



**Testimony of NYC Schools Chancellor David C. Banks on the FY24 Executive Budget  
Before the NYC Council Committees on Finance and Education**

May 22, 2023

Good afternoon and thank you Speaker Adams, Chair Brannan, and Chair Joseph, as well as members of the City Council Committees on Finance and Education, for inviting me to testify today about the Fiscal Year 2024 Executive Budget. I'm David C. Banks, Chancellor of New York City Public Schools. I'm joined by First Deputy Chancellor Daniel Weisberg, Chief Operating Officer Emma Vadehra, and Deputy Chancellor of Early Childhood Education Dr. Kara Ahmed. I'm also joined by several other members from our administration who are available to be called on if necessary. It is great to be here with so many colleagues and champions for NYC Public Schools on the City Council.

My team and I have greatly enjoyed joining many of you at events, community meetings, and school visits. Your leadership and advocacy truly make a positive difference for our schools. It has also been great seeing and hearing from many of you at our monthly check-ins to hear directly what is happening inside your districts so we can be more accessible and responsive to the needs of your communities. And now, I would like to highlight important progress we have made as a result of our listening to and engaging with you.

Chair Joseph: Your leadership in supporting additional shelter-based coordinators to better support our students in temporary housing has been timely and critical, especially in relation to Project Open Arms. Special thank you as well to Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, who has also been supportive of this effort from day one.

Chair Brannan: We greatly appreciate your voice, in addition to those of Majority Leader Powers, Chair Joseph, and Council Member Osse in advancing more support for arts education. We are aligned around the importance of arts in our schools.

Council Member Narcisse: It meant a lot to receive your immediate support for NYC Reads, which is one of the most important civil rights initiatives of our lifetime.

Council Members Schulman, Gennaro, and Salamanca: Your advocacy around advancing more supplies, training, and education for our school communities as part of a holistic approach to combat drug overdoses in the city is already making a difference; the Health Department will be strengthening its partnerships with our schools this September.

Council Members Brooks Powers and Dinowitz: We thank you for convening meetings between our Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood Education and local providers to deepen relationships, which improve outcomes for all involved.



Council Member Brewer: We were proud to work with your office to add an additional 3K class at P.S. 185, the Locke School in Manhattan, to address a real need in the community.

I could go on, but in the interest of time, I will pause listing the productive engagements we have had working together, but I hope it is obvious how important engagement with our elected leaders is to our administration and to me, personally. I know that we may not always agree on every issue, but in the spirit of collegiality, we remain focused on our collective work to better serve our school communities.

### **Literacy: NYC Reads Launch**

First and foremost, I want to share about a major initiative we announced two weeks ago that you helped inform and which will truly be life-changing for our students. As you know, I've been Chancellor for almost 17 months now, and every day I'm struck both by the brilliant promise of our children and by the need for us to do more for them...and for our educators. It's crystal clear to me—as I know it is for you—where our intense focus needs to be. We need to improve the way we teach our children to read.

The numbers tell the story. Right now, 51 percent of New York City elementary students—and two-thirds of students nationally—are not reading at grade level. This is the educational crisis of our lifetime, and we're doing something about it.

This is why Mayor Eric Adams and I announced the launch of “**NYC Reads,**” a landmark citywide campaign to declare literacy and reading instruction as the core focus and overriding priority of New York City Public Schools.

The Science of Reading tells us what works, and that is a focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. Teachers tell us that they want clear guidance on what works, backed by coaching and professional learning that's tied to what they're doing in their classrooms. And we're going to give it to them.

NYC Reads will cover all Early Childhood Education programs and elementary schools over the next two years, with a focus on a streamlined set of curricula that, again, are rooted in the Science of Reading.

Mayor Adams and I see this as a game-changer in the classroom, particularly in teaching all children to be confident readers—an absolutely essential step on the way to achieving our mission of ensuring each student graduates on a pathway to a rewarding career and long-term economic security, equipped to be a positive force for change.

I hope we have the Council's support in making this critical initiative a reality.





