

A Bold Vision for Quality Education

After eight years of promises from a self proclaimed “progressive” administration to end the “tale of two cities,” we have seen how a lack of urgency, plans, and commitment has stifled the critical work of addressing racial inequality. As New York City’s only second Black mayor, and as we are actively navigating a deadly pandemic, the historic nature of this moment cannot be understated. At the same time, we are well aware that people of color, particularly those who are Black, elevated to the highest level of government, also have the burden of “fixing everything” on their shoulders. We understand this same burden will fall on the shoulders of Mayor-Elect Eric Adams, but are hopeful he will be more than a Mayor who talks and doesn’t deliver.

We see points of alignment in the education goals outlined by Eric Adams and those of our coalition. We believe every New York City student deserves an education that is high-quality, transformative, culturally responsive, and provides tools and opportunities for all students to equitably participate in democracy, enter the workforce, and ultimately reach their fullest potential. We believe an Eric Adams administration has a profound opportunity to tackle these issues. We are ready to work together to make that a reality for every New York City student.

We offer the following “Big Ideas” for the Adams administration and an invitation to partner in the actualization of these ideas.

Culturally Responsive Schools

The Department of Education must ensure that all NYC schools use curriculum, pedagogy, assessments, and policies that reflect and respect the histories, cultures, identities, and experiences of NYC students in [every grade, every class, every day](#). All newly aligned curriculum and materials must go beyond the surface level of diversity and be intersectional of race, gender, class, ability, religion and sexuality to truly be culturally responsive.

- Universal Mosaic Curriculum design and implementation that works in tandem with the Black Studies curriculum effort

- Deep and on-going engagement and curriculum co-creation process with parent, students, educators and community members
- Hiring of a Senior Advisor for CRSE to provide clear and on-going leadership for all CRSE efforts across the DOE

Early Childhood Education

Early care and learning includes access to programs for infants and toddlers, preschool, preschool special education and pre-K. The new mayor must ensure that the Department of Education has a streamlined process to approve families who are eligible for subsidy, advertise a comprehensive list of early care and learning providers that includes both center-based and family-based programs, a more streamlined process of enrollment and placement, and ensure access to mental health supports both for the workforce and families.

In addition, the new mayor must ensure that there is access to free and affordable afterschool programs for all students in New York City.

Literacy

One of the most fundamental responsibilities of schools is to teach students to read. Yet, in NYC, less than half of students are reading proficiently, and disparities by race, housing status, disability, and language are alarming. The Department of Education should revamp literacy instruction and intervention so that every child becomes a skilled reader and NYC becomes a national model for literacy development.

- Ensure that the literacy portion of the Universal Mosaic Curriculum is not only culturally responsive, but also firmly grounded in the science of reading, so that every student receives explicit, systematic instruction in foundational literacy skills—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—as outlined in the report of the [National Reading Panel](#).
- Continue the promising Universal Literacy coaching program to train K-2 teachers how to teach reading effectively.

- Provide every K-12th grade student having difficulty with reading with one-to-one or small group support by training current staff in evidence-based approaches, hiring a new corps of interventionists, and including evidence-based literacy support as a component of comprehensive summer programming.

Supportive, Not Penal, Schools

When students in need are met with a policing response instead of care and support, they are further traumatized. New York City can be a leader in the U.S. by investing in healing centered practices that support young people and divesting from practices that criminalize them.

- Fully fund citywide Restorative Justice for all New York city public high schools and middle schools.
- Invest in culturally responsive social emotional support staff, including school counselors and social workers in every school at 1:150 ratio for most schools and 1:50 ratio for high needs schools.
- Eliminate school policing, which includes: disbanding the school safety division and reinvesting in well paid supportive positions that do not require a bachelor's degree, eliminating the youth coordination officer position, and fully divesting from metal-detection equipment, and camera-surveillance technology

Desegregated & Integrated Schools

New York City can implement 21st-century student assignment policies that increase access, promote inclusivity, and actively work to repair the historical harm of segregation by:

- Making permanent pandemic admissions reform policies related to screens and G&T
- Hiring a Chief Integration Officer
- Implementing the School Diversity Advisory Group (SDAG) policies and goals

