

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS & MAYOR DE BLASIO: Preparing the Next Generation for College & Careers

A Report by the



"We believe in grassroots, people-powered government."

Mayor Bill de Blasio

INTRODUCTION

Bill de Blasio and the People-Powered Educational Vision

One year ago, thousands of parents, students, teachers and community members participated in [PS 2013](#), a citywide planning process to develop a new vision for public education that Bloomberg's successor could implement.

They participated in workshops in every borough, filled out surveys and voted for their top education priorities in a mobile education platform mounted in a blue school bus. What emerged was a new vision of public education that will serve the whole child, the whole school and the whole community.

Mayor de Blasio has embraced this people-powered vision for change and committed to create at least 100 community schools within his first term. These schools will provide a high-quality college and career preparatory education and serve as the hub of the community by bringing together, inside the school building, social-emotional, medical, adult education, recreational and job training services to address the needs of students, families and the entire community.

Community schools embody the vision of education that thousands of New Yorkers want.

The NYC Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ) urges Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña to put these 100 community schools at the core of their effort to provide a world-class education to every child in our city, right in their own neighborhood.

To be successful, these 100 community schools must:

1. Be located in schools and neighborhoods with the greatest educational needs.
2. Involve parents, educators, young people and community groups in planning, design, implementation and evaluation.
3. Provide a rich, rigorous academic curriculum and expert teaching that prepares all students for college and careers.

OVERVIEW

Community Schools Can Address Educational Disparities

This vision for schools that addresses the needs of the entire community is long overdue.

A 2012 study by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, [*Is Demography Still Destiny?*](#) showed that the expansion of school choice under the Bloomberg administration did not change the fact that zip code too often predicts whether students will succeed or fail.

The educational disparities between neighborhoods are enormous:

- Only 8 percent of students from Mott Haven graduate ready for college, while nearly 80 percent of students from Tribeca do.
- In the city's neighborhoods with 100 percent Black and Latino residents, no more than 10 percent of high school students graduate ready for college.
- Eighteen of the twenty-one neighborhoods with the lowest college-readiness rates are in the Bronx (the other two are in Brooklyn).

This study showed that no matter what schools students attend, the inequities in their home neighborhoods are key factors in their preparedness for college. Giving students the "choice" to leave their neighborhood for schools does not address the core problems of educational inequity.

Clearly, a neighborhood-based strategy for school improvement is critical to prepare many more of NYC's students for college. Community schools are that strategy.

Since being elected, Mayor de Blasio has appointed a Chancellor who is a highly-skilled educator and a Deputy Mayor with deep experience to implement the community schools initiative. He has committed to listening to grassroots voices on education, and his administration has begun to engage CEJ and other community groups. Now we need to ensure that City Hall's decision-making on community schools keeps grassroots voices at the center of the effort.

Members the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ) and other grassroots organizations are the eyes and ears on the ground in communities. We know what our neighborhoods need, which stakeholders should be involved, and what will work and not work to realize the community schools vision. We also know firsthand that even the

best-intended initiatives can falter without strong community leadership, buy-in and oversight. So we plan to work closely with Mayor de Blasio to ensure a strong and effective community schools roll out.

Community schools can be a critical lever to raise students' academic achievement and to strengthen entire communities, and we are ready to play an active, hands-on role in ensuring that this community school initiative realizes the educational vision that this administration and thousands of parents, students, and teachers across the city want to see fulfilled.

In that spirit, we propose the following recommendations for setting the 100 community schools initiative on the right track for success and sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to Make the 100 Community Schools a Success

1. The 100 community schools must be located in the schools and neighborhoods with the greatest educational needs.

Community schools can be a life-changing intervention for students who come to school with physical, social and emotional challenges that interfere with learning.

To ensure that the initiative reaches the students and families who need it most, we recommend that a large majority of the 100 community schools be:

- Schools identified as Focus or Priority by NY State Education Department
- Schools in which at least 90% of students are eligible for free/reduced price lunch
- Schools with high rates of chronic absenteeism
- In neighborhoods with high rates of homelessness, hunger and unemployment
- In neighborhoods with high rates of asthma, diabetes and lead poisoning
- Clustered in districts with high numbers of Focus and Priority schools, in school feeder patterns where possible

Clustering schools in several neighborhoods allows them to share practices, learn from each other and collaborate to serve families that are connected with multiple schools.

