



## PREPARING EVERY STUDENT FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND CAREER

Our education system is at a crossroads. With a stubbornly persistent achievement gap and low college readiness rates, we must rapidly work to improve our schools. Currently, only 23 percent of New York City high school students are prepared for college or a career. The percentage of black and Latino students prepared for college and career is abysmal, at only 13 percent.<sup>8</sup>

For the growth and stability of our economy, New York City must have a strong public education system, in which every student has a real chance to reach his or her individual potential and graduate high school prepared for success in college and career.

## The De Blasio Record on Education

As a public school parent, former school board member, former City Council member, and Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio has fought for every child in New York City to get what his own daughter and son received — an education from a New York City public high school that prepares students for success upon graduation. Bill de Blasio's administration will promote equity and social and economic justice by striving to establish *high-quality schools in every neighborhood*.

**Creating Truly Universal Pre-Kindergarten and After-School Programs for ALL Middle School Students.** In front of some of New York's wealthiest residents, Bill de Blasio called for an increase in taxes for New Yorkers earning \$500,000 or more to dramatically expand after-school programs for all middle schools students, and to create truly universal pre-K programs.

**Expanding and Improving Career and Technical Education.** While the Bloomberg Administration has opened up several new CTE schools, they have ignored many of the older CTE schools and have not focused enough on developing schools that focus on high-growth, high-wage and high-skill jobs. Bill de Blasio called for reforms that include dramatically expanding the number of schools in high-growth fields, as well as ensuring that all poor-performing CTE schools are matched with successful CTE schools in their field.

**Increasing Parental Engagement and Communication in the Co-Location Process.** As Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio demanded significant reforms in the way the Department of Education implements co-locations. These changes include requiring more information on the way co-locations will impact programs for students with disabilities in the building, establishing additional venues for parents to relay their concerns, and a process in which the DOE responds to parents' concerns.

**Fighting Unfair Closures By Standing Up For Struggling Schools.** As Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio successfully fought unfair school closures, including the closing of P.S. 114 in Canarsie, Wadleigh in Harlem, and Maxwell High School in East New York. Struggling schools require specific plans to address their needs, which is exactly what Bill de Blasio did for P.S. 114 — and it's what he will do for every struggling school.

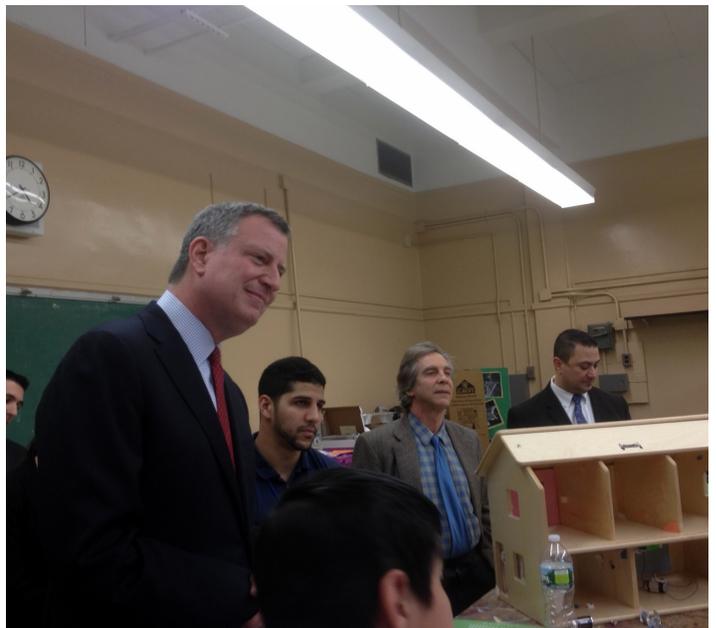
**Providing a Voice for Students with Disabilities.** There are 183,000 — or 17 percent — of students with disabilities in New York City public schools.<sup>9</sup> As Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio has provided parents of children with disabilities a voice in the DOE. In 2010, he initiated a multi-year evaluation of the DOE’s Special Education Reform, and he has called for increased professional development for principals and teachers to better meet the needs of students with disabilities. In 2011, Bill de Blasio launched a survey for parents of students with disabilities to learn their concerns about their child’s education and declared, alongside advocates, April as “Students with Disabilities Month.” In 2011, Bill de Blasio also called on the DOE to reform the kindergarten admission process for students with disabilities.



**Stopping Bullying in Schools.** In 2012, Bill de Blasio hosted an anti-bullying forum with educators and advocates, calling for reforms on the ways schools address bullying issues. These ideas include requiring the DOE to hold yearly workshops on bullying prevention, instituting new disclosure requirements on bullying prevention trainings at the school level, and examining data on bullying to help monitor schools’ anti-bullying strategies.