- Fully funding local law 225 established in 2019, that mandates the establishment of diversity working groups in each community school district by 2024

Fully & Equitably Funded Schools

[Fair Student Funding Formula \(FSF\)](#) was first introduced in 2007 to achieve three goals: 1) increase equity while preserving stability, 2) improve student achievement, and 3) make school budgets more transparent. We believe these goals have not been met. In order to create a more equitable funding for NYC schools, we recommend the new administration:

- Implement the [recommendations by the advocates on the Fair Student Funding Task Force](#) that was convened by former City Council Education Committee Chair Mark Treyger, and consisted of advocates from our coalition.
- Properly allocate Foundation Aid funding increases to Contracts for Excellence to reduce class size, as ordered by the State's highest court in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity settlement.
- Develop an equitable mechanism to distribute PTA funds across all schools based on needs.

Inclusive Schools

Education policy in NYC has historically marginalized students across various identity markers: students in racially and economically marginalized communities, students with disabilities, English Language Learners, immigrant and undocumented students, students in temporary housing, students in foster care, students involved in the juvenile or criminal justice system, and overage and undercredited students.

- Investing in immigrant-serving community-based organization (CBO) partnerships in districts with immigrant populations that are often hard to reach, to provide culturally responsive enrichment programs and information in families' home languages.

- Establishing universal afterschool, Saturday, and summer programs, especially for students with disabilities, students in temporary housing, students in foster care, English Language Learners, and students with limited financial means.
- Guaranteeing transportation so students in foster care can remain in their schools
- Hiring 150 new shelter-based community coordinators who can help homeless families navigate the school system, address barriers to attendance

Engaged Schools

For our schools and school systems to function well, students and parents must be at the decision making table at all levels. They bring unique and critical perspectives that are lacking in the current decision making processes.

- Engage youth in decision making at all levels by making student positions on the Panel for Educational Policy and Citywide & Community Education Councils voting members
- Ensure School Leadership Teams are fully functional and engaged in collaborative decision making in every school
- Develop a blueprint for reaching out to and elevating the voices of historically marginalized parents. Such a blueprint should address language access and creating spaces safe for parent participation.

Truly Public Schools

Privately-run charter schools in New York City are already costing the Department of Education more than \$2.1 billion a year, and rising, as they continue to expand to new grade levels. In addition, the city is required to pay for private

space for all new and expanding charter schools if they are not given space in our already overcrowded public schools – the only district in the state and the nation that is so obligated. On average, charter schools enroll far fewer special needs students and English Language Learners than other public schools. The new mayor must ensure that public schools are not disadvantaged because of charter schools. A new clear and bold position must be taken publicly that the city is opposed to any measure that hurts the one million students in public schools. This position must include:

- Monitoring the “revolving door” of students in charter schools. Pushing students with challenging behaviors has been a long standing practice of many of NYC’s charter chains. Some of the fastest growing charter chains, including Success Academy, have been [sued repeatedly](#) for [pushing out students](#) and violating their civil rights, especially children with disabilities. This must stop.
- Opposition to increasing the charter school cap for New York City
- Opposition to increases of charter school tuition payments
- Active advocacy around overhauling the mandate for New York city to pay rent or provide space for charter schools

If the Legislature allows charters to continue to proliferate, our public schools will be even more concentrated with the highest needs students in less space and with fewer resources to educate them. What is tragic is how, unlike charter schools, the city’s most popular and successful public schools are prevented from expanding or replicating by insufficient space and funding, which would be further diminished if the charter cap were raised. As a city and a state, we must focus on supporting and improving our public schools, rather than encourage the growth of privately-managed charter schools that pull resources from them.

RJPS

We are members of *New Yorkers for Racially Just Public Schools (RJPS)*, a grassroots coalition of over 50 community based, youth, parent, and educator advocacy organizations, service providers, elected parent leaders, and university partners working to ensure the city and state education budget as well as policy decisions regarding schooling are centered in racial and educational justice. We believe every New York City student deserves an education that is high-quality, transformative, culturally responsive, diverse, and provides tools and opportunities for all students to equitably participate in democracy, enter the workforce, and ultimately reach their fullest potential.