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PRE-K HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE: CITY ANNOUNCES LATEST STEPS TO ENSURE EVERY PRE-K FOR ALL SITE MEETS HIGHEST STANDARDS

With three weeks until first day of school, all priority health violations have been addressed

Every site subjected to multi-point health and safety inspections, Department of Education walks every classroom before opening day

NEW YORK—With just over three weeks until the first day of school, City officials announced the latest steps to ensure every Pre-K for All classroom meets the highest health and safety standards. Expanding on last year’s regime, each program receives multiple on-site inspections before opening day, and their readiness is scrutinized by agencies including the Department of Investigations. As of August 13, there are zero unresolved health violations in the most serious category at any Pre-K for All site.

“This is an opening day almost two years in the making. There is no higher priority for this administration than the health and safety of every child entrusted to our care. We have had inspectors and support staff on the ground all summer long to ensure every program meets the very highest standards, and we do not allow any program to open its doors unless we are convinced it is ready for children. We’re proud to say we are on course for a smooth and successful year,” said **Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives Richard Buery**.

In this, the first year of universal access to Pre-K for All, children will receive instruction at 1,150 NYC Early Education Centers and 700 public schools.

Each new site has been subject to a rigorous approval process and inspection by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Buildings and Fire Department. Returning sites receive annual inspections, with follow-up inspections if violations are discovered. The Department of Education conducts walk-throughs of all pre-K sites in the lead up to the first day of school with staff trained to recognize not only educational preparedness, but health and safety concerns that can be immediately referred to a sister agency for follow-up. In addition, the Department of Investigations checks all proposed Pre-K for All providers, organizations affiliated with the proposed providers, and the providers’ corporate principals against DOI’s internal Case Management System (“CMS”) to ensure their integrity.

To deliver on this oversight, additional staff for health, safety and quality control were dedicated in the adopted budget. This year’s budget provided an additional \$1.5 million to the Health Department to boost its early education and childcare quality control team by 26 inspectors to a total of 69 staff. The Fire Department now has 55 inspectors devoted to pre-K, the Department of Design and Construction has assigned nine staff, and the Department of Buildings has a seven-member team dedicated to pre-K with additional support staff throughout the year. The Department of Education has also increased its staff at the Division of Early Childhood Education to 326 total, including instructional coaches to monitor and improve teaching quality as well as field staff to oversee each pre-K site.

“The safety and security of our students is always our top priority and we’ve left no stone unturned in ensuring that every pre-K site is ready for the first day of school – both in its ability to give our four-year-olds the high-

quality educational foundation they need to thrive in kindergarten and beyond, and in meeting our high safety and health standards,” said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña**.

“We are excited that thousands of children will have the opportunity to attend pre-K this year,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. “We want every program to meet our high standards for safety, and with our partner agencies, we will continue our efforts to be transparent and ensure that children are healthy and safe while they are in our care.”

“The FDNY is deeply committed to the safety of every student and teacher in our city,” said **Fire Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro**. “We’re very proud of our work with the Mayor’s Office, the Department of Education and numerous city agencies in last year’s successful launch of Universal Pre-K, and we’re again collaborating with our partner agencies to make sure all our city’s children have a safe place to learn come September.”

“We’re thrilled that through ACS’s EarlyLearn NYC program we will serve more than 11,000 four year olds in pre-K classes,” said **ACS Commissioner Gladys Carrion**. “We are proud to be part of this unprecedented expansion. Health and safety are our top priorities and we are excited to welcome our incoming pre-k youngsters.”

“As part of the Mayor’s historic expansion of pre-kindergarten to allow every child in New York City the opportunity to attend a program, the Department reviewed over 500 sites for building code compliance,” said **Buildings Commissioner Rick Chandler**. “Parents should feel assured that after a thorough review, all of these sites were determined to be safe. The Department will continue periodic inspections as part of an annual program to ensure the safety of our classrooms.”

“By conducting thorough checks of potential pre-kindergarten providers at the outset, and providing the facts to our partner agencies to eliminate bad actors, we’re both protecting the integrity of this essential City program and safeguarding the health and well-being of thousands of New York City’s children. The value of front-end prevention cannot be overstated – and its effect on this program further illustrates the importance of DOI’s work in weeding out fraud and corruption in City government,” said **Department of Investigation Commissioner Mark G. Peters**.

Parents can review their program’s health and safety history on the new [Child Care Connect site](#).

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