



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

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## Press Release

### For Immediate Release

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## Statement by Advocates for Children of New York in Response to New York Graduation Rates for the Class of 2016

**February 10, 2017 (NEW YORK CITY)** — *The following is a statement by Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York, on today's release of New York Graduation Rates for the Class of 2016:*

We are alarmed by the precipitous drop in English Language Learner (ELL) graduation rates and the sharp increase in ELL drop-out rates for the Class of 2016 in New York City. Only 30.8 percent of New York City ELLs graduated by August 2016 as compared to 40.5 percent of ELLs in 2015, representing a drop of more than 9.7 percentage points. Equally troubling, the drop-out rate for ELLs in New York City has grown 5.5 percentage points, from 21.5 percent to 27.0 percent over the past year. The new data shows that both New York City and New York State urgently need to double down on efforts to improve instruction for ELLs so that they can achieve their potential and graduate with a high school diploma. The decline in ELL graduation rates in New York City is particularly concerning given the fact that the New York City Department of Education has been under a New York State Education Department-imposed Corrective Action Plan for several years now as a result of the City's failure to serve ELLs appropriately. While we very much appreciate recent statements by state and city leaders indicating that immigrant students and ELLs are welcome in New York's classrooms, they need to do a better job at both levels of government of providing for equitable access to instruction and services that will set these students up for academic success.

We also remain concerned about the sizeable gap between the graduation rates of students with disabilities and their general education peers, with 44.8 percent of students with disabilities in New York City's Class of 2016 graduating by August as compared to 78.5 percent of their general education peers. Similarly, the statewide graduation gap also remains wide, with only 54.9 percent of students with disabilities graduating in 2016, as compared to 86.3 percent of their general education peers. Although these gaps have narrowed slightly over the past year, both New York State and New York City must step up their game to provide students with disabilities with the supports that they need in order to graduate from high school.

**About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)**

Since its founding in 1971, Advocates for Children of New York has been protecting the education-related needs of children most at risk of academic failure or school-based discrimination due to such factors as poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, language barriers, immigration status, homelessness, or involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice system. AFC's mission is to promote access to the best education New York can provide for all students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. AFC uses integrated strategies to advance systemic reform, empower families and communities, and advocate for the educational rights of individual students.

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