



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

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Chancellor Melissa Aviles-Ramos  
New York City Public Schools  
Tweed Courthouse  
52 Chambers Street  
New York, NY 10007

**RE: Protecting Immigrant Students and Families**

Dear Chancellor Aviles-Ramos,

We are writing on behalf of the Newcome Education Network (NEN), which is a network of 27 organizations that serve and advocate for immigrant students and families across New York City. NEN was created in April 2024 by Advocates for Children of NY (AFC) to better respond to the educational needs of our newest New Yorkers. NEN seeks to improve educational outcomes for all immigrant students, including those in temporary housing, by enhancing the coordination and quality of services our members provide as well as advocating for system-wide change.

As we move forward with the new Presidential Administration, NEN strongly urges New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) to strengthen existing policies and implement additional measures to safeguard immigrant students' right to access public education.

We commend NYCPS for providing administrators with guidance and training on how to respond to requests by Non-Local Law Enforcement and for creating family-facing resources for immigrant families. However, as the new Presidential Administration starts making changes, it is essential that NYCPS take further steps to ensure that all schools are fully equipped to protect and support students. Below you will find a set of recommendations that includes updating guidance, policies, and training for schools; fostering partnerships with citywide agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs); building school staff capacity; and centering and supporting students and families.



## **1. Updating Guidance, Policies, and Trainings for Schools**

- a. NYCPS to update and re-issue, as needed, based on changes at the federal government level, **Immigration Guidance for Principals**. Updated guidance should include information about which school-related locations fall under ICE's Sensitive Locations Policy and information about not collecting sensitive immigration documents at the time of enrollment.
- b. NYCPS to create and issue family-facing school-related Public Charge guidance to supplement the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs **Public Charge** flyer. The guidance should highlight that students who receive school services such as special education and free meals are not considered public charge.
- c. NYCPS to make Superintendents and Principals aware of changes to any of the above-mentioned immigration guidance and policies and provide updated training as needed. This should include training on how to access all **InfoHub** resources.
- d. NYCPS to ensure Senior Field Counsel are aware of immigration and public charge policies as they relate to NYCPS students and families, and that they understand and can implement all NYCPS guidance.
- e. NYCPS to coordinate with the New York City Police Department to ensure School Safety Agents receive training that is aligned with NYCPS policies. This training should be updated as often as necessary.

## **2. Building School Staff Capacity**

- a. Schools to identify, and NYCPS to resource, a point person at each school to be trained by their Superintendent's Office on NYCPS protocols and policies designed to protect immigrant students and families, public charge, and community resources.
- b. NYCPS to create a list of stock phrases for school administrators to use in case of Immigration and Customs Enforcement visits which are aligned with the **Immigration Guidance for Principals**.
- c. NYCPS to provide trainings for all school staff, including front office staff, that covers basic immigration information, how to support students, rights of undocumented students and families, and typical scenarios our immigrant students and their families face. Remind school staff not to offer legal advice on immigration and to refer families to partners (See Section 3).
- d. NYCPS to ensure that CBOs that contract with NYCPS to run programs, including early childhood education programs and after-school programs, receive similar guidance, policies, resources, and trainings to those shared with schools.

## **3. Partnerships – Citywide Agencies and Community Based Organizations**



- a. NYCPS to partner with city agencies, including the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA), the Comptroller's Office, the Public Advocate's Office, and the New York City Council (NYCC) Committees on Education and Immigration, to ensure New Yorkers know that protecting our students and families is a city-wide priority, not just a school priority.
- b. NYCPS to partner with CBOs to offer legal clinics on site at schools.
- c. NYCPS to collaborate with local legal services organizations and other CBOs in their communities to expand capacity and ensure services are provided in a linguistically and culturally appropriate manner. Superintendents' Offices should support schools in identifying and cultivating relationships with CBOs.
- d. Schools and NYCPS to collaborate with trusted partners, such as houses of worship, to support immigrant students and families. These partners may also offer to host workshops and legal clinics.

#### **4. Centering and Supporting Students and Families**

- a. NYCPS to create and provide tailored support and resources for undocumented, unaccompanied minors and older students who may be fending for themselves and are particularly vulnerable.
- b. NYCPS to create a one-pager with local resources in their district (such as immigrant-serving organizations) to be shared with all students and their families.
- c. NYCPS to ensure all schools display, in prominent locations including school entrances, the **Immigration Poster for Schools** in all covered languages. Once a school identifies a point person for immigrant families (Section 2a), the school should affix their contact information to the Immigration Poster.
- d. NYCPS to provide schools with language-friendly mental health resources for families and students in collaboration with CBOs and city agencies.
- e. NYCPS to ensure that schools offer language access and cultural competency, especially for students and families who speak African, indigenous, and other low-incidence languages.
- f. NYCPS to partner with immigration law experts to create materials/guides/tip sheets on how to navigate the immigration system *pro se* to support families who may not have access to one-on-one legal advice, and should make these available in all schools and accessible online.

It is essential that all family and student-facing documents referenced above be translated into the covered languages, and where applicable, into additional languages spoken by families at individual schools, assuming a written form exists, with support from the Office of Language Access (OLA).



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Additionally, all student and family-facing documents should be made available in schools and easily accessible online to ensure that all families can fully access them.

We look forward to meeting with you in February to discuss these recommendations and to work with NYCPS to ensure that all students and families feel safe and welcome in our schools. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the aforementioned recommendations, please contact Rita Rodriguez-Engberg at [rrodriguez@advocatesforchildren.org](mailto:rrodriguez@advocatesforchildren.org).

In Solidarity,

The Newcomer Education Network

**Member Organizations:**

Advocates for Children of NY

Afrikana

Catholic Charities Community Service - NY

Center for the Integration and Advancement of New Americans

Children's Aid

Committee for Hispanic Children and Families

Counseling in Schools

Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project

Glasswing International

ImmSchools

IncludeNYC

InsideSchools

International Rescue Committee

Internationals Network for Public Schools

Kids in Need of Defense

The Legal Aid Society of NY

Mañana Otro Día

Masa

Mixteca

National Newcomer Network at The Century Foundation

New York Immigration Coalition

New York Math Academy and Coaching Services

Project Rousseau

Safe Horizon Streetwork Project

Safe Passage Project

Sinergia, Metropolitan Parent Center

United Federation of Teachers