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PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESS

Latest News for Parents from the NYC Department of Education



City Schools Aim for Equity, Excellence

Mayor Bill de Blasio and Chancellor Carmen Fariña announced last month a set of proactive new standards for New York City public schools. These reforms, an investment of \$186 million annually, will set the system on track to raise student achievement in all schools, for all students.

“There is a tale of two cities in our schools, and we will not accept it. Each and every child in each and every classroom deserves a future that isn’t limited by the zip code of their birth,” Mayor Bill de Blasio said at the Bronx Latin school. “Our schools must run on the twin engines of equity and excellence.”

The initiatives laid out by the Mayor set critical benchmarks for students to meet throughout their K-12 education in New York City public schools. These are common sense policies that will equip students with the tools necessary to graduate and achieve post-secondary success.

Continued on next page



● **Computer Science for All:**

Every student will receive a computer science education within ten years through an \$81 million public-private partnership between the City of New York, the New York City Foundation for Computer Science Education (CSNYC), and private partners who have committed to matching City funds. This program is for students in all grade levels.

● **Universal 2nd Grade Literacy:**

Every elementary school will have a licensed reading specialist, who will focus primarily on helping struggling second-graders improve their literacy skills. All schools with low reading proficiency in grade 3 will have a specialist by school year 2017-18, and English Language Learners and students with disabilities will receive additional supports to keep them on track with their peers.

● **AP for All:** Every high school student will have access to a range of Advanced Placement courses by 2022, beginning as early as fall 2016. Schools will also have prep courses that will help students build AP readiness.

● **Algebra for All:** Every student will have access to algebra in grade 8 by 2022 and every student will complete algebra by the end of grade 9. This will enable them to reach more advanced math in high school, and prepare them for college-level courses.

● **College Access for All:** All high schools – approximately 500,000 students – will have the resources to provide each student with the opportunity to visit a college campus, get help completing applications or be paired with a college student who can serve as a mentor. Families will also

receive assistance with financial planning, so that college can be a real and affordable possibility for their family.

● **Single Shepherd:** Every student in grades 6-12 in districts 7 and 23 will be paired with a dedicated counselor, who will support them through graduation and college enrollment.

“These reforms take tools proven to drive success and make them the new standard for every student and every school. These are the building blocks that will ensure our students and this City can compete in a world that demands more education than at any time in our history,” said the Mayor.

Chancellor Carmen Fariña joined the Mayor at the event and pledged to dedicate all Department staff and resources necessary for success.

“I’ve seen our schools evolve over the last 50 years, and I know these are the right ingredients for transformative change,” said the Chancellor. “Ensuring that every student has an equitable and excellent education is at the very core of my vision of public education.”

For more information about the new initiatives, see the [Mayor’s press release](#), or read the entire [speech](#).

Parent to Parent with Yolanda Torres

Dear Parent,

It was wonderful to meet many of you at the Chancellor's Parent Conferences for middle schools and high schools earlier this month. It's exciting to get feedback on how we can better engage with you. I look forward to meeting more of you on **Saturday, October 17** for the **Chancellor's Parent Conference for elementary schools** at the Tweed Courthouse, located at 52 Chambers Street in Manhattan, where Chancellor Carmen Fariña will provide the keynote address.

In addition, next **Saturday, October 24** from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. we will be hosting the **Chancellor's Conference for Education Councils** at Tweed Courthouse. The event will be open to CEC members, Presidents' Council members and Community Board education chairs. For the first time, we will be bringing together elected parent leaders from across the City in an effort to build relationships with and between them.

There will be workshops presented by deputy chancellors on topics ranging from the role of superintendents, teacher evaluations, co-locations, pre-kindergarten, and English Language Learners.



It is not a coincidence that you have been hearing and seeing a lot more about parent engagement. Parent engagement is not just a priority for New York City; there is a growing national commitment to parent leadership. To take full advantage of this momentum, it's imperative for all of us to think about what will bring us together as school communities, and as a whole system. That's why we need to hear from you, so that we can use your wisdom and experience to collaborate on family and community involvement in schools and at the district level.

I know from personal experience about the socio-economic barriers that exist, and can minimize your ability to participate in your child's

education as fully as you might like. However, I believe strongly that parents can educate themselves, for your own growth as individuals and as advocates of your child's education. Becoming involved as a parent leader allows you to learn firsthand how to support your school. It also gives you a sense of community, allowing you to communicate and collaborate with your fellow parents towards a common goal.

It is also important to remember that as a public school parent you are automatically a member of your Parent Association (PA) or Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Attend meetings to learn what is going on at your child's school, exchange ideas, solve problems, make budget decisions, and help direct your school's future.

For more information on opportunities to become a parent leader, please consult page 6 of [Achieve NYC](#), your parent guide.

Let's keep the lines of communication open.

Best,

Yolanda Torres,
Executive Superintendent of FACE

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PARENT TALK SERIES

Fostering School-Home Connection

More than 400 parents and children attended the launch of the first session of new *Parent Talk Series* hosted by the Division of Family and Community Engagement (FACE). In these special engagements, families are encouraged to learn through conversation, discussing education themes and current events.

