

**Testimony of NYC Schools First Deputy Chancellor Donald Conyers
on Changes in COVID Protocols and Vaccine Mandate Implementation
Before the NYC Committee on Education**

October 6, 2021

Introduction

Good morning, Chair Treyger and all the members of the Education Committee here today. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Department of Education's (DOE) COVID-19 protocols and implementation of the vaccine mandate. I am Donald Conyers, First Deputy Chancellor at the DOE, and I am joined here today by my colleagues, Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson, Chief Administrative Officer Lauren Siciliano, Dr. Ted Long, the Executive Director of New York City's Test and Trace Corps, Dr. Torian Easterling, First Deputy Commissioner from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and Commissioner Melanie La Rocca from the Department of Buildings.

Homecoming

I want to take a moment to mention how exhilarating it has been to reopen our school buildings to all of our students. Over the past month, we have all had the privilege of witnessing students, families, and our invaluable staff joyfully reconnecting with each other. The evidence continues to be clear that teaching and learning face-to-face in the classroom is the absolute best way for our students to grow academically and socially. We are so thrilled to have them all back five days a week!

We are not simply picking up where we left off when the pandemic forced school buildings to close in March of 2020. Our enhanced literacy efforts are moving into action, our strengthened social-emotional support systems are helping our students cope with the trauma they have been through, and our health and safety protocols are keeping everyone safe.

Vaccine Mandate

Health and safety for our students and staff have always been our top priority. Last year we were the first major school district to open our doors for in-person learning and created the gold standard approach to health and safety during the pandemic that served as a national model. Schools were some of the safest places to be in the city, and we ended last year with just a 0.03% seven-day average positivity rate. We know from our experience last school year and over the summer with Summer Rising what works to keep our children, families, and staff safe, and that is exactly what we are continuing to do.

Heading into this school year, we knew that we had to continue our highly-effective, multi-layered approach to health and safety, but we also recognized that the amazing vaccines have now become our strongest tool in the fight against COVID-19. That is why we ensured that every school serving students aged 12 and over provided vaccinations on site during the first week of school. We also led the way among U.S. school districts in mandating vaccinations for all DOE school-based and central employees.

The mandate has clearly worked! Over 95 percent of all full-time DOE employees are now vaccinated, and more than 43,000 shots have been given out since the mandate was announced. Breaking that down further, 99 percent of principals have been vaccinated; 96 percent of teachers; 92 percent of paraprofessionals; 92 percent of school food workers; and over 90 percent of custodians. This all means that our employees and staff members are doing their part to keep their communities safe. Thanks to the vaccination mandate, New York City schools are the safest places to be.

So I am enormously grateful to every educator, food service worker, school safety agent, administrator, substitute custodial worker, and every other employee who stepped up and took this vital step to keep our kids safe.

We are also working together with our schools to provide every resource we can to ensure their needs are met. That includes thousands of vaccinated substitutes, with more teachers and paraprofessionals joining that pool of available subs every day. We are also providing schools with increased funding to support the cost of additional staffing needs due to the vaccination mandate, while working closely with them to ensure continuity of instruction and day-to-day school life. One benefit of being the largest school district in the nation is that we have the largest village of dedicated adults prepared to step up for our young people.

Changes to COVID Protocols

The vaccine mandate is a critical component of our multi-layered, CDC-aligned protocols that are keeping our schools safe and running smoothly. These include mandatory masking, maintaining distance, enhanced ventilation, testing, and daily screening requirements. From the beginning of this pandemic, we have been continually learning and adapting to circumstances as well as listening to the guidance of our trusted health experts. Being nimble in order to do what is best for our students has been essential to navigating these unprecedented times.

To this end, we recently changed our quarantine policy to align with CDC guidance. When a positive COVID-19 case is confirmed in a classroom, we no longer automatically close it, provided everyone has remained masked and maintained at least three feet of distance from whoever has tested positive. That change ensures that our students are able to remain learning in-person in their classrooms.

In addition, we increased our testing frequency to weekly from biweekly and have the capacity to deploy additional resources where they may be needed. As always, we will continue to make adjustments as needed to respond to the data we constantly gather so that our school buildings remain the safest places to be in the city.

Conclusion

Everyone throughout our entire school system has been hard at work to make our homecoming safe and successful. Thanks to our multi-tiered approach that combines vaccinations, ventilation, mask mandates,

enhanced cleaning techniques, testing, and our situation room that operationalizes quarantine and closure policies, all signs to date indicate that our system is working.

Again, I am so grateful to every staff member, many of whom work around the clock, striving to make this year safe and successful as our school communities reconnect.

Thank you for your time, and we will be happy to answer any questions you may have.



United Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals

**TESTIMONY OF THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
BY MICHAEL MULGREW
PRESIDENT**

**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**ON THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S CHANGES IN COVID-19 PROTOCOLS
AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VACCINE MANDATE**

OCTOBER 6, 2021

My name is Michael Mulgrew and I serve as the president of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). On behalf of the union's more than 190,000 members, I would like to thank Chair Mark Treyger and all the members of the New York City Council's Committee on Education for holding today's oversight hearing on the Department of Education's (DOE) changes in COVID-19 protocols and implementation of the vaccine mandate.

Last year, we were able to say that the city's public schools were the safest spaces in a community because of the strong multi-layered protocols we put in place to protect our students and school staff from COVID-19. However, this year, I must warn you that I think our current approach is much too lax.

While the COVID-19 infection rate in NYC schools remains low — a 0.16% positivity rate last week — we have reason to be concerned about the delta variant. I have traveled across the country and have seen the desperation in communities with pediatric Intensive Care Units at capacity. It's a dire situation we absolutely need to avoid here.

We cannot lose focus, and we certainly cannot let our guard down. Today, I want to share with you the ways I believe the DOE has watered down three key protections for our public schools: quarantine rules, social distancing rules and testing and tracing protocols.

Taken together, these changes put our unvaccinated children at greater risk, and they disrupt school communities at a time when they are already stretched thin.

Quarantine Rules

We started the school year with a very strong quarantine policy that was abruptly changed only a week after the first day of school. Under the new guidelines, unvaccinated students will no longer have to quarantine after coming in close contact with a student who tested positive, as long as they were masked and kept 3 feet apart. The administration previously required all unvaccinated close contacts of a student who tested positive to quarantine for 10 days.

With this change in policy, the challenge is that it is now up to the school staff to determine close contact. In a NYC school today, if there is a confirmed COVID-19 case, the principal, teachers and other school staff are, for all intents and purposes, the contact tracers. It is their responsibility to determine, for example, who sat next to the infected child during lunch, how long they were together, how long they had their masks off, were the children 3 feet apart, etc.

