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SUSTAINING PROGRESS FOR NYC STUDENTS

A Call to Action for Policy Makers

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) has received more than \$7 billion in federal stimulus funding under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), an unprecedented infusion of cash that is allowing the City to fund a number of critical priorities. While some of this funding has been used for short-term expenses directly stemming from the pandemic, such as costs associated with reopening school buildings and accounting for the impact of lost instructional time, **the DOE is also using ARPA/CRRSA dollars to address student needs that existed long before the pandemic and that will remain long after federal COVID-19 relief funds run dry in October 2024.**¹ Among other things, stimulus funding is being used to:

- » Double 3-K enrollment and open new preschool special education classes to help address a longstanding shortage of seats for preschoolers with disabilities;
- » Expand access to summer enrichment programming and increase the number of community schools;
- » Hire 500 new school social workers, expand restorative justice practices, and enable every school building to have a nurse;
- » Bolster supports for students with dyslexia, students with intensive sensory needs, and students living in homeless shelters; and
- » Open new bilingual programs for English Language Learners and improve access to translation and interpretation services for immigrant families.

This brief highlights several key uses of education stimulus funds to address significant needs that will not go away when the funding expires. It will take more than \$700 million per year to sustain these new and expanded initiatives.² New York City's students and their families are counting on policy makers at the city, state, and federal levels to work together to ensure that the City's schools have the resources they need to avoid taking a massive step backwards and losing the progress that the stimulus funding has enabled.

3-K EXPANSION

Stimulus funding is underwriting the expansion of 3-K, with \$456 million in federal funding allocated for FY 2023 alone. 3-K is not a temporary program; it provides 3-year-olds with free, high-quality early learning experiences while simultaneously enabling their parents to work and contribute to New York City's economic growth. The number of children enrolled in 3-K has roughly doubled following this investment of federal dollars, rising from 17,500 in 2019–20 to 35,700 in 2022–23, and the DOE now guarantees a seat for every 3-year-old in 12 of the City's 32 community school districts.³ At a time when city officials are concerned about declining enrollment

in NYC schools, this popular program attracts families into the public system at the very start of their children's education and helps prepare the youngest New Yorkers to succeed in school and beyond. While Mayor Adams has announced plans to roll back the additional planned expansion of 3-K, the City will still need approximately \$100 million each year to sustain 3-K at its current capacity when federal COVID-19 funding expires, taking into account city funding already allocated for 3-K in future years.

PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION

An additional \$88 million in federal funding is allocated in FY 2023 for **long-overdue investments in preschool special education**. In recent years, many preschool special education programs at community-based organizations have shut their doors due to under-funding, leading to a shortage of seats in preschool special education classes: 800 young children were still waiting for a spot in such a class at the end of the 2021–22 school year, in violation of their legal rights.⁴ Overall, roughly 30% of all New York City preschoolers with disabilities—a total 7,805 children—did not receive all their mandated services in 2020–21.⁵ Federal stimulus funding is being used to begin to address these gaps, including by:

- » **Providing support to preschool special education programs with the goal of adding 800 seats in preschool special education classes** to help address the shortage.
- » **Opening hundreds of new preschool inclusion class seats** to increase opportunities for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to learn alongside their peers without disabilities.
- » **Hiring speech therapists and other preschool related service providers.**
- » Adding staff to help address delays in the preschool IEP development process.

The City has a legal obligation to provide preschoolers with disabilities with *all* their mandated services—an ongoing responsibility that dates not to the American Rescue Plan Act, but to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) more than four decades prior.

SUMMER RISING

The DOE, in partnership with the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), used COVID-19 relief funds (\$100 million in FY 2022 and \$236 million in FY 2023) to revamp its summer programming and expand eligibility to all students in kindergarten through eighth grade, not just 3rd–8th graders struggling academically. The free, full-day **Summer Rising program, which provides supplemental academic instruction in the morning and enrichment activities in the afternoon**, proved so popular with New York City families that nearly all 110,000 seats were snatched up within a week of enrollment opening in April 2022.⁶

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The DOE allocated \$10 million in federal funding in FY 2022 and \$60 million in FY 2023 for its community schools initiative. The DOE has used the funding to **restore cuts to existing community schools and to create additional schools following the community schools model, with the goal of increasing the total number of community schools citywide from 266 in 2020–21 to more than 400 in 2022–23**. Seventy new schools are coming online during the 2022–23 school year. Each school in the initiative partners with a community-based organization (CBO) to provide comprehensive wrap-around services—such as after-school programming, college access, adult education classes, and medical, dental, and mental health care—to students and their families.

