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SCHOOL SPACE WORKING GROUP UNVEILS RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS SPACE NEEDS ACROSS CITY SCHOOLS

Recommendations from wide-ranging school communities, parents, principals and advocates inform de Blasio administration's school space policy

NEW YORK— The de Blasio administration's School Space Working Group today presented a set of recommendations to create a fairer and more transparent set of space guidelines in the New York City school system.

The School Space Working Group—consisting of education leaders and experts from New York City's district and charter schools, advocacy and faith-based organizations, foundations, community councils, parent groups, labor organizations, elected officials, and the real estate sector—was formed earlier this year to help identify long-term solutions to school space issues, including overcrowding and the phase out of mobile classrooms as permanent instruction sites. The group has also worked on recommendations to foster positive outcomes in future co-locations, a longstanding source of friction within school buildings and communities.

The group's members developed a range of recommendations, including maximizing the use of space to help students with special needs, making space decisions more inclusive and transparent, and helping schools co-located on the same campus work together more effectively. Co-chaired by Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña and Deputy Mayor Richard Buery, the group met throughout the spring and summer to develop solutions to often intractable space issues.

"The School Space Working Group gathered to share their expertise, make recommendations, and put on paper values and principles that should guide space utilization and planning moving forward," said **Chancellor Fariña and Deputy Mayor Richard Buery** in introducing the report. "We believe the recommendations in this paper can have a positive impact on students across New York City, and we are grateful to the working group for the time and energy they invested in this work."

"It has been an honor to serve alongside so many talented and committed educators and advocates for the children of New York City. Nearly every public school in the city—district and charter—shares space and while sharing space is hard, proactive planning and communication will lead to success. The group was united by the belief that every kid, regardless of the type of public school they attend, is a New York City public school kid and should have access to outstanding and equitable public facilities," said **David Levin, Co-Founder, KIPP**.

"Having worked for some weeks with a different group of dynamic people, my experience from beginning to its conclusion was a great learning experience. It made me challenge myself to look at the project not only for the needs of children of District 75, but for all children of New York City who receive their instruction in such spaces. I learned so much from all my colleagues on this working group and hope that we can all come together

on future projects that will bring a brighter perspective to the education of all children,” said **Gloria Corsino, President, District 75 Community Education Council.**

“This was a superb process. Parents, teachers, administrators and advocates from across the city came together, worked collaboratively, and developed eminently sensible recommendations,” said **Burt Sacks, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, City University of New York.**

The School Space Working Group’s recommendations come from a diverse set of stakeholders, and, while there was not consensus on every recommendation, there was broad overall agreement born from a respectful process. The recommendations include:

I. Maximizing the use of space to help students with special needs thrive:

- Creating flexible space allocations to assist schools with large numbers of students with special needs—including special-education students and English Language Learners—obtain more space
- Reducing disruption to District 75 students during any co-locations
- Allocating space specifically for in-school mental health services for students

II. Creating a more inclusive and transparent process that maximizes community input to help students succeed:

- Beginning the engagement process earlier through Community Education Councils, before school siting decisions are made
- Holding an annual campus-wide space meeting every year on every campus
- Making information about changes in school building utilization easier for community members to access and understand by:
 - Providing summaries of new Educational Impact Statements and Building Utilization Plans
 - Making the summaries available in languages and formats appropriate for the community
 - Holding public hearings related to building utilization decisions during the school year only

III. Establishing stronger campuses that function to promote student achievement:

- Holding structured meetings between schools during a new school’s transition into a building
- Creating a *Guidebook to Effective Co-Location*
- Appointing arbiters to address intractable campus disputes
- Developing fiscal rules and instruments to allow schools to share resources

IV. Easing challenges around space and time in co-located schools by:

- Using administrative office space creatively—share offices between schools and use large office spaces as classrooms instead
- Creating communal workspaces—designed to accommodate independent work, storage, and meetings—for adults in schools
- Helping schools share lunch periods
- Making reduction of overcrowding and removal of TCUs a priority in the DOE capital budget

Read the report: <http://schools.nyc.gov/sswg>

“I commend this administration for creating the School Space Working Group and recognizing what educators, students, and parents have always known—space matters. Our school buildings, by necessity, are usually shared by two or more schools, and how that sharing comes about and is managed has direct consequences on the education of the students. The recommendations of the Working Group are a positive step towards moving the needs of students and their schools to the center of all school space-sharing decisions. The Council looks forward to continuing this important work,” said **City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito.**

“I want to congratulate Mayor de Blasio, Deputy Mayor Buery, Chancellor Carmen Fariña, and their team on such a collaborative process that heard from all sides about the difficulties that overcrowded schools face,” said **Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan**. “It is important that we continue to make progress on getting our children out of trailers and into adequate facilities that are suitable for classroom instruction. I look forward to working with my colleagues in government and the appointed members of the School Space Working Group to prioritize smaller class sizes so we can continue to give our students the best education they deserve.”

“Co-locations escalated dramatically under the Bloomberg administration, which opened more than 650 new district and charter schools. Many of these co-locations provoked controversy and protest, as parents and community members felt that their voices were ignored by decision-makers. The working group’s recommendations attempt to make the process more transparent and inclusive of community input, and responsive to the needs of students and school communities,” said **City Council Education Committee Chairperson Daniel Dromm**.