2. Parents, educators, young people and community groups must be involved in planning, design, implementation and evaluation.

Community schools must be a collaboration between the neighborhood and the school community, not imposed on a school perceived as needy. With genuine buy-in and participation from all constituencies, a community school can build the strong partnerships that transform student achievement while also strengthening the entire community.

To build that deep level of community engagement, the 100 community schools must:

- Participate in a citywide Community School Advisory Board that includes parents, community leaders, educators, youth and other stakeholders to drive and evaluate the citywide 100 community schools effort, as well as subcommittees that guide and monitor specific areas of work.
- Create a committee of the School Leadership Team at each community school that brings in additional parents, teachers, youth and community stakeholders and is trained to serve as a Community School Advisory Team.
- Charge the Community School Advisory Team with conducting a school and community needs assessment; involving the community in creating a vision and plan; screening, approving and evaluating institutional partnerships; ensuring that community schools programming is integrated with school day teaching and learning; and planning for sustainable funding through existing resource streams.
- Hire a full-time Resource Coordinator to manage the needs assessment and community engagement effort, recruit partnerships and resources, and work closely with the principal to integrate and align these partnerships as part a seamless school day.
- Conduct community surveys to identify the needs, strengths and priorities of residents and teachers, and hold multiple community meetings to solicit input, create a vision for community schools, and engage people in implementation.
- Engage parents and community in their native language and build strong family partnerships through innovative strategies such as Parent-Teacher Home Visits and Academic Parent-Teacher Teams.
- Take guidance from research-based models such as the US Department of Education's [Framework for School-Community Partnerships](#).

3. The 100 community schools must provide a rigorous academic curriculum and expert teaching that prepares students for college and careers.

Community schools cannot significantly raise academic achievement in struggling schools without restructuring and improving classroom-based teaching and learning. That is why we insist that community schools' critical mission is preparing young people for college and careers.

Each community school should have the flexibility to tailor interventions to strengthen teaching and learning. We recommend the following:

- Include the 100 community schools in the PROSE initiative to innovate staffing and the school day and year schedule.
- Expand learning time for all students and integrate it with the school day, following the model currently used in the [ExpandED](#) and [MSQI Extra](#) schools.
- Increase instructional offerings such as science, technology, arts, music and physical education, as well as hands-on activities, critical analysis and culturally relevant curriculum and practice.
- Ensure that schools have the expertise and resources to meet the needs of special needs students and fulfill their IEPs.
- Assign model and master teachers to the community schools to support quality teaching and effective use of the additional contractual professional development time.
- Train school staff in positive discipline practices such as peer mediation and restorative justice that build school community and keep students in school, and ensure that schools have the infrastructure to monitor, evaluate and reduce their reliance on suspensions.
- Increase support for the high school and college application process through additional dedicated counselor positions, the Student Success Center models and summer bridge programs to support students entering high school and moving on to college.
- Pair novice principals with master principals through the [Learning Partners Program](#).
- Include schools that have low achievement for Black and Latino males in the [Young Men's Initiative](#).

The 100 community schools could embody these recommendations by engaging students in academic tasks and projects that are critical to the community engagement and planning process, for example:

- Mapping the community resources and assets
- Producing guides of local resources
- Analyzing economic costs and benefits of community schools
- Conducting oral histories of community elders
- Identifying and interviewing key community leaders and institutions
- Leading walking tours of the neighborhood

It is critical that the administration create a thoughtful, collaborative process for this initiative that brings in multiple stakeholders, bolsters student academics, and builds on the excellent community schools models that already exist in NYC. While 100 community schools is a great start, CEJ hopes that a strong and sustainable initiative will lay the foundation for hundreds more community schools in the near future.

TIMELINE

Launching 100 Community Schools Effectively

The urgency of launching the 100 community schools in the 2014-15 school year must be balanced with the need for sufficient time for the community engagement and collaborative planning essential to the community schools model.

