



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**LOWELL D. KERN**

Chair

**Jesse R. Bodine**

District Manager

February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Richard A. Carranza  
Chancellor  
Department of Education  
52 Chambers Street  
New York NY, 10007

**Re: Dyslexia Screening in Schools**

Dear Chancellor Carranza:

This Letter is on behalf of the Arts, Culture, Education & Street Life Committee (ACES) of Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) to urge the Department of Education to support students with dyslexia through universal screening, teacher professional development and pilot programs specifically designed to educate dyslexic students. At its regularly scheduled meeting on February 5, 2020, MCB4 voted, by a vote of XX in favor, XX opposed, XX abstaining, and XX present but not eligible to vote, approval of the ACES committees' recommendations.

At our ACES meeting on January 6, 2020 and our joint forum on Students with Learning Disabilities on December 9, 2019 with Community Education Council District 2 and Community Boards 1 and 2, ACES members heard from parents and educators regarding the lack of support for students with learning disabilities attending New York City Public Schools. Currently the DOE does not offer universal screening for dyslexia or teacher training to teach students with dyslexia.

According to the Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity, dyslexia affects 20% of the population and represents 80 - 90% of persons with learning disabilities. If left undiagnosed and untreated, dyslexia can lead to anxiety, depression, low-self esteem, higher student drop out rates and unemployment. The achievement gap between typical students and dyslexic students begins in first grade and worsens over time creating a substandard education and equity issue for too many children. New York City Department of Education data for 2019 shows that only 22% and 18% of students with disabilities passed the 4<sup>th</sup> grade math and ELA state exams respectively; by 7<sup>th</sup> grade, the scores dropped to 12% for math and 11% for ELA.

Last year, the Department of Education reimbursed an estimated 46 million dollars to individual families for private school tuition for students with learning disabilities whose needs they could not meet. These costs include but are not limited to:

- Private neuropsychological evaluations to obtain a dyslexic diagnosis
- Private tutoring
- Tuition for private schools that can be in excess of \$60,000 per year
- Retainers for special education lawyers to sue the DOE to cover the cost of tuition

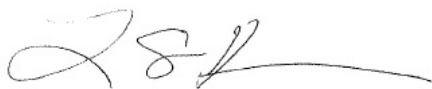
These resources are only available to families who can afford to pay for them. The majority of public school families do not have the time or financial resources to navigate this expensive, complex system. According to Department of Education data, 72.8% of New York City public school students are economically disadvantaged. Therefore, a greater number of students with learning disabilities do not have the financial resources needed to obtain their constitutional right to a sound basic education.

In order to meet the standards of the Department of Education's Equity and Excellence initiative, the DOE must serve the needs of all New York City Public School children including those with dyslexia. Therefore, MCB4 urges the Department of Education to take action in supporting students with learning disabilities to ensure these students receive a Free and Appropriate Education as stated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act by providing the following:

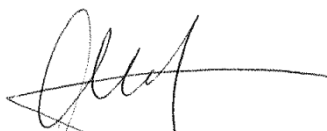
- Universal and comprehensive dyslexia screening for all K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade students in NYC public schools
- Training for teachers to recognize early signs of dyslexia
- Professional development for teachers to effectively teach children with dyslexia
- Curriculum and programs within schools.

The ACES Committee appreciates the ongoing cooperation that has developed with DOE and invites DOE to return to the committee to present an update on this issue.

Sincerely,



Lowell D. Kern  
Chair  
Community Board 4



Allen Oster  
Co-Chair  
ACES Committee

[signed 2/10/20]  
Inge Ivchenko  
Co-Chair  
ACES Committee

cc: Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker, City Council  
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
Community Education Council District 2