



TESTIMONY OF NYC SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA
ON THE PROPOSED 2016-2017 STATE EXECUTIVE BUDGET

Wednesday, January 27, 2016

Good morning, Ways & Means Chair Farrell, Finance Chair Young, Education Committee Chairs Nolan and Marcellino, New York City Education Subcommittee Chair Felder and all the members of the State Assembly and State Senate here today. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on Governor Cuomo’s proposed 2016-2017 Executive Budget.

On behalf of our city’s over one million public school students, I thank you for your support for all of the great initiatives we have been able to accomplish in the past year. You are all partners in our work. Whether it’s the nearly 70,000 children now enrolled in free, full-day, high-quality pre-k, the creation of new and expanded dual language and transitional bilingual education programs or the 22,000 middle and high school students now receiving arts instruction, we simply could not have done any of these things without you and your leadership.

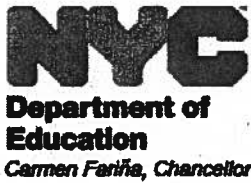
Today in New York City, we are celebrating College Awareness Day. As you can see, I have brought my undergraduate cap and, in many New York City public schools, teachers and administrators are wearing their college gear too. We want every student to know the hard work, determination and skills it takes to be on the path to college and the work force. In support of this goal, and in order to lay this groundwork as early as possible, we have started College Awareness Day.

The idea to start this celebration highlighting the importance of college came to me after I visited a class of pre-k students and found that none of them knew what the word college meant. The aim of College Awareness Day is to embed the college conversation at every grade level, in all of our schools. It is important for students and families to understand that their dream of college is attainable and need not be compromised by financial considerations, geographical barriers, or any other obstacles. It is also important to recognize that college readiness is not simply an academic endeavor but also a social-emotional one; in addition to a high-quality education, our students need confidence and drive to carry them toward their goal of attending and graduating from college.

A few months ago, speaking in front of hundreds of parents and educators, Mayor de Blasio laid out new reforms to achieve equity and excellence across all New York City public schools. These initiatives bolster the vision the mayor and I share of a school system that begins earlier to give students a solid foundation; makes rigorous and challenging courses the norm; ensures students master critical skills on time and invests in a path to college for every New York City public school student.

I would like to take this opportunity to share what our Administration has accomplished for our students since the last time I had the opportunity to give testimony.

With the \$300 million the State invested last year, we were able to enroll a record 68,547 children in free, full-day, high-quality pre-k – nearly 50,000 more students than were enrolled before



Mayor de Blasio took office. These students are now getting a crucial year of problem solving and vocabulary building that will put them on the path to long-term success.

We know quality is key to a successful expansion, and I am committed to ensuring that every pre-k program throughout the city continues to provide an important foundation for academic achievement. In order to ensure that every student has access to a high-quality program, the City assessed pre-k for All programs using two rigorous, research-based, nationally recognized tools: the Classroom Assessment Scoring System and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale. New York City's new program scores are on par with other nationally recognized model pre-k programs.

Data released earlier this month showed a strong increase in our City's graduation rates and college readiness indicators, as well as a decrease in the dropout rate. The graduation rate was over 70% for the first time in the city's history. These gains are a testament to hard work by New York City students, and teachers and administrators who deliver high-quality instruction from the moment students enter pre-k to the day they graduate high school. I was particularly pleased to see a decrease in the dropout rate across all ethnicities: critical progress, but there is still more to do. We will continue to be laser-focused on strengthening instruction, expanding opportunities for all students, and engaging families to ensure there is a clear path to college or a meaningful career for all City students.

In order to provide every student and every school with critical tools to prepare students for success in college and the workforce, and in order to make New York City the best urban school district in the nation, the Mayor and I have pledged to meet rigorous benchmarks: 80 percent of our students will graduate from high school on time and two-thirds of them will be truly college-ready. To meet these targets, Mayor de Blasio and I are committed to providing every student and every school with critical tools to prepare students for success in college and careers: from providing every student with Computer Science classes in elementary, middle and high school to ensuring all students are reading in 2nd grade and on track to take Algebra by the 9th grade.

The City is also redoubling its efforts around college readiness and access as part of the Mayor's agenda for Equity and Excellence across all schools with College Access for All, AP for All, and the new SAT School Day. Through College Access for All, every student will have the resources and supports at their high school to pursue a path to college. Through AP for All, every high school student will have access to a range of Advanced Placement courses. Through the new SAT School Day, all high school juniors will take the SAT exam during the school day starting in the spring of 2017 that will ensure that all students take the test at their own school and free of charge.