We are not test and trace professionals, and we should not be responsible for this added duty. We need stronger quarantine rules, especially in the elementary school grades where all students are unvaccinated because they remain ineligible for any of the available vaccines.

Social Distancing

Many schools cannot meet the goal of maintaining 3 feet of distance between students while, at the same time, ensuring that their full school roster is in the building every day. Rather than be honest and transparent about it, school communities were told to figure it out for themselves, particularly in our most overcrowded schools.

As a result, many of our members have informed us that their schools begin measuring the 3 feet from the middle of a student's desk, rather than the edge. This may sound like a minor change, but it is not. This can be the difference between 16 square feet per student with barely any aisle space between desks and 35 square feet per student, which provides for 3 feet of space from the edge of every desk.

We are going into the winter months, meaning we will be inside more. While adults are vaccinated, children under 12 are not, and too many of our middle and high school students are still not vaccinated. We need to do what the administration failed to do over the summer — put

our heads together and try to figure out an appropriate solution, either by renting space or making programming changes in schools.

Testing and Tracing

It's a shame we had to once again explain to the administration the importance of COVID-19 testing in schools. The initial policy published by the DOE planned to test school populations bi-weekly, but at our urging, the policy was shifted to weekly. There are, however, several issues I would like to highlight when comparing this year's testing policy with last year's.

Last year, 20% of the full school population, including adults and students, were subject to random COVID-19 testing, which could be mandated because there was a remote option for families who refused.

This year, only 10% of the unvaccinated student population can be tested -- and actually only a subset of that group because only those with signed consent forms can be tested. In other words, this year we are excluding from COVID-19 testing all adults, all vaccinated students, and unvaccinated students who do not have consent forms.

I want to be clear: This is dangerous. While vaccines are now mandated for adults, we know there will be breakthrough cases, most of which will be asymptomatic. But it's important we catch them for the safety of unvaccinated students and all families. We need an early warning system, which means we want a percentage of vaccinated adults tested as well.

As for tracing in schools, as mentioned earlier, we are not tracing professionals, yet it has become an added responsibility in our daily routines. When a person who has tested positive has been in a school, Test & Trace will send the principal of the affected school a template for reporting COVID-19 close contacts to the Situation Room. A Test & Trace liaison is supposed to contact the principal within a few hours to assist in the completion of the COVID-19 close contact form.

The form asks for date, duration and distance of potential "close contacts." It sounds simple until you think through the number of students a typical 3rd-grader spends time with during the course of a day; multiply that by 6 or 8 for middle and high school students who switch classes for subjects.

The bottom line is that our principals and school communities need help, which means restoring the Situation Room hours so they are the same as last year's.

Closing

We cannot accept these watered-down health and safety policies that have been put in place. Young children are unvaccinated, and we have plenty of older students who are unvaccinated as well. We need to restore quarantine guidelines so an elementary classroom with a confirmed case goes remote, 3 feet of social distancing is measured from the edge of one desk to the edge of another desk, appropriate space is rented for overcrowded schools or there are real programming changes, and Situation Room tracing protocols and hours are restored to match last year's.

Thank you for your time. I hope you will use your voice to advocate for these recommendations.

TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF LOCAL 372 | NYC BOARD OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES
DISTRICT COUNCIL 37 | AFSCME
TO THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 1, 2021
10:00 AM

Education Committee Chairman Mark Treyger and distinguished members of the committee, I am Donald Nesbit, Executive Vice President of Local 372 – NYC Board of Education Employees, District Council 37 – AFSCME. It is the honor of Local 372 to present this testimony on behalf of the approximate 25,000 New York City Board of Education Employees, under the leadership of our President, Shaun D. Francois I.

The start of the school year is quickly approaching, and getting our children safely back to school continues to pose a struggle. It has been over a year since we've been battling the COVID-19 pandemic, now with the Delta-variant posing a higher risk to individuals, including those who are fully unvaccinated. According to the CDC, the Delta variant is more than 2-times as contagious as previous variants.¹ This also includes the notion that fully vaccinated individuals can still transmit the viral genetic material to others. Even though the risk of breakthrough infections from fully vaccinated individuals is low, the contagiousness of the Delta variant poses a danger to children under 12 years of age.

As of right now, the FDA has not approved individuals under 12 years of age to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Because the Delta variant is twice more harmful, having a mask mandate in place is crucial than ever. However, having a vaccine mandate in place has surfaced many issues to not only NYC schools but to our members as well. As a union, 60% of our members have acquired the COVID-19 vaccine. On August 23rd, Mayor Bill de Blasio placed a vaccine mandate on all NYC public schools, with less than a month left until the beginning of the school year.² By doing so, it has greatly impacted our bargaining space. Currently, there is no unilateral scope on vaccine mandates. As of August 31st, 2021, Governor Kathy Hochul placed a statewide

¹ CDC: *Delta Variant: What We Know About the Science*. August 26th, 2021. [Delta Variant: What We Know About the Science | CDC](#)

² Daily News: *Mayor de Blasio announces vaccine mandate for all NYC public schools staff*. Elsen-Rooney, Michael; Gartland, Michael. August 23rd, 2021. [De Blasio: COVID vaccine mandate for all NYC public schools staff - New York Daily News \(nydailynews.com\)](#)

weekly testing requirement for unvaccinated school staff.³ With the Mayor's office not having open hearings on the possibility of placing a vaccine mandate, it violates our collective bargaining agreement. The possibility of also having employees be disciplined or have their job status put at risk for not getting vaccinated puts our members in a vulnerable position as families continue to struggle to make ends meet.

We've also been in support for more protective protection equipment (PPE) since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to stress the importance of having highly effective masks for both staff and our members, such as N95 masks. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), N95 masks provide 95% filtration while surgical masks with ties provide 71.5% filtration efficiency.⁴ With a number of public-school employees and young children yet to be vaccinated, providing highly effective PPE is crucial, with the Delta variant on the rise.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear on behalf of Local 372 NYC Board of Education Employees. I am available to answer any questions you all may have.

³ Health: *Governor Hochul Announces New Measures to Combat COVID-19 Delta Variant*. August 31st, 2021. [Governor Hochul Announces New Measures to Combat COVID-19 Delta Variant \(ny.gov\)](https://www.ny.gov/newsroom/governor-hochul-announces-new-measures-to-combat-covid-19-delta-variant)

⁴ EPA: *EPA Researchers Test Effectiveness of Face Masks, Disinfection Methods Against COVID-19*. April 5th, 2021.

[EPA Researchers Test Effectiveness of Face Masks, Disinfection Methods Against COVID-19 | US EPA](https://www.epa.gov/newsroom/epa-researchers-test-effectiveness-of-face-masks-disinfection-methods-against-covid-19)

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. Here is my testimony:

While families who do not require a remote option seem to take precedence in the Department of Education's planning, I implore you to tell me, how does this represent a GOLD STANDARD? Where is the equity and excellence in removing an option that the majority of NYC parents, largely Black and brown, clearly prefer and even require to ensure their family and community's safety?

