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**MAYOR ADAMS AND CHANCELLOR BANKS ANNOUNCE HISTORIC
INVESTMENT IN PRESCHOOL SPECIAL-EDUCATION SUPPORTS AND
EXPANSION OF ACCESS**

*NYC Public Schools Enhance 3,000 Special Education Seats Across 65 Early Childhood
Providers, Adding 400 New Seats*

*Additional Expansion Expected to Open Enough Preschool Seats This Spring to Serve All
Children Living with Disabilities*

NEW YORK – New York City Mayor Eric Adams and New York City Department of Education (DOE) Chancellor David C. Banks today announced an expansion of early childhood education special-education seats across the five boroughs, in partnership with community-based providers, that will provide an early childhood education special-education seat for every child living with a disability by the spring of 2023. Previously, the early childhood education system did not have a strategic or intentional focus on serving young children living with disabilities and their families. Through a citywide contract enhancement process, New York City public schools is addressing this historic inequity by expanding the number of seats reserved for students living with disabilities across early childhood education and increasing pay for educators and providers.

“I know from personal experience what it’s like not to have had the supports I needed to learn and thrive as child. For far too long, our young students living with disabilities have struggled in a system that hasn’t been fully able to meet them where they are,” said **Mayor Adams**. “Today, we’re changing that. This expansion ensures not only that our youngest are provided the resources they need to succeed, but that the educators and caretakers who serve them are paid fairly and at a rate worthy of the life shaping the work they do. This investment is long overdue, and I’m so grateful to everyone who has worked tirelessly to make this a reality.”

“For far too long, children with disabilities and their families have been overlooked by a system that was not built with them in mind. Our vision for early childhood education sees all children,” said **DOE Chancellor Banks**. “My team has particularly been focused on young children living with disabilities. We are deeply committed to establishing early childhood education that works

for all New York City families — a truly accessible, high-quality, and sustainable program that equitably serves our children living with disabilities. Bright starts begin at birth, and I am proud that Deputy Chancellor Dr. Ahmed and the Division of Early Childhood Education are dedicated to creating a truly inclusive early childhood system that will set our children up for success for generations to come. Thank you to Mayor Adams, our partners in the City Council, our PEP members, and our devoted community providers for prioritizing our children living with disabilities and building a system that not only meets, but also understands and prioritizes their needs.”

“In an equitable society, a high-quality early childhood experience must include all children,” said **Deputy Chancellor Dr. Kara H. Ahmed**. “Our team envisions a comprehensive system that serves all children from birth to five, inclusive of children living with disabilities. We have already begun the work necessary to provide a seat for every young child with a disability based on their individual strengths and learning needs, and we will not stop until that goal is actualized.”

Previously, early childhood seats for children living with disabilities were few and limited, and their educators were paid less than their general education peers. As part of Chancellor Banks' long-term vision to reimagine early childhood education and special-education programming in New York City public schools, it is vital that all children have access to educators and resources that meet their unique needs as soon as they enter the classroom. To ensure that early childhood education programs are prepared to meet the needs of the city's most vulnerable children, the first set of special education contract enhancements will be implemented across 65 provider contracts. As part of this process, approximately 3,000 seats across the sector will benefit, including 400 new seats to meet needs. By this spring, an additional 400 new seats will be added for a total of 800 new seats, and additional seats will be stabilized by the contract enhancement process.

Additionally, special education contract enhancements will:

- Earmark \$130 million for early childhood education special education providers over two years;
- Align early childhood education special education programs with the city's 3-K and pre-K general education programs by extending the school day from five hours to six hours and 20 minutes and providing extended care and learning for children and support for working families;
- Extend general early childhood education site supports such as professional development opportunities to early childhood education special education providers;
- Increase access to services in the least restrictive environment by enabling providers to offer special class in an Integrated Setting (SCIS) classrooms;
- Establish funding to help programs recruit, train, and retain staff to support special education seats across the early childhood education landscape;
- Allocate funds for teacher and staff salaries in accordance with new services and lengthened school days; and
- Bring increased pay and pay parity to teaching staff in special education programs to match that of their peers in general education in 3-K and pre-K.

NYC Public Schools is committed to strengthening and stabilizing the early childhood education landscape in close partnership with providers, educators, community members, and families. Part of this essential work is permanently incorporating preschool special education programs into the fabric of New York City communities to ensure they are exceptional and accessible for all New York families, in response to community need. This announcement comes on the heels of Chancellor Banks's renewed vision for special education programs in New York City public schools, which celebrates and expands successful programs, provides new professional learning opportunities to students, and empowers family and community members as partners in this work.

