



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

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February 16, 2021

Mayor Bill de Blasio
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Chancellor Richard A. Carranza
NYC Board of Education
52 Chambers St.
New York, NY 10007



In Support of Sibling Priority in District 3 for the 2021-2022 School Year:

We are writing to you concerning Chancellor Carranza's and Mayor de Blasio's recent decision to remove admission screening systems for all middle schools citywide, which inadvertently eliminated the sibling priority policy for some schools in District 3 and around the city. During this ongoing pandemic, we believe that for public health reasons, sibling priority should be extended to ALL District 3 middle schools for the September 2021 Admissions cycle, and as long as the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates. Allowing sibling priority for all District 3 middle schools would ease the burden on and calm the anxious minds of parents in our community. In addition, it may eliminate the necessity to close multiple classrooms and/or school buildings if one family is impacted by COVID-19.

We are deeply concerned the decision to remove sibling priority will have a detrimental impact on our families. Sibling priority policies ease the travel and organizational burden on parents whose resources were already spread thin before the pandemic. New York City families have faced many uncertainties during this lockdown and this change is yet another unwelcome disruption.

What's more, during the ongoing pandemic, the science supports keeping families together in the same school in order to limit their exposure to COVID-19. Furthermore, keeping families together will limit the exposure a family impacted by COVID-19 could have on the school system. If multiple family members are infected with COVID-19 and they are not in the same school you will have the potential for multiple schools being closed.

This arbitrary policy change seems completely antithetical to Chancellor Carranza's 12/4/20 op-ed in BKReader where he wrote:

“As a parent myself, I know how challenging it can be even in normal times to feel pulled in different directions simultaneously. In this moment, it seems as though society’s expectations of parents has increased tenfold—and we need you to know we are here to support you every step of the way. We are expanding every effort to lift up and empower parents as our partners for the good of our children and this city.”

Sibling priority policies not only support New York City parents but they also increase family engagement and family choice, both of which are priorities of the DOE. Allowing families to send their children to the same middle school will only help to increase parental engagement in their school community by becoming invested for the longer term.

All families have suffered during the pandemic and having siblings together as we come out of these tumultuous times feels like a trauma-informed decision that will serve all families across the public school system, in particular,

the most vulnerable students. In addition, removing sibling priority can potentially increase health risks, as it remains unclear what the status of COVID-19 pandemic, vaccination effort and various strains will be come September. We have attached a letter from two Infectious Disease doctors with a recommendation that sibling priority be available for all District 3 middle schools.

We strongly urge you to consider these health recommendations and allow for sibling preference in admissions for the 2021/2022 school year.

Sincerely,

Community Education Council District 3

cc: Governor Andrew Cuomo
Executive Superintendent, Manhattan, Marisol Rosales
District 3 Superintendent Christine Loughlin
Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
NYC Public Advocate Jumaane Williams
NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer
NYS Regents Member, 1st District, Nan Eileen Mead
Panel for Educational Policy Member, Michael Kraft
Panel for Educational Policy Member, Shannon Waite
City Councilmember Mark Treyger
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State Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried
State Assembly Member Robert J. Rodriguez
State Senator John Liu, Chair, Subcommittee on NYC Education
State Senator Shelley Mayer, Chair, Committee on Education
State Senator Brian Benjamin
State Senator Brad Hoylman
State Senator Robert Jackson
State Senator Jose M. Serrano
U.S. Congressman Adriano Espaillat
U.S. Congressman Jerrold L. Nadler
United Federation of Teachers President Michel Mulgrew
Community Board 7 Chair Mark Diller
Community Board 10 Chair Cicely Harris