

August 11, 2020

To: Mayor Bill De Blasio
Governor Andrew Cuomo
Chancellor Richard Carranza

CC: District 15 Superintendent Anita Skop
Brooklyn North Executive Superintendent Karen Watts
CSA President Mark Cannizzaro
UFT President Michael Mulgrew

As we pass the mid-summer mark, we are anxious to finalize and submit our reopening plans. We are eager to get students back into school where we can rebuild community, further develop relationships, address trauma, and learn together. But we can only do that if the health of our students and staff is the true first priority.

We are gravely concerned that the central response to opening has been piecemeal, and many of the most important questions about health and safety, space usage, academic policy, Special Education policy, and policy for Multilingual Learners still remain unanswered. Planning for such uncertainty is almost impossible without a clear long term blueprint for reopening, with coordinated guidance from the city and state education departments, and guided by public health experts. Both the CSA and UFT have asked for answers on a comprehensive set of questions, most of which remain unanswered. We can't plan properly if we don't have these answers now. Our District 15 Superintendent's team has been resilient in attempting to provide us with answers to our questions, but it is clear they do not have access to the information they need to support us.

Many of us lived through outbreaks in our school communities last March and saw overloaded isolation rooms, nurses without face shields and PPE, and no central response for providing these for us. Keep in mind, many of our schools still lack a dedicated school nurse and have lost nurses from affiliated organizations since the pandemic began. We have windowless classrooms and ventilation systems that have not been updated in decades.

There are ways to minimize risk of in-person learning. We can hold classes in parks, in closed streets, and in other open air spaces. We know that some schools that have abundant resources are already purchasing tents, negotiating outdoor space with elected officials, and raising significant amounts of money to purchase PPE for staff and students. Schools are actively working with CBOs and non-profit organizations to provide childcare options for staff and families on remote days. While we appreciate that school communities are actively seeking to solve these problems, we fear it will further the divide between the haves and have nots in our city. The COVID-19 funding provided to schools is completely inadequate to address the challenges we face. Our schools need immediate answers, a clear blueprint, and the resources to move forward safely.

We empathize deeply with our teachers who are fearful of returning to classrooms. The level of distrust of our city since the botched decision on school closures in March has not been healed or even addressed. Many of our staff lost loved ones and watched their families become incredibly sick. The DOE lost at least 79 employees, many of whom contracted the virus in school. As it has played out across our city, our paraprofessionals and employees of color have been impacted the hardest.

We desperately want to return to schools, we know that kids and parents need schools open and rely on us for critical services, but we cannot let that cloud our judgment and push for a hastily planned unsafe return that delivers a mediocre educational experience. **At this point, it is becoming abundantly clear that our schools cannot open safely and effectively on September 10th.**

If reopening school for some in person instruction is moving forward, we ask for the following to ensure we can manage risk and ensure as safe of an opening as possible.

Start the Year Remote: Designate September 10th-18th fully asynchronous instruction days so school staff can learn all new safety protocols, set up and inspect classrooms, train staff on trauma informed instruction, ensure promised building improvements have been addressed, and allow Building Response Teams time to practice safety procedures.

Phase In Blended Students: Allow schools the option of phasing in blended learning students from September 21st to October 18th.

Communicate Supply Shipments: Provide principals with guaranteed delivery dates, shipments details including items and quantity to be received (PPE, cleaning supplies, etc.), as well as procedures for distribution within the school building and procedures for replenishment.

Ensure building councils meet with custodial engineers: Ensure custodial engineers have collaborated with school Principals to verify physical distancing signage has been posted, classrooms have been adequately set up, excess furniture has been safely stored, and that cleaning schedules are prepared and shared with school leaders.

Provide Schools with Ventilation Reports: Reports detailing which systems have been inspected, what repairs, upgrades, or modifications have been made, and how it has been determined ventilation is appropriate in each classroom must be provided to each school principal.

Respond to School Exceptions Immediately: Many schools have submitted requests which are awaiting a central response. We need those responses immediately to plan appropriately.

Determine Eligibility for Reasonable Accommodations: Principals need final lists of staff members approved for reasonable accommodations to work remotely by August 17th at the latest.

Develop Protocol for Assigning Remote Teachers: Central must develop a procedure for selecting which teachers will teach remote only students if school leaders need more staff for remote learners.

Signed,

Wanda Ramirez - Principal PS 1
Peggy Wyns-Madison - Principal PS 15
Maria Diaz - Principal PS 24
Rebecca Fagin - Principal PS 29
Denise Watson-Adin - Principal PS 32
Pascale Pradel - Principal PS 38
Sara Panag - Principal PS 39

Lenore DiLeo-Berner - Principal MS 51
Katie Dello Stritto - Principal PS 58
Cristina Gonzalez - Principal PS 94
Eve Litwack - Principal PS 107
Elizabeth Garraway - Principal PS 118
Maria Interlandi - Principal PS 124
Stephanie Parsons - Principal PS 130
Stamatina Tina Hatzimichalis - Principal PS 131
Amanda Bueno - Principal MS 136
Anna Allanbrook - Principal The Brooklyn New School PS 146
Jason Foreman - Principal PS 154
EuJin Tang - Principal PS 169
Erika Gundersen - Principal PS 172
Maria Della Ragione - Principal PS 230
Erica Davis - Principal PS 261
Linda Mazza - Principal PS 295
Elizabeth Phillips - Principal PS 321
Rosa Amato - Principal PS 372
Noreen Mills - Principal MS 442
Arin Rusch - Principal MS 447
Scill Chan - Principal Brooklyn Collaborative MS/HS 448
Jill Sandusky - Principal Park Slope Collegiate MS/HS 464
Nicole Lanzillotto - Principal Boerum Hill School for International Studies MS/HS 497
Jessica Knudson - Principal PS 516
Jen Spalding - Principal MS 821
Michael Perlberg - Principal MS 839
Ruth Rodriguez-Rivera - Principal PS 896