Our school buildings are not safe for our unvaccinated and otherwise vulnerable children and school staff. The number of new COVID cases has exploded among children in districts that have returned for in-person learning. We are facing a preventable public health disaster.

The Mayor and the DOE must stand with the majority of NYC public school families who remained remote throughout June 2021 as well as the immunocompromised, medically fragile, and deeply traumatized, and impacted students and staff in low-income communities of color. Both families who need in-person services and supports and those who require a remote option should be prioritized to maximize trauma-informed practices and culturally responsive supports during this transition.

In addition, many historically marginalized students and communities have found solace in virtual learning due to the lack of bullying students faced for common in-person behaviors that are often shunned and criminalized. Cultural hairstyles, clothing, use of informal speech or languages other than English, and social and emotional needs that do not fit into the mold of 'normal' behavior are often met with over-policing rather than care. The absence of this resulted in a dramatic improvement in the lives of these students.

What does mandated in-person learning with no remote option and lackluster health guidance mean for our immunocompromised families and teachers? For our pregnant and nursing guardians and staff members? For our students with disabilities? For our students in temporary housing and our multilingual families who have continually been the last to receive pertinent Covid-19 and school reopening related information in languages that they can understand? What does this mean for families of our

youngest learners for whom vaccinations are not yet available, and those who have made a commitment to adhering to safety guidelines to protect public health?

These are the questions students, parents, guardians, and school staff have been asking since the school year ended. Why can't the Mayor and the DOE lead with compassion and equity at the center of their thinking rather than a desire to be the 'largest school district to fully reopen' at all costs?

How can we allow our children to be packed into already overcrowded school buildings that are not prepared to adequately meet their needs just so the outgoing Mayor can build his legacy on the backs of our students and their underpaid and overworked educators?

Here is the solution:

A centralized remote option that prioritizes social-emotional learning and culturally responsive curriculum, and allows for student voice, parent empowerment, and teacher autonomy. This can be borough or district-based to avoid the staffing issues schools experienced last year.

Free universal broadband.

A high-quality, functioning, internet-connected device, headset, and/ or keyboard for every public school student who needs one. Our suggestion is a keyboard for every middle and high school student since long-form writing and essays are difficult to perform on a tablet or phone. This may apply to older elementary students as well and should be considered.

When New York City educators, students, and families look back on this time they won't remember being 'the largest school system to reopen.'

They will remember whether our city's leadership prioritized its most vulnerable students and staff and created a feasible remote option for the majority of New York City's public school families.

We hope you will make the right decision in supporting our school communities.

Gina Rotundo, she/her

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#mu4blmnyc

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Testimony for NYC City Council's Committee on Education

Wednesday, October 6, 2021

Good afternoon, Council Members and Chair Treyger - always nice to see you again. Thank you for continuing to hold the DOE and City Hall accountable for a situation that -- no matter HOW they try to spin it -- gets worse every day.

My name is Jennifer Goddard and I'm the parent of a NYC public school student in Brooklyn who has an IEP and is currently at home in medically necessary instruction because of his severe asthma and overactive immune system disorder. I'm here on behalf of the New York City Coalition for Educating Families Together (NYC CEFT).

It was extraordinarily hard to listen to the propaganda vomited here by the DOE and DOH today. If there's one lie they need to stop it's claiming this year's strategies are a success based on last year's when 70% of students WERE NOT PHYSICALLY IN SCHOOLS BECAUSE WE HAD A REMOTE OPTION.

A lot of the speakers here have already raised questions about and spoken strongly on topics that we are also very concerned about in the NYC CEFT. I'd like to briefly talk about what the DOE's gold standard looks like for two populations of New Yorkers: medically fragile students, who most need support and protection at this time; and parents who are keeping their children home out of legitimate safety concerns.

My son is in an Outschool.com math lesson at this very moment that I've had to pay for because he receives only one hour of instruction per day in the DOE's medically necessary instruction.

One hour per day is the bare minimum currently required by a NY State Dept of Education Chancellor's Regulation but it's certainly possible to offer more, especially if the NYC DOE has a "plethora of substitutes" and "abundance of paraprofessionals" that the first deputy chancellor spoke of earlier. I challenge him to argue how one hour per day is a gold standard.

My son is suffering actual learning loss NOW. Since Sept 13, he's received exactly 11 hours of learning as a medically fragile student in the DOE's home instruction program. That equates to less than 2 regular school days.

I want to bring another very important issue to this committee's attention that is happening to parents in our group, as well as others who recently shared their experiences on social media. Several of our members, including from District 75, have received calls from ACS for educational neglect for either keeping their children home because they are afraid for their safety or because of school bus issues.

This is happening now in Queens and in the Bronx, despite assurances from the Chancellor that were made to this very committee that ACS would NOT be weaponized against parents fearful of their children or family members contracting covid at school.

It started last week when borough district offices and attendance teachers started calling parents and THREATENING them with ACS. We immediately alerted members of the media who were told by the DOE that this wasn't happening. They can try gaslighting tactics on the media but you can't tell parents in our group who this happened to that they imagined it. One of our parent members has even been threatened about attendance because her 14-yr-old daughter -- who caught covid at school the 2nd week -- had not yet returned ... even though she still has symptoms.

Only one testimony can be true if you are presented with opposing testimony. We humbly request that you please examine statements made by the Chancellor during the Sept 1, 2021 oversight hearing regarding ACS. If the DOE refuses to provide transparency into basic numbers like how many students are vaccinated or even in the system, they need to be held accountable for something like making demonstrably false statements under oath.

I also want to point out that the president of the UFT, Michael Mulgrew, testified today and again yesterday to the NY State Senate Standing Committees on Education, NYC Education and Budget & Revenue that the burden of contact tracing is on teachers and school administrators right now - not the 200 or so professionals staffing the Situation Room or Test & Trace that the NYC Dept of Health stated today. So we ask the committee to examine that more closely, too.

The DOE can spin lies on record here, but you can't lie to parents who KNOW: what is happening in our homes and in schools is NOT SAFE and NOT A GOLD STANDARD. The DOE has NOT come back stronger than last year.

We again request that the DOE offer a remote option to parents who are desperately worried for their children's health. Doing so would address a number of current problems facing our schools, including staff shortages, overcrowded and unsafe classrooms and shared spaces like hallways and cafeterias, help keep students who cannot yet be vaccinated safe, and limit the virus' transmission throughout the city in families and communities already devastated by the pandemic.

Thank you.

