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**EVALUATION OF MAYOR DE BLASIO'S UNPRECEDENTED  
INVESTMENT IN MIDDLE SCHOOL AFTERSCHOOL SHOWS 98  
PERCENT OF SURVEYED PARENTS SAY CHILDREN LIKE THE  
PROGRAM**

*Principals, teachers and staff report strong programs, engaged students,  
positive results from SONYC expansion in schools across city*

*Nearly all families say they would recommend programs to other families*

**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Department of Youth and Community Development Commissioner Bill Chong today released the findings of the Year One Evaluation of SONYC (School's Out New York City), part of the City's expanded middle school afterschool initiative. The study shows the Mayor's historic \$145 million first year investment in 2014 worked to triple SONYC enrollment and dramatically increase educational and recreational opportunities for New York City sixth through eighth graders. Ninety-eight percent of parents surveyed reported their sons and daughters like coming to the program, and nearly all of the families surveyed said they would recommend SONYC to other families.

"Today's report shows that kids are learning—and they like it. We're growing tomorrow's leaders, keeping kids safe and busy while parents are at work, building their confidence, and closing in on the achievement gap in communities across our city. And this is only year one," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

"The de Blasio administration has made afterschool programming a cornerstone of our approach to achieving equity and excellence in education. We have kept our commitment to offer an afterschool program seat to every middle schooler. And under the leadership of DYCD Commissioner Bill Chong, SONYC has been a resounding success. We've doubled the overall number of middle school students served just two years ago, and that's thousands more parents who can go to work or pursue their education, knowing that their children are learning, having fun and making friends in a safe environment," said **Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives Richard Buery**.

"Middle school students are in a critical stage of their social and educational development and have specific expectations of their afterschool experience. These findings are testament that our

quality SONYC programs offer diverse and engaging learning opportunities, provide students with safe and welcoming environments, and result in positive outcomes. I thank Mayor de Blasio and his staff for their commitment to expand SONYC programs, which offer our young people a true pathway to success,” said **DYCD Commissioner Bill Chong**.

“Today’s report confirms what I hear from families across the City – afterschool programs work and provide students with safe and enriching environments. Learning shouldn’t stop when the bell rings and providing rigorous and exciting afterschool programming is essential to raising student achievement and ensuring students are ready for college and meaningful careers,” said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña**.

The findings represent data from 2,300 hours of program observation, more than 2,000 youth surveys, nearly 1,000 family surveys and 7,000 hours of interviews from a cohort of 37 SONYC programs that participated in site visits during the first year of the two-year review conducted by the American Institute for Research (AIR), a behavioral and social science research, practice, and policy organization.

The AIR report also shows:

- Program quality is high, and school and program staff cited program activities as a key strength.
- Program and school staff reported improvements in youth outcomes, particularly in their social and emotional development and leadership skills.
- Youth attended a total of 13 million hours in SONYC programming, with each participant spending, on average, 236 hours in programming during the year.
- SONYC programs encourage all youth, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

To view highlights of the SONYC Year One Evaluation, click [here](#).

Prior to the expansion, DYCD and the Department of Education combined served an estimated 56,369 middle schoolers in 239 schools and community centers in the 2013-14 school year. In the first year of the middle school expansion (2014-2015), the City served 111,448 young people in programs operated by both DYCD and DOE through various initiatives. The initiative with the largest expansion was SONYC, DYCD’s afterschool programs in public middle schools, community centers, and other locations. Enhancements included programs being open five days per week for 36 weeks during the school year, and a higher price per participant to cover the additional hours and enable providers to hire and retain qualified staff and provide high quality programming

Middle school can be an especially challenging time for students, parents and teachers, with young people undergoing the extraordinary changes of early adolescence, and an especially valuable time when young people can experience amazing growth when provided opportunities. Afterschool programming helps develop new skills and interests; prepares students for high school, graduation, college and beyond; encourages young people to pursue their passions; keeps

youth out of trouble between the hours of 3 PM and 6 PM; and reduces the achievement gap among diverse communities.

SONYC programming offers diverse opportunities to middle schoolers, including STEM robotics, 3D modeling, urban agriculture, fitness, fashion and design, podcast production, coding, animation, and filmmaking and theatre arts.

“Public education simply isn’t complete without afterschool programs. Afterschool programs enhance students’ work in the classroom by pairing creative recreation with experiential learning, and they strengthen families by affording parents and guardians more working hours. But more to the point, they’re a crucial opportunity for every student to pursue interests outside curricula and lesson plans, becoming a more complete person. Every student deserves that opportunity,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**.

“I applaud Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Chong on the positive results attained in the Year One Evaluation of SONYC. With some shared features of my Beacon Schools bill that is before the State Senate, this initiative supports the evidence that a child’s development does not end when the school day is over, and that the power of supplemental learning opportunities and safe spaces is essential to student development. It is critically important that we create safe spaces for our students and their families – both after school and on weekends. I intend to support the City’s success here through actively advocating for my legislation in the Senate that would make all New York City public schools Beacon Schools that afford all students, of all grade levels, high quality afterschool programs, as well as secure and resource-rich spaces on the weekends,” said **State Senator Kevin Parker**.

