

January 5, 2022

Dear Families,

It's an honor to serve with Mayor Eric Adams as I become your new Schools Chancellor—and to welcome your children back to school after their much-deserved winter break. The health and safety of our children, families, and staff is our highest priority. I hope you received the recent letter outlining the new health and safety measures we have put in place to ensure that your children remain safe and that our schools remain open. We continue to encourage families to get tested, get vaccinated, and consent to in-school testing. If you missed the letter, you can read it at schools.nyc.gov/messagesforfamilies.

As a parent and life-long educator, I believe that every young person is filled with brilliance, promise, and gifts. I believe that all children deserve a strong academic foundation that prepares them to graduate with an employable skill set. Equally important, they deserve the tools and support needed to be physically and emotionally healthy.

And as a proud New Yorker, born in Brooklyn, I know the difference an excellent educator and school can make in a child's life. I will never forget the teacher at P.S. 161 in Brooklyn who transformed my life: Mrs. Mildred Scott. She taught me about Black history and culture. She also taught me that I had a responsibility to my community, a value reinforced by my parents.

I took those lessons with me to Queens, where I graduated from Hillcrest High School and then attended college. Now, I didn't plan on becoming a teacher. In fact, I was a school safety officer for a year when I was bitten by the teaching bug. Wouldn't you know it, I began my first teaching job at P.S. 167 in my old neighborhood on Eastern Parkway. From there, I became a founding principal at the Bronx School for Law, Government and Justice, and later at the Eagle Academy for Young Men, where I proved that a high-quality college preparatory education for young men of color can be provided in a public-school setting.

In the more than 30 years I've been doing this work, I've learned a few things about education. I learned that the answers to how we improve the system exist in the hearts and minds of our teachers, principals, children, and families. I learned that you cannot create innovative and high-quality schools that serve all students without engaging the entire community. And so, in my first week as your Chancellor, I welcome your input and partnership as we work together to ensure that the nation's largest school system also becomes the nation's *best* school system.

To achieve this goal, we will work on behalf of all our children—children from every neighborhood, and especially those who have been historically left behind. Children who are learning to speak English. Children with disabilities. Children who live in temporary housing. We will work day in and day out for all of our children, because they are all capable of thriving. This means giving every student the support, learning experiences, and resources to graduate from high school, attend college or learn a trade, get a great job, and become informed and engaged citizens.

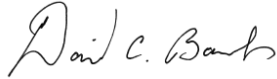
You can count on me to always be honest. I won't sugarcoat it: we face enormous challenges, and we can only change a system as large as ours with an all-hands-on-deck approach. This is particularly true as we enter our third year of a pandemic that has required us to adapt to new ways of teaching and learning.

This is where you, our families, come in. We want to reach every one of you and welcome you as partners in your children's education. We want your input on the policies that affect your children. Over the coming months you

will begin to see new and improved ways to communicate with our school system. We want to empower you to be advocates for your children, your schools, and your communities. We want to bring in our parents who are not typically engaged with the school system and elevate their crucial voices.

I began this letter with my commitment to safety and I want to reassure you that we will do everything in our power to keep your children safe and our schools open, with as little disruption as possible. We owe New York City's students nothing less. Thank you for your warm wishes and for your support as we lift all our students higher.

Soaring high,



David C. Banks
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education

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