The inaugural event was held on October 10 at the AMC Lincoln Square movie theater on the Upper West Side. Parents and their children – all public school students – joined together to watch a screening the film "He Named Me Malala" followed by a panel discussion. The event was held in collaboration with Participant Media and the Malala Fund, an organization which seeks to empower young girls through enabling their safe completion of a full 12 years of education.

"Through all the pain and violence Malala was subjected to, she



still stands strong, and I feel that this is a lesson we can all learn from," said parent Melody Walton, who attended the event. "I felt empowered by her story because I struggle every day with my special needs daughter, Erica, and I continue to fight for her to have a quality education and bright future."

The youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Malala Yousafzai co-founded the Malala Fund with her father. Malala had been targeted for many years for being an outspoken critic of the Taliban for banning girls from attending school in her home country of Pakistan. On October 9, 2012, 15-year-old Malala boarded her school bus in northwest Pakistan and was shot by the Taliban. After being flown to England and making a miraculous recovery, Malala – now an 18-year-old high school student residing in England – has become an icon for female education activism.

Through the *Parent Talk Series*, FACE seeks to demonstrate to parents the power of involvement in their child's education. By using compelling current events which focus on important figures and news in education, FACE hopes to engage even more families.

"Strengthening the school-home connection ensures learning and social-emotional development are consistent both in and out of school," said Executive Superintendent of FACE Yolanda Torres. "Research shows that strong parent engagement produces higher attendance rates, minimizes disciplinary incidents, increases test scores and graduation rates, and bolsters student self-esteem."

To stay up-to-date on future *Parent Talk Series* events, and other events for parents, please visit the [Parent Events](#) page on the DOE website.



NYC Students See Gains on SAT Scores and AP Exams

New York City students outperformed the state and nation, showing increases in SAT participation and scores last school year, and the number of students taking and passing Advanced Placement exams also increased.

City students' SAT scores were substantially better than those nationwide, and increased in every section across all ethnic groups. The average SAT math score for NYC seniors increased three points from 463 to 466, while the average critical reading score increased four points from 440 to 444 and the average writing score increased three points from 436 to 439. Nationwide, average scores on all three components of the SAT fell. In the rest of New York State, average scores fell in math and writing and stayed flat on the critical reading portion of the exam. The number of City seniors taking the SAT also increased from 47,950 students to a record 48,678 students.

The number of students taking and passing at least one Advanced Placement exam also increased across all ethnic groups. The gains reflect the DOE's ongoing commitment to increasing college access and planning opportunities for all students. On Advanced

Placement, the number of students taking at least one exam rose 8.0%, from 39,318 students to a record 42,481 students, and has increased 40.1% in the last five years. Participation increases were largest for Black and Hispanic students: specifically, 16.0% more Black students and 8.7% more Hispanic students took at least one AP exam in 2014-15 than in the previous year. The number of students passing AP exams also increased by 5.9%.

This commitment to improvement across all student groups was reinforced by Mayor Bill de Blasio's announcement last month. College Access for All and AP for All were two of the key initiatives presented as part of the Mayor's plan for equity and excellence in education.

"I believe that all our students should graduate high school with the skills, coursework, and college planning they need to thrive in college, and we're investing in that work like never before with College Access for All and AP for All," said Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña. "I'm not surprised to see more New York City students taking these exams and meeting the high bar that they set, and I look forward to the work to come."

Dates to Remember

Chancellor's Parent Conference for Elementary Schools

Saturday, October 17
8:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

Fall 2015
Parent
Conferences
Save These Dates!



RSVP Here Middle and High School Parents Saturday, October 3 8:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

RSVP Here Elementary School Parents Saturday, October 17 8:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

Tweed Courthouse, 52 Chambers St., New York, NY 10007
Free Childcare for 4+ • Interpretation Services

Nov 3

Election Day: Students do not attend school.
Chancellor Conference Day for Staff Development.

Nov 4-5

Elementary School: Parent-Teacher Conferences

Nov 9-10

District 75 School Programs: Parent-Teacher Conferences

Nov 11

Veterans Day: Schools closed



Thousands of Families Register for NYC Schools Accounts

Since the NYC Schools Account launched on June 8, more than 127,000 New York City families have registered for an account. This figure is more than three times the number of families who had previously signed up for ARIS, the predecessor to NYC Schools Account for providing families with access to student information.

“By making it easier for parents to become more involved, an unprecedented number of families registered for these accounts,” said Chancellor Carmen Fariña. “This demonstrates parents’ desire for easy online access to important information on their child, and parents’ commitment to involvement in their education.”

With an [NYC Schools Account](#) you can access key information about your child’s progress in school, including attendance, report card grades, general student information, and test scores in one of ten languages on a computer, phone or tablet. If you do not yet have an NYC Schools Account, find out how to register online or in person [here](#).

