

March 19, 2021

Dear Families,

This was my first week as your new Chancellor, and I couldn't be more excited to take on this role. Not only because I am a New Yorker born and bred, but because education is in my blood. Both my mom and auntie were teachers and I became a New York City public school English teacher because of them, and the amazing educators I had as a student myself growing up in Queens.

Since I started at the DOE 21 years ago, I have also worked as an assistant principal, and then principal. More recently, I served our school communities as a superintendent and Bronx executive superintendent.

And now it is my honor and privilege to lead our schools citywide. I have spent much of this week seeing our brilliant students and educators from every borough in action, in-person and remotely. I saw pre-k students learn about the water cycle, joined sixth graders in learning ratios by mixing just the right ratio of food coloring into frosting, and joined seventh-graders in sharing special objects that reveal something about who we are. Despite all the changes and challenges we've faced this past year, our school communities are still joyful, vibrant places of learning.

As I reflect on this week's visits, I am also heartened by the beautiful diversity of our classrooms, communities, and our City as a whole. In our schools, "respect for all" is not just a slogan, but a way of life. We value every student, staff member, and family for who they are. We ensure everyone feels welcomed. This is at our very core.

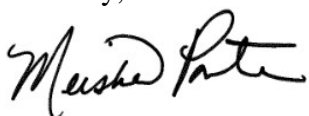
But the horrific anti-Asian hate crimes we've been seeing citywide and this week in Atlanta make it clear that we must work harder to end systemic racism. Justice and inclusivity have been pillars of my career as an educator. As Chancellor, I promise to continue to advance equity and dismantle any biases in our school system. And I want to make it clear: there is no room for racism or discrimination of any kind at the Department of Education or in any of our schools. Just this week, we provided our educators with updated resources to combat hate crimes in our schools and provide our students with social and emotional supports. You can find resources for discussing racism and hate crimes with your children at schools.nyc.gov/togetherforjustice.

Creating environments that encourage all students to be who they are will be on my mind on March 22, when all our public high schools will begin welcoming students back to in-person and blended learning. Like elementary and middle schools, as well as our District 75 programs, high schools will follow the strong practices we have established to help keep school communities healthy and safe. This includes weekly random testing of students and staff for COVID-19, physical distancing, masks, and nightly deep cleaning. In the meantime, I'm excited about this important milestone in the city's recovery. And I'm proud to lead a school system that has set the standard for the nation in reopening efforts.

This is such a hopeful and historic time for our schools and our city, and I want to thank you for all you have done to support our students and schools. In the coming weeks, there will be opportunities for us to meet and talk. I promise to hear and include your voices as we finish out this school year and plan for the next.

Let's go. Let's do this. We're ready.

Sincerely,



Meisha Porter
New York City Schools Chancellor

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