**Addressing Behavioral Issues.** Many schools have inadequate support to address students with behavioral issues. As Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio filed a lawsuit against the city in State Supreme Court, demanding data on students who were sent to the emergency room because of behavioral problems at school instead of getting the help they needed in a school setting. De Blasio also called for an expansion of the Community Schools model to ensure that all children receive adequate mental health services in schools.



## The De Blasio Vision for Quality Schools in Every Neighborhood

Bill de Blasio knows the Tale of Two Cities in our schools must come to an end. New York City will not thrive if only some of our schools meet the needs of students. We need a commitment from City Hall to ensure every child can succeed. As the largest school district in the nation, this is a great responsibility. Bill de Blasio stands ready to work with New York City's principals, teachers and parents to meet the needs of our students. He will work tirelessly to implement policies and programs that will create great schools in every neighborhood, and prepare all children for success in college and career.



### **Establish Truly Universal Full-Day Pre-Kindergarten.**

Our economic future depends on the best-trained, best-educated workforce in the world — and that starts with pre-K. By 2020, China will enroll 70 percent of children in three years of pre-school. India will have twice as many children prepared to learn on their first day of school by 2018.<sup>10</sup> But in New York City, tens of thousands of children do not receive any pre-K education. Bill de Blasio will increase the city's income tax on earners over \$500,000, from 3.86 percent to 4.41 percent. This five-year surcharge would yield \$530 million in new revenue to pay for universal pre-K for all 4-year-olds and fund after-school programs for all middle school students.

### **Offer After-School Programs for All Middle School Students.**

Over the last several years in New York City, after-school programs have been dramatically cut from 87,000 slots in 2008, to roughly 20,000 slots for FY 2014.<sup>11</sup> Bill de Blasio has called for a large-scale expansion of after-school programs for all middle school students by taxing New York's wealthiest residents. The extended learning time in after-school programs helps our students make positive gains in their academic performance, benefit from

diverse programs that enrich learning, improve communication skills with adults, decrease behavioral problems, and it offers young people alternatives to trouble on the streets.

**Ensure All Students are Reading at Grade Level by Third-Grade.** A key indicator in determining if a child is falling behind is if he or she is reading at the appropriate grade level. Third grade is a pivotal year in development, as children switch from learning to read to reading comprehension. One in six students who cannot read at their grade level by the third grade does not graduate high school on time. This hurts a student's ability to go to college or get a good job.<sup>12</sup> That's why reading at grade level must be an urgent priority. Bill de Blasio will ensure there are strong reading programs in every school that allow teachers and parents to continually monitor student progress in reading at grade level, and support students should they begin to fall behind. De Blasio will work with community partners to establish community and school-based reading programs, and he will raise awareness about the importance of reading at grade level through summer reading programs and expanded partnerships between DOE and the city's three public library systems.

**Improve Special Education.** There are 183,000 — or 17 percent — of students with disabilities in New York City public schools. But only 31 percent of all students classified as having disabilities graduate high school, and only 4 percent of students who are in self-contained classrooms graduate from high school.<sup>9</sup> The status quo is not working, and Bill de Blasio will commit to getting the implementation of Special Education Reform right with real reforms that provide the educational preparation for college and careers upon graduation. The city needs to work with local universities to strengthen professional development for principals and teachers, strengthen IEP teams by providing access to intensive professional services, better balance students with disabilities population in home-zoned schools, and to reform the SESIS data system to provide a more user-friendly and appropriate technology system for teachers, IEP teams and families.

**Lower the Stakes on Testing.** We all know that a single test should not be the sole determining factor of success in learning and development. Students learn in different ways, and our evaluation system for students and schools must reflect that reality. Bill de Blasio will remove single-test criteria for all admissions and gifted and talented decisions, including selective schools, and he will expand the use of portfolio assessments in schools. In addition, in his first year in office, Bill de Blasio will eliminate letter grades of schools. Overall progress reports will remain available for parents, and educators, experts and parents will be convened to determine if the progress reports are the most effective long-term way to evaluate schools.

**Involve and Engage Parents and Families.** Bill de Blasio will ensure increased and improved parent participation in decision-making at the school level and at DOE, and he will redirect the Department of Education to be more inclusive of parents by identifying model parent engagement schools and mirror these practices across the school system, ensuring that district superintendent offices provide all needed information about admissions, programs

and special education services. Bill de Blasio will work with Community Education Councils (CECs) to develop district plans for each school year, work collaboratively with the DOE in assessing space issues and struggling schools in need of support. We should ensure that all PTA and CEC meetings are streamed online and promote flexible schedules for parent-teacher conferences that include, where possible, options for night or weekend slots.

