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**Parents and Education Advocates Applaud the Approval of Community Schools Policy**

*The approval by the Panel for Educational Policy is a victory for parents and leaders of the Coalition for Educational Justice, who first proposed the key guidelines in 2014*

Bronx, NY – Parents and students from the Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ) and community schools, as well as members of the Coalition for Community School Excellence celebrated the approval of the Community Schools Policy today by the Panel for Educational Policy. The vote took place at the Taft Educational Center in The Bronx shortly after many community school supporters had rallied outside in support of this important guideline.

The approval of this key policy is especially relevant because it will guide the implementation 130 new community schools already in full operation this school year as well as the dozens of other community schools being expanded across the city. It is an excellent model of collaboration between parents, community groups and the DOE to create strong education policy.

The guideline was first proposed by the Coalition for Educational Justice in December 2014, and supported by two-dozen community-based organizations. It is based on extensive research, on policies in other cities that have scaled up community schools and on recommendations that have proven that district-wide policy is an important tool for quality control across a diverse initiative, accountability and sustainability beyond a single administration. Its implementation will define community schools not only by the social, emotional and health services that are core to the traditional community school model, but also through strong classroom instruction, rigorous, college- and career-ready academics, and deep engagement with parents and community partners.

Moving forward CEJ will pledge to ensure that the city and state follow through on all of the aspects of this policy, and sustain funding past the current 3-year commitment.

“Through this policy, NYC paves a new way for community schools nationally by having strong academic instruction as a core component of community schools. It's now official that community schools in NYC include additional services and programs inside schools, but do not stop there. Those services programs are aligned with a high-quality academic plan and deep, ongoing engagement with families and communities as decision-makers. CEJ looks forward to working with the administration to ensure that community schools set students on track for the ultimate goal of being college and career ready," **said** **Natasha Capers, Coordinator for the Coalition for Educational Justice.**

**Vanessa Leung, Chair of the Panel for Educational Policy**, said, "The Panel for Educational Policy (PEP) is thrilled to have approved the New York City Department of Education's Community Schools Policy. We believe that the key elements listed will help improve our schools and the communities they are in. After visiting a community school today in the Bronx I have seen first hand the impact of having an effective community based partnership embedded into the fabric of the campus culture. The PEP worked closely with the NYCDOE to create this policy in partnership with advocates and stakeholders who want to see our community schools succeed. We look forward to continuing our  work with DOE to ensure the success of these schools."

"I stand with the Coalition for Educational Justice in calling on the Panel for Educational Policy to pass the DOE's Community Schools Policy," said **NYC Council Education Committee Chairperson Daniel Dromm** (D-Jackson Heights, Elmhurst).  "Community Schools empower our students to thrive academically by offering a wide range of services including support groups and childcare for parents, access to healthcare, mentorship and other valuable programs.  I urge the Panel to join us in supporting this innovative and holistic approach to meeting our children's educational needs in the 21st Century."

"Community Schools is a powerful part of the city's strategy to support our students and our schools for success, which ensures that the social services provided by not-for-profit partners like Good Shepherd Services are closely knitted together with strong instruction, academic rigor and family engagement – and that these combined strategies work together to help our schools succeed. The community schools policy being voted on tonight will help provide a roadmap to ensure that we as a city are doing what it takes to set up all of our Community Schools to attain the success we envision," **said** **Sister Paulette LoMonaco, Executive Director of Good Shepherd Services**.

“We serve thousands of students and families each year who could benefit from attending community schools, as community schools are defined by this policy.  It’s absolutely critical that everyone get on the same page about what makes a school a community school,” **said** **Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children.**

“Counseling In Schools applauds the Department of Education's actions to formalize the definitions and systems that go into the Community Schools model.  This model provides a critical bridge for community strengths and voices to meet community needs and challenges. The application of formal structures within this model will promote both the standards and accountability that all high functioning systems require,” **said Kevin Dahill-Fuchel, Executive Director of Counseling in Schools**.

 “Community schools are the dream that many parents such as myself have had for our children. My son had a lot of difficulty in math and the community school helped him get one-on-one tutoring, which I had sought for him for a long time. Now I have such good communication with the staff at my son’s school and we work as a team to support him. I hope all schools can be community schools so that all students can receive the supports they need and all parents can be listened to. The Community Schools Policy will help these programs to expand to more schools effectively,” said **Yamile Henry, a parent at Academy for Environmental Leadership and a member of Make the Road NY**.

“The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families is proud to support NYC's Community School Initiative as a key strategy towards achieving equity in education in struggling K-12 public schools. By promoting the value of partnerships between schools and community-based organizations who provide comprehensive supports to students, teachers, and families who are part of these schools, the community is fortified by opportunities to succeed and thrive that may not have existed before,” **said Grace Bonilla, Executive Director of the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families**.

“There are many obstacles that can stand between a child and success in school. The community schools model brings together resources from the school, partner organization and community to mitigate those obstacles and give children a clear path to being engaged in learning. The YMCA is proud to stand with the City of New York and our colleagues to bring more community schools to our great city. We believe that partnerships built by community schools support not only the whole child but also the whole family and the whole community. We all must work to bring together a full service, well rounded, multi-faceted approach to serving our citizens through community schools and the policy voted on tonight does that while preserving the individuality of the community schools model,” **said Sharon Greenberger, President & CEO of the YMCA of Greater New York.**

“Only coordinated efforts of schools, families and community groups can build the network of long-term supports young people need to succeed in building family, sustaining careers and being leaders for community change” **said** **DreamYard Co-Executive Director Tim Lord**.  “That's where community schools come in, and why we at DreamYard so support the Community Schools Policy voted on tonight to help ensure excellence and sustainability for community schools into the future.”

"Community schools can be compared to a fertile soil where we the parents, teachers, administrators, and community can plant the seeds for our children to excel and develop skills for future generations. It is the answer we have been looking for many years", said **Community Health Academy of the Heights parent Christian Rodriguez**. ‘The Community Schools Policy that the Panel for Educational Policy voted on tonight will sustain that soil for many years and generations to come.”

“ExpandED Schools applauds the administration and DOE for their investment in Community Schools as we also believe it is a central strategy for achieving equity in education. Expanded learning time is a pillar ofstrong community schools because offering more time and ways to learn supports students’ academic, social and emotional growth, and helps close the opportunity gap,” **said Lucy N. Friedman, President, ExpandED Schools.**

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