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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 26, 2020

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**MAYOR DE BLASIO, FIRST LADY MCCRAY AND CHANCELLOR CARRANZA
ANNOUNCE “BRIDGE TO SCHOOL”**

Citywide focus in schools this fall on addressing trauma will give communities the tools they need to provide safe, supportive schools

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio, First Lady Chirlane McCray, and Schools Chancellor Richard A. Carranza today announced “Bridge to School,” a Citywide initiative for the 2020-21 school year focused on the social and emotional well-being of students and adults in order to create a safe, supportive learning environment that confronts the trauma caused by the COVID-19 crisis. As a result, schools will be equipped to integrate trauma-informed practices into school reopening, and build off of last year’s major expansion of mental health supports in schools.

“School classrooms are safe havens, giving our kids the emotional encouragement they need to grow and thrive,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “But for so many of our kids, going back to a classroom will not necessarily mean going back to normal. Our approach to blended learning will reach kids where they are, helping them cope with the disruption of the pandemic in a safe and supportive environment.”

“When we brought social and emotional learning to every New York City classroom last year, it was built on a simple concept: children learn best when they are healthy and have a sense of emotional well-being,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. “Now, more than ever, all of our students need to know they are not alone, and there are people who can help them process the anxiety, grief and trauma that have been triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. This expanded approach integrates social emotional learning into the curriculum to reach students, provides trauma-informed training for more teachers and resources for teachers and principals to manage blended learning.”

“The young people of our city experienced a significant trauma this year caused by this pandemic – on top of the traumas inflicted by poverty and racism,” said **Schools Chancellor Richard A. Carranza**. “We’ve listened to educators asking for more support in caring for students, and we are answering their call with direct resources, training, and support for our school communities.”

Last year, the Department of Education made a historic investment measures to address the social-emotional needs of students and provide educators with the supports they need to be partners in that work. This work became more important than ever as schools transitioned to remote learning and New York City became the epicenter of a public health crisis. At the height of the pandemic, the DOE trained approximately 13,000 people throughout the spring and summer in a Trauma 101 series focused on grief and loss, bereavement and self-care in a crisis.

This included Crisis Team members, who respond to schools that experience a loss and provide mental health supports, school leaders and school support staff. These practices were put into immediate use across the system during remote learning and supported students, families, and staff members who experienced losses this spring in coming together to begin healing.

To enhance this key priority, the Fund for Public Schools has secured \$1.9 million in philanthropic funding from the Robin Hood, Gray, and Tiger foundations. These grants will help to equip school-based staff citywide with trauma-informed training, high quality resources, and ongoing support - all critical to effectively respond to students' social emotional needs in this challenging time. Already, 1,600 school leaders have completed this training, giving them skills to provide foundational classroom and school wide support and the ability to recognize when acute trauma requires a referral for more targeted support.

Training will be made available to teachers at all schools. Available sessions include training on:

- Building capacity of school staff and school leaders to recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma and its impact on young people
- Learning effective classroom and school-wide trauma informed care practices that align to existing social-emotional and mental health support systems used in the NYCDOE

Addressing trauma will be an ongoing need, and so the philanthropic support will also enable the DOE to partner with the Child Mind Institute to offer additional supports for school-based staff this fall, including webinars and workshops, videos and print materials to support social-emotional learning in the classroom, and a helpline for educators to receive additional guidance and support. The helpline will be available Monday through Friday, 8am to 8pm starting September 21st and these resources will remain available to educators through the end of 2020.

Beyond training, and direct classroom support, the Department of Education is releasing the Bridge to School Resource Guide. This puts at educators' fingertips grade-appropriate tools, like activities and lesson plans for both remote and in-person learning, that help students build coping skills, process grief, re-connect, and allow students to orient themselves to blended-learning or online classroom during first the few weeks of school. These resources are flexible, adaptable, and will be available to educators this week.

In New York City, a comprehensive approach to supporting the whole child is the bedrock of an equitable education. This administration has made unprecedented investments in the well-being of students that have lowered suspension rates to record levels, increased school safety, and significantly moved our schools away from a punitive approach to school safety. Those measures included: access to social-emotional learning support, expanded restorative justice practices, support and training for educators and administrators, and hiring School Response Clinicians to provide immediate clinical support to students in crisis. New York City public schools are making a system-wide effort to meet head on the mental health needs of 1.1 million students.

“We applaud the New York City Department of Education for acknowledging that the combined effects of COVID, racial injustice and social unrest need to be recognized and responded to, and that we all have a responsibility to help young people build resiliency,” said **National Council for Behavioral Health President and CEO Chuck Ingoglia**. “Equipping communities with the tools to practice trauma-informed care will improve the well-being of young people and their

families. The upcoming school year presents numerous challenges for students, parents and educators alike. But the fundamental principles of trauma-informed care and efforts to foster resilience will provide teachers with useful resources as they help young people face those challenges. The Bridge to School Plan is a clear path forward in creating a supportive environment.”

The Bridge to School Plan is a clear and comprehensive guide to returning to school this fall, focusing on the social and emotional needs of students, teachers, and families. It will help all to adjust to the reality of teaching and learning while staying safe physically and emotionally during a pandemic,” said **Paul Gionfriddo President and CEO Mental Health America.**

“As the return of school approaches, we know that a safe and encouraging learning environment in the midst of COVID-19 includes attention to all the health concerns, academic supports, and equally important, mental health needs of children and adults, said **Wes Moore, CEO of Robin Hood.** “The pandemic, our economic crisis, and the debate around our national reckoning with racial injustice have impacted our mental health. How adults at school think, feel and act influence how children behave, learn and grow. These mental health challenges will persist for years unless we are attentive to all.”

“Tiger Foundation is pleased to be a part of this partnership to help schools across the entire city meet the mental health and social-emotional needs of students who have lived through the compounding traumas of the last six months,” said **Charles Buice, President of the Tiger Foundation.** “Schools will be a key place students and families turn for support during these continuing uncertain times, and we know this work will be critical to helping to create the strong foundations needed for a return to teaching and learning.”

“In this challenging time, supporting mental health is more vital than ever,” said **Mindy and Jon Gray, Co-founders of the Gray Foundation.** “We are proud to partner with Robin Hood, the Tiger Foundation, and the New York City Department of Education to ensure that teachers have the resources they need.”

“From the start of this crisis, we’ve linked arms with the philanthropic community to ensure the well-being and continued learning of our City’s 1.1 million students,” said **Julie L. Shapiro, Chief Executive Officer of the Fund for Public Schools.** “Through generous funding from the Robin Hood, Tiger, and Gray Foundations, school teams will gain the expertise they need to navigate trauma and meet their students’ social and emotional needs as schools reopen.”

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