



August 12, 2020

Office of the President

President
Mark F. Cannizzaro

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carranza,

I write on behalf of New York City's 6,400 school leaders urging you to heed their dire warnings concerning the city's September 10th reopening plan. We are now less than one month away from the first day of school and still without sufficient answers to many of the important safety and instructional questions we've raised on behalf of school leaders and those they serve. Given the lack of information and guidance available at this time, CSA believes that NYCDOE's decision to open for in-person learning on September 10th is in disregard of the well-being of our school communities.

While the city's messaging suggests that reopening plans have been developed collaboratively with our union, the city has failed to address many of our crucial concerns and ignored repeated appeals from school leaders to allow enough time to implement highly complicated protocols. Since last school year ended, our members have been working tirelessly to reimagine the upcoming school year and pleading for more information on the City's incomplete reopening plans. The slow rollout of guidance has forced us to once again address an unfortunate truth: schools will not be ready to open for in-person instruction on September 10th. A more realistic, phased-in approach would instead welcome students for in-person learning toward the end of September, following a fully remote start to the year.

Additional time before the start of in-person learning would allow our system to answer basic, but vital questions. When will nurses be hired for schools currently in need? How will school communities be informed of repairs to ventilation systems? When will schools receive PPE, thermometers, signage, hand sanitizers and cleaning materials to comply with the safety protocols? What additional support will be given to communities if they have a higher positivity rate than the city standard? Will we have sufficient staff to schedule both in-person and remote teaching? Do our schools have sufficient bandwidth to support remote instruction? When will we receive proper guidance specific to our students with special needs?

These are just a small sample of questions that must be answered for school leaders to provide a safe and successful educational environment for students. To be sure, no one understands how important it is to reopen our buildings more than our members. These public servants have dedicated their entire lives to serving their communities. They know firsthand how essential in person learning is to their students' success and growth, especially after the challenges and trauma brought about by the pandemic this spring. They experienced the frustrations and deficits of remote learning alongside teachers, parents, and most importantly, students. They also fully understand the hardships that remote learning causes working families and the fundamental needs that in-person services fulfill, particularly for

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underserved and vulnerable students. School leaders speak with these families every day and will continue to stand with those parents asking for schools to return to in-person learning as soon as possible.

However, the number one priority of all school leaders is to ensure the safety, health, and well-being of the staff and students in their charge. Regrettably, the city started the planning process far too late for them to have any faith or confidence that they can reopen their buildings on September 10th. Especially given that teachers do not report until September 8th, allowing frighteningly little time for the preparation and training necessary for these unprecedented circumstances.

On Aug 6th, the Chancellor's team met with principals to discuss the submission of individual school plans to the State for the first time, asking that they complete their school's submission within four working days. School leaders rose to that pressing challenge while also preparing to submit their programming model selection to the DOE by August 14th, which they have grappled with due to lack of information on student enrollment and teachers with accommodations to work remotely.

Once all individual school plans are submitted this week, school leadership teams must wait for approval and will have less than 15 working days to prepare for the arrival of students without much of the necessary guidance and training in place. The task before them is simply not possible to complete while simultaneously providing assurances of a safe and secure learning environment.

New York City school leaders are among the most talented and creative in the world. They stand ready and willing to take on the immense responsibilities of reopening their school buildings this fall, but I implore you to not ignore their voices at this critical time in the lives of New Yorkers—commence in-person learning only when our school leaders are confident they can reopen school buildings safely and successfully.

Sincerely,

Mark F. Cannizzaro
President

