



Educational Impact Statement for the NYC Department of Education

I. Summary of Proposal

Chancellor Klein claims his primary goal is to create a system of great schools. But this pledge is being violated by the closing of struggling schools without an educational plan to serve the students with the greatest needs.

The NYC Department of Education's (DOE) continued failure to provide a college and career preparatory education to tens of thousands of Black and Latino students demands an aggressive educational strategy beyond simply closing schools. We can make all schools great schools by: (1) Giving low-performing schools the opportunity to redesign and expand the school day to improve teaching and learning; (2) Providing a diversified, college preparatory curriculum; (3) Recruiting, supporting and keeping the best teachers and principals; (4) Offering strong, comprehensive support services for all students; (5) Giving parents and community constituencies real say in decisions about their school.

These recommendations can be implemented with federal stimulus funds not only in the 19 schools currently slated for closing, but in all 34 schools on NY State's "persistently lowest-achieving schools" list, as well as other low-performing schools in NYC. This will ensure that struggling schools have the resources and support they need to redesign teaching and learning and raise academic achievement for the city's highest needs students – *before* they have to be closed.

II. Enrollment and Achievement for Black and Latino Students in NYC Public Schools

A. Enrollment

Current Grades Served: PreK-12

Current Enrollment: 1,038,741

Current Enrollment of
Black and Latino Students: 726,252 (70% of all students)

Declining Enrollment of
Black and Latino students
As They Progress Through
School:

In 2001, 26,306 Black students and 30,449 Latino students were enrolled in 4th grade in NYC public schools. By 2009, only 17,618 Black Students and 19,367 Latino students had made it to 12th grade.

What happened to 8,688 Black and 11,082 Latino students?

B. School Performance

English Language Arts
(2008-09):

Even with recent improvements in student test scores, barely half of Black and Latino eighth-graders in New York City read and write at state standards. The wide racial achievement gap has barely been reduced since 2003.

NAEP Math
(2003-09):

Fourth and eighth grade students' scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress have been flat since 2007. There has been no significant narrowing of the racial achievement gap since 2003.

Specialized High School
Admissions Test (SHSAT)
(2009-10):

Of the 5,261 students who received an offer to enroll in a specialized high school in 2010, 6% were Black and 7% were Latino. More than a decade after the city created a special institute to prepare Black and Latino students for the SHSAT, the percentage of these students accepted to specialized high schools has declined. Enrollment of Black students in prestigious city schools has dropped 10% during Mayor Bloomberg's tenure.

Advanced Placement
Exams (2008-09):

Only 4% of Black 12th graders and 11% of Latino 12th graders scored a 3 on an AP exam in 2009 – compared to 4% of Black and 14% of Latino 12th graders in 2005. Among Black graduating seniors who took an AP exam in 2009, 28% scored 3 or higher – down from 33% in 2002. A 3 on AP exams is the lowest score that carries college credit.

SAT Scores
(2005-09):

SAT scores for Black and Latino students have been falling for the past five years. Black and Latino students' average scores on the SAT Critical Reading and Math assessments put them considerably below the 25% bracket for students in private colleges, SUNY colleges, and most CUNY colleges. The average Black student in NYC scored a 416 in Reading and a 413 in Math in 2009, but CUNY colleges require a 480 in Reading and a 510 in Math to avoid remediation. The racial gap in SAT scores has been growing since 2002.

Regents Graduation
Rates (2007-08):

Less than a third of Black and Latino students graduate high school in four years with a Regents diploma, which will soon be the only valid diploma. Less than 17% of students earned an Advanced Regents Diploma in 2008, and that percentage has barely inched up since 2005. Many experts in college preparedness define the Advanced Regents diploma or its equivalent as the minimum indicator of college readiness.

CUNY Remediation
(2009):

Three out of four NYC public school graduates who enter the City University of New York (CUNY) colleges must take and pass remedial courses before proceeding to credit-bearing academic work.