We suggest the following timeline:

Year One: 2014-15 school year

- 25 schools receive funds for staffing, needs assessment, community engagement and collaborative planning. After developing a community schools plan, they receive funds for interventions in the plan as prioritized by the Advisory Team.
- These 25 schools should be placed in three clusters in three districts, to allow geographic distribution as well as pooling of capacity and expertise.

Year Two: 2015-16 school year

- First cohort of 25 schools continues to implement interventions and services determined by Advisory Team and creates sustainable financing plan for expansion through existing funding streams.
- Second cohort of 35 schools joins initiative for planning year and initial implementation. These schools are placed in additional clusters in additional districts.

Year Three: 2016-17 school year

- First and second cohorts continue implementation of Advisory Team plan.
- Third cohort of 40 schools joins initiative for planning year and initial implementation. These schools are placed in additional clusters in additional districts.

BUDGET

Investing in the Successful Creation of 100 Community Schools

To ensure a successful roll out of 100 community schools, strong investment is essential. We recommend the creation of a funding stream that would award an average of \$500,000 in grants to each of the 100 community schools, for a total cost of \$50 million/year within three years. In the first year, 25 schools would begin planning and initial implementation, for an initial cost of \$12.5 million. We understand that actual grant sizes may fluctuate based on school size. But the administration can and should develop a funding strategy that is sustainable and scale-able for the long term.

Community School Staffing and Engagement	\$150,000 / school
Resource Coordinator	\$100,000
Per session and stipends for Advisory Team	\$25,000
Community engagement expenses (Printing, mailing, childcare, translation, food)	\$25,000

Community School Interventions **\$300,000 / school**

The Community School Advisory Team will develop a budget to support interventions within the following categories that don't have an existing funding stream, according to the strengths and needs of their school.

Parent and community engagement

- Parent-Teacher Home Visits and Academic Parent-Teacher Teams
- GED, ESL, computer training and adult education
- Enhanced translation and interpretation services

Teaching and learning

- Expanded learning time including arts, sports, science and other critical subjects
- Model and mentor teachers
- UFT Teacher Center

- Curriculum, common planning time, teacher teaming

Comprehensive support services

- Health and mental health clinics
- Social workers, counselors, attendance workers
- Restorative justice practices

College and career readiness

- High school or college/career counselors
- Student Success Centers at the middle or high school level

Technical Support, Capacity Building and Evaluation \$50,000 / school

The 100 community schools will need centralized support from an independent organization that is expert in community schools, to make the initiative effective and sustainable. This role will include functions such as:

- Training and supporting Resource Coordinators
- Collecting and analyzing program data
- Evaluating organizational partners and the community school programs overall
- Leading ongoing training for school staff, parents and community partners
- Identifying and writing city and statewide policy changes that will facilitate the smooth functioning of community schools
- Collecting and disseminating learning across the 100 schools

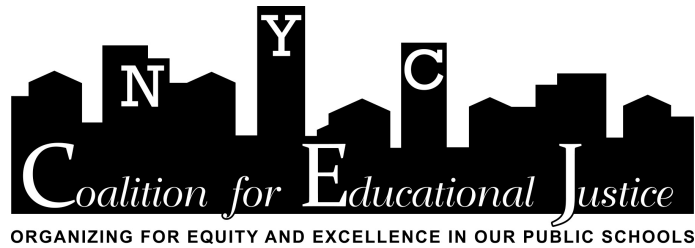
SUBTOTAL \$500,000 / school

TOTAL

YEAR ONE \$12.5 million for 25 schools

YEAR TWO \$30 million for 60 schools

YEAR THREE \$50 million for 100 schools



Who We Are

The NYC Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ) is organizing a parent-led movement for educational equity and excellence in the city's public schools. We are a citywide collaborative of community-based organizations and unions whose members are parents, community residents and teachers. Together, we are fighting to ensure that every child in NYC receives a quality and well-rounded education.

