



**TESTIMONY OF NYC SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA
ON THE PROPOSED 2018–2019 STATE EXECUTIVE BUDGET**

January 31, 2018

Good morning, Senate Finance Committee Chair Young, Assembly Ways & Means Committee Chair Weinstein, Education Committee Chairs Marcellino and Nolan, ranking members Senator Krueger and Assemblyman Oaks, and all the members of the State Senate and State Assembly here today. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today about the proposed 2018–2019 Executive Budget and the experience of leading the New York City public school system. With me is Raymond Orlando, Chief Financial Officer for the New York City Department of Education.

As you have probably heard, I will be leaving my position as Chancellor of the New York City school system. This will be my second time retiring from the school system that I have devoted most of my life to and that I believe in so deeply. I am proud to leave knowing that New York City public schools are the strongest they have ever been, and under this administration’s vision of Equity and Excellence for All, we are on the path towards becoming even stronger.

Our four-year graduation rate for the class of 2016 was 72.6%, up 6.6 points since 2013. We expect this trend to continue. ELA and Math scores are also on the rise, and we are outpacing the State in English. More of our students are graduating ready for college and careers. And, just this month, I was proud to announce that the number of New York City juniors taking the SAT increased by 51% this past year, thanks to our SAT School Day initiative, which gives students the opportunity to take the test for free during the regular school day. These gains were especially high for black and Latino students, who saw a 57.9% increase in participation and a 65.1% increase in participation, respectively. This means 15,000 more black and Latino students took the SAT.

Under AP for All, one of our Equity and Excellence for All initiatives, we have increased the number of students taking AP courses by 9.9%, and the number of students passing at least one AP test by 7.5%, again with outsize gains among black and Latino students. This was done by increasing the number of AP classes we offer and increasing training for teachers. We are raising the bar on good instruction. We also increased fee waiver assistance to students; I was glad to see that the Executive Budget includes a provision to increase State assistance in this area.

Our campus initiative also helped drive AP participation gains. By encouraging schools in shared space to work together and share resources, students gained access to offerings and opportunities in the other co-located schools.



I know that many of you visit your local schools regularly, attend school events, and meet with principals, teachers, parents, and students. I am grateful for your commitment to public education and creating the leaders of tomorrow. You know that what makes a school community special goes beyond test scores. Of course, students must make tangible, measurable progress, but we also want schools to be places where students make friends, experience new things, cultivate hobbies, overcome obstacles, and feel safe. In many ways, these elements go hand in hand with improving academics.

Over the last four years we have implemented key initiatives that have helped students grow academically, and also prepare them to become responsible citizens of the world. I have always believed that both arts and social studies are so important to creating well-rounded adults, and I am proud that we have strengthened those subject areas in schools. We have the highest number of full-time certified arts teachers in 12 years, and partnership grants focusing on the arts have more than doubled. Additionally, the DOE has increased our school level arts spending by \$17 million, on top of \$23 million already allocated by the Mayor's budget this past year. For social studies, we have developed a new extensive curriculum called Passport to Social Studies that is now used in the vast majority of our elementary and middle school classrooms.

We have also taken major steps to increase access to unique learning opportunities and options that fit students' specific interests and needs. Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are a key part of this work, and of our broader strategy to put students on the path to college and careers. Over the 2016–17, 2017–18, and 2018–19 school years, we are investing in 40 new high-quality CTE programs while strengthening our numerous existing programs.

Last year we implemented new initiatives to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of students living in temporary housing. We hired more social workers, implemented literacy programs in shelters, and provided school-based health services. Additionally, we provide yellow bus service to their home schools for students in grades K–6 who reside in the Department of Homeless Services shelter system. We are continuing these initiatives this year, including providing social workers in schools with the highest concentrations of students in shelter and after-school tutoring at the shelters themselves. We are working to ensure that school can remain a constant, stabilizing force in these students' lives.

We have focused on our most struggling schools through our Renewal program. These schools have been supported over the last three years as part of the largest turnaround effort in the country. They received a range of resources and supports, and I am happy to report that 21 of these schools have made enough progress to move out of the program and become RISE schools, where they will continue to receive additional supports to ensure that their progress continues. Many of the schools continuing in the program are on an upward path, and I expect many more of them to become RISE schools in the near future. We continue to evaluate the schools regularly and to make decisions about their future based on what we know is best for kids.



As a first-generation American and former English Language Learner (ELL), I know firsthand the many benefits of being bilingual. As Chancellor, I have made sure that ELLs have access to rigorous instruction and the full range of educational opportunities. This school year, we have more than 500 bilingual programs across every borough; 150 are new during my tenure. These include the first-ever Urdu program and more Bengali programs at elementary and high schools. This month, we announced 33 new dual language pre-k programs, more than doubling our current number.

We have also made tremendous progress with our Language Access services. The DOE's Translation and Interpretation Unit currently offers over-the-phone interpretation services in over 200 languages—including Spanish, Chinese, Bengali, Arabic, Russian, Urdu, Haitian-Creole, French, and Korean—and in person interpretation services at DOE events across the City. Expanding these offerings led to a threefold increase in the number of over-the-phone interpretation services provided to families: from 16,722 during the 2015–16 school year, to 52,850 during the 2016–17 school year.