Firebird

By Misty Copeland, illustrated by Christopher Myers
(G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2014)

In *Firebird*, American Ballet Theatre (ABT) principal dancer Misty Copeland shows a fragile, young dancer how to dream and soar. She assures the girl that with practice she, too, will “become a swan, a beauty, a firebird.” Misty’s own fraught childhood informs this uplifting story, which encourages boys and girls to transcend stereotypes and “find their voice, their wings, their missing piece.”

Speaking to the young dancer in the book, Misty recalls being “a dreaming shooting star of a girl,” longing to feel the sun shine on her face. She describes sweating at the barre and practicing a thousand leaps and arabesques while reaching for the sky.

Misty doesn’t describe her challenging home life in her book, but she has spoken publically about what it was like to live with five siblings in a shabby motel room, struggling to find a place to sleep on the floor. Discovering ballet at age 13 “was like finding the missing piece to my puzzle,” she writes in a letter to readers published in her book. If ballet was her craft, it was also her salvation, enabling her to dance away her worries and fears.

Unfortunately, there was no clear path to the top for her. In books and on stage, none of the ballerinas looked like Misty. They weren’t brown-skinned, with curvy, athletic bodies, and tendrils sweeping their faces. But through hard work and determination, Misty shattered the stereotypes, rising through the ranks at ABT. This year, she became the first African-American woman to be promoted to principal dancer in the company’s 75-year history.

With *Firebird*, Misty calls on her own experiences to inspire children—no matter what they look like or what they struggle with—to dream limitless dreams. Keeping our children on a path to bright futures is also our job as parents. I would like us all to use the arts as a vehicle for encouraging students to break barriers and aim beyond the world of the classroom. Sometimes, in our push for academic results, we forget that the arts bring a special gift to our children—by tapping into their creativity, building on their passions, and reinforcing the value of focus, hard work, practice, and performance.

We must ensure that all of our students have opportunities, like Misty, to create and soar, to have the sun shine on their faces, and to have the spotlight shine on them.

Warmly,

Carmen Fariña

Parent Leader Corner

News and updates for parent leaders

Parent Association (PA) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Have you sent a letter home welcoming all parents to the PA/PTA?

As a best practice, the letter should highlight the fact that all parents are automatically members of the PA/PTA. Inform parents that they do not have to pay dues to be members, and that the only qualification to run for office is being the parent of a child in the school.

Have you posted your contact information?

To be effective representatives, PA/PTA officers must be reachable by the membership. The executive board must make available a list of elected PA/PTA officers' names, with either a phone number or email address. A way to contact the PA/PTA executive board, such as a DOE-issued PA/PTA email address, must also be provided.

The list of officers, with the contact information, must be posted in the school at the beginning of the school year, and must be available in the principal's office and at every PA/PTA meeting.

Have you checked with your parent coordinator to make sure the information on the Election Certification Form has been entered correctly in the School Parent Leader Contact Information (SPLCI) system?

This step is necessary to ensure your school is represented on the Presidents' Council.

Presidents' Councils

Complete the [Presidents' Council Election Certification Form](#), and submit it to FACE via [email](#) or fax (212)374-0076. This form is needed to identify your Presidents' Council representative to the Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council (CPAC). If you have co-presidents, be sure to indicate which one is the CPAC representative. If your president is not able to attend CPAC meetings, a designee must be selected and listed on the form.

1. Send your election results and the name of your CPAC representative to infocpacnyc@gmail.com.
2. Be sure to attend the next CPAC meeting on **Thursday, November 12 at 9 a.m.** The meeting will be located at the Tweed Courthouse, 52 Chambers Street, 2nd Floor Conference Room, Manhattan.
3. Verify that FACE has the elections certification form. If something comes up for a vote, you won't be able to vote without it.

Community / Citywide Education Councils

Schedule your quarterly joint meetings

Citywide/Community Education Councils and Presidents' Councils should meet quarterly to discuss engagement and potential challenges in their districts. Have you scheduled your joint meeting yet?

Fill vacancies on your council

Vacancies should be filled as soon as possible to ensure the council doesn't fall below quorum. If you have not already done so, take

efforts to advertise vacancies around the school community. For ideas on how to engage your school community to find individuals who may fill these vacancies, consult your Presidents' Council for recommendations, and ask your district's superintendent to announce the vacancies at the next parent workshop. Applications for the CCEC are available [here](#).

Notify FACE of resignations and vacancies

If you have resignations or vacancies, email CCECinfo@schools.nyc.gov; in addition to the suggestions above, we can also advertise the opportunity to serve on your council on the CCEC [website](#) and in town hall brochures.

Please note that the "Same School Rule" which bars a single school from having more than one parent elected as a representative on the CCEC, does not apply when filling vacancies. For more information, please email FACE at CCECinfo@schools.nyc.gov.

ALREADY A PARENT LEADER? Email CCECinfo@schools.nyc.gov with feedback and suggestions on helpful information that we can include in upcoming issues.

GET INVOLVED!

Want to get involved in your school community as a parent leader? To learn when your district's Community or Citywide Education Council meets, call or [email](#) the CEC office. Information is also available [here](#).