### Our Work Together

Our work together has been consistent and transformational since the moment I became Chancellor. With your support we have:

- Made the city's first-ever investment in the largest, most comprehensive approach to **supporting students with dyslexia**, screening all students at-risk and providing specialized instruction. Made a significant investment in expanding proven, research-based programs such as ASD Nest, Horizon and SEED to **improve outcomes for students on the autism spectrum and with other special needs**.
- Announced our **Class Size Working Group**, made up of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders. The goal is to gather feedback related to our implementation of the State's legislation prescribing new class size caps for all NYC K-12 schools. This work will require difficult decisions and trade-offs in the years ahead as well as more funding, and we believe it's critical that members of our school communities are included in this process.
- **Strengthened the Fair Student Funding formula**, based on feedback from our communities, to boost funding to schools that serve students in temporary housing and schools that serve a large number of students with high needs. I want to thank you for your hard work and partnership on this, and I hope you will join us in asking the State to support updating its outdated State Foundation Aid formula, which currently does not have a specific funding weight for our students in temporary housing.
- Implemented a **historic investment to expand early childhood education special-education seats**. Our vision for early childhood education sees all children. And we are particularly focused on children with disabilities.
- And we launched our new **Arts Hub**, a groundbreaking approach to urban arts education and a fantastic way to make sure we're connecting our schools to the magic and splendor of our city's arts scene.

These are all meaningful accomplishments for our students, families, and schools, and we are grateful for your partnership in achieving them. And all the initiatives we are discussing today are focused on rebuilding that trust with our families while bringing families back to our schools, all guided by our Four Pillars: Re-imagining the student experience; Scaling, sustaining, and restoring what works; Prioritizing wellness; and Engaging families to be our true partners. I am certain we will continue to work together individually and collectively to build on all these successes.

In the spirit of transparency, prior to this hearing we publicly shared our enrollment projections for the upcoming year. Since 2017 we lost over 120,000 students, including 70,000 in the two years prior to my arrival. The current enrollment projections are promising, reflecting a decline of less than 1 percent and an increase at the high school level. But we still have a lot of work to do to bring more students and families back to the system.



### **FY 2024 Executive Budget Highlights**

I now want to turn to our Fiscal Year 2024 Executive Budget, which totals approximately \$37.5 billion. That includes \$30.6 billion in operating resources and another \$6.9 billion for education-related pension and debt-service funds.

Our funding is a combination of City, State, and Federal resources, with City tax levy money making up the largest share—FY24 projected to be at 51 percent, State funds at 38 percent, and Federal dollars at 10 percent.

Acknowledging the realities of the difference in enrollment from the pre-pandemic days, which has declined, and short-term stimulus funding, the Mayor's budget includes a reduction in fringe by over \$300 million in order to meet the citywide PEG target.

As part of this budget, we are also investing in some key initiatives:

- Continuing the efforts that this Council has been leading on and recognizing the importance of these positions, we are investing \$3.3 million to continue one-time funding in FY 2024 for the 25 Shelter Based Coordinators.
- \$5.5 million for the Wellness in the Schools (WITS) Food program, which is a partnership to bring in local chefs to every NYCPS kitchen to develop healthy, scratch-based recipes and train our cooks on the new recipes. This is in conjunction with \$1.1 million for nutrition education work and \$50 million in the School Construction Authority's (SCA's) budget for the Cafeteria Enhancement project; and
- \$2 million in FY 2024 and out for climate education as part of the Mayor's Climate Action Plan, including professional learning for teachers, a school certification program, and Climate Action Day.

Perhaps most importantly, the actions I have described will allow us to meet the Mayor's commitment to fiscal responsibility while continuing to provide schools with 100 percent of their Fair Student Funding.

It is imperative that we continue to meet that benchmark for all our schools.

In addition to what was in our Executive budget and our commitment to fully fund Fair Student Funding, and in spite of fiscal challenges, I'm very pleased that under Mayor Adams' leadership and our work with OMB, I can share that for next year, schools will be held harmless for their initial budget allocations compared to this current year, so no school will get a lower initial allocation.

While schools may see increases or decreases in specific allocations, like title I or FSF, we will ensure that all in, schools will be held flat or see an increase.





Schools will also continue to see additional allocations throughout the year, just as they always do.

I assure you, the team is working around the clock to get school budgets out with this policy in place no later than the end of this month. This is aligned with the typical timing of when school budgets are released and will provide principals with enough time to plan for the upcoming school year. When we release school budgets we'll have more details for you about this policy and how we executed it.

We want to thank the Council for your continued advocacy for Fair Student Funding and for school budgets overall all in recent years and assure you that these remain a high priority.

I am excited to continue to work together with all of you to support our students and our schools, collaborating on the issues that matter to all of us, to help ensure that we're giving our students a world-class education. We deeply appreciate and respect your leadership role in this budget process and are always eager to hear from you about your priorities and hopes for our school system. As I continue to say, we are partners in this work.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.