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PLEDGING STRONGER PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES ‘SCHOOL RENEWAL PROGRAM’

City investing \$150 million to transform 94 struggling schools

All 94 schools will become Community Schools, provide one-hour extra of instruction each day, launch after-school programs, strengthen family engagement, and receive extra professional training for teachers

Schools and leadership will be held accountable for results

NEW YORK—In a speech before hundreds of parents and community leaders, Mayor Bill de Blasio unveiled the *School Renewal Program*, a new strategy to turn around New York City’s most challenged schools.

The *School Renewal Program* will fundamentally change the direction of and accelerate progress in 94 struggling schools, in stark contrast with the old approach of simply closing or phasing out schools. Each Renewal School will transform into a Community School, knitting together new services that support children’s families, as well as their mental health and physical well-being. Each Renewal School will provide an extra hour each day of extended instruction and could offer additional after-school, weekend, and summer learning opportunities, as needed. And each will receive additional resources for academic intervention and professional development to create a better learning environment for students.

The plan will invest \$150 million to fundamentally build each school’s education capacity across the elements of the Chancellor’s Capacity Framework: rigorous instruction, supportive environment, collaborative teachers, effective school leadership, strong family-community ties, and trust.

The Department of Education will develop tailored implementation plans, closely track every school’s progress, and hold schools accountable to meeting strict goals over the next three years. Schools that do not meet targets for each academic year would face a leadership and faculty change, as needed, and possible reorganization.

“We believe in strong public schools for every child. Getting there means moving beyond the old playbook and investing the time, energy and resources to partner with communities and turn struggling schools around. We’re going to lift up students at nearly one hundred of our most challenged schools. We’ll give them the tools, the leadership, and the support they need to succeed—and we’ll hold them accountable for delivering higher achievement,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

“Today marks an unprecedented commitment to deliver for our schools that need extra support, and I know this will translate into real improvements in student outcomes,” said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña**. “With the right leadership, rigorous instruction, community partnerships, family engagement, and ongoing support, every school can be great. We will ensure our school communities are anchored in trust, and with the cooperation of all major stakeholders, we will support our schools—our students deserve no less, and I’m determined to get this right.”

Among the 94 schools participating in the *School Renewal Program*, 43 are located in the Bronx, with 27 in Brooklyn, 12 in Manhattan, and 12 in Queens. The 94 schools include schools that were identified by the State as Priority or Focus Schools and have demonstrated low academic achievement for each of the past three years, ranking in the bottom 25 percent of City schools on Math and ELA state exam scores or graduation rates, and showed limited capacity for improvement with a rating on their most recent Quality Review of “proficient” or below.

The research-based Community School model has a proven track record of improving academic achievement. It provides vital mental health and social services and engages families and community as partners in students' education, as part of a holistic approach towards elevating educational outcomes. Based on individual circumstances and challenges, each of the 94 schools will be matched to one or more community-based organizations and a full-time resource coordinator, who will organize the delivery of resources like optometrists, dentists, mentors, and mental health professionals.

In addition to adopting the Community School model, each school will offer one hour of extended time each day for student learning. Additional supports could include more after-school, weekend, and summer programming.

Each school will develop its own *School Renewal Plan* by Spring 2015, in partnership with its school leadership team and school community.

Aggressive Supports and Reforms for 94 Low-Performing Schools

Each school-specific *School Renewal Plan* will outline the school's approach to transforming into a Community School and offering extended time, as well as feature the following supports and reforms:

- Additional resources, such as academic intervention specialists, guidance counselors, social workers, small group instruction and individualized plans to meet the academic and emotional needs of every student
- Extensive professional learning and development for school staff, including intensive coaching for principals
- Enhanced oversight from superintendents who all recently completed a rigorous interview process
- Frequent visits from DOE trained staff to provide feedback and closely monitor progress

Additional targeted supports tailored to each school, based on its individual needs, may include:

- Modified curriculum to maximize school improvement
- New master and model teachers who can share their craft with other educators at the school
- Operational support, enabling principals to focus on supporting their teachers to ensure rigorous classroom instruction
- Additional resources for school safety and social service programs designed to address the specific identified needs of the student population

Accountability and Transparency in the School Renewal Program

The 94 struggling schools will be expected to meet clear and strict benchmarks in their first three years under the program.