In Solidarity,

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Testimony for NYC City Council Committee on Education Oversight Hearing on DOE's Changes in COVID Protocols and the Implementation of the Vaccine Mandate

Wednesday, October 6, 2021

Greetings Chairman Mark Treyger and members of the NYC City Council educational committee.

My name is Amy Tsai and I am a parent of 5 NYC public school students all currently attending schools in the borough of the Bronx; all in different school settings and all receiving different academic needs; 3 of my 5 children are students with a disability. I am also a CEC member for the Citywide Council for District 75 and the Vice President of NYC Coalition of Educating Families Together (NYC CEFT).

Today, I am testifying with other parents and advocates across this city to ask our city officials to hear our desperate pleas and demand NYC Mayor Bill De Blasio and NYC Chancellor to restore remote option to families that do not qualify or was denied for medically necessary instruction, asthmatic students who are not qualified under the home instruction because asthma is not classified for a medical approval, and there is no exceptions for siblings and/or family members that reside in the same household whom may be medically vulnerable/immune-compromised. I am also asking that remote option be put back on the table immediately with no delay or hesitation because the climate of the new SY 21-22 has started rougher than any other school year in history. The crisis of the bus staff shortage and not enough bus routes, now, school administrators scrambling to fill or find coverage for classrooms and/or programs that may not have a teacher(s), paraprofessional(s), school aide(s), nurse(s), and other faculty members. A hand full of schools staffed no more than 50% in the building vaccinated are mostly located in hit hard low-income underserved and under-resourced neighborhoods like southern Brooklyn, Upper Manhattan, Northern Queens, and in the Bronx. While there is a health crisis we are still fighting to recover, we are also battling the violence and hate crimes on our streets and in our schools that our children have to duck and be fearful in order to attend and be present to learn.

Thousands of DOE leaders, teachers, students, and families have NO trust in our mayor and the chancellor and are willing to prove today why their case is so very strong and justifiable. It is imperative that the choice of remote learning from home be given to keep students and their community healthy and safe, also learning during this unprecedented public health epidemic. Also, to those students who require a 1;1 bus para or nurse and currently don't have one, will not be able to ride their school bus without one assigned, therefore, it makes it impossible for a family to have funds or access to and from school until a resolution is resolved, leaving parents no choice to keep their children home, no longer have the opportunity for asynchronies and/or synchronies online learning and/or related services, and school teams are unable to fully support students who are not in-person.

- Clearly NYC is still in the COVID-19 pandemic and NYC Health Commissioner Dr. Chokshi stating 90% of positive tests is the delta variant which is deadlier for children than previous variants. Therefore, it makes no sense why DOE and DOH has lifted all health and safety guidance and protocols; comparing it to last school year when the virus wasn't attacking children at high rates like it is now. The DOE states they

are following DOH recommendations and DOH is following CDC real-time guidance. The school year started with bi-weekly testing for randomly 10% unvaccinated consented students and vaccinated students will no longer be required to be tested in each school. Unvaccinated students tested positive or a close contact of a member tested positive was required to go into quarantine for 10 days; vaccinated students tested positive or a close contact of a member tested positive and appears to have COVID like symptoms are required to immediately go into quarantine, vaccinated students showing no symptoms and provides a negative test, they will be allowed back in to the classroom right away. On the first day of school, over a hundred positive cases popped up across the city; by the end of week 1 almost 1,000 positive cases. The NYC mayor announced, instead of bi-weekly testing they will be increasing it to weekly and decreasing the number of students required to quarantine defining only unvaccinated tested positive or a close contact and vaccinated students with symptoms who was unable to social distance with the 3ft rule and if masking wasn't enforced or worn properly, determined with school staff and DOE Test & Trace team 24-hour observational investigation.

- The isolation room separate from the nurse's office that was setup last school year for students whom may not be feeling well can stay in that room until pickup no longer exist; any student that feels sick or is tested positive now stays in the nurses' office until the parent/guardian can pick up the child. Most nurse offices are a size of a closet, some are windowless and have poor ventilation, therefore, there is no proper containment and room to medically assist multiple students at once with different reasons of being sent to the nurses' office. Not having a separate room to isolate for students that may have COVID or present symptoms of COVID is not efficient enough to contain any possible exposure.
- Communication to families in regards to classroom/schoolwide closures and its procedures are not transparent and clear like last school year; if a school is under investigation, why is the classroom/school still conducting in-person instruction. P79 (75M79) a District 75 program is an example of that situation resulting with a final judgment of the first and only schoolwide closure; comparing to a Bronx school with multiple cases stretching within days (more accumulated COVID positive cases than 75M79) did not have a schoolwide closure at all, but certain classrooms did close. Many communities in NYC have households with multiple children in the same school/campus/community district in different grades who are daily contacts in the home, but yet one sibling is in quarantine and another sibling wouldn't need to and to continue in-person learning.
- With a shortage of staff in school buildings, significantly in paraprofessionals, cross agents, and cafeteria aides, school administrators are overworked and over-exhausted from the last 19 months and now filling in or finding coverage for vacant positions and/or classrooms that have no supervision. Although, DOE central administrators are substituting or finding subs to fill-in those school requests. It is certainly not enough and not wise because subs are temporary, uncertified for certain student pods like our special need's population, and their presence does not give the students consistency of learning.

The pandemic has highlighted inadequacies in our education, mental health, and medical systems. It amplified the importance of community and coming together to support one another through this and many historical crises that still have not been addressed.

Thank you for inviting the public to comment on this important issue and for your advocacy to ensure that NYC school faculty members, students, and families are properly acknowledged as stakeholders of the NYC educational system striving for a new norm and much improvements and hold City Hall and the DOE accountable. Thank you.

-NYC Coalition for Educating Families Together

Amy Tsai
NYC CEFT Vice President, Special Education and District 75 Policy



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Today, I am testifying with other parents and advocates across this city to ask our city officials to hear our desperate pleas and demand NYC Mayor Bill De Blasio and NYC Chancellor to restore remote option to families that do not qualify or was denied for medically necessary instruction, asthmatic students who are not qualified under the home instruction because asthma is not classified for a medical approval, and there is no exceptions for siblings and/or family members that reside in the same household whom may be medically vulnerable/immune-compromised. I am also asking that remote option be put back on the table immediately with no delay or hesitation because the climate of the new SY 21-22 has started rougher than any other school year in history. The crisis of the bus staff shortage and not enough bus routes, now, school administrators scrambling to fill or find coverage for classrooms and/or programs that may not have a teacher(s), paraprofessional(s), school aide(s), nurse(s), and other faculty members. A hand full of schools staffed no more than 50% in the building vaccinated are mostly located in hit hard low-income underserved and under-resourced neighborhoods like southern Brooklyn, Upper Manhattan, Northern Queens, and in the Bronx. While there is a health crisis we are still fighting to recover, we are also battling the violence and hate crimes on our streets and in our schools that our children have to duck and be fearful in order to attend and be present to learn.