New York City's community schools initiative has had a positive impact: a 2020 report by the RAND Corporation found that, compared to otherwise similar schools, community schools had significantly lower rates of chronic absenteeism; higher rates of credit accumulation and on-time graduation (high schools); and fewer disciplinary incidents (elementary and middle schools).⁷

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, & NURSES

In each of the 2021–22 and 2022–23 school years, the City allocated more than \$125 million in ARPA/CRRSA funding to school-based non-teaching staff, using this funding to better support students and their families by:

- » **Hiring 500 school social workers to provide support to students** (\$67 million). Nearly 194,000 students gained access to a social worker in 2021–22 thanks to this investment.⁸
- » **Adding school psychologists and family workers** to address delays in the evaluation and IEP development process for students with disabilities (\$10 million).
- » **Enabling every school building to have a nurse** (\$49 million).

The pandemic may have highlighted the critical importance of having staff on site with the skills and training to address students' physical and mental health needs, but city schools have *never* had an adequate number of social workers, counselors, psychologists, or nurses. For example, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that every school have a minimum of one full-time professional nurse,⁹ yet at least 137 DOE schools serving a combined 70,000 students did not have a school nurse prior to the pandemic.¹⁰ Similarly, while the National Association of Social Workers advises a ratio of one school social worker for every 250 general education students (and a lower ratio, such as one to 50, for schools whose students have more significant needs),¹¹ the citywide ratio for DOE schools stands at roughly one social worker for every 480 students—*after* the investment of federal COVID-19 relief.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES

Over the past decade, the DOE has worked to reduce the use of punitive, exclusionary discipline practices like suspensions—which disproportionately harm students of color and students with disabilities and do not make schools safer—and instead adopt restorative approaches that address students' underlying needs, teach positive behaviors, and keep students in the classroom where they belong. To this end, the City allocated \$12 million in federal relief funding in FY 2022 and \$14.8 million in FY 2023 to **support the expansion of school-wide restorative justice practices**. Restorative practices hold students accountable for their actions, help address the root causes of behavior, and build and heal relationships; their adoption is correlated with improved academic outcomes, school climate, and staff-student relationships.¹² The DOE has committed to bringing restorative practices to every middle and high school in New York City. Along those lines, the New York State Education Department just released a report to the Board of Regents with recommendations that school policy and practice must shift from a punitive, exclusionary structure to helping students learn from their mistakes, providing proactive and supportive alternatives to keep students in class, such as restorative practices.¹³ Sustaining the progress that has been made in New York City and making this promise a reality will only be possible with continued and expanded funding—at both the individual school and central DOE levels—for full and effective implementation.

LITERACY INSTRUCTION & DYSLEXIA PROGRAMMING

In May 2022, Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks announced a series of plans for reforming literacy instruction in New York City schools and better supporting students with dyslexia, allocating \$7.4 million in federal stimulus funding for this work in FY 2023. This investment is going towards **universal screening; two new specialized programs for students with dyslexia; and targeted support and training in identifying reading difficulties and delivering interventions for 80 elementary and 80 secondary schools.** It will be critical to evaluate and learn from these initial efforts, with an eye towards scaling success, setting the stage for long-term sustainability, and ensuring support reaches the students with the greatest needs. Teaching children how to read is one of the most fundamental responsibilities of our schools; the pandemic may have amplified public concern about low reading proficiency rates, but the need to fundamentally overhaul literacy instruction and intervention long pre-dates COVID-19. In 2019, for example, less than half of all New York City students in grades 3-8—and only 36% of Black and Hispanic students and 16% of students with disabilities—scored proficient on the state English Language Arts (ELA) exam.¹⁴

SENSORY EXPLORATION, EDUCATION & DISCOVERY (SEED) PROGRAM

The City has invested \$22.5 million in federal stimulus funds in the Sensory Exploration, Education, and Discovery (SEED) program, which is designed to support students with intensive sensory needs that significantly impact their ability to function and participate in school. This popular program provides **small-group support from occupational and physical therapists to help children develop sensory regulation and social-emotional skills** so they can be successful in the classroom. At SEED sites, students have access to specialized sensory equipment that is otherwise typically only accessible to children whose families can afford to pay for them to attend a private sensory gym.

