

TESTIMONY OF NYC SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR CARMEN FARIÑA  
ON THE PROPOSED 2017–2018 STATE EXECUTIVE BUDGET

February 14, 2017

Good morning, Senate Finance Committee Chair Young, Assembly Ways & Means Committee Chair Farrell, ranking members Senator Krueger and Assemblyman Oaks, Education Committee Chairs Marcellino and Nolan, and all the members of the State Senate and State Assembly here today. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of New York City's public school system and its students. I would also like to thank you for your continued partnership. With me is Raymond Orlando, Chief Financial Officer for the New York City Department of Education.

In honor of Valentine's Day, I asked principals why they love their school. See their responses, and post your own, at #PSILoveMySchool. We will keep tweeting throughout the day and into the week. School communities are already using the hashtag to share the exciting things going on in their schools.

As Chancellor, I am not satisfied until every single public school student in New York City is getting a high-quality education. However, I am proud of what we have accomplished so far on behalf of the City's students. Last year's graduation rate is the highest it has ever been, with 72.6 percent of high school students graduating in four years. Our dropout rate is 8.5 percent, the lowest it has ever been. We are also pleased with the results from last year's New York State tests in English language arts (ELA) and math, where New York City outperformed the rest of the State in ELA results for the first time, and our overall improvement outpaced the rest of the State in both ELA and math.

This year, we've also achieved:

- The highest-ever postsecondary enrollment rate—55 percent of the Class of 2015, with 77% of graduates enrolling in college.
- The highest-ever number of New York City students taking and passing Advanced Placement exams, with an 8% increase in both.
- The highest-ever college readiness rate—37 percent of all students, and 51 percent of graduates, in the Class of 2016 graduated high school on time and met CUNY's standards for college readiness in English and math.
- Our schools are starting earlier with 70,000 free, full-day, high-quality pre-K seats through Pre-K for All. This would not have been possible without the financial support you provided, and continue to provide, and I want to thank you for your commitment.

We are on the right path for continued progress and thank our students, families, and educators for their hard work and important accomplishments.



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While we are pleased with our progress, we know we have more work to do. That's why in the fall of 2015, Mayor Bill de Blasio and I announced Equity and Excellence for All, a set of new initiatives with ambitious goals for New York City schools: By 2026, 80 percent of our students will graduate high school on time and two-thirds of our graduates will be college ready.

These initiatives address our students' academic, social, and emotional needs. They build a continuum—starting with our youngest learners and the first book they successfully read by themselves, until they earn their high school diploma and college acceptance letter.

This school year marks the first full year of implementation of these Equity and Excellence for All initiatives, which will be rolled out to schools citywide over the next several years. There are over 800 schools with at least one Equity and Excellence program this year—a number which will continue to grow over the course of the year.

I would like to share some highlights:

Our Universal Literacy Initiative is taking off, with over 100 reading coaches in elementary schools to ensure that, by the end of second grade, all students will be reading on grade level.

Our Algebra for All initiative is improving math instruction in over 200 elementary, middle, and high schools. We're starting this work in the fifth grade, and will ensure that all eighth graders have access to algebra.

Our College Access for All initiative is making college an achievable expectation for our students. We have eliminated the CUNY application fee for our low-income students and all high school juniors will take the SAT for free during the school day on April 5th for the first time this year. 20,000 middle schoolers are visiting colleges and we're giving families additional supports along the way.

Last year, we saw a record high number of students who took at least one AP exam. Participation and performance gains were largest for Black and Hispanic students, with an 18 percent increase in the number of Black students passing at least one AP exam, and a 10.8 percent increase in the number of Hispanic students passing at least one AP. Our AP for All initiative, which is bringing new AP courses to 63 high schools this year—and will eventually bring every high school student access to at least five AP classes—will build on this progress. Expanding access to these courses is critical, and I applaud Governor Cuomo's proposal to increase the amount of State funding used to assist low-income students with exam fees.

The Single Shepherd initiative in District 7 in the Bronx and District 23 in Brooklyn is showing promise; I have been blown away by what is happening in these schools. The initiative serves all 16,000 students in 50 schools and provides them with a dedicated counselor or social worker who will guide them on a path to success.



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We are constantly working with non-profit and private partners to meet the shared goal to provide every single New York City student with a quality education. This is true of our Computer Science for All initiative, made possible through a public-private partnership. Computer Science for All is intended to increase equity and access to computer science education, and many participating schools were required to develop a plan to engage traditionally underrepresented students, including female and African-American and Latino students. In particular, our work in elementary schools is intended to expose underrepresented students to computer science at a younger age so they gain the skills and confidence to pursue pathways in computer science and technology. We also have a public-private partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation and the musical Hamilton, has enabled 20,000 New York City students to experience the show and take part in an educational exercise that explores its themes. I know that's something many adults wish they had the opportunity to take part in as well.

And for all our schools, there is always an opportunity to learn and grow, particularly from each other. Through the District-Charter Partnerships program, district and charter schools are coming together to share best practice on specific topics, like instruction for English Language Learners and alternative discipline, and the sharing goes in both directions.

In addition to the programs I mentioned earlier, we've expanded access to physical education and sports programs, particularly for female students and those that attend smaller schools. There are 150 community schools providing access to mental health, health and vision services. We're working towards changing school climate and implementing restorative practices in our schools. For the first time our summer programs are serving high need 2nd graders and we plan to serve 4,400 more 2nd graders in the upcoming summer.

