.

23 Seeing none, Chair Treyger, we have concluded
24 public testimony for this hearing.

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I just want to close by
3 first of all, acknowledging the incredible work of
4 the Education Committee staff Malcom, Jan, Kalima,
5 Chelsea. I mean, the entire Counsel staff, my staff,
6 my Chief of Staff Anna Scaife and Venessa, they have
7 all worked incredibly hard. I want to thank everyone
8 that testified today and please make sure that if you
9 did not testify, you could still email my office and
10 Council your testimony and I'll just conclude by
11 going back to Joshua's story at the start. You know,
12 the technical glitch you get hearing his sound speaks
13 to some of the challenges we're facing with remote
14 learning but his words about not being a robot.
15 Children are human beings in even in an era of
16 physical distancing, we need to find ways to deepen
17 connections to our children, particularly our most
18 vulnerable, to better meet their needs. And I said
19 this before and I'll say this again, I am deeply
20 worried about those children that were shortchanged
21 before the pandemic and have fallen greatly behind
22 during this pandemic and helping them catch up and
23 helping to stabilize their social emotional academic
24 situation.

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2 And I also you know, give enormous kudos to those
3 at school communities that had a seamless transition
4 and we need to make sure that we do have nuanced
5 approaches to continuing enrichment opportunities.
6 But I just want to be mindful that we don't even know
7 how many kids have not logged on once. We don't even
8 know how many kids have not had a wellness call or
9 check in call.

10 There are kids who want to learn, there are kids
11 who want to do right. There are kids facing enormous
12 challenges right now at home fighting battles that we
13 know nothing about. I just want to tell them that I
14 see you, I hear you, we will not stop fighting for
15 you just because you haven't logged on once or
16 someone hasn't called you or made a connection.

17 And the budget ahead for our school system will
18 determine if the pain, trauma, and loss that they
19 have faced in their schools will be temporary or
20 generational. And so, we have a lot of work to do to
21 truly meet the needs of all of our kids and I thank
22 everyone and my colleagues for their work, their
23 offices. I see Council Member Holden, who has been
24 throughout the entire hearing. I thank you as well to
25 all my colleagues for their great work and service

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and to all the parents and family members and
students, teachers. We truly appreciate and the
Sergeant and the entire Council staff.

And with that, I will adjourn and conclude this
hearing. Thank you. [GAVEL]

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 April 1, 2018