Thousands of DOE leaders, teachers, students, and families have NO trust in our mayor and the chancellor and are willing to prove today why their case is so very strong and justifiable. It is imperative that the choice of remote learning from home be given to keep students and their community healthy and safe, also learning during this unprecedented public health epidemic. Also, to those students who require a 1;1 bus para or nurse and currently don't have one, will not be able to ride their school bus without one assigned, therefore, it makes it impossible for a family to have funds or access to and from school until a resolution is resolved, leaving parents no choice to keep their children home, no longer have the opportunity for asynchronies and/or synchronies online learning and/or related services, and school teams are unable to fully support students who are not in-person.

- Clearly NYC is still in the COVID-19 pandemic and NYC Health Commissioner Dr. Chokshi stating 90% of positive tests is the delta variant which is deadlier for children than previous variants. Therefore, it makes no sense why DOE and DOH has lifted all health and safety guidance and protocols; comparing it to last school year when the virus wasn't attacking children at high rates like it is now. The DOE states they

are following DOH recommendations and DOH is following CDC real-time guidance. The school year started with bi-weekly testing for randomly 10% unvaccinated consented students and vaccinated students will no longer be required to be tested in each school. Unvaccinated students tested positive or a close contact of a member tested positive was required to go into quarantine for 10 days; vaccinated students tested positive or a close contact of a member tested positive and appears to have COVID like symptoms are required to immediately go into quarantine, vaccinated students showing no symptoms and provides a negative test, they will be allowed back in to the classroom right away. On the first day of school, over a hundred positive cases popped up across the city; by the end of week 1 almost 1,000 positive cases. The NYC mayor announced, instead of bi-weekly testing they will be increasing it to weekly and decreasing the number of students required to quarantine defining only unvaccinated tested positive or a close contact and vaccinated students with symptoms who was unable to social distance with the 3ft rule and if masking wasn't enforced or worn properly, determined with school staff and DOE Test & Trace team 24-hour observational investigation.

- The isolation room separate from the nurse's office that was setup last school year for students whom may not be feeling well can stay in that room until pickup no longer exist; any student that feels sick or is tested positive now stays in the nurses' office until the parent/guardian can pick up the child. Most nurse offices are a size of a closet, some are windowless and have poor ventilation, therefore, there is no proper containment and room to medically assist multiple students at once with different reasons of being sent to the nurses' office. Not having a separate room to isolate for students that may have COVID or present symptoms of COVID is not efficient enough to contain any possible exposure.
- Communication to families in regards to classroom/schoolwide closures and its procedures are not transparent and clear like last school year; if a school is under investigation, why is the classroom/school still conducting in-person instruction. P79 (75M79) a District 75 program is an example of that situation resulting with a final judgment of the first and only schoolwide closure; comparing to a Bronx school with multiple cases stretching within days (more accumulated COVID positive cases than 75M79) did not have a schoolwide closure at all, but certain classrooms did close. Many communities in NYC have households with multiple children in the same school/campus/community district in different grades who are daily contacts in the home, but yet one sibling is in quarantine and another sibling wouldn't need to and to continue in-person learning.
- With a shortage of staff in school buildings, significantly in paraprofessionals, cross agents, and cafeteria aides, school administrators are overworked and over-exhausted from the last 19 months and now filling in or finding coverage for vacant positions and/or classrooms that have no supervision. Although, DOE central administrators are substituting or finding subs to fill-in those school requests. It is certainly not enough and not wise because subs are temporary, uncertified for certain student pods like our special need's population, and their presence does not give the students consistency of learning.

The pandemic has highlighted inadequacies in our education, mental health, and medical systems. It amplified the importance of community and coming together to support one another through this and many historical crises that still have not been addressed.

Thank you for inviting the public to comment on this important issue and for your advocacy to ensure that NYC school faculty members, students, and families are properly acknowledged as stakeholders of the NYC educational system striving for a new norm and much improvements and hold City Hall and the DOE accountable. Thank you.

-NYC Coalition for Educating Families Together

Amy Tsai
NYC CEFT Vice President, Special Education and District 75 Policy

October 5, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this as testimony to the New York City Council meeting for Committee on Education. I hope that this letter will be read and not dismissed as this is an especially important matter. I am writing this testimony on two different subjects, one being the fact that a centralized remote option is needed in New York City schools immediately and the other being the issue of mayoral control must be relinquished.

On the first subject of there needing to be a centralized remote option in New York City schools for us parents to determine what is right for our children, especially at this time of the pandemic still raging with the Delta variant. I have a lot of reasoning behind this as the school buildings are NOT safe and it has nothing to do with the fact that of a vaccine mandate as even the Director of the CDC, Dr. Walensky has stated in August 2021 on CNN that the vaccine cannot stop the spread of the transmission of covid- 19. Notice I am only commenting on the fact of the transmission due to the entire fact of vaccine mandates was to STOP the spread and if the vaccine is not doing that then a mandate is not the answer, and the schools are still a petri dish breeding covid-19. When the mayor, the chancellor, and the DOE are trying to say that NYC Schools have a gold standard of protection regarding their layers, that is gaslighting and too many lies. First, all the layers must be ALWAYS in tack for it to be work and they are not able to be done all at the same time. Regarding the Intellipure DFS technology air purifiers, they are NOT regulated by the EPA and have NOT been recommended by the CDC. The owner of Intellipure Vincent Lobdell and the website states that the DFS technology is allegedly better than the CDC recommended HEPA filters and cleaners and that this was allegedly proven by an independent laboratory named Healthway. Ironically, Healthway is also OWNED also by Vincent Lobdell which would go to show that without outside sources who are registered to regulate if a product is doing what it advertises especially in the case of this virus, that evidence is not being given to prove that it helps to minimize the threat. So, the DFS technology air purifiers are one layer of this alleged gold standard stripped away. Masks are supposed to be mandatory in the schools which they are being worn but not at all times and definitely not always properly. Both staff AND students are not using the masks properly. So that's the second layer of the gold standard taken away. Now for a third layer of this gaslighting of a gold standard that the mayor and chancellor and the DOE are trying to lie about, SOCIAL distancing. Yes, the CDC states that social distancing can be 3ft apart if all are wearing masks. The problem is even if all in the schools are wearing masks and properly, THE schools are so grossly overcrowded that 3FT distancing is NOT able to be done AT ALL!! But as I stated previously, masks aren't being worn properly. This is EXTREMELY dangerous. Not to mention that the rules keep changing on who is considered to be close contacts. The issue AGAIN is masks are not properly worn and it is impossible for the teachers to always know if children even TEENAGERS are wearing the masks as they should. All these issues means that the schools are not safe for anyone and especially for those of our children who have underlying issues that are stated by the CDC that causes them to be elevated risk fatality for covid-19. Therefore, a centralized remote option is DEFINITELY needed at this time as we are still in the covid era. As a bonus issue that also causes the schools to be dangerous regarding covid-19 is that opening a window is not proper ventilation. To be honest, there should have been a centralized

hybrid remote option in the schools prior to covid-19. We are about to be in the year 2022, yet the formation and guidance of the fabric of our school system is outdated. WE are in a high technology age and antiquated mind sets are actually holding our students back. Think of this, look at your cell phone, your tablet, your laptop, your computer, where were they made? Out of the country probably from either China or Japan. This is because China and Japan teach their children from young how to be proficient in technology. On a side note, look up the 5,000-room quarantine center that China has built for overseas arrivals that is extreme high tech. That shows that the United States and to make it worse NYC which we are a hub for technology and trends are extremely behind. In order to do better we need to be better and that means changing antiquated ways and frameworks.