I am also particularly proud of our work to better serve students who are English Language Learners (ELLs). As a former ELL myself, this work is very personal. We currently have 434 bilingual programs in every borough in the city, and will continue to open more. We are holding native language family engagement conferences, in Spanish, Bengali, Arabic, and Mandarin. These conferences give parents an opportunity to take part in workshops and activities in their native language.

Our former ELL's, students who placed out of being an ELL in the prior two years to graduation, posted great gains in graduation rates, up to 84.1 percent up from 78.9 percent last year. We still have to do more, and that's why we have partnered with Dr. Nonie Lesaux from the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Language Diversity and Literacy Development Research Group to design an institute to equip schools with tools and knowledge to independently deepen their work with ELLs. I thank the Assembly Education Committee for holding a hearing on ELLs last December, and the leadership exhibited from legislators on this important issue.

Additionally, since I became an educator 51 years ago, involving parents has been a central focus —this continues each and every day across the DOE. We are pleased that our increased emphasis on parent engagement has resulted in significantly more parents attending parent-teacher



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conferences, participating in parent groups and running for their local Community Education Council (CEC). In fact, CEC elections are happening right now, and I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to ask you to encourage parents to text “RUN2017” (all one word with no spaces) to 877-877 to learn more about running for an education council. To learn more about the CEC elections this year and to apply, parents should visit NYCparentleaders.org. The last CEC and citywide council elections in 2015 had 1,290 parents apply to be part of their local CEC, up from 729 in 2013 and 511 in 2011. We are hoping for even greater numbers this year.

The DOE also continues to focus on increasing diversity through system-wide and localized approaches, and I have asked my senior leadership team to work on these important efforts through operations, programming, instruction and policy. Last year, we implemented our first-ever diversity in admissions pilot, encouraging principals to develop admissions priorities to increase diversity. I am pleased to report that we will expand this program to 19 schools this year. I want to thank the legislature for the funding in last year’s budget to support initiatives to help increase diversity in our Specialized High Schools. This funding, in part, supports several initiatives, including outreach, teacher training, and tutoring and preparation programs, all targeted toward students underrepresented at our Specialized High Schools.

I am also grateful for the funding the DOE received last year under the My Brother’s Keeper Initiative, and I am pleased to see funding included in the proposed budget for this year as well. We look forward to continuing to work with you to support NYC students with funding from both these initiatives.

I also want to thank the legislature for the Smart Schools Bond Act. Although our proposal has not yet been approved by the State, that funding will go a long way toward bolstering our efforts to modernize our schools—including supporting our Computer Science for All effort—and to fully remove and replace Transportable Classroom Units (TCUs). This administration has committed to prioritizing the removal of all 352 TCUs in place when the Mayor took office. There is \$405 million in the City’s Capital Plan for the removal of TCUs, \$300 million of which is Smart Schools Bond Act funding. This fully funds the cost of the removal of all TCUs. To date, 94 have been removed, and plans are underway to remove 104 more; we are actively creating plans to remove the remaining TCUs. The removal of TCUs goes hand-in-hand with our funding for over 44,000 new school seats in the current 5-Year Capital Plan and in January we committed to funding 38,000 more in the next 5-Year Capital Plan.

More broadly, I would like to thank the Legislature for always supporting additional funding for our public schools. Additional State funding has allowed us to do more for students, including addressing inequity in funding to our schools through Fair Student Funding (FSF). Over two years, we raised the citywide average from 88 percent to 91 percent. We are funding all Renewal and Community Schools at 100 percent of their FSF level and no school in the city is below 87 percent. Next year, we intend to raise the citywide average to 92.5 percent with no school below 90 percent of their FSF level, a plan that is contingent on a similar level of growth in Foundation Aid as we’ve received in the past two years. And we are committed to getting to 100 percent for all schools by FY21, an accomplishment that can be realized if the State continues its



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commitment to fulfill the Campaign for Fiscal Equity settlement. I know this is a priority for many of you as well, and I deeply appreciate your commitment. The phase-in of Foundation Aid is critical to ensuring funding levels that will enable the City to provide a constitutionally guaranteed sound basic education to our students. The State's commitment to satisfying the shortfall must remain intact.

As for some of the budget's other proposals:

I want to voice my support for NYSED's request for additional funding for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. CTE programs provide a unique opportunity to prepare students with the skills and rigorous academics to both graduate with a career skill and be college ready. We are investing in 40 new high-quality CTE programs over the next three school years and strengthening our numerous existing programs. An important step we can take to help improve CTE is to change the regulations around licensing for CTE teachers to allow more individuals with relevant field experience the opportunity to teach some of the harder to staff CTE subjects, including computer science.

The budget also makes several changes to the charter school landscape that come at an expense to the Department of Education. It is important that this be balanced with continued improvement in our public schools. In order to maintain that balance, the state must fund any increased support to Charter schools, not New York City.

All of the progress I have described would not have been possible without Mayoral Control of the New York City school system. I have worked in three different governance systems, in many different capacities—as a teacher, staff developer, principal, superintendent, Deputy Chancellor and now Chancellor—and I can say without a doubt that this governance system is the most efficient, the most transparent, and most capable of getting results for students. A three-year extension is in the Executive Budget. Let's make sure it's in the enacted budget.

With hard work and appropriate resources, New York City's students are capable of anything. I know you feel the same way, and I am grateful for your hard work on behalf of your communities and their students, all of whom deserve the best opportunities. We have a lot of work ahead of us. I thank you for your time and look forward to answering your questions.