SHELTER-BASED COMMUNITY COORDINATORS

The DOE received \$33 million in American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) funds specifically to support students in temporary housing, who faced significant barriers to participation in remote learning during the pandemic. The City committed to using more than half of its ARP-HCY funds to **hire 75 shelter-based DOE Community Coordinators to help families in shelter navigate the school system and resolve barriers to attendance, while funding an additional 25 coordinators through city funding.** Though COVID-19 exacerbated existing inequities, the more than 29,000 students who spend time in city shelters each year have long faced tremendous obstacles to success in school: more than 60% of students in shelter are chronically absent, meaning they miss at least one out of every ten school days, and their four-year high school graduation rate trails that of their permanently housed peers by more than 20 percentage points.¹⁵ Additionally, over 10,000 new students living in temporary housing have enrolled in DOE schools since July, many of whom recently arrived in the U.S. and are living in NYC shelters. Now is the time to sustain and grow shelter-based supports, not shrink them.

BILINGUAL PROGRAMS

Approximately 145,000 New York City students—about one in eight—are English Language Learners (ELLs). When provided with needed support, ELLs have the potential to outperform their native-English speaking peers. However, ELLs have long been left behind. Even before the pandemic, only 19% of ELLs in grades 3-8 were proficient in math on the 2019 state tests and 9% were proficient in reading, and only 46% of ELLs graduated from high school in four years. Though bilingual programs—in which students receive instruction in both their home language and in

English—have proven effectiveness¹⁶, currently only 17% of the City’s ELLs are enrolled in such programs, while four out of five are in English-only classes.¹⁷ As there are a limited number of bilingual programs in New York City, many families do not have a meaningful choice when deciding on an instructional model for their child learning English as a new language. To help address this shortage, the City allocated \$11.2 million in federal stimulus funding in FY 2023 for **the expansion of bilingual programs**. Given the dismal outcomes for ELLs, the City should be increasing, and certainly not decreasing, the number of bilingual programs.

TRANSLATION & INTERPRETATION

In the 2021–22 school year, approximately 42% of all students enrolled in DOE schools spoke a language other than English at home.¹⁸ We often hear from parents who cannot fully participate in their children’s education because they cannot understand the school documents they receive or meetings they attend about their child. In April 2022, Mayor Adams announced that the City would allocate \$7 million in federal stimulus funding to **increase the capacity of the DOE’s Office of Language Access**. Since that time, the need for such resources has only grown with the influx of thousands of additional Limited English Proficient families enrolling their children in city schools.

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As these examples make clear, New York City has taken advantage of an unprecedented, one-time influx of federal education funding to invest in long-term priorities and address ongoing needs that have historically been under-funded. The City is also using hundreds of millions of dollars in federal stimulus funding to soften the blow of reductions to schools’ per-pupil funding due to declining enrollment: in FY 2023, the City is investing \$160 million in “register relief,” in addition to holding schools harmless from mid-year adjustments due to enrollment declines. Even with this relief, the majority of schools are experiencing budget cuts; without federal funds, the cuts would be even more severe. And the loss of this extra funding will come at the same time as federal support runs out for the programs described above.

This means that **the school system is all too quickly approaching a steep fiscal cliff**. It is critical to ensure that new initiatives, such as those around dyslexia, can continue beyond 2024; that hundreds of schools are not forced to excess social workers who are providing much-needed support to students; and that families who rely on programs like 3-K and Summer Rising do not have the rug pulled out from under them. **It will take more than \$700 million per year to sustain new or expanded programs and supports, including those described here, once COVID-19 relief funding has all been spent.** Elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels need to start planning immediately to address this looming threat and determine how to fund initiatives that are having a real impact on the lives of students and families across New York City.

STIMULUS FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR ONGOING NEEDS: EXAMPLES FROM FY 2023 ¹⁹	
3-K	\$456M ²⁰
Summer Rising	\$236M
Preschool special education	\$88M
School social workers	\$67M
Community schools	\$60M
Contracted school nurses	\$49M
SEED program	\$22.5M
Restorative justice	\$14.8M
Bilingual programs	\$11.2M
School psychologists & special education family workers	\$10M
Shelter-based Community Coordinators	\$8.7M
Literacy instruction & dyslexia programming	\$7.4M
Translation & interpretation	\$7.1M

NOTES

¹ CRRSA funding expires in September 2023, and ARPA funding expires in September 2024.