“All children are vulnerable, but children with special needs are especially so. For too long that has been overlooked,” said **New York State Senator Simcha Felder**. “Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks have shown sensitivity and good sense in prioritizing this vital initiative. The world will be an infinitely better place when we value every child and give them the keys to unlock their full potential.”

“This is wonderful news for families, particularly those who now won't struggle to find a quality early childhood program for children with special needs,” said **New York State Senator Roxanne J. Persaud**. “Every child deserves an opportunity for inspiration and cultivation of knowledge.”

“Every child deserves a quality education. In order to build a truly equitable and inclusive city, students of all abilities must have the resources and services they need to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally in our public schools. For too long, children with disabilities and their families have struggled to receive an equitable level of resources and supports,” said **New York State Senator Jamaal Bailey**. “I am grateful the New York City Department of Education is taking action to rectify a historic inequity by expanding the number of special education seats across the Early Childhood Education program while increasing pay for educators and providers who do this critical work. This is long-awaited and will ensure our schools are equipped to meet the unique needs of every child in the critical moments of their early development.”

“We all know that by providing quality education and the right tools, we make great progress in closing the equity gap between all communities. Under Chancellor Banks' leadership we have seen great strides in this direction,” said **New York State Senator Luis Sepúlveda**. “This Early Childhood Education program focused on special education is an example of that. Our communities have already faced the greatest challenges in terms of equity and lack of attention, but our students with special education needs have been affected more than any other. I commend Mayor Eric Adams for this right vision and the chancellor for working with his team to make it possible for more seats to be available along with the resources our students need.”

“This investment in the early childhood education of all New York's children will have an incredible impact on countless families across our city,” said **New York State Senator Andrew Gounardes**. “I look forward to working with Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks to see these changes implemented and ensure our early childhood education is truly equitable for all, no matter their learning needs.”

“I am very pleased to see Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks fulfilling the promise of early childhood education for all,” said **New York State Assemblymember Cathy Nolan**. “This is an important and overdue step, and so important to so many families.”

“Creating an equitable, accessible, and inclusive education system for all means ensuring children with special needs aren’t left behind,” said **New York State Assemblymember Al Taylor**. “I fully support Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks’s historic investment in preschool special-education programs which will not only expand access to Early Childhood Education special-education programs but transform so many lives for the better. Early childhood special education services are proven to have a huge impact on the academic, social, and emotional progress of children with disabilities and we must do everything we can to increase access, support special education providers, and set up our children and their families for success. Children succeed when they have access to the resources they need, and this investment will be a game changer for generations to come.”

“Today, Mayor Eric Adams and Chancellor Banks are providing our special needs children with the special care they deserve,” said **New York State Assemblymember Jenifer Rajkumar**. “The data shows that high-quality pre-K for children with special needs can be transformative, increasing their test scores by as much as 23 percent. A 23 percent increase at that critical juncture will improve their educational outcomes and contributions to society in the decades that follow. Now for the first time, every special-needs child will have access to this life-changing early education. The program also provides vital funding to end the shortage of special needs Pre-K teachers by closing the \$30,000 salary gap between special needs and general education teachers. The result will be that every year, 1,000 more special needs children will receive the instruction they need. Through this multi-pronged approach, the mayor and chancellor are recognizing and responding to the needs of every child in our city.”

“Children with disabilities and their families has been forgotten by the system for years, today with this initiative our children with disabilities can get easier access to education, we are committed to serve our overlooked families with great accessible, substantiable programs, and high-quality service,” said **New York State Assemblymember Yudelka Tapia**. “I’m proud to represent my community that equitably serves our children with disabilities.”

“Early childhood special education is foundational to equitable, high quality public education in our city, and I’m encouraged to see it expanded with more seats and more providers,” said **New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams**. “Children with disabilities deserve all the same opportunities to thrive in New York City schools, and this announcement is an essential step forwards for accessibility, inclusion, and educational equity. Quality early childhood education has an outsized impact on young people throughout their lives, and I’m glad to see the City Council and Adams administration heeding the calls of parents, providers, and advocates by funding these invaluable programs and services.”

“Today’s announcement brings us one step closer to true equity in preschool education,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso**. “Not only will every preschooler with a disability have a special-education seat by spring, but educators and providers will be better recognized for their work through an increase in pay. I’m so grateful for these long-overdue

efforts to improve our city's special education and eager to work with Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks to ensure we deliver on this vision for our students.”

“I commend Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks on this important announcement of investing additional \$130 million over two years into opening enough preschool seats to serve all children with disabilities in our city,” said **New York City Councilmember Ari Kagan**. “Good quality early childhood education is crucial for the future success of every kid. The new investment will also increase pay for educators and providers they definitely deserve. I strongly support this decision and looking forward for its smooth implementation this spring.”

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