

September 18, 2020

Dear Mayor de Blasio, Chancellor Carranza, and UFT President Mulgrew,

We, the members of the P.S. 139 community, are writing today to address the egregious failures of the City of New York and the Department of Education in regards to the blended learning model. Additionally, we demand for a **full remote start** for the school year until schools are fully staffed by educators that are certified in the appropriate licensed areas.

On July 8th, Mayor Bill de Blasio [released a statement](#) introducing the New York City Department of Education's (NYCDOE) plan to provide in-person, blended instruction. In order for this model to be implemented successfully, the NYCDOE would require schools to be staffed by a mixture of in-person, blended remote, and full remote teachers. Families opted into the blended model, under the impression that their children would [receive live instruction](#)--whether in person or remotely--five days a week. Then, on September 16, the City's Education officials announced that blended remote students will [no longer be guaranteed live instruction on their remote days](#).

The City of New York and the Department of Education have ignored this staffing crisis--amidst a hiring freeze and veteran educators leaving the field due to health concerns. On September 14, the president of the administrator's union, Mark Cannizzaro, announced that NYC public schools are ["woefully" short-staffed by 10,000 teachers](#). The Mayor and Chancellor noted that [75% of families](#) were in favor of blended learning--many of these families opting for the model while under the impression their children would continue to receive live instruction on their remote days. In reality, these students will most likely receive only 1 - 2 days of live, in-person instruction, while their peers enrolled in fully remote classes will receive live, remote instruction 5 days a week.

As it stands, the city's plan for school reopening is not only inherently inequitable, but it will also exacerbate the achievement gap amongst our most vulnerable and marginalized students.

Some of these inequities across the city's public schools include, but are not limited to:

- Blended remote students will receive 1 - 2 days of live instruction per week, while fully remote students will receive 5 days of live instruction per week.
- Special education students enrolled in the blended remote integrated co-teaching (ICT) classes will only receive live, in-person instruction 1 - 2 days a week, and little to no synchronous learning on their remote days, which is in direct violation with their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and Program Adaptation Documents (PADs).

- In order to meet the demands of a severe staffing shortage, teachers continue to have their positions changed, disrupting students' sense of stability and disrupting schools' programming and planning.
- The staffing crisis has led to many teachers teaching out of their certified license areas. All students deserve to be taught by a teacher that has received the appropriate training to adequately teach the material in an age-appropriate way.
- In an effort to staff the blended remote and fully remote positions, many students are not receiving instruction in physical education, the performing arts, and the visual arts. A fully remote plan would allow for these students to receive a full, virtual arts education.
- Teachers are being expected to serve as trauma specialists, while some of the city's hardest hit communities are being asked to go along with a reopening plan that will retraumatize students and their school communities.
- Schools being delayed for a second time creates instability and uncertainty to the hundreds of thousands of families across the city that have enrolled their children into the blended program.
- Across the city, students, colleagues, and families are still processing the trauma inflicted by the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic. COVID-19 has and will continue to [disproportionately affect our BIPOC students, colleagues, and families](#). A reopening plan that does not consider the safety of these most vulnerable communities will only continue to exacerbate the inequities reinforced by the pandemic.

We are writing to demand a **full remote start** until there is enough staffing to appropriately meet students' academic and social emotional needs. By beginning the school year fully remote, all students can receive a quality education, with consistent live instruction by a teacher certified in the appropriate licensed area. All New York City students and families deserve educational opportunities that are equitable.

Sincerely,

Members of the P.S. 139 Community