² Our calculation is based on the FY 23 allocations for key long-term initiatives funded with federal COVID-19 relief funding, accounting for changes in the most recent financial plan. This document does not highlight every long-term initiative funded with federal relief dollars, so the full amount needed is likely even higher. The DOE has also estimated that more than \$700 million in the FY 24 budget does not have a funding source when the COVID-19 stimulus funding expires. NYC Department of Education, testimony at the New York City Council Committee on Education oversight hearing held November 16, 2022.

³ 3-K enrollment in 2019–20 comes from the DOE Demographic Snapshot, available at <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/school-quality/information-and-data-overview>. 2022–23 enrollment is from NYC Department of Education testimony at the New York City Council Committee on Education oversight hearing held October 19, 2022.

⁴ NYC Department of Education, testimony at the New York City Council Committee on Education oversight hearing held September 21, 2022.

⁵ NYC Department of Education, Annual Preschool Special Education Data Report (School Year 2020–2021), <https://infohub.nyced.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/annual-special-education-data-report.pdf>.

⁶ Amy Zimmer, “What to know about the hottest ticket in NYC, Summer Rising,” *Chalkbeat New York* (May 4, 2022), <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2022/5/2/23054129/nyc-schools-summer-rising-enrollment>.

⁷ William R. Johnston, John Engberg, Isaac M. Opper, Lisa Sontag-Padilla, and Lea Xenakis, *Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools: An Assessment of the Impact of the New York City Community Schools Initiative* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, January 2020), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3245.html.

⁸ Calculated using the DOE Demographic Snapshot (*supra* note 3) and the DOE Guidance Counselor/Social Worker School Reporting Data for 2021 and 2022, available at <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/government-reports/guidance-counselor-reporting>.

⁹ American Academy of Pediatrics, Council on School Health, “Role of the School Nurse in Providing School Health Services,” *Pediatrics* 137, no. 6 (June 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-0852>.

¹⁰ Does not include charter schools, pre-K programs, or District 75 schools. Reema Amin, “NYC will hire 400 school nurses amid pressure from educators and families,” *Chalkbeat New York* (August 13, 2020), <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/8/13/21367861/nyc-will-hire-400-school-nurses-amid-pressure-from-educators-and-families>.

¹¹ National Association of Social Workers (NASW), *NASW Standards for School Social Work Services* (2012), <https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice/Practice-Standards-Guidelines>.

¹² See, e.g., Lama Hassoun Ayoub et al., *School Discipline, Safety, and Climate: A Comprehensive Study in New York City* (New York, NY: Center for Court Innovation, October 2019), <https://www.courtinnovation.org/school-discipline>.

¹³ See Safe Schools Task Force Report: Recommendations for Reducing Disparities in and Reforming School Discipline in New York State, presented by the New York State Education Department’s Office of Student Support Services (December 2022), <https://www.regents.nysed.gov/node/10271>.

¹⁴ NYC Department of Education, ELA Test Results (2013–2022), <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/academics/test-results>.

¹⁵ Advocates for Children of New York, *Still Disconnected: Persistently Low Attendance Rates for Students in Shelter* (May 2022), https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/still_disconnected.pdf.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Ilana M. Umansky & Sean F. Reardon, “Reclassification Patterns Among Latino English Learner Students in Bilingual, Dual Immersion, and English Immersion Classrooms,” *American Educational Research Journal* 51, no. 5 (October 2014): 879–912, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214545110>; Rachel A. Valentino & Sean F. Reardon, “Effectiveness of Four Instructional Programs Designed to Serve English Learners: Variation by Ethnicity and Initial English Proficiency,” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 37, no. 4 (December 2015): 612–637. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373715573310>.

¹⁷ NYC Department of Education, 2021–22 ELL Demographics At-a-Glance, <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/academics/ELL-demographic-report>.

¹⁸ ELL Demographics At-a-Glance, *supra* note 17.

¹⁹ Stimulus funding is being used to support a wide variety of important initiatives; this is not a comprehensive list.

²⁰ As noted above, while Mayor Adams has announced plans to roll back the additional planned expansion of 3-K, the City will still need approximately \$100 million each year to sustain 3-K at its current capacity when federal COVID-19 funding expires, taking into account city funding already allocated for 3-K in future years.