**Expand Community Schools Model in High Poverty Neighborhoods.** When it comes to preparing all children for college and careers, high quality schools must be the focal point for serving the needs of students and their families with a cradle to career strategy. New York City has incredible community school models, including Children’s Aid Society and Harlem Children’s Zone. Yet despite their proven success, these schools only serve a handful of students. Bill de Blasio will create a unified effort to develop a minimum of 100 community schools by the end of his first term. With improved communication among all city agencies — especially the Departments of Education, Homeless Services, and the Administration for Children Services — the city can make real strides in serving families and students in their communities.

**Increase Focus on College and Career Readiness.** Only 13 percent of black and Latino males are prepared for college by current DOE standards, and most of New York City students who attend our CUNY system have to take remedial courses. Bill de Blasio will not only continue the Young Men’s Initiative, but he will ensure that as an education system, all our children have a path to college or career by creating partnerships between high schools and the CUNY/SUNY system. De Blasio will expand Advanced Placement programs, Early College, and dual high school/college models. And Bill de Blasio will expand Career and Technical Education programs to meet the demand of high-growth job fields by focusing on placing non-college-bound students in jobs upon graduation.



**Reduce Class Size.** Reducing class size is critical for boosting learning, yet class sizes have increased over the last four years. Bill de Blasio will create a targeted class size reduction plan for our early grades and in hard-to-teach grades, such as ninth grade, in struggling schools. De Blasio will create Early Education Centers within communities that will free up classroom space currently used for pre-kindergarten in community schools, fight for the \$3 billion in court-ordered state funding owed to New York City to reduce class sizes as a result of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, audit the Contracts for Excellence budget to see how we can re-prioritize reducing class size, and work with school supervisors and principals to adjust the school day schedule and maximize staff time with students.



**Recruit and Retain Teachers.** Bill de Blasio will make it a priority to provide schools with a pool of knowledgeable, caring and committed teachers. The city needs to encourage New Yorkers to consider teaching as a profession by expanding “grow your own” programs in high schools, teacher residency programs, and partnerships with CUNY and SUNY colleges to expand the pool of potential teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers. The best way to keep teachers in our schools is to create career paths that encourage quality teachers to remain in teaching, such as Lead Teachers and Master Teachers.<sup>13</sup> Lead Teachers — used in a small proportion of city schools — mentor new and struggling teachers, develop curriculum, and generally strengthen the professional development of their peers.



**Place Great Leaders to Lead Great Teachers in Every School.** With the new teacher evaluations mandated by the state, principals will now have discretion in determining 80 percent of the criteria by which teachers will be judged, making it even more critical that principals have both the skill and trust needed to effectively evaluate teachers on their school team. Bill de Blasio is proposing to improve principal recruitment, development and support because we need to build a new pipeline of strong school leaders in our lowest-performing schools.

We need a new leadership-training model that requires all principals to have a demonstrated track record successfully leading teachers before being promoted. We also need more cost-effective and comprehensive support for new principals, such as scaling up programs like the Collaborative Leadership to Advance School Success (C.L.A.S.S.) and Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model (SAM) at Baruch College. The city should reduce bureaucratic paperwork for principals and move more day-to-day operational responsibilities to school business managers or assistant principals, making clear that the core responsibility of principals should

be leading academic instruction and supporting the professional development of teachers in their schools.

**Strengthen Citywide Oversight and Support For Schools.** The DOE needs to recruit superintendents that can support principals and strengthen citywide monitoring of all schools. Bill de Blasio believes we need to establish an evaluation office responsible for all DOE initiatives and programs, generating data for system-wide decision-making and examining the innovations attempted by charter schools. We need to develop strong district superintendents who will be able to encourage, coach, support, and hold principals and schools accountable for steady progress toward quality schools and build support for Partner Support Organizations (PSOs) with proven success in supporting schools and student achievement as “learning laboratories.” All schools need to be monitored on a comprehensive set of performance indicators that measure student readiness for success, with an Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment guiding schools in implementing rigorous standard-based instruction and assessment.



**Turn Struggling Schools Around.** Bill de Blasio believes that Mayor Bloomberg’s closing of more than 140 schools<sup>14</sup> has been an excuse not to address ways to help struggling schools improve and meet our expectations that all students graduate ready for college or a career. The city needs to create an early warning system for schools, so they can receive help before they get on the state’s Persistently Low Achieving list. An “Office of Strategic Support,” housed in the DOE, will develop intervention strategies in conjunction with the school communities and target individual high-need schools, which will receive short-term, intensive support.

