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MAYOR DE BLASIO AND CHANCELLOR FARIÑA ANNOUNCE FIRST SIGNS OF PROGRESS IN STRUGGLING SCHOOLS, PROMOTE EXPERIENCED LEADER TO HEAD RENEWAL SCHOOLS

Turnaround in Progress: Boys and Girls High School, left to languish for more than a decade, has new top-flight principal, more students on-track to graduate, climbing attendance, and new 'Saturday Academy' for weekend tutoring and Regents Prep

Dedicated Leadership: Aimee Horowitz elevated to spearhead efforts at 94 Renewal Schools

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña today announced a new Renewal Schools leader to spearhead change at 94 Renewal Schools, and detailed progress happening on the ground at long-struggling schools.

They made the announcement at Boys and Girls High School, the oldest high school in Brooklyn and an institution that has struggled for more than a decade. Today, there is new momentum at Boys and Girls because of the School Renewal program. There is a new principal with a track record of achievement, new Advanced Placement course offerings to challenge students, twice as many seniors on track to graduate on time, climbing attendance rates, and a new Saturday Academy to provide students with small group instruction and Regents Exam preparation on weekends. As part of Boys and Girls' transformation, every teacher must reapply for his or her position.

Mayor de Blasio announced the \$150 million School Renewal program in November, dedicating experienced new leadership and new resources to 94 schools that have struggled for years. The effort will be overseen by the new Executive Superintendent for the School Renewal Program, Aimee Horowitz, a leader with a track record of turning around troubled schools and raising student achievement. Horowitz has most recently served as superintendent for Staten Island high schools and 14 Renewal Schools, including Boys and Girls High School and Automotive High School. She was also the founding principal of the College of Staten Island High School for International Studies, which maintained a graduation rate of well above 95 percent under her leadership.

In the past three months, initial changes have gotten underway at Renewal Schools, including the addition of extra instructional time in 54 schools, academic intervention teams deployed to overhaul curriculum and course offerings, and groups of experienced principals and assistant principals sent to high-needs schools to strengthen leadership and help change direction.

“The status quo is not acceptable. That’s why we are giving struggling schools something they’ve never had before: the leadership, focus and support they need to finally succeed. This is what real change will take,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Many of these schools have been broken for years, and they won’t be fixed overnight. But make no mistake: this strategy is working. This is why it is so vital we renew Mayoral Control and secure the fair funding our students need.”

At Automotive High School and Boys and Girls High School, two of the City’s long-struggling schools deemed “out of time” by the State Department of Education, key early indicators—like whether students are earning enough credits to stay on track for graduation—are moving in the right direction:

- **Boys and Girls High School’s** new principal has re-programmed the entire school schedule to ensure that students get the courses they need to graduate on time and that teachers can collaborate on comprehensive academic plans for individual students. In addition to an extra 9th period of instruction each day, Boys and Girls has a new Saturday Academy to help students catch up. As a result, more than twice as many seniors are on track to earn the necessary credits needed to graduate on time—90 students now, versus 40 in the first semester.
- **Automotive High School** has received special Renewal Coaches to provide professional development to teachers with a focus on students’ writing. The coaches have helped teachers assess student writing for signs of progress and signs of students falling behind. After just one semester in the program, 80 percent of freshman are earning the necessary 10 credits to stay on track to graduate in four years, compared to just 60 percent previously. Credit accumulation rates also rose sharply among upper grade students. Seventy-seven percent each of sophomores and juniors are on track with their credit accumulations, up from past averages of 60 and 50 percent, respectively.

“Real change is happening in our Renewal Schools, and I’m encouraged by leading indicators of better attendance and credit accumulation on the rise, showing many more students are on a path to college,” said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña**. “The Renewal School team visits schools every day and is giving top-to-bottom evaluation, teacher training and support.”

“We are already seeing tangible progress at our Renewal Schools, and I am confident that we will turn these schools around with more intensive, proven reforms like extended learning time, improved school leadership, and academic intervention teams,” said **Executive Superintendent for the School Renewal Program Aimee Horowitz**.

“I taught at Boys and Girls back when it was the ‘Pride and Joy of Bed-Stuy.’ Today, after years of struggling, you can really feel change in the hallways. It’s because we finally have the support and leadership we need to bring this school back. This is what progress looks like—our attendance is up, we saw a bounce in our January Regents scores, and for the first time, we have several students enrolled in AP courses with our partner school Medgar Evers College Prep. This is painstaking work—but we are finally on the right track with the School Renewal program,” said **Boys and Girls High School Principal Michael Wiltshire**.

Each Renewal School’s program is defined by several critical aspects ensuring improved student achievement. Schools have seen notable progress across these areas:

More Instructional Time – Through the Renewal program, 54 Renewal Schools have already added either an extra period each day, before- or after-school academic activities or Saturday class. The extra instructional time can be used for additional subjects, or to reinforce lessons from earlier in the day and provide extra support to students.

- Bronx High School of Business is offering extra instructional time to its students throughout its school week. There is new instructional time from 2:45 to 5 PM every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, as well as through its Saturday Academy. Bronx Business is also providing its English Language Learners, which account for 30 percent of its student population, with an extra period in the morning before school begins and on Saturdays to support language development.

