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VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY

John B. Mattingly  
Commissioner

September 16, 2009

Melanie Hartzog  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Child Care & Head Start

Senator Velmanette Montgomery  
Chair, Senate Children & Families Committee  
New York State Senate  
Administrative Office Building, room 711  
Albany, New York 12247

150 William Street, 18<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10038

Assemblymember William Scarborough  
Chair, Assembly Children & Families Committee  
New York State Assembly  
Administrative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Montgomery and Assemblymember Scarborough:

Commissioner Mattingly asked me to respond to your August 26<sup>th</sup> letter following up the hearing you convened on the ACS initiative to transition child care programs' 5-year-olds to public school kindergartens. I would like to take this opportunity to clarify a couple of aspects of the initiative that may allay some of your concerns.

First, the transition to kindergarten affects only children who are five years old, or turning five by December 31, 2009, i.e., only those children who would be kindergarten-eligible. Those 3200 children will join 75,000 five-year-olds in public school kindergarten. Data shared among Children's Services, the Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD) showing where these transitioning children lived, assured us that appropriate schools and Out-of-School Time (OST) programs had seats for these children.

As of July, the majority of kindergarten-eligible children in ACS-contracted centers had applied for public school. Currently, the DOE is compiling school registration information from the first weeks of school. OST programs started on Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup>. We expect that shortly, we will receive data from DOE and DYCD showing that children have successfully shifted from contract programs into the existing kindergarten system.

Most of our provider agencies have experience with transitioning children and their parents to public schools' kindergarten and other educational settings, as it is an annual occurrence for centers. This year, due to this initiative, ACS, DOE and DYCD communicated with parents to an even greater extent than usual. Forums were held for child care providers to share information with parents and to offer guidance in their efforts help transitioning families. Joint-agency communications were sent to all parents impacted by this transition to ensure that they knew of the kindergarten enrollment process and the 'priority enrollment' period for OST.



In August, the Department of Education and Children's Services held kindergarten information sessions in each borough. Families with kindergarten-eligible children who had yet to enroll for kindergarten, were invited to attend these sessions. At these meetings information regarding the kindergarten process as well as school information was shared. Parents could enroll their children in kindergarten at these sessions.

We are pleased that for the ACS programs where all kindergarten classrooms were scheduled to be closed, City Council and Federal Stimulus funding made it possible to restore those classrooms to serve 3 and 4 year olds. We encouraged the programs to begin recruiting as early as June and July, and we are looking forward to seeing that classrooms will be filled this fall.

Children's Services, Department of Education and DYCD continue to share information and plan for the children of the City of New York to insure they are offered consistent early education care in quality programs.

Thank you for your continued support for New York City's children and the early care and education system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melanie Hartzog". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Melanie Hartzog  
Deputy Commissioner