“The results of this report prove once again the importance of properly funding afterschool programs in New York City. By providing SONYC’s diverse and exciting programs to our youths, our City is ensuring that they are acquiring the necessary academic, social and leadership skills that will guarantee their future success. It also allows parents to focus on their work endeavors without worrying about their children’s safety. I thank Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Chong for investing in our children’s future,” said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera**.

“The success of the SONYC program is no surprise to me, as it equips youth with supplemental enrichment experiences, and continues to provide them with a safe haven where they can grow academically, socially and physically. For this reason, it is imperative that we remain committed to opportunities of this nature which strengthen and build our youth. We must continue to advocate for our children, by supporting programs like this which establish access to favorable methods and aid in their road to success,” said **State Assembly Member Diana C. Richardson**.

“This report proves that the SONYC expansion has improved the lives of thousands of students and their family members. High-quality afterschool and summer programs are invaluable tools to close the achievement gap and inspire a love for learning in our children. We hope that the City and State continue to invest in this programming that supports our youth as they explore their passions and form lasting friendships,” said **State Assembly Member Robert Rodriguez**.

“Afterschool programs are a great investment in our children, and I’m pleased to see such promising findings in the Year One Evaluation of SONYC confirming that these programs are worthwhile for our youth. When we provide our young people with positive outlets, we are helping to ensure that they stay on a positive life path. I’d like to commend Mayor Bill de Blasio and the Department of Youth and Community Development for investing in our youth,” said **Council Member Mathieu Eugene, Chair of the Youth Services Committee.**

“These findings are encouraging and demonstrate what a substantial investment in public education and afterschool programs can achieve. SONYC provides middle school students with the safe space they need in order to learn and work collaboratively. At the same time, the program helps parents make ends meet by affording them more time on the job. I look forward to continuing to work with Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Chong to further expand and enhance this successful initiative,” said **Council Member Daniel Dromm, Chair of the Council Education Committee.**

“As the former director of an afterschool program, I know the crucial support system they are for working families and the essential services they provide for students to succeed in school. These findings attest to the effectiveness of SONYC and are the kind of exemplary results this City strives for. I applaud Mayor de Blasio for his wise investment and look forward to supporting more programming to uplift New York City’s youth,” said **Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, Chair of the Council Committee on Finance.**

“One year later, it is clear that increased investment in afterschool programs for our middle-schoolers is already paying dividends, from which these young people will reap the benefits – not only later on in their education, but for the rest of their adult lives. I thank Mayor de Blasio for his commitment to this afterschool program that has shown clear benefits for educators, parents, and students,” said **Council Member Margaret Chin.**

“As our youth mature into adulthood, it is critical that we provide affordable programming year-round that will support their growth and development. School’s Out New York City (SONYC) offers middle schoolers an incredible opportunity to explore their interests through arts and sports, while nurturing new friendships amongst a diverse group of their peers. Our children are our great resources, and we must continue to invest in the initiatives that extend student learning beyond their classrooms to strengthen their capacity to thrive as scholars, leaders, and young professionals,” said **Council Member Laurie A. Cumbo.**

“This study shows what many parents have known all along; afterschool programs keep our youth off the streets while giving them the opportunity to learn and participate in extracurricular activities that keep them healthy. Working families appreciate the SONYC program as well because it not only saves them money, it gives them ease at work knowing their child is in a safe and productive environment. I look forward to continuing to work with Mayor Bill de Blasio and his administration to enroll even more students in this successful program,” said **Council Member I. Daneek Miller.**

“Investments in afterschool programs have had a resounding impact on our students. While it was never a secret that afterschool programs improve student engagement, it took the political

courage and commitment of Mayor de Blasio and his team to make this a reality. Kids are now more interested in school and are learning well after instruction ends. I cannot say enough about how great this initiative is for the future of our city,” said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez**.

“Research shows that afterschool programs build students’ confidence, expand learning opportunities and help prepare students for future educational endeavors. The findings of the evaluation show that the Mayor’s investment in middle school afterschool programs is paying off, meeting the needs of young students and affirms what research tells us. Hopefully these programs will keep growing and enrolling more middle school students throughout the City,” said **Council Member Ritchie Torres**.

“I commend Mayor Bill de Blasio and Commissioner Bill Chong on the success of the expanded middle school afterschool initiative. An engaged youth is instrumental to the success and safety of this city. Providing adolescents with outlets to enrich their educational and recreational opportunities act as a deterrent to other nonproductive, and at worst, criminal activities. This is a step in the right direction to combating the various issues communities all over the city face,” said **Council Member Jumaane D. Williams**.

