



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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LOWELL D. KERN

Chair

Jesse R. Bodine

District Manager

September 10, 2020

Donalda Chumney
Superintendent
Community Education Council District 2
333 7th Avenue
New York NY 10001

Re: Student Teacher Virtual Learning Initiative

Dear Superintendent Chumney,

Thank you for your support of the Student Teacher Virtual Learning Initiative to be piloted in three Title I elementary schools (PS 111, PS51, PS33) located in Community Board 4. Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) is excited about this program that will provide live remote instruction for students most in need, provide educators with much needed support and help alleviate parents/caregivers educational responsibilities at home. MCB4 at its duly noticed Full Board meeting on September 2, 2020, voted, by a vote of 37 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 0 present not eligible to vote, in support of this initiative.

The Arts, Culture, Education & Street Life Committee (ACES) has been in constant communication with parents and educators regarding the reopening this September of NYC public schools. As you are aware, our committee staged a virtual forum on Reopening Schools in the Age of COVID-19 and last month, drafted a letter to Mayor de Blasio and DOE central highlighting parent and educator concerns and advocating for necessary steps our community is asking for in order to return in September¹. During these extraordinary times of the COVID-19 pandemic, we understand the remarkably difficult task the DOE has getting kids back to school safely and providing a quality education while also considering each student's family situation.

The Student Teacher Virtual Learning Initiative

MCB4 has partnered with SUNY's Urban Teacher Education Center, Pace University College of Education, Columbia Teachers College and Fordham University Graduate School of Education

¹ <https://cbmanhattan.cityofnewyork.us/cb4/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2020/08/01-ACES-Letter-to-Mayor-and-DOE-re-Reopening-Schools-Letter.pdf>

to provide our District 2 Schools with their education students as virtual student teachers on the at-home days of blended learning.

Right now, children will be divided into three groups on any given day.

- 1) Live, in-person instruction (one half of blended learning)
- 2) At-home studies (2nd half of blended learning)
- 3) Children who are opting for 100% at-home learning.

There is not enough time nor staff for our teachers to create three separate lesson plans serving different groups of students simultaneously while maintaining the offering of a high-quality education. This plan will allow DOE teachers to concentrate on the in-person learning and have student teachers provide supplemental instruction on the at-home learning days of blended learning (not to be confused with the 100% remote learners). All student teachers involved in this on-line program have already been fingerprinted and vetted by their respective colleges and universities.

School educators will form pods of 4-5 like-level students from the same class. On the at-home days, these pods will meet with their student teacher who will work off the teacher's lesson plan from Google Classroom. They will review already covered materials from the in-person learning days. Principals and teachers will work together to identify students for this program.

In adhering to the Chancellor's vision of Equity & Excellence, we are pleased that the Virtual Student Teacher Initiative will begin in our Title I schools including PS33, PS51 & PS111. These schools serve a very diverse body of students including our most vulnerable populations.

BENEFITS

- Schools receive much needed manpower in the form of trained and educated student teachers.
- Teachers' massive workloads are alleviated, and they can concentrate on providing more focused, quality education.
- Students receive live instruction on-line during their at-home days.
- This provides live, small group student-educator time.
- Small groups foster peer-to-peer interaction and socialization.
- Small groups encourage diffident or inhibited students to participate.
- Parents are able to sign up for their pod at the best and most convenient time for them. This enables working parents and caregiver's flexibility in their scheduling.
- Parents and caretakers are not required to take on the "teacher" role at home. (This is the most common complaint we have been hearing from parents.)
- If at some point in the year schools are forced to pivot to full-time distance learning, there will already be experienced student teachers.

This initiative will also help our college and university partners who are looking for alternative placements for their early education students whose traditional opportunities were limited by COVID-19 restrictions. Student teachers joining this program will gain valuable field experience and accredited hours to fulfill degree requirements. Furthermore, this program will help build a

future generation of teachers, who may continue their careers in the New York City Public Schools system.

We are grateful that Community Schools District 2 saw the value in this initiative and adopted it immediately. This is a wonderful example of how community advocacy can work with city agencies to provide working solutions for our residents. In fact, since word spread of this initiative, several upstate New York school districts are interested in replicating this concept.

Our early projections indicate that this program can reach as many as 800-900 children this upcoming quarter. We are encouraged that based on the results of this pilot program, District 2 representatives are optimistic this model can be expanded to serve a larger student population across the city.

MCB4 also would like to thank Principal Edward Gilligan at PS111, Principal Stephanie Lukas at PS51 and Principal Cindy Wang at PS33 who were instrumental in providing suggestions and feedback during the planning stages and are a big reason why this initiative is being introduced.

We would like to note the speed and efficiency with which you and your District 2 staff implemented this plan. We understand student teachers are already assigned to their schools and principals are already in the process of creating their pods. We look forward to updates as we move further into this school year.

Sincerely,



Lowell D. Kern
Chair
Community Board 4



Allen Oster
Co-Chair
ACES Committee



Kit Tollerson
Co-Chair
ACES Committee

cc: Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker, City Council
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Helen Rosenthal, City Council
Ed Gilligan, Principle, PS 111
Stephanie Lukas, Principal, PS 51
Cindy Wang, Principal, PS 33 Chelsea Prep