

September 16, 2022

Chancellor David C. Banks
New York City Department of Education

Re: Call to Permanently End Middle-School Screens

Dear Chancellor Banks,

It is with great concern that we write to you on behalf of 39 organizations and over 400 individual students, parents, and community members regarding impending admission decisions for the 2022-2023 school year. Specifically, we are troubled that this administration is purportedly preparing to reverse course and allow discriminatory admission methods to restart at the middle-school level despite two years of equitable progress.

A reinstatement of middle-school screens would result in direct harm to our most vulnerable students and families both academically and socio-emotionally, and would exacerbate segregation in one of the most segregated school systems in the country. We request that this administration act on over a decade of research and advocacy by organizations, students, parents, and educators and call for the **permanent elimination of middle-school (MS) screens citywide.**

A Synthesis of Facts in Support of Eliminating Middle-School Screens:

Diversity at previously screened, highly sought-after middle schools has increased citywide.

Within the first year of removing MS screens citywide, 50 of the most selective middle-school programs saw an increase in offers going to students from low-income families and students learning English as a new language.¹ Several schools were witness to considerable shifts in offers going to historically marginalized student groups: The Christa McAuliffe school in Brooklyn saw an 11% increase in offers to English Language Learners, Mark Twain Middle School saw an 11% increase in offers to students from low-income families, and NYC Lab Middle School for Collaborative Studies also saw a 23% increase in offers to students from low-income families.²

¹ Reema Amin, Big changes to this year's middle school admission process yielded modest demographic shifts, <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/5/11/22431085/nyc-middle-school-offers-2021-integration> (May 11, 2021)

² Michael Elsen-Rooney, Pandemic admission screens pause boosts diversity at NYC middle schools, <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/education/ny-middle-schools-pandemic-middle-school-screens-suspension-20210511-bvnten6fmnhibek3jzl6hyna6e-story.html> (May 11, 2021); Reema Amin, Big changes to this year's middle

Community School District (CSD) 15, which effectively removed screening from all middle-school programs in 2018 only required one enrollment cycle to see a dramatic increase in offers to low-income students, students learning English, and students in temporary housing.³ Prior to their policy change, only three of the 11 middle schools in District 15 were within the target range for diversity (i.e. 40-70% of offers going to high needs students). Within the first year, 8 of the 11 schools met goals for diversity and recent data on 2020-2021 offers shows that the increase in diversity has stayed consistent, with 7 out of 11 meeting the target range.⁴

Preliminary data on the effects of removing middle-school screens shows promising progress toward a less segregated, more inclusive school system. A reversion to screens not only stunts this progress, it also puts NYC at risk of supporting a policy clearly attributed to denying NYC's most vulnerable students access to public learning opportunities.

The segregative and detrimental effects of screening are well-documented, making any allowance for schools to return to MS screens an unsound policy that is not supported by research.

In 2019, New York Appleseed released a report debunking the notion that residential segregation is the driving force behind middle-school segregation in NYC.⁵ In 2018, only 17% of middle schools relied solely on a student's place of residence (or elementary school) for admission.⁶ The segregation present in the city's most diverse Community School Districts (such as CSDs 2, 3, and 15) appeared to be caused not by geography, but by intentional policy of the NYCDOE.

Subsequent reports only affirmed Appleseed's findings and calls to eliminate MS screens. In 2019, The School Diversity Advisory Group (SDAG), commissioned by former Mayor de Blasio, produced two reports which found that, "New York City's schools with exclusionary admissions practices are among the most homogeneous middle and high schools. These schools disproportionately under-serve the city's Black students, Latinx students, students with disabilities and multilingual learners compared to the makeup of the entire student population."⁷ The NYC Bar Association released their own intensively researched report, which

school admission process yielded modest demographic shifts,

<https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/5/11/22431085/nyc-middle-school-offers-2021-integration> (May 11, 2021)

³ Brad Lander, Nyah Berg & David Tipson, The White Flight That Wasn't: New Data Reveal That Brooklyn School Integration Is Working,

<https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-new-data-reveal-brooklyn-school-integration-is-working-20191114-ygw2flcqkngqne5ctz2ewfu3qy-story.html> (last updated Nov. 14, 2019)

⁴ Jillian Jorgensen, Admission changes fuel more diverse middle school offers,

<https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/news/2021/05/11/admissions-changes-fuel-more-diverse-middle-school-offers> (May 11, 2021)