“How hopeful it is to see the tremendous results of our leaders proactively supporting youth and families in our city. Thank you Mayor de Blasio and the City of New York for thinking outside the box and investing in our future through quality, accessible afterschool programming,” said **Rev. Dr. Amy Butler, Senior Minister of the Riverside Church in Manhattan**.

“SONYC is a great example of a public investment in afterschool taken to scale. For a relatively young initiative serving so many youth, the implementation is impressive. It’s likely that the program infrastructure put in place by the City allowed for the program to achieve such a high level of quality at a fast pace,” said **Deborah A. Moroney, Ph.D., Principal Researcher and Director at the American Institute for Research**.

“As a result of SONYC, Sports & Arts in Schools Foundation (SASF) has seen our middle school participants significantly improve their daily school attendance and grades, become more confident and better students, and more prepared now for success in high school,” said **Jim O’Neill, Chief Executive Officer of Sports & Arts in Schools Foundation**, the largest provider of SONYC programming.

Students in the Xposure program at Satellite West Middle School in Brooklyn produced “Work Hard,” a video about financial literacy that was nominated for a New York Emmy Award this year.

“Xposure is all about innovative life skills programming. Prior to the City’s expanded middle school afterschool initiative, the youth of New York City had limited access to our non-traditional programs. As a result of this initiative, we are now in schools throughout the City and have literally been able to change lives. We aren’t just grooming them to be future leaders; for them, leadership begins today. Xposure students are tapping into their full potential and achieving milestones that, until now, are unheard of in the afterschool arena. This initiative and

DYCD have enabled thousands of otherwise overlooked youth to be reached,” said **J. Marcelle Lashley, Chief Operating Officer of Xposure Foundation, Inc.**

“Xposure’s pretty dope because you get access to stuff that you don’t see every day. Last year in Xposure, I was in a show called ‘Fun Finance TV,’ where we learned that if you put money in the bank you can earn interest. Xposure even helped us open savings accounts and invest in stocks. This year, I wrote a rap called ‘If I Were President’ that is on iTunes and YouTube. Maybe one day President Obama will hear it!” said **Zachary Ramos of the Bronx, a sixth grader at PS 212 Xposure Multicultural Magnet School.**

As part of the SONYC culinary arts program, the Institute for Culinary Education recently hosted DYCD’s annual “Recipe Rescue,” during which youth participants modified a family or existing recipe and “rescued” it by creating a healthier option.

“SONYC has been an exciting way to learn about cooking and where my food comes from. During the Recipe Rescue competition, I learned how to prepare and cook food myself with the help of professional chefs – something I wouldn’t have had the chance to do without my afterschool youth food justice program,” said Recipe Rescue middle school champion **Alyssa Castro, a sixth grader at Liberty Middle School in Brooklyn.**

“We are incredibly proud of Alyssa Castro for her achievement and she is a prime example of why we love being a part of the SONYC family. Participants like Alyssa are more engaged in school, developing confidence and exploring new interests. At Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, we are seeing the positive results in our middle school youth every day, and are grateful for the funding that has expanded middle school afterschool programs,” said **Yasmin Schwartz, M.Ed, Program Director of Liberty After School.**

"SONYC helps our youth with social skills, smaller group learning, physical activities, and outside exposure to help ensure our children are well rounded,” said **Corey Terry, Executive Director of Our Brothers Guardian.**

“SONYC bridges the gap between the school and home. Through Youth and Tennis Academy our scholars develop a sense of organization and discipline that can be utilized on the court as well as in the classroom to become the youth leaders they are destined to be,” said **Bill Briggs, Executive Director of Youth and Tennis Academy.**

“On behalf of District 23 Community Education Council, we are very happy with the SONYC After School Program for our Middle School students. This program has given our Middle School students an opportunity to have something to do after school. It gives the students an opportunity on how to network with other Middle School students and how to collaborate with their peers,” said **Melanie Mendonca, President of Borough Appointee Community Educational Council District 23.**

“SONYC provides an academic and creative means for our young scholars to be surrounded in a positive environment which will help them build their own legacy,” said **Dorita Clarke, NYS Committee Woman, 29th Assembly District.**

"I am glad to know that more of our middle school students are taking advantage of the SONYC program. I commend our Mayor for making this program available to our middle school students," said **Leora Keith, President Tompkins Houses Resident Association, Inc.**

"It is great that the Mayor is investing in our youth. Education provides the best return -dollar for dollar," said **Mossa Jones, Assistant Coordinator of College Prep Program, Family Services Network of New York, Inc.**

"At an age when young people find everything boring and it can be easy to find the wrong thing to do after school, SONYC after-school programs keep 6th , 7th, and 8th graders active and entertained. Parents can be assured that while they may have to work, their child is having fun and learning with their peers in a safe place. SONYC programs should be available for all students anywhere in the city," said **Susan Seinfeld, Queens Community Board 11 District Manager.**

"My child feels excited about afterschool because each day she is learning something new," said **one parent** surveyed for the evaluation. Students were also asked for open-ended input, and most frequently used words like "safe," "happy" and "fun" in describing their experiences.

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