



Educational Justice in the 21st Century: Our Kids Need College Prep, Not Just Test Prep!

In neighborhoods across New York City, parents share the hope that their children will graduate high school and go to college. But even with test scores rising, the vast majority of students in our communities still do not graduate high school with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college and the world of work. Starting in elementary school, NYC schools must prepare students to think critically, read and write analytically, develop their creativity and work with others to solve complex problems. All students deserve the kind of high quality education that the best schools offer – without having to leave their neighborhood.

RE-DESIGN THE SCHOOL DAY

The current school day was designed 100 years ago to prepare students for factory or farm work, not for college and careers. Back then, public schools did not expect all students to graduate and go to college. To meet the challenges of the 21st century, struggling schools must be given the opportunity to reorganize teaching and learning and:

1. Add More Time to the School Day and Year

Many of the highest performing traditional public schools and charter schools serving low-income students have a longer school day and year, to offer college-preparatory academics without losing the arts, sports and other classes that engage students. Adding more time does not mean more traditional education; it means reorganizing the school day to provide a demanding, well-rounded education that prepares students for college and the world of work.

- Add 30% more time to the school day and year at low-performing schools to provide students with rigorous and engaging academics, diverse enrichment courses and teacher planning and learning time
- Launch Summer Academies to reduce skills loss over the summer and ease difficult transitions, especially before 1st, 6th and 9th grades
- Organize school-based committees of teachers, parents, students, school staff and community-based organizations to redesign the school day according to the school's and community's needs
- Provide schools with the option to participate, and compensate staff fairly for additional hours

2. Provide a Well-Rounded, College-Preparatory Curriculum for all Students

Redesign the school day to provide more rigorous college-preparatory academics:

- Challenging, high-quality curriculum in all grades, including Regents courses available to all middle grade students and Advanced Placement or other college-level courses for all high school students
- Less teaching to the test and more intellectual challenge through hands-on problem solving, scientific investigation, critical analysis, and opportunities to apply academic skills to real world issues

- Small group and individual tutoring available to accelerate struggling students

And more diverse enrichment courses:

- Visual and performing arts, physical education, and other elective courses several times a week
- College orientation courses in all middle and high schools

3. Attract, Train and Keep the Best Teachers and Principals

Redesign the school day to provide teachers and principals with opportunities to advance their professional knowledge and practice pedagogy that develops students' critical and analytic thinking skills.

- Provide daily common planning time for teachers in the same grade and subject to create curriculum, problem-solve, analyze student data and strategize supports for struggling students
- Create weekly blocks of time for teachers and principals to participate in peer-led trainings that connect directly to the classroom, deepen their subject knowledge and model inquiry-based, project-based learning and strategies to stimulate higher order thinking skills
- Organize cultural competency training for teachers and principals that involves parents, students and community partners in helping teachers learn about the school's neighborhood and families' cultures
- Link teachers and principals with high-performing schools serving similar student populations
- Reduce class size and the total number of students per teacher

Offer strong supports for new teachers and principals, and leadership opportunities for experienced ones.

- Phase-in new teachers through a transition year that provides extra time to observe other teachers, plan with grade and subject peers and participate in trainings
- Hire Lead Teachers to mentor new teachers and model effective instruction

4. Provide Strong, Comprehensive Supports for Every Child

Redesign the school day to provide struggling students with a strong network of relationships and services.

- Turn existing schools into community schools that partner with local organizations to provide services such as health care, recreation, cultural activities, youth development, school-to-work activities and service learning
- Organize an Early Warning System that concentrates resources in critical years like the 9th grade, identifies struggling students immediately, and intervenes swiftly through comprehensive services
- Increase the number of licensed school counselors or social workers to 1 for every 200 students
- Provide regular trainings and strong supervision and support for all counselors and social workers

Provide all students with information and access to college and careers.

- Hire high school and college counselors in middle and high schools who focus on planning, preparing and completing effective applications to high school and college
- Organize college visits, college fairs, mentors and guest speakers about the college experience for all students, beginning in elementary school and accelerating through middle and high school

5. Put the Parents Back in Public Education

Redesign the school day to provide opportunities for parents to be actively involved in student learning.

- Include and support traditional and independent parent groups in decisions about budget and policy
- Provide high-quality translation and interpretation services at all school functions and events
- Organize college tours and workshops for parents to develop their knowledge of the college process
- Offer adult education courses such as GED, ESL and technology within the school building to support parents in pursuing their own educational goals

Make All Schools Great Schools!