



April 9, 2020

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carranza:

The Covid-19 virus has affected all New York public school students, teachers, families and administrators regardless of borough, community, race, ethnicity, gender or income. With that knowledge, we write as parent advocates at PLACE NYC to recommend conducting an immediate current state assessment of NYC's public school system in order to address and prioritize the pre-existing challenges along with the new challenges resulting from the sudden school closure and transition to remote learning.

The last few weeks have brought enormous change to NYC's 1.2 million public school students and their families. While these changes have highlighted a number of areas that require immediate attention, the changes have also provided us with an opportunity to create solutions and lay the groundwork to improve our education system and enhance all students' ability to learn, thrive, and contribute to our city.

The sudden shift to remote learning clearly demonstrates that our educators and students have the ability to continue to teach and learn while navigating dramatic and unprecedented structural changes--that knowledge can and should be used to inform the bold steps we must take to improve the education of all students as we move forward. However we must remain vigilant of the challenges many students, families, and teachers face, in particular our ELL students, students with disabilities, students in temporary housing, struggling and other at risk students, and families without easy access to the internet or technology. Learning the lessons of our unanticipated and abrupt shift to remote learning in order to improve instruction in the long-term is a vital mandate.

### **Stakeholder Advisory Committee**

We applaud and support the current outreach by the DOE and UFT to stakeholders to gather feedback on a wide range of issues. However, it is crucial that this initiative encompass diverse perspectives from all public school families. Towards that end we ask for either a meeting with Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carranza, or that PLACE NYC be invited to join any such task

force or group assembled to address these pressing education issues. As parent leaders of PLACE NYC, our advocacy for a high quality challenging education for every student will provide an important perspective as a part of these discussions.

### **Immediate Actions Needed**

There are a number of issues that require immediate attention in order to minimize the academic loss and are not limited to the following:

1. Developing remote learning technology platform standards (e.g. video conferencing, devices, software/apps, operating systems, and hardware requirements), including the use and access of peripheral technology (e.g. printers, scanners), along with the requisite technology support & training of school staff and families.
2. Developing a grading policy for the current marking period that allows for flexibility and accommodation recognizing that many students across the learning and socioeconomic spectrum have worked hard and should be recognized for their achievements, while others have experienced challenges due to their individual situations and should not be penalized.
3. Establishing and communicating student learning expectations for the remainder of the school year so that students, parents and teachers can understand the revised promotion requirements and know what to expect at the start of the upcoming school year.
4. Strengthening support services for ELL students and families, students in temporary housing, students with disabilities, and other struggling and at risk students.
5. Publicizing the decision process and key considerations being utilized in determining if and/or when schools will reopen this school year and any data supporting the decision.

In addition to the issues and concerns requiring immediate attention, there are several items that must be addressed before the end of the school year:

1. Expanding the criteria for students to be recommended for summer school. Understanding that the academic achievement gap will grow at an accelerated pace through the remainder of the school year, it will be imperative that more students have additional instruction time prior to the beginning of the next school year. This includes our ELLs, SWD, STH and other students currently below grade level.
2. Creating a strategy to maintain parent engagement once remote learning ends and the new school year begins.
3. Developing academic support services that students had previously received during the school day or after school, including tutoring and social emotional support services. These support services must also be available to Special Education students with IEPs.

While DOE summer activities still remain uncertain and pre-existing programs now being re-evaluated, the summer months must be used to make modifications to existing curriculum to account for the missed learning and to prepare for remedial level instruction.

Because of the varying degrees of rigor, content and expectation now being utilized due to remote learning, it will be even more important that curriculum standards across schools be more aligned. Academic policy will need to be revised, and guidance must be given to schools on aligning curriculum with grade level expectations, with a process established to provide timely feedback to the DOE so that any necessary adjustments can be made.

PLACE NYC is ready and looks forward to collaborative discussions that will help address the broad range of concerns and perspectives of NYC public school families in these uncertain times.

Sincerely,

Yiatin Chu  
Co-President PLACE NYC

Lucas Liu  
Co-President PLACE NYC

CC: Adrienne Austin, Acting Deputy Chancellor for Community Empowerment, Partnerships, and Communications  
Dean Fuleihan, First Deputy Mayor of the City of New York  
Mark Treyger, New York City Council Chair Committee on Education  
Emma Wolfe, Chief of Staff to the Mayor of the City of New York

**About PLACE NYC (<https://www.placenyc.org>)**

PLACE advocates for a rigorous curriculum for all students in all schools, more G&T programs with a focus on neighborhoods currently lacking programs, additional Specialized High Schools to accommodate the overwhelming demand for rigorous academics, and increase awareness and preparation for the availability of SHSAT. PLACE also created Friends of Accelerated Curriculum and Education (Facebook - Friends of Accelerated Curricula and Education in NYC) with over 700 members and growing consisting of parents and supporters of accelerated curricula and accelerated education.