As part of our work to increase college readiness and access by meeting the whole needs of every student, New York City is committed to creating and sustaining community schools. Over the past two years, we have created and funded 130 new community schools. Community Schools are customized to a community's unique set of needs and they create opportunities available for students, families and communities, including: expanded learning time, school based health clinics, mental health programs, drop-out prevention strategies, parent engagement programs, and adult education opportunities. These resources are embedded into and outside the school day.



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Ninety-four of these new community schools are in the School Renewal Program, a strong, clear commitment from the City to improve our most struggling schools. With an investment of \$187 million in FY17, the City is providing targeted, tailored supports to 94 of New York City's most struggling schools, including turning each school into a community school. These interventions have a strong focus on improving student attendance and demonstrated rigorous instruction.

Under my leadership the Department of Education has also rolled out many new initiatives, including:

- A new streamlined accountability system to best support schools, which aligns the responsibilities of supervising and supporting schools with the superintendents. The reforms created clear lines of authority in our school system. Additionally, superintendents must now have at least 10 years of pedagogic experience, including at least three as a principal.
- New, geographically-based Borough Field Support Centers that provide integrated supports to schools across areas of instruction, operations and student services including health resources and counseling, support to students with disabilities and support to English Language Learners.
- A redoubled focus on parent engagement run by new Executive Superintendent Yolanda Torres. We believe in the importance of strong family-community ties for student achievement and have invested in training, providing increased professional development trainings for parent coordinators, parent leaders, and Family Support Coordinators and Family Leadership Coordinators.
- A new investment of \$23 million in arts education funding allowing for the hiring of 300 new arts teachers and resulting in 22,000 more students receiving arts education.
- 40 new dual language programs and more being developed to give students the bilingual and bicultural skills they need to succeed; and a model dual language program that will foster collaborative practices among dual language educators, elevate the quality of programs across the City and provide support and guidance to school staff interested in opening programs.
- To share strong practices, we created two important programs: Learning Partners and Showcase Schools. Together, these two initiatives demonstrate a commitment to professional development and collaboration among educators and schools that foster student learning and school improvement. When I see schools excelling in a particular area, I want them to share their secrets, not hide them.
- Expansion of language access services through new Field Language Access Coordinators at the Borough Field Support Centers, who will ensure that schools are providing parents with limited English proficiency full access to translation and interpretation services available to them in schools.
- And finally, approximately 220 new athletic teams, providing access to inter-school athletics to an additional 3,000 students, the majority of which are for small schools and for girls' teams.



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Last week, Mayor de Blasio presented the Fiscal Year 2017 Preliminary Budget that made targeted investments in our city's public schools, such as \$868 million in capital to reduce school overcrowding through 11,800 new seats, which would bring the total current capital plan to over 44,000 new seats. We are making a commitment in our FY17 budget that with any additional State aid, we will raise the Fair Student Funding floor at all schools to at least 87 percent – ensuring a citywide average of 91 percent – which would be an unprecedented investment of \$159 million in FY17 that will provide vital education resources to students in historically underfunded schools. Ensuring that every student has an equitable and excellent education is at the very core of my vision of public education. I've seen our schools evolve over the years, and I know these are the right ingredients for transformative change, but none of these new initiatives would have been possible without your leadership and support. That said, I would be remiss if I did not address the state aid that New York City schools are owed from the 2006 settlement of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit.

Since 2009 the State has not met the court-ordered obligation to our City Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit. In this school year alone, New York City public school students will be shortchanged some \$2 billion in State education funds. I am confident you will agree that it is time to make a significant down payment on this obligation by fulfilling a commitment and making equity in education a priority.

As I sit before you today, I am thinking of the message of College Awareness Day. College readiness starts in pre-k. It is up to us to provide these students with the opportunity not only to think about college but to also envision themselves as college students who will have successful futures.

To that end, I ask for the full support of the State Legislature for the continuance of mayoral control in New York City. I have seen firsthand the extraordinary difference mayoral control has made in our ability to move our school system forward and put students on a path to college and the work force. Providing free, full-day, high-quality pre-k to every 4-year-old, creating aggressive turnaround plans for our struggling schools and expanding community schools are just a few examples of reforms that were only possible because the mayor has direct responsibility for our schools. After more than a decade, we know New York City schools do better when the mayor has direct authority and accountability. Our students can't go back to the way it was before.

I look forward to working with the State Legislature and the Governor on the proposals outlined in the Executive Budget, and stand prepared to do everything I can to help. We have laid the foundation, we are on the right path, and we need your support to continue moving forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.