⁵ New York Appleseed, Student Assignment to Public Middle Schools in New York City,

https://www.nyappleseed.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Middle-School-Advocacy-Briefing_01_19-PDF.pdf (Jan., 2019)

⁶ Id. at

⁷ School Diversity Advisory Group, Making the Grade: A Path to Real Integration and Equity for NYC Public School Students,

concluded in calling for the elimination of competitive admissions at the elementary and middle-school level, further reasoning, “Competitive admissions for very young children are pedagogically unsound because research demonstrates that all children derive educational and social benefits from diverse classrooms with students of differing races, economic status, and learning ability.”⁸

In addition to the well-documented systemic inequities that screens perpetuate, there is also cause for concern on the effect such processes have on individual students. A researcher who followed 36 eighth graders through Chicago’s competitive high school admissions found a young Black girl internalized her rejection to a selective school, taking her rejection as a sign that she “set too high standards for myself,” and wishing she “could have done better like them,”—them being those admitted.⁹ City leadership should be wary of authorizing any policy that negatively impacts the self-worth and self-esteem of its young students and compounds on the historical trauma that Black and Latino students, students from low-income families, students with disabilities, students in temporary housing, and English Language Learners internalize from decades of exclusion in public policy decisions.

Previously used selection criteria such as attendance and state test scores are still invalid and inequitable measures of a student’s achievement.

Selection criteria previously used by screened middle schools and high schools remains largely incomplete and unreliable due to the unavoidable disruptions that COVID-19 has had on student learning. For example, attendance fluctuated throughout the 2021-2022 school year due to surges in coronavirus cases, forcing many schools to toggle between virtual and in-person classes, and many families to weigh health risks of in-person learning.¹⁰ State testing data is also likely to continue as an incomplete and invalid indicator of student achievement as a result of ongoing learning interruptions from the pandemic and NYC schools experiencing an increase of families opting-out of testing.¹¹

https://cdn.givingcompass.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/22123200/1c478c_4de7a85cae884c53a8d48750e0858172.pdf (Feb. 7, 2019); School Diversity Advisory Group, Making the Grade II: New Programs for Better Schools, https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/1c478c_1d5659bd05494f6d8cb2bbf03fcc95dd.pdf (Aug. 26, 2019)

⁸ NYC Bar Association, Eliminating competitive admissions at the elementary- and middle-school programs and schools, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/documents.nycbar.org/files/2019521-CompetitiveAdmissionsDOE050119.pdf> (May 1, 2019)

⁹ Kate Philippo, Competitive high school admission policies send students strong messages about their worth. Students are Listening,

<https://chicago.chalkbeat.org/2019/9/16/21108821/competitive-high-school-admissions-policies-send-students-strong-messages-about-their-worth-students> (Sept. 16, 2019)

¹⁰ Alex Zimmerman, Reema Amin and Christina Veiga, An early test for Eric Adams: solving low attendance and a school staffing crunch, <https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2022/1/3/22865904/eric-adams-nyc-schools-staffing-shortage-covid> (Jan. 3, 2022)

¹¹ Amy Zimmer, Some NYC schools see more families opt out of state tests amid rising anxiety, https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2022/4/19/23025988/nyc-opt-out-state-tests-jamaal-bowman-east-harlem?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#Echobox=1650366536 (Apr. 19, 2022)

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The elimination of MS screens is a popular, highly demanded policy change amongst students, parents, educators, and community members.

In 2019, over 5,000 students, parents, organizations, DOE employees and other educational stakeholders across multiple petitions and sign-on letters demanded that the DOE eliminate discriminatory admission methods and provide inclusive, equitable and high quality learning opportunities for their children.¹² Their calls were supplemented by many reports and briefings—several of which are mentioned in this letter—that span over a decade of work.

To reinstate screening is to erase the voices of thousands who wanted this change, and ignore the needs of historically marginalized communities.

Conclusion: A majority of students in New York City started the school year with less resources because of school budget cuts—fewer teachers, less programming, and fewer counselors. We implore this administration to not make a quality education even more elusive to families through condoning the restoration of discriminatory middle-school admission policies. We call on Chancellor Banks to **permanently end the use of middle school screens**.