The reason behind me giving this testimony in regard to having a centralized remote option is very personal for me. My teen goes to a great high school but even in 2019 precovid had been over registered with too many students a little over 1400. I was in the school a lot during the day helping the PTA with things like bake sales and other fundraising activities. The school is cramped like sardines in a can because there are too many kids in the school and not enough space for all to social distance. To make it worse, now in this time with covid still severely raging and the delta variant catching anyone and everyone, the DOE decided to dump over a hundred more students into an already cramped school. Now there is a little less than 1600 students registered in the school. I have no issues with the school personally, my problems are with the DOE, the chancellor and the mayor's inability to understand that in this time one size DOES NOT fit all. My teen is an IEP child. My teen has EVERY year had to do summer school and I am talking about IN-PERSON schooling. My teen has been in FULL remote (NO HYBRID) since March of 2020, and this past summer was the FIRST SUMMER that my teen has not had to do summer school. This is because I have been able to know what is going on in classes for assignments and have been able to push my child to do the work. My child as I said has an IEP. This is partially due to the fact that my child has a Neurological Disorder which is ADHD. On the CDC list of what is considered to be underlying conditions making one at a severe risk for fatality in covid-19 is Neurological Disorders. To make it worse, my teen also has moderate but leaning to almost severe asthma. WE all know that asthma is already a respiratory failure illness and that coupled with a respiratory virus can be very fatal. To top it off although my child isn't that bad on this but still according to the CDC any BMI over 25 is also considered a risk factor upon which my child's BMI is over 25. There are also other issues, but these are definitely the main ones and that is way too much. Then let's turn to me. I have SEVERE asthma, I am SEVERELY OVER THE BMI, I have HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, & again Neurological as I have mild ADHD but also another thing that many do not know is under Neurological Disorders which is migraines. I get migraines very often and severely also, since I was a teenager so that is over 30 years now. My child is my ONLY CHILD, and I am not able to have any more children. I am a SINGLE mother, and I am the ONLY PARENT my child has! I AM NOT SENDING MY CHILD INTO THESE HEALTH RISK SCHOOLS that already has almost FOUR THOUSAND CASES, FOR MY ONLY CHILD TO POSSIBLY DIE OR FOR MY CHILD TO BRING COVID 19 HOME TO ME TO DIE! NEITHER ONE OF US ARE EXPENDABLE! AND THE CDC HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE VACCINATIONS ARE NOT STOPPING THE SPREAD AND ME AND MY CHILD CANNOT TAKE THE RISK OF GETTING COVID-19 AS YOU CAN GET IT BOTH FULLY INOCULATED AND UNVAXED WITH THE SAME VIRAL LOADS. WE CANNOT TAKE A GAMBLE TO GET THIS VIRUS PERIOD! This is very much pain and suffering that the DOE, the mayor, the chancellor all are doing just for their own profit and prestige. My teen and I ARE NOT ANYONE'S HUMAN SACRIFICE NOR ARE WE ANYONE'S EXPERIMENT. We DEMAND and need a centralized remote option NOW!

As for the second issue I am bringing up. Mayoral control of the school system needs to be relinquished. First and foremost, the mayor is severely out of touch with the community and the needs of the communities. Photo ops does not attest to being in touch with the constituents. One size does not fit all as I mentioned before, and the control of the schools should be more in the hands of the people. Of the parents whose children attend the schools as we parents know what is best for our children. Having a public school system in mayoral control gives the mayor too much power and footage to use the schools as a weapon to heighten his stature and prestige. What is going on right now in the school system with the mayor refusing to give remote options for as I mentioned above have already almost FOUR THOUSAND cases and that is only with 16 days of school! This is clearly proof that the mayor is out of touch with the complexities of managing a school system especially during a pandemic. The same way that the whistle-blower said about Facebook and Instagram how the social media site knew that things were harming others but did things instead to benefit them, is the same way that the mayor is treating the school system and our children in the system and their teachers and ultimately all of our families. The mayoral control of the public school system must end immediately as the mayor is not competent to fully grasp the needs of the students and families in the communities along with the teachers and other employees in the schools.

AGAIN, I HOPE that this testimony is FULLY read and adhered to because what is going on with our children and the schools is atrocious and downright inhumane and is neglect on the part of the mayor, the chancellor, and the DOE.

Sincerely,

Davida LoSavio

Mother of a very smart 16-year-old who is currently in 11th grade

New York City Council

Committee on Education Hearing Wednesday October 6, 2021 10 a.m

Thank you Council Members for your time and attention to this very important subject. We all have a different experience and unique way of dealing with the impact of the covid virus on our families and everyday life. Whether we have children or not, school aged, adults, nieces, nephews, etc we know that today's students are tomorrow's Future leaders. We must invest our time and attention to their safety and needs so they can aspire to be whatever the beautiful minds wish to be.

With the increase rise of the much more infectious Delta variant, now is not the time to decrease covid protocols in in schools. If figures are still being reviewed in terms of children's cases why would it be feasible to expect children (especially those who are not of age to be vaccinated) to remain in school buildings for hours exposing them to hazardous work environment? If children eat lunch in the classrooms, move around the room and work in groups as we see in pictures posted across social media which shows the lack of social distancing we can eliminate the idea that eliminating the need to quarantine students after exposure if they are 3 feet apart and wearing a mask. In office buildings an entire floor is quarantined if there is a positive case why is the bar lower in schools with our precious children?

Why would we expects teachers to take on an additional task (as if they aren't already doing more than just teaching in even traditional times) to create and maintain a seating chart and keep accurate details of every students' interactions? That is impossible when teachers aren't at lunch or specialty classes with students. Are teachers debriefing every staff member that enters the classroom? This is why we have test and trace workers. Allow them to do their jobs and sort it out according to CDC regulations.