Providing students with safe, nurturing learning environments is at the heart of our Equity and Excellence for All agenda. As part of this work, we have implemented important school climate reforms, and invested \$47 million annually in school climate and restorative justice initiatives. In partnership with the First Lady's ThriveNYC initiative, we are offering mental health supports to equip schools with the critical resources to effectively manage incidents and address underlying issues. We also work hand in hand with the NYPD to provide safe learning environments in all schools. Earlier this year, we announced the launch of new anti-bullying initiatives, including ways to support families in reporting bullying incidents, mental health first aid training and community workshops, anti-bias and anti-bullying training for staff, increased bullying protections for students, and funding for student-led clubs that promote diversity and equity. We are also targeting supports for 300 schools across the City with high rates of incidents and bullying.

The environment children learn in profoundly impacts their experience. We have undertaken several different initiatives to improve and upgrade space in our schools. We have dedicated funding to create more than 44,000 seats in overcrowded areas across the City. We have made great progress in removing and replacing Transportable Classroom Units, or TCUs. Since 2014–15, we have removed 159 of 354 total TCUs and have plans for the removal of 75 more. These remaining trailers will be removed with funding supported by the Smart Schools Bond Act, which we thank the legislature for and look forward to receiving. I know this is an important issue for many of you, and it has been a priority of this administration as well because we know children learn best in an environment that is safe, that is supportive, and that provides them with the resources they need to grow socially and academically. For this reason, we also announced two other initiatives last year: one will provide every classroom with air conditioning by 2022, and the other, our Universal Physical Education initiative, will provide every student with adequate physical education space by 2021.



Our work to make New York City's schools more diverse and inclusive is critical to the success of our broader agenda. In June, we released New York City's first citywide school diversity plan, *Equity & Excellence for All: Diversity in New York City Public Schools*. Building on this plan, we were proud to announce our first-ever district-wide school diversity plan in Manhattan's District 1 this fall, and have launched a diversity working group in Brooklyn's District 15— with the aim of announcing a District 15 middle school diversity plan by the end of the current school year. Our citywide School Diversity Advisory Group has also kicked off and will be hosting town halls in all five boroughs starting this month to solicit more ideas and feedback on our ongoing work.

There are many proposals in the Executive Budget that are in line with our goals. Community Schools, expanded pre-k, increased computer science, increased after-school programming and Universal School Lunch; these initiatives are very similar to programs the DOE has trail blazed under my leadership. I am particularly proud of our Pre-K for All expansion. Under Pre-K for All, nearly 70,000 four-year-olds enrolled in pre-k this fall, thanks in no small part to the state funding provided by all of you. As many of you know, we rolled out 3-K for All in September, which looks to bring high-quality Early Childhood Education to 3 year olds across New York City, starting in eight school districts over this and the next 3 years. I look forward to discussing with you how we can work together to achieve the goal of bringing this program citywide. 3-K for All classes opened last September in School Districts 7 in the South Bronx and 23 in Brownsville, Brooklyn, serving more than 1,500 children this year.

I would like to thank the Legislature for always supporting additional funding for our public schools. I want to particularly thank you for your advocacy for the My Brother's Keeper Initiative, which many schools are using to do incredible work. I also want to thank you for your consistent advocacy for State aid increases. Additional State funding has allowed us to do more for students, including addressing inequity in funding to our schools through Fair Student Funding (FSF). The FSF formula is an equitable, transparent way for us to distribute funding to our schools and ensure that our neediest schools receive the greatest resources. We are committed to a funding process that is fair and easily accessible, which is why our budget information, both system-wide and at an individual school level, is publicly available on our website, and why we believe the proposed budget reporting mandate that would allow the State to veto our budget is unnecessary and a violation of the principle of local control of education decisions. This year, every school got at least 87% of their FSF, up from 81% in 2014, and certain schools like those in our Community and Renewal School programs are guaranteed 100% of their FSF. On top of this, we also commit funding to our schools through many of our central initiatives, including all of our Equity and Excellence programs. In this way, we continue to put even more resources into our schools.

We want to continue to increase the FSF percent. This would rely on an investment from the State in Foundation Aid that wasn't absorbed by an equal amount of mandated expenses and revenue reductions that directs funding away from schools. The proposed budget cuts other funding streams from us, including eliminating basic charter supplemental tuition reimbursement and capping the amount of funding we can receive from the State for charter facilities aid



reimbursement. We believe, that if enacted, these cuts would cost us \$144 million. Not having this critical funding makes it all the more difficult for us to achieve what we want: a sound, basic education for every single child in New York City.

I want to thank so many of you for the work we have done together these past four years. We have met here in Albany (this is my fifth budget testimony), visited schools together, and held events with your local school communities. Your insights into local issues, the legislative process, and our schools have been invaluable. You are making the lives of New York City kids better. I am very proud of the work we have done to engage communities, and our rates of family engagement have never been higher, with a 40% increase in attendance at parent teacher conferences. I truly believe that you can only be successful if you can get people to buy into your vision, and you can't do that without speaking to them, strengthening community, and establishing trust. As public officials, we know it's not about ourselves; it's about students and families. Nothing is more important.

An educator's work is never done. I believe that anything is possible for children, and my 52 years working for the DOE has only strengthened that core belief. Even in retirement I will be unable to resist keeping my hand in the projects that are most important to me. Because of the changes we have made to empower superintendents and local leadership, however, I know there are many strong and passionate individuals in charge of our schools who will continue to carry on this work. I am proud to have committed my life to being an educator. I am also proud of bringing back joy and dignity to educators in New York City. There is no greater honor and satisfaction than to be of service, and it has been my great honor and pleasure to be of service to the children and families of New York City.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.