The goals for the coming years are:

- 2014–2015
 - Each school must develop and put in place a *School Renewal Plan* for transformation by Spring 2015
- 2015–2016
 - Each school must meet concrete milestones defined in its *School Renewal Plan* and improve on targeted elements of the capacity framework, as identified in the needs assessment
 - Each school must demonstrate measurable improvement in attendance and teacher retention
- 2016–2017
 - Each school must demonstrate significant improvement in academic achievement
 - Each school must demonstrate continued improvement on targeted elements of the capacity framework

While the *School Renewal Program* is intended to provide holistic supports and services needed to turn low-performing schools around, schools that do not meet their benchmarks will face consequences, including changes to leadership and faculty of the school, as needed, and/or possible reorganization of the school.

Possible modes of reorganization include combining schools, splitting large schools into smaller academies, or closing and replacing schools. School reorganization will only occur when necessary to best meet the needs of students and the school community.

“For the past 12 years, New York City’s ‘answer’ for struggling schools was simple: warehouse our neediest students, starve their schools of support, and then close their schools, if they didn’t miraculously turn around. It was a political press release, not an educational solution. As a teacher, if you see a struggling student, it is your job to come up with a plan to help that child. You don’t throw that student out of your class. It is refreshing that New York City is finally willing to clean up this mess and take responsibility to help schools instead of rushing to close them,” said **Michael Mulgrew, President of the United Federation of Teachers.**

“Nurturing local schools through the School Renewal Program is like nurturing the heart and soul of the whole surrounding community,” said **Ernest Logan, president of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators.** “It is just common sense to support and improve individual schools in ways that speak to their unique populations and situations and to enlist the greater school community to help with this enlightened effort. This initiative is consistent with the Chancellor’s philosophy of collaboration over competition, and it reflects the deeply held values of most of our school leaders.”

“Based on our experience with a pilot community learning project, we are encouraged that bringing support services into troubled schools will allow educators to dedicate more time and energy to teaching, while the social, emotional, and health care needs of students and their families are attended to by others,” said **Kathryn Wylde, President & CEO of the Partnership for New York City.** “This approach of engaging the whole community in helping struggling schools makes a lot of sense.”

“Earlier this year, working with Mayor de Blasio, we were finally able to achieve my dream of fully funded statewide universal pre-K. And now, the Mayor has put forth yet another important plan to transform struggling schools and give all our children a chance to succeed. This is the kind of visionary thinking Assembly Democrats have been advocating for years in order to level the playing field by providing resources and support for families and children. I look forward to working with the Mayor and City officials, so that we can make our schools the best they can possibly be,” said **Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver.**

“Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña are to be commended for a plan to allow challenged schools to be renewed. It is important that schools be given the resources and the assistance to renew their commitment to students, parents, teachers, administrators and communities. This plan is a balanced attempt to do that. I look forward to working with NYC DOE on making sure that these opportunities are available and properly funded as this important program moves forward. Chancellor Fariña has the expertise and Mayor de Blasio the commitment to make this a success. Our children deserve the best help we can give them,” said **Catherine Nolan, Chair of the State Assembly Education Committee and the parent of a New York City public school student.**

“Our students are the future of our city, and we must make sure we are educating and meeting the unique needs of all of them,” said **City Council Education Committee Chairperson Daniel Dromm.** “The School Renewal Program reflects a commitment to students in all our schools, engaging school communities, educators, and experts and providing necessary supports to turn schools around. New York City schools must do whatever it takes, so that all students are learning in the classroom and thriving.”

The *School Renewal Program* is partially underway at 23 schools, and all 94 schools will develop their intensive, school-specific plans by this spring. The schools will be expected to employ the community schools model for the beginning of the 2015–2016 school year.

Additionally, beginning in the 2015–2016 school year, the DOE will consider additional schools for the *School Renewal Program* based on performance across the six elements of the Capacity Framework.

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