How does after school tie into all of these plans? My fourth grade daughter would be grouped with other fourth graders. When figuring out who needs to quarantine are those after school groups added to the equation? Parents need clarity and a better understanding of the cases in schools so they can keep their children and families safe. Consent forms and testing should mandatory for everyone. Vaccination does not prevent infection or transmission.

By the time my daughter entered third grade we were on our third chancellor. Since we are under mayoral control and counting down the days until our next mayor takes office, what does January look like for students, parents, and staff? Will we have a new chancellor? Will guidelines change?

We were told the number of students enrolled couldn't be confirmed at this time however ACS is being called on parents for keeping their children in the place that is safest for them contrary to what others believe and say which is their home. Parents don't feel safe with the lack of information and the implementation of safety measures.

Where else am I required to send my child and not be able to enter the building to be sure it is safe? How can I be called neglectful when I ask for school work? I am told that it is only for students

quarantining. Daily phone calls in addition to emails with intimidation tactics to send my child to school or enroll my daughter in home schooling. Is that not neglect? The Chancellor has said she is aware that not all parents are ready to send their children back to school and they are willing to work with those families. What exactly are those plans? Are DOE employees at Central, District, or Main offices aware of these plans? Each person who has contacted me from these offices has only offered home schooling.

As a parent I am responsible for the overall health of my child which includes her physical, mental, and emotional well being. I would have to commute by two trains to get my daughter to school. With the violence and overcrowding in the subway those pose additional risks to my family. The first week of school my Mom was hospitalized with Covid and pneumonia. The second week my sister also had a breakthrough case. These are reminders that covid is still a major issue. My daughter has also not forgotten the most traumatic experiences of her life. My Dad (Papa as we called him) was taken from us by Covid during the height of covid. One day he left to go to the Doctor and we never saw him again. I can still hear his last words telling her good bye. We couldn't visit him in the hospital or gather with family or have traditional services.

My Father died alone. No one there to put the phone next to him so we could tell him we loved him. Reassure him that he wasn't alone. Just waiting and constantly calling. The overwhelming grief and stress caused me to suffer multiple seizures. They both occurred while I was home alone with my then 8 year old daughter and left me unconscious. She sat up all night watching me the first time. The second time she had to dial 911 and allow the paramedics access to our apartment. I know adults who wouldn't be able to react but she did everything she needed to help me. She is truly amazing!! When my Dad was hospitalized she told me don't worry he will be okay. The Love, Empathy, Courage, and Intelligence that she possesses is unexplainable. You will see her doing wonderful things one day. I will not risk her health. My job is to keep her safe, protect, and care for her the same way she did for me. I don't want to risk losing my only child and the fact that we have to have a discussion about keeping our children safe is unbelievable.

Please protect our future leaders.

Thank You,

Melissa

From Paullette Healy

Distinguished Council members,

My name is Paullette Healy and I am a steering member of Parents for Responsive Equitable Safe Schools (PRESSNYC), a returning member on the Citywide Council on Special Education (CCSE) and a D75 community advocate.

Thank you Council members for holding the DOE accountable with this legislation on attendance and enrollment numbers. As NYC families keep their children home for safety or are still awaiting approval for home instruction, they continue being harassed by school and sometimes district and Boro attendance agents despite continuous communication with the schools on the status of the applications. This week we have reports of ACS contacting families who have kept their children home for safety from schools in the Bronx, 2 districts in Queens and Gravesend in Brooklyn. Without transparency on attendance, the DOE continues to downplay the over 100k families that they refuse to service. At yesterday NYS Senate hearing, DC Lashawn Robinson disputed Senator Liu calculation of 144,000 students not receiving educational supports as she did today to CM Treyger's estimate of 150,000 but still will not provide the enrollment number the DOE is using as it's denominator to establish the 12% of children not attending school. The approach DC Robinson stated to re-engage our families who are not sending their children in is top down only and is obviously not being implemented by our administrators if ACS is being called on parents now. How many more examples of this top down approach by DOE central administrations failing do our families need to endure before we change these systems?

Also, I did not hear answers from the DOE for these following inquiries.

1. Our D75 students are still waiting for bussing even tho school started almost a month ago. How are these children being logged attendance wise and how are these children being supported? Standard worksheets will not suffice for children with multiple disabilities.
2. What support staff is being sent in to cover the shortages in cafeteria staff?
3. We still do not have a concrete explanation of what constitutes as widespread transmission. We have some schools with over 10 classrooms closed and no investigation has been made. That means potentially hundreds of children with no educational support. So wouldn't it make more sense to establish what constitutes a school closure so supports can be provided sooner?

And I encourage the DOE in refraining from the continuous use of the trope that children learn best in person. We all agree in person is best, please stop conflating establishing a remote option will ever take away from that. Our families are not stupid and see right through your poor attempts of division and misdirection.

Lastly, since CM Treyger mentioned pupil transportation could be its own oversight hearing, I implore you to do so. Academic Recovery programs are expected to roll out by Nov and it is against the law to prohibit access to these programs due to lack of transportation but that is what 26,000 of D75 students are facing. 80% of D75 students are bussed out of their community for their programs and do not have the ability to receive these targeted supports in their own

neighborhoods as many other IEP students can. Yet these students will need it most. I will send a draft resolution the CCSE will be voting on tomorrow on bussing with recommendations for more oversight separately for your consideration. Thank you for the time, your leadership and your continued support and collaboration.

Lucas Healy Testimony

My name is Lucas Healy and I am a D75 student. I am striking until a remote option is restored. I thank CM Treyger for listening to our families who need to prioritize our safety over the many lies we have heard from the DOE and the DOH for the past 3 hours. I trust them less now than I ever had before. It is especially unsafe now that my OT and Speech therapists are being pulled to cover other classes. So how do I get my services? How do my friends who are going in person going to get their services? Who is going to make sure our sessions get made up? Nobody that's who! This could all have been avoided if we just got our remote option. I miss my teachers. I miss my school. But I don't trust the Mayor or this Chancellor to keep me or my friends safe and I don't plan to risk my life to prove that I am right. Thank you for your time.

First I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of my daughter shes only nine and I am her voice.

My name is Barbara Scott my child goes to public school in Brownsville Brooklyn she has not attended school since September 13th because we feel as her parents Barbara and Robert Scott that is not safe in the school building. Children cannot social distance in the lunch room or in the auditorium. Children don't have they face mask on constantly germs are always spreading.

The mayor and the Board of Education have been less than forthcoming with the covid cases in our schools they have changed policies to even more endanger our children's lives. So for these and many more reasons we would like a remote option to keep our children safe and healthy. After all this is over. As a parent it is unbelievable that the school and the d.o.e. threaten parents with ACS just for trying to keep our children safe.