Why We Are Organizing

Education is a critical lever for social and economic equity in our society. The opportunity to receive an excellent education is not distributed equally across neighborhoods, and far too many children are stuck in failing schools that do not prepare them for college and the world of work. For example:

- Only half of Black and Latino students in NYC graduate from high school in four years
- Only one in six NYC Black and Latino students are reading and writing at state standards, compared to half of White students

What We Have Won

Our successes so far include:

- *Parent-Teacher Conferences:* To help parents support their children in meeting the new Common Core standards, CEJ waged a campaign that won \$5 million to fund 30-minute one-to-one parent-teacher conferences for over 200,000 students who scored below grade level.
- *Middle Grades:* CEJ's efforts led to the Middle School Quality Initiative, which has invested more than \$35 million in comprehensive reform of low performing middle grade schools, including 20 schools that are piloting expanded learning time.
- *Academic Intervention Services:* After city test scores plummeted, a CEJ-led campaign resulted in \$10 million to provide additional tutoring to struggling students at 532 schools.
- *Science Labs:* The Brooklyn Education Collaborative won \$444 million from the Department of Education to build science labs in every middle and high school by 2010.

New Settlement Parent Action Committee, Make the Road New York, Highbridge Community Life Center,
UFT Parent Outreach Committee, New York Civic Participation Project & New York Communities for Change
with support from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform

212.328.9266

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- *Teacher Quality:* The Community Collaborative to Improve District 9 Schools created the Lead Teacher Program, which puts master teachers in schools to support the development of other teachers. The program expanded to include more than 100 schools citywide.
- *School Funding:* The work of CEJ and its statewide partners led to the millionaires tax and the restoration of millions of dollars in budget cuts

Current Organizing Work

We will continue our fight to:

- Organize parents and community members to win 100 college ready community schools that provide rigorous, diverse curriculum and comprehensive supports for students and families
- Through our alliance with the Alliance for Quality Education, ensure that NYC schools get their fair share of city and state funding

CEJ will continue its work with community advocates and unions to build a broad social movement to end educational inequities and ensure that *all* of NYC's children receive an excellent education.

CEJ Member Organizations

- Highbridge Community Life Center has been providing a wide range of educational and social services since 1979, including job training programs and entitlement assistance to families living in the Highbridge neighborhood. *Contact Ocynthia Williams at (718) 410-6744.*
- Make the Road New York is a major force for social change in New York City, with more than 3,000 members who lead the organization in Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island. Make the Road New York offers a variety of services and strategies for neighborhood improvement, including organizing for civil rights and economic justice, legal services, educational programs, and youth development. *Contact Placida Rodriguez at (718)418-7690 ext. 210.*
- New Settlement Parent Action Committee organizes for educational justice and safety with dignity in the lowest performing school districts in NYC. PAC develops local and district-wide campaigns, builds the leadership and skills of South Bronx parents, and offers monthly "Know Your Rights" workshops that benefit the entire community. PAC is a program of New Settlement Apartments, which owns and operates nearly 1,000 units of housing and provides educational and community service programs to thousands of children, youth and adults. *Contact Emma Hulse at 718-716-8000.*
- New York Civic Participation Project is a collaboration of labor unions and community groups organizing union members in the neighborhoods where they live. The member organizations – SEIU Local 32BJ, AFSCME DC-37, HERE Local 100, the National Employment Law Project, and Make the Road NY – represent hundreds of thousands of workers and decades of success fighting for immigrant and worker rights in New York. *Contact Omar Perez at (212) 388-3664.*

- New York Communities for Change is a community-based membership organization committed to organizing in NYC's lowest-income neighborhoods. Our goal is to empower communities to impact the political and economic policies that directly affect them. We will build organizations that have the strength to create positive change through leadership development, direct action, negotiation, legislation, and voter participation. *Contact Yambeli Gomez at (347) 410-6919.*
- United Federation of Teachers Parent Outreach Committee works to strengthen home-school collaborations and increase parent involvement and responsibility. *Contact Betty Zohar at (718) 722-6936 or Fran Streich at (212) 701-9464.*
- Alliance for Quality Education is a coalition mobilizing communities across New York State to demand the resources and policies necessary to provide a quality public education to all students regardless of zip code. *Contact Maria Bautista at (347) 622-9706.*
- The Community Organizing & Engagement division of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform has supported community organizing for school reform in New York since 1995. It provides a wide range of strategic support to the collaboratives, including data analysis, research, and training. *Contact Megan Hester at (212) 328-9259.*