The War Room team at the DOE and mayor’s office will work with the city’s most challenging schools to increase educational attainment. The War Room team will collaborate with all school stakeholders to analyze key indicators of student success, review accounts of school successes and challenges, and implement support plans. When school leadership is deemed to be a failure, the city should do more than replace the person at the top.<sup>15</sup> Instead, the city should have a Strategic Staffing Initiative where struggling schools would receive an experienced principal with success in turning around a school, as well as a complete team to assist that principal — including an assistant principal, a literacy coach, an expert in behavioral management and up to five teachers with success in helping struggling classrooms.<sup>16</sup> The War Room approach, along with the development of the Strategic Staffing Initiative, will increase the likelihood of success in turning around our city’s struggling schools.

**Improve Mayoral Control.** Bill de Blasio believes in mayoral control, but he also knows we must do a better job of involving and listening to parents. His plan to revamp mayoral control will allow Community Education Councils an advisory vote on major school utilization changes in their communities, which will influence and provide insight to the Panel for Education Policy (PEP). The role of Citywide Education Councils (high schools, special education, English Language Learners, D 75) will be enhanced by ensuring they can provide written recommendations to the Panel for Education Policy on issues related to their respective councils.

**Make School Breakfasts More Available.** As a City Council member and as Public Advocate, Bill de Blasio has supported many of Mayor Bloomberg’s public health initiatives, especially around obesity prevention. However, the city’s policy around meals in schools is foolish for the health of our children — and our budgets. Arguing that breakfast in classrooms could increase childhood obesity, Mayor Bloomberg has opposed mandating free breakfast in school classrooms. As a result, fewer than 5 percent of our schools allow breakfast in all classrooms, and only 20 percent of our schools provide free breakfast in some classrooms. In our school system, only 35 percent of our children receive the free breakfasts they are entitled to—while next door in Newark, 95 percent of the children receive breakfast. As a result, every year, the city misses out on more than \$50 million in federal aid designed to keep our kids from going hungry. As mayor, Bill de Blasio will require schools to make free breakfasts available in classrooms.<sup>17</sup>



**Strengthen School Safety.** Bill de Blasio knows we cannot keep relying on 911 calls and unfair suspensions and arrests to solve minor student misbehavior. These practices are not just overused and unproductive — they disproportionately hurt students of color and students with disabilities. Instead, we need to empower principals by giving them the resources and tools to deal with student misbehavior. Bill de Blasio’s plan will expand the community school model, which helps address mental health needs in our city’s school system, build capacity in schools for positive discipline strategies, and expand student support services through multi-agency/service provider collaboration.

Schools should adopt a Graduated Response Protocol to resolve student misbehavior at the school level, and use School Safety Agents (SSA) to focus on behavior that requires law enforcement response by integrating SSAs with school administration teams and conducting conferencing between SSAs and principals prior to arrests. We also need to improve educational planning for court-involved youth and educational re-engagement for placed and sentenced youth.

**Maintain Mandated Sex Education in Schools.**

While recent Department of Health and Mental Hygiene data revealed that the city’s teen pregnancy rate fell 27 percent in the last decade, there are still more than 20,000 teen pregnancies annually, 87 percent of which are unin-

tended.<sup>18</sup> In the summer of 2011, Mayor Bloomberg mandated sex education classes for middle school and high school students in New York City public schools. If elected, Bill de Blasio will continue this policy and expand support to New York City schools as they carry it out.

**Improve School Transportation.** Students with disabilities are disproportionately affected by poor bus service. On one day alone, 398 bus delays were posted. Of these, 76 percent were special education routes.<sup>19</sup> Bill de Blasio will reduce the maximum time limit students with disabilities are allowed to spend on the bus. De Blasio will also ensure parents are notified if there are bus delays exceeding 15 minutes, and clarify the lines of communication, so that parents have one point of contact when they have a question or complaint.

**Ensure Every Child Receives Arts Education.** Research shows that arts education helps children learn to think critically and creatively, and is positively correlated to attendance and graduation rates.<sup>20</sup> Yet too many New York City students do not receive the arts instruction required by law. Especially troubling: schools with lower-income students tend to offer the least access to the arts. Bill de Blasio will establish a four-year goal of ensuring that every child in every school receives a well-rounded education, including the learning standards required by the State Education Department, taught by certified arts instructors.