The schools have been no help to parents who feel like me the schools are not safe right now for our children to return they have made it difficult and made it clear that we CHOOSE to keep our child home. We are in a world pandemic there is no choice about keeping your child safe and healthy as best as you can as a parent how dare they, tell me how to keep my child safe. They are also violating federal law by not providing my child and many others who have IEP'S with the services they deserve and are entitled to by the Disability Act.

So again please help us keep our children safe by recommending a remote option for all who want it. It is our children's right to have a free and public education.

Thank you

Barbara Scott

Robert Scott

Thomas Wiermann
10/06/2021

New York City Council Speech

Hello. My name is Tom Wiermann. I am a 20 year NYC teacher who has been put on unpaid leave for refusing to take the Covid-19 vaccine. I want to be clear. I am not anti-vaccine nor am I anti-science. I have a Masters degree in science as does my wife. I am friends with doctors, physicists, epidemiologists and many others who hold positions within the scientific world. I value their opinions greatly. That being said, science is not to be followed blindly, as I believe many are doing so as it relates to the Coronavirus pandemic.

On August 23rd Mayor DiBlasio mandated that all NYC teachers and staff be vaccinated by September 27th or be placed on unpaid leave. One would think that in order to place a mandate such as this, on something, the science should be settled on the given subject. It is clear the science regarding the coronavirus pandemic is anything but that.

If something as powerful and absolute as a mandate can be placed on NYC city teachers and staff because the "science" is clear, then can someone please explain to me how the use of masks has changed an innumerable amount of times since the pandemic started?

Can someone please explain to me how people who have gained natural immunity by having the virus itself are no better or equal to those who have gained immunity by taking the vaccine? Not to mention, we know natural immunity poses a stronger barrier to variants of the virus than does the vaccine.

Can someone please explain to me how if the goal is to stop the spread of the virus, then why do we even allow vaccinated teachers and staff near children considering the vaccinated have been proven to not only be infected with the virus but also spread it themselves? Where is the science in that?

Can someone please explain to me how our leaders in government can claim that one of the offered vaccines has FDA approval when in reality the only vaccines available in the country are still under emergency authorization use status?

And finally, can someone please explain to me why a vaccine should be forced upon anyone without even knowing the long term effects of the drug? Most vaccines take anywhere from 5 to 15 years to be developed. This one took a few months.

These are not the questions of a conspiracy theorist. They are the questions of intelligent and prudent people who want concrete, long term data available to them before making important decisions. Thank you for your time.

For 12 months straight, I have worked in person. It was 12 months because our summer Special Education Pre-K program was severely short-staffed as our dedicated SpEd teachers and providers were physically, mentally and emotionally drained from a rollercoaster of a school year and took the summer off. EVERY day, myself and colleagues spent hours of UNPAID time, trying to find daily coverages to safely provide our most delicate students with their entitled education and federally mandated services. I can tell you that in the 6 weeks of the summer program, "testing" for covid showed up 2-3 times, despite giving the DECE a list of all those employed during the summer on DAY ONE!

Let me be frank, even the protocols, PPE, social distancing, during the regular school year, was very much so, smoke and mirrors. Despite that, my Pre-K center only faced 1 closing due to a person that tested positive from a contact after being FORCED to quarantine with an infected person and not come to work. Suddenly the DOE is on a sprint for health, forcing unvaccinated teachers into leave without pay, claiming to have staff covered in the building, pulling unexperienced central staff out of their supportive roles, only for them to not be placed in a classroom. Let's be honest, the vacancy list on sub-central has been blasted all over social media and so have the complaints, walk-outs, missed preparatory periods of teachers and unqualified subs. It's no secret that not only is the DOE out of COVID compliance, but you are not meeting state, federal or city compliance and you are doing so on the backs of children. Not to mention the rise in weapons and school attacks with a decrease of SSA.

Schools ridden with asbestos, lead in water, lead in paint, broken air conditioners, no heat, decaying infrastructure...the list is miles long with the SCA but NOW you think there is a problem?!? NOW I AM NOT GOOD ENOUGH to run my Pre-K center, to continue to serve the low-income community of Sunset Park as I have done for the past 6 years?

DOE, you have MUCH bigger problems than my 40 years of IMPECABLE health, the disease is one you breed and you are infecting our city's children with this rushed mandate.

The Covid protocols currently at the DOE are putting our children at risk. There is NO excuse given the funds that the schools have and that DOE has from federal and state stimulus.

First, students should be doing ALL eating outside. There is now eating in the classroom with no regard for allergies and no regard for Covid spread.

Second, all students should be tested once a week.

Third, if there are exposed students all parents should be told – as they were alerted last year. This provides the information necessary to parents to make the decisions that they need to for students who are immunocompromised, disabled, etc.

My daughter is a senior in high school. Her father passed away from COVID in December and she has been grieving. The deep grieving led to serious depression and she is under a doctor's care.

Prior to COVID, my daughter was an incredibly engaged student. With support from her doctors and therapists, she returned to school last week. She is enrolled in two classes - one where there is no teacher and the other which takes place at the end of the day.

On Monday, my daughter arrived at school after returning from a doctor's appointment. As instructed, she went to the library where students who do not have class are required to gather. Students were playing in the library and someone threw an object across the room. The teacher in the library immediately accused my daughter of disrupting his class. My daughter, and her friends, insisted that she did cause the disruption.

The teacher demanded that she leave the library and she refused. He immediately said that she was disrespecting him and insisted that she call me.

Upon receiving the call from the teacher, I had to de-escalate the situation. I quickly walked to the school to make sure that my daughter was okay to stay in school.

It has taken a great deal to have my daughter return to school in a safe environment. At this point, my daughter is discouraged and not able to return to in person learning. I requested a hybrid or remote option for her senior year this morning. The principal responded in an email saying, "There is no remote or hybrid NYCDOE high school option in school year 2021-2022." I need a remote option for my child to complete her senior year.

I come to you as a former early childhood teacher, school leader, and current education collegiate faculty member. I have great respect for the teaching profession and educators.

I share these anecdotes with my daughter's consent.

My daughter is a senior in high school. Her father passed away from COVID in December and she has been grieving. The deep grieving led to serious depression and she is under a doctor's care.

Prior to COVID, my daughter was an incredibly engaged student. With support from her doctors and therapists, she returned to school in person last week. She is enrolled in two classes - one where there is no teacher and the other which takes place at the end of the day.

I am concerned that there is no empathy or sensitivity training for teachers dealing with students who have been traumatized during this pandemic.

Here is an example: On Monday, my daughter arrived at school after returning from a doctor's appointment. As instructed, she went to the library where students who do not have class are required to gather. Students were playing in the library and someone threw an object across the room. The teacher in the library immediately accused my daughter of disrupting his class. My daughter, and her friends, insisted that she did cause the disruption.

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Our schools are not safe. We need a remote option now.