“The SSWG’s recommendations provide greatly needed support and resources for schools that share buildings. In the SSWG’s work, people with diverse views, united around a common desire to give New York’s kids the best education possible, found a broad common ground,” said **Eric Greenleaf, member of Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver’s Overcrowding Taskforce and Professor of Marketing at NYU’s Stern School of Business**.

“This report is evidence that a large group representing education professionals, foundations, NGOs, and community leaders can successfully attack a critically important, complex and emotionally charged issue and reach consensus. It is also a tribute to the wisdom, professionalism and commitment to transparency of DOE and the Mayor’s Office,” said **Richard Kahan, Founder & CEO, Urban Assembly**.

“In our work, the group built upon the rich wealth of perspectives, insights, and diversity of experiences of our members to confront some of the most challenging dilemmas faced by schools in co-located settings. Our work took a common sense and solution-oriented approach that weighed and considered many variables and legitimate concerns—in the end, we worked hard to put the students of New York City first in our recommendations. I firmly believe the committee’s report and suggestions will go a long way to building stronger, more cohesive, and ultimately more successful co-located school campuses, which support each other and most importantly are responsive to children and families,” said **Joseph Canale, Principal, College of Staten Island High School for International Studies**.

“For the past several months, it has been a pleasure to work with the school space working group. It is a diverse set of stakeholders, all working towards a common goal. Namely, the education of our children, a meaningful education, one rich and full, going beyond simple mechanical rote learning. It is hoped that the recommendations of this group are seen as a place to start, a beginning towards addressing the many opportunities that we have in this great city to educate our children, while at the same time effectively using all the resources at our disposal,” said **Isaac Carmignani, public school parent and Co-President NYC Community School Board (CDEC) 30**.

“In an overcrowded system, co-location of services and schools in buildings will be with us for some time. This committee’s process and the result exemplifies what has to happen at every New York City campus: a broad set of stakeholders participates in decision-making, listens and learns from different constituents and puts aside differences to come to a consensus that benefits students. It is not easy, but it is the only way of securing equity and access for every child,” said **Bob Hughes, President, New Visions for Public Schools**.

“It was a pleasure to participate in the Chancellor’s School Space Working Group this past summer. Our Group—which included educational leaders representing all stakeholders, including Parent Advocates Charter School and DOE principals and network leaders—was a model for future consensus building within co-located schools. By working together and identifying shared values and problem solving techniques, leadership can

develop unique strategies that will build stronger communities and result in an enhanced experience for all of our children,” said **RoseAnn Darche, former Special Assistant for Education, Office of the Queens Borough President.**

“Working on the School Space Working Group was a great experience, where quality education for all children was a priority and true collaborative thinking took place. As a parent sitting at the table, it was surreal and a glimpse of what great public education should look like; shared decision-making from every stakeholder. We did not always agree, but we always agreed on what was best for all children. I hope more people will start to see the ‘hope’ I experienced as part of that group,” said **Miriam Aristy-Farer, President, District 6 Community Education Council.**

“It was a rather gratifying experience to engage in profound conversations regarding the current state of shared space in schools with key stakeholders from various City entities. We each brought a unique perspective to the team, which resulted in the creation of solid recommendations that will positively impact New York City children,” said **Roshone Ault, Principal, South Bronx Academy for Applied Media.**

“We were pleased that the Deputy Mayor and the Chancellor included CPAC on this working group. The diverse composition of the team helped us appreciate the perspectives and challenges of each stakeholder. I believe, in turn, they came to appreciate ours. We appreciate the collegiality demonstrated by the other members—from the Mayor’s Office, the DOE, principals, other advocacy and parent group members, the City Council—for sharing their concerns and taking ours as equally seriously. In the end, we worked toward common ground—determining a set of recommendations that can improve the environmental and cultural outcomes of those schools that share proximate resources. I fully believe that including parents early as part of the decision-making process (as addressed by this report) will help improve conditions at shared spaces,” said **Alim Gafar, Co-Chair, Chancellor’s Parent Advisory Council.**

“I was glad to be part of a diverse group of stakeholders as we considered some very complex and potentially fraught issues. We were pleased in particular to be able to bring to the table some significant concerns about the impact that space decisions have on students with disabilities,” said **Maggie Moroff, Special Education Policy Coordinator, Advocates for Children and Coordinator, ARISE Coalition.**

“At long last, community is pivotal in an equation for equality, insuring that every child, whether a student of a district or an independent public school, is provided decent space for learning and total development,” said **Luis Garden Acosta, President, El Puente.**

“Deputy Mayor Rich Buery deserves our thanks for his expert leadership of the process. His skills and steady hand were evident. We hope this is the beginning and not the end of the conversation about how to provide high-quality educational facilities for all children in our city,” said **David Umansky, CEO, Civic Builders.**

“While it was not always easy, bringing everyone together—with all of their expertise and diverse opinions—this was an inclusive process. The working group had many different perspectives but we shared a common goal. We all wanted to create the best environment for all students to learn,” said **Emary C. Aronson, Managing Director, Education, Robin Hood.**

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