

New York City Mayoral Policy Priorities



New York City is home to the largest and one of the most diverse school systems in the country. In order to adequately serve its more than one million students in over 1,600 district-run and charter schools, equity-driven leadership must be the baseline.

The next Mayoral administration must commit to taking steps to close persistent opportunity gaps and prioritize educational equity for all students, especially students historically underserved by the education system—students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and other special populations.

COVID-19 exacerbated educational inequities that existed prior to the pandemic, especially among students from low-income backgrounds and students of color. It will take significant, equity-driven investments to address the academic needs for all students, but especially students from communities that have been historically underserved by the education system and society at large. Incumbent leadership should provide a clear, actionable vision for New York City schools that directs resources and services to support schools as well as the communities that they serve.

The following educational equity priorities should be in the next Mayoral administration's agenda:

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Invest city resources to help address pre-existing inequities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

- Expand Community Schools models.** Community Schools support students beyond the classroom by incorporating social, emotional, and academic supports into the school environment. They invest in and strengthen school collaborations with community-based organizations to provide culturally and linguistically responsive services for students and their families. A **RAND** study found that New York City community schools positively impacted students' on-time progression and credit accumulation, as the initiative resulted in a 4.7 and 7.2 percentage point increase in the number of high school seniors graduating on time in 2016 and 2018, respectively. The study also revealed that the community school initiative led to a decline in the percentage of students who were chronically absent with the three-year effect for high school students decreasing by 8.3 percentage points. Moreover, studies show that students and families feel more connected and engaged in community schools. Recognizing the positive impact community schools have on school communities, Mayor Bill de Blasio recently announced that the administration would invest \$10 million to increase the number of community schools from 266 to 406. However, this is only about 25% of all New York City schools, leaving thousands of students and families who would benefit from this model out. The availability of wrap-around services like vision care, free glasses, medical care, dental care, mental health counselors, and tutoring that is available in community schools are needed now more than ever.
- Provide a comprehensive, equity-driven approach to early childhood education.** Many historically underserved communities lack access to high-quality, affordable child care for infants and toddlers. While there have been many efforts to expand access to pre-kindergarten programs, there remain significant inequities in both access and quality throughout the birth to five education continuum, especially for students of color and students with disabilities. In a recent **Global Strategy Group** and Raising New York statewide poll, more than 90% of parents said they support investment in child care for New Yorkers who live in "child care deserts," as was recently proposed by the state's Child Care Availability Task Force. New York City's economic recovery will depend on educational leaders' commitment to ensuring high-quality, reliable, safe, affordable child care using multiple modalities, proven investments, and coordination of critical family services. This includes equitable salaries for early childhood educators and programs operated by community-based organizations.
- Address mental health and social-emotional learning in schools.** All students should have access to free culturally and linguistically diverse mental health and social-emotional care in schools. School communities that have experienced disproportionate amounts of housing and food insecurity and other forms of trauma should be prioritized. Social and emotional learning paired with academic development is critical for system-wide recovery. Leaders should commit to increasing

the number of school counselors, college counselors, social workers, and community-based supports available in schools. In addition, city and education leaders must ensure that all student support staff have access to the professional development and support that is needed to deliver high quality services to students and their families.

- **Provide academic supports.** To promote greater educational equity, the city should provide a robust suite of academic supports for all students. The city should establish publicly funded extended learning and enrichment opportunities to make up for lost instructional time and support a full and equitable transition into full time in-person instruction. The city should leverage the expertise of community-based organizations to create comprehensive

learning opportunities that allow students to learn in safe and supportive environments.

- **Address the digital divide.** Educators at every level of the system should have opportunities for professional learning that expands their ability to use technology for teaching and learning. There should be a full investment in infrastructure that will support educators to make academic content broadly accessible from remote locations including, but not limited to a central learning management system and upgrades to broadband in and around schools. All students should be provided with a device that connects to the internet and supports student learning at home or in school and the city should find ways to support student connectivity—including access in the shelter system, public housing, and other public spaces.



Improve college and career readiness.

- Improve equitable access to advanced coursework.** Black and Latinx students and students from low-income backgrounds are less likely to attend schools that offer a full range of college and career-prep courses. New York City should enact a policy that ensures equitable student access to advanced coursework through automatic enrollment beginning in grade seven. Families should be provided with clear and concise information about enrollment in advanced courses and the courses their child can take in middle and high school to prepare for college, careers, and civic engagement. Communications should highlight the benefits of enrolling in advanced courses and the supports that are available for students. Teachers should receive the professional development needed to successfully support all students in advanced courses and offer additional academic supports for students who enroll in advanced courses.
- Support postsecondary transitions for high school seniors** and others matriculating into postsecondary institutions. Centrally hire more school and college counselors to support students with the college application process. While there is limited information available about the prevalence of college counselors in the school system, New York City's Department of Education [reported](#) a guidance counselor to student ratio of 1:215 in high schools during the 2020-21 school year. Guidance counselors work with seniors to develop individual educational progress and career plans, and they also provide emotional support to students. Now more than ever, students will need emotional support, but they will also need support with transitioning out of high school. Additional guidance counselors can help reduce guidance counselor workload and provide them with opportunities to strategically support students with transitioning out of high school.
- Improve postsecondary attainment.** Expand dual enrollment programs such as the CUNY Early College Initiative. Increase funding for the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) Provide additional funding to CUNY to support wraparound services like school-based food support, child care, counseling services, and emergency grants that recognize the immense financial insecurity many students will be under as they transition from high school into college. Further, provide additional funding to CUNY to support equitable access to information about academic, training, and counseling opportunities for students and families of students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, students who are multilingual learners, and historically underserved populations, particularly Black and Latinx males from low-income communities.



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Address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- Expand integration/desegregation programming.** New York remains one of the most segregated school districts in the country. **Research shows** that increasing diversity and integrating schools is beneficial for all students. Leverage the work of districts that have implemented integration pilot programs to desegregate schools across the city. Ensure that participating community school districts prioritize inclusivity by adopting culturally responsive and sustaining and anti-racist practices.
- Expand initiatives that promote educator diversity and retention.** New York City should expand educator diversity pipelines throughout the educational system. Building upon the work of New York City Men Teach, New York City should create more pipelines for educators of color into classroom, district, and central level positions. New York City should continue to lead the way on educator diversity by instituting local grow-your-own strategies within high schools, CUNY, and other local institutions. New York City should pursue reviving opportunity programs like New York City Teaching Fellows and other alternative routes into the profession.
- Inclusive instructional leadership and curriculum.** Support equity-focused, effective instructional leadership that is culturally responsive and sustaining. Implement more holistic and coherent standard-aligned

curriculum citywide. Provide all educators with professional learning content that helps them support students' cognitive, academic, social and emotional development. Create opportunities for educators to learn inclusive pedagogical methods that are trauma-informed, anchored in anti-racism, affirm student identities, and promote academic rigor.



The New York Equity Coalition is a group of civil rights, education, parent, and business organizations committed to fighting for higher achievement and greater opportunities for all students in New York State.