Strong Leadership – Since the launch of the School Renewal program, seven new principals have taken over leadership of struggling schools, and the Department of Education is dispatching crack teams of dedicated principals and assistant principals to supplement school leadership, providing the focus and experience to change direction.

- John Starkey, former principal of the International High School at LaGuardia Community College—which became known during his tenure for its high graduation and college enrollment rates, as well as

strong English and language arts programs and community engagement—started as the new principal at Peace and Diversity High School in the Bronx in February. He has already communicated one-on-one with every parent or guardian of his students, and communicated clear, raised expectations—including parental engagement, student attendance and behavior, as well as rigor of teaching and learning that is designed to meet students’ academic and personal needs.

Deeper Accountability at Every Level – Chancellor Fariña replaced 16 of 45 Superintendents, and invested each with authority to hire and remove principals, and the tools to help principals improve. Each Renewal School is required to meet performance targets identified in its school renewal plan, and schools that fail to do so are subject to faculty and leadership changes. Schools are also embarking on the use of more effective data systems that allow teachers and administrators, as well as students, to evaluate academic progress in real time. For example, some schools are using innovative tools to create standards-based reports that allow teachers to target instruction based on deficits they see in students’ work.

- P.S. 112 in Bronxwood uses SuccessMaker software in both ELA and Math to assess and target deficits in instruction. In 2012-2013, 80 percent of kids scored the lowest level, Level 1, in math. The following year, 2013-2014, P.S. 112 started using SuccessMaker and reduced that number to only 50 percent Level 1’s and increased their Level 3’s and 4’s by 5 percent. This year, they continue to use the instructional interventions to deepen the trend.

More Professional Development in Key Subjects – More than 600 teachers in Renewal Schools have received professional development and training in key academic areas, ranging from mathematics to literacy.

- To increase students’ writing skills, a key pillar of success in high school, 35 teachers at nine elementary and middle schools in the Renewal program are receiving a year of intensive professional development at Columbia University’s Teachers College Writing Institute. As a result, their students are writing more and are becoming more proficient in three key areas: registering opinion, creating narrative, and imparting information. This month, 240 more teachers across all 79 Renewal schools serving elementary and middle-school grades began participating in the program.

Wrap-Around Services to Eliminate Barriers to Learning – Every Renewal School is being turned into a Community School that offers mental health, physical well-being, or other vital supports to better support the social, emotional, physical and academic needs of students and overcome issues that impede learning. The Community Schools partner selection process is well underway, and, by June, Community School Directors will be in place at all 94 schools, with services to launch this September.

- Many Renewal Schools have partnerships with CBOs that are making strong impacts. While it hasn’t transitioned to a Community School yet, Renaissance School of the Arts in East Harlem has been working with Citizen Schools, and they are already seeing improvements in student engagement as measured by attendance rates (up three points, from 89 percent last year to 92 percent this year). Starting last year, Citizen Schools has worked with the principal to add 2.5 hours of additional learning time for every sixth grader and are supporting small-group literacy interventions for students who struggle with reading comprehension.

“New York City is well-equipped to support struggling schools and the students that attend them,” said **Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. “I’m pleased with the progress the Renewal Schools program has made to strengthen these schools and to provide educators with the tools they need to help their students thrive. I thank Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña for spearheading the Renewal Schools program and look forward to its continued success.”

“For too long, struggling schools throughout our city have not received the sufficient support to make significant gains and remain open to serve their community. I commend Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Farina for this effort to provide renewed support to struggling schools, and strengthen standards to ensure that school performance remains competitive, including increased Advanced Placement and college preparatory courses. This renewal will enhance our education system, and better serve children throughout our city,” said **Public Advocate Letitia James**.

“The Renewal Schools program is infusing new energy into our struggling schools,” said **Council Education Committee Chairperson Daniel Dromm**. “Educators know best what schools need to do to improve. That’s why I am glad to see experienced school leaders spearheading the effort to raise student achievement. Local control over our schools is vitally important if we are to succeed. We know our schools best. Students need a challenging curriculum and lots of teacher support. I look forward to what the future has to hold for our Renewal Schools.”

“The leadership of Principal Wiltshire and the Renewal Schools Initiative are reinvigorating Boys and Girls High School, which has long been an important resource for central Brooklyn. Our community is deeply involved in supporting Boys and Girls in achieving the concrete improvement goals the Renewal Schools Initiative demands. This high level of engagement, combined with support from the central, will ensure that the students who rely on Boys and Girls have an educational experience there that prepares them to move forward into a bright future. I’m grateful for Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Farina’s vision, that has given Boys and Girls and the other renewal schools a real fighting chance,” said **Council Member Robert Cornegy**.

“Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña are taking unprecedented steps to invest in our struggling schools and the whole needs of every child,” said **Sister Paulette LoMonaco, Executive Director of Good Shepherd Services**. “With more time in the classroom, tailored academic interventions, and community-schools services that meet students’ social, emotional, and health and mental health needs, we are demonstrating our belief that every child can succeed. All of us at Good Shepherd Services look forward to working with the Mayor, the Chancellor, educators, families and the community to turn that belief into a reality.”

Learn more about Renewal Schools: nyc.gov/renewalschools.

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