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**NEW YORK CITY LAUNCHES 'SONYC,' LARGEST AFTER-SCHOOL EXPANSION FOR  
MIDDLE SCHOOL IN CITY'S HISTORY**

*Number of available seats will nearly double to more than 78,000 this school year*

*Applications for elementary and middle school students available at [nyc.gov/afterschool](http://nyc.gov/afterschool)*

**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio, Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña, and Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Commissioner Bill Chong today launched School's Out New York City (SONYC), the City's largest-ever expansion of afterschool for middle school students. The number of seats has nearly doubled to more than 71,000, and with the addition of Department of Education District 75 and non-public school sites over the coming months, the total number will exceed 78,000 during the course of the school year. Applications for City-funded middle school and elementary school after-school programs are ongoing and available at [nyc.gov/afterschool](http://nyc.gov/afterschool).

During a visit to MS 255 Salk School of Science in Manhattan, Mayor de Blasio, Chancellor Fariña, and Commissioner Chong met with students participating in a music video club operated by Manhattan Youth, one of more than 100 community-based organizations that are part of the City's after-school expansion for middle schoolers.

The unprecedented expansion is part of the de Blasio administration's plan to transform public education in New York City, including Pre-K for All, the creation of new community schools, and a historic contract with New York City's teachers. The after-school expansion will reduce inequality across all communities and provide sixth, seventh and eighth graders with safe, high-quality learning and recreational opportunities during an especially challenging time in their lives.

"Learning shouldn't stop when the school bell rings," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "With today's transformational expansion of after-school programs to more middle school students than ever in our city's history, we're making headway in providing our young adults with an engaging and supportive environment that will keep our kids off the streets and out of trouble between the hours of 3 and 6 PM. Middle school is often a make-or-break time in an adolescent's life—and we're determined to use all tools at our disposal to expand learning opportunities for the future shapers of our city."

"Some children discover their love of learning in a classroom. But for others, it's a dance class or a science experiment in an after-school activity that lights the spark. This expansion of after-school will lift up tens of thousands of our young people, not just for a few hours each afternoon, but in the rest of their lives as well. We are going to have a better chance of keeping students out of trouble and on the right track because of these new programs," said **Deputy Mayor Richard Buery**.

“Adolescence is such a critical and challenging period for our students, and enriching and engaging after-school programs give them the support they need during this time. Not only do high-quality after-school options keep our students safe and productive during afternoons, they also have a real positive impact on classroom learning. This historic expansion of after-school is going to open new doors for our middle-schoolers, and bring us closer to our goal of meeting the whole needs of every child,” said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña**.

“These high-quality SONYC programs come at a time in a young person’s development when they become ‘consumers’ and make their own life choices about what—and how—they learn. It is our responsibility to offer youth positive programming that is engaging, educational and fun, so they can make the transition from early adolescence to becoming responsible young adults,” said **DYCD Commissioner Bill Chong**.

“The middle school expansion program may be the most important investment in youth development and education by an American city in recent memory,” said **Theseus Roche, Director of After-School Programs at Manhattan Youth**. “Manhattan Youth is grateful to Mayor de Blasio and DYCD for creating and expanding the SONYC program. We are honored to be part of it, and thrilled to be able to serve more than 1,000 middle school students this fall.”

The launch of SONYC, by the numbers:

- \$145 million in new after-school funding (FY15)
- More than 34,000 new middle school after-school seats will be available this school year
- More than 78,000 seats to be available this school year nearly doubles 44,000 last year
- 271 new SONYC middle school programs – bringing total to 562 citywide
- Enhancements include programs being open five days per week for 36 weeks during the school year
- Price-per-participant increase to \$3,000 (higher for programs serving students with special needs) will cover additional hours and enable providers to hire and retain qualified staff and provide high-quality programming.

“After a summer of planning, the Greater Ridgewood Youth Council is over-the-edge excited about the start of the SONYC initiative. With the support of DYCD, DOE, DOH and the Mayor’s Office, it is ‘all systems go to launch’ of our innovative after-school program for nearly 1,000 students at 10 locations. Our principals are totally supportive, teachers are excited to expand on school day learning, and our students are ready to blast off,” said **Bob Monahan, President, Greater Ridgewood Youth Council**.

“LeAp’s award-winning after-school program has truly impacted the students and families of CIS 22 in the Bronx over the years. Our young people have made huge strides in many artistic, academic and personal ways, and we are very proud of them. Now, with the continued support of DYCD and the Mayor’s after-school initiative, SONYC, we are very excited to be able to bring more and even stronger programming to our students and the community in a safe and productive environment,” said **Jim Pugliese, Afterschool Supervising Director, LeAp**.

“The children are so excited to be coming to our Children’s Aid SONYC program at I.S. 61 Staten Island, and parents are extremely happy for all the wonderful things their children will be doing in such a creative and safe place,” said **Ilene Pappert, Goodhue Center Director, The Children’s Aid Society**.

“We are thrilled that New York City is taking the lead in investing in our middle school youth through SONYC. The initiative creates a safe space for youth to discover untapped potential during a key time in their socio-emotional development,” said **Laura Paris, Director of the Arts & Literacy Program, Coalition for Hispanic Family Services**.

“Afterschool gives us a safe place to be when the streets can seem scary. It feels like a family to me,” said **Justin**, who attends 8<sup>th</sup> grade at IS 230 in Jackson Heights, Queens. Justin’s classmate, **Stevan**, added, “The after-school program has been my favorite part about school. I couldn’t wait for this new year to start with SONYC.”

## **About COMPASS**

The newly-renamed Comprehensive After-School System of NYC (COMPASS NYC) comprises more than 800 programs serving young people enrolled in grades K-12. Through its network of providers, COMPASS NYC offers high-quality programs with a strong balance of academics, recreation, enrichment, and cultural activities to support and strengthen the overall development of young people. Programs are offered at no cost to families and are strategically located in public and private schools, community centers, religious institutions, public housing, and recreational facilities throughout the City.

## **About SONYC**

COMPASS NYC’s middle school model, renamed SONYC (pronounced “sonic”), serves as a pathway to success for youth in sixth, seventh and eighth grades. Structured like activity clubs, SONYC offers young people a choice in how they spend their time, with opportunities in leadership, academics, arts, physical fitness, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), and literacy. Activities range from basketball, fitness, volleyball and tennis to dance, culinary/chef, fashion and shoe design, service learning, and homework help. The City itself becomes a classroom, through field trips and instruction outside of the traditional educational setting.

## **About the Transition to High School Program (THS)**

The COMPASS NYC Transition to High School Program (THS) is designed to help incoming high school ninth graders navigate their new surroundings with targeted academic and social and emotional supports, and advocacy within the school community. Research shows that when freshmen get off track, they are more likely to drop out than finish high school.

For more information on applying for City-funded after-school programs, visit [nyc.gov/afterschool](http://nyc.gov/afterschool), or call 311 or DYCD Youth Connect at 1-800-246-4646.

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