III. Proposed or Potential Actions the DOE Should Implement

According to an Independent Budget Office analysis, most of the high schools currently scheduled for closure serve disproportionately large percentages of the highest-need students – special education students, English Language Learners, overage students, homeless students, and the lowest-income (free lunch) students. In recent years, the DOE’s chief strategy for improving achievement among these students has been to close large high schools (91 under the current administration) and open new small schools in their place. That approach, however, has been increasingly criticized as ineffective. A 2009 study by the Consortium on Chicago School Research found that most students who transferred out of Chicago’s closing schools re-enrolled in schools that were also academically weak. A recent report by the New School’s Center for NYC Affairs showed that replacing large, poorly-performing high schools in NYC with smaller schools has led to lower attendance and graduation rates at other large high schools, as they struggle to accommodate an influx of high-needs students. This pattern is reflected in the current cohort of closing schools, several of which accepted large numbers of students from previously closed schools.

In their analyses of 27 large high schools closed since 2000, Jennifer Jennings and Aaron Pallas found that students who enroll at new small schools on large high school campuses are often quite different from the students who attended the large high schools they replaced. Students at these new small schools have higher 8th grade ELA and Math scores, and are less likely to be English Language Learners or in special education. Furthermore, a recent report by the UFT showed that the majority of charter schools educate a much smaller proportion of the lowest-income students, English Language Learners and special education students than surrounding neighborhood schools. In light of this evidence, the cycle of closing large schools may be simply displacing, shuttling, and eventually discarding the system’s most needy students.

The DOE’s public process that implements this cycle of school closings and openings has been deeply flawed. Parents and the public have not been provided with clear criteria for how closing schools are identified, and the DOE’s own accountability measures provide conflicting information. Of the 20 schools originally scheduled for phase-out in 2010, 13 received a Quality Review Report evaluation of Proficient last year. None of the schools were on the SURR list, and 4 were In Good Standing according to federal guidelines. Incredibly, two of those schools received performance bonuses last year for excellent progress. Despite the large populations of high-needs students in these schools, the DOE’s Educational Impact Statements contain no information about what will be done to improve the education of the remaining students in the school, or to ensure that high-needs students are more effectively served in other schools without perpetuating the cycle of closures.

This lack of transparency has alienated parents who want a high quality education for their students. The DOE has made decisions about school closings and the creation of new schools to replace them without consultation with parents, students or the school community. And although the state’s revised school governance legislation mandated public hearings for each closing school, the DOE disregarded the testimony of hundreds of people at those hearings as well as at the January 26th PEP meeting.

An educational crisis demands an educational plan. Given the flawed process of closing schools and the urgent need to support low-performing schools before they are shut down, the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ) calls for:

1. **A Temporary Moratorium on School Closings and Co-locations Until There Is an Independent Analysis of Impact**
2. **The Establishment of a *School Transformation Zone* to Improve Low-Performing Schools and Prevent School Closings**
 - a. Schools in the Zone would re-design teaching & learning to:
 - Expand the school day and year
 - Provide a diversified, enriched college & career preparatory curriculum
 - Attract, train and keep excellent teachers and principals
 - Offer strong, comprehensive support services for students
 - Ensure active parent and community involvement
 - b. All struggling schools will have the opportunity to apply to join the Zone and turn themselves around
 - No school can be closed without having the opportunity to join the Zone for three years
 - All schools receiving School Improvement Grants will be part of the Zone
 - DOE will apply for federal Innovation Funds to support schools in the Zone
 - c. Each school will establish a School Transformation Committee to lead the re-design process with key stakeholders
 - d. The Zone will establish a Coordinating Committee that includes key stakeholders to oversee and monitor the initiative
 - An expert educator with a track record in turning around struggling schools will be appointed Zone Leader

CEJ urges the DOE to take responsibility for all its struggling schools, and provide them with the resources and support to implement research-based strategies to improve student achievement *before* they are threatened with closure.