Respectfully,

Nyah Berg
Executive Director, New York Appleseed

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Further Supported By:

Organizations:

1. Advocates for Children of New York
2. Advocates for Justice
3. Alliance for Quality Education
4. BNS/BCS Parent Action Committee
5. BLM at Schools NYC
6. Black at Specialized

¹² Teens Take Charge, Petition to tell the DOE to end discriminatory admissions screening, <https://www.change.org/p/nyc-doe-end-discriminatory-admissions-screening>; Culturally Responsive Education Working Group, NYC schools for transformative change letter, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E3ehlcrY5co_NTPy9TPgu6Q3MDezL7XnSuvO6quWc1c/edit; Community School District 2 Educators & Parents, Educators for an End to Middle School Screening, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QAVva-Og8FmMukoigA_xIny49z8YOsM4y89lVB5vjts/edit; IntegrateNYC, End Discriminatory Screens Campaign, <https://integrateNYC.org/whats-new/2020/06/24/update2>

7. Bridges Collaborative
8. Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
9. Class Size Matters
10. Coalition for Asian American Children and Families
11. Community Education Council District 4
12. Community Education Council District 14
13. Cypress Hills LDC
14. D15 Coalition for Equitable Schools
15. D15 Parents for Middle School Equity
16. Desis Rising Up and Moving
17. District 28 Action for Equity
18. Dignity in Schools Campaign- New York
19. D28 Equity Now
20. Education Council Consortium
21. Education Justice Research & Organizing Collaborative (EJROC) at NYU Metro Center
22. EduColor
23. Gowanus Houses Art Collective
24. Grupo Juego y Lectura de Sunset Park
25. IntegrateNYC
26. Jews For Racial & Economic Justice (JFREJ)
27. Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE-UFT)
28. MS 51
29. MS 136, principal
30. Mural Justice Project
31. New York City Coalition for Educational Justice
32. New York Edge Inc
33. NYC Opt Out
34. Parents Supporting Parents NY
35. Parents to Improve School Transportation (PIST)
36. PRESSNYC
37. Protect NYC Special Education/ Proteger la educación especial de NYC
38. PS 29 Brooklyn
39. PTA Members of 277Q
40. Reclaim Pride Coalition
41. Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) NYC
42. Students Break the Silence
43. Teens Take Charge
44. Territorial Empathy
45. Voces Ciudadanas Inc

Individuals (students, parents, educators & community members):

1. Abby Kornfeld

2. Adia Tucker
3. Agnes Laird
4. Agnieszka Warsicka
5. Aimee Fox
6. Aixa B Rodriguez
7. Alan A. Aja
8. Alana Jones
9. Alexander Artz
10. Alexandra Freidus
11. Alexandra Haridopolos
12. Alex Stevens, D13 parent
13. Alina Tenser
14. Allison Kleiman, NYCDOE School Counselor
15. Allison Moulard
16. Allison Pariani, Teacher at MS447
17. Altagracia Montilla
18. Amanda A.
19. Amanda Abry
20. Amanda Aschettino-Ramirez
21. Amanda Clarke
22. Amanda Vender
23. Amanda Zinoman
24. Amity Murray, Parent
25. Amy Althoff
26. Amy Alvarez
27. Amy Gropp Forbes
28. Amy Sumner
29. Anabel Soto
30. Anaiah, Student
31. Ana Rojas
32. Andrea Begor
33. Andrea Castellano
34. Andrea Chu
35. Andrea Dovalle
36. Andrea Harris
37. Andrea Quintero, Parent
38. Andrew Borges
39. Andrew Godsberg, Parent
40. Andrew Zinn
41. Angela Walker
42. Anna Alfredson
43. Anna Lee
44. Anna Lewis Riquier

45. Anna Sathe, D15 Parent and NYCDOE Central Staff
46. Anne
47. Anne Hager
48. Anne McGroarty
49. Annie Kountz
50. Anthony Cannonier
51. Antonia Ferraro Martinelli, CEC15 Recording Secretary
52. Arsenia Margaret Reilly-Collins
53. Ashley Hughes
54. Ashley Strohm
55. Ayishah G Irvin, PA President-Teachers College Community School, CEC D5 Treasurer, PTA Treasurer-FDA, President Council President D5
56. Ayisha Kalin
57. B. Kaiser, Teacher
58. Barbara Barnes
59. Barbara Lewis-Williams
60. Bertrand Moulard
61. Beth Botshon
62. Bliss N Broyard
63. Bonnie Massey
64. Bonnie Veronico
65. Brandon Roiger
66. Brian Peters
67. Brittany L.
68. Britta Sorensen
69. Bryony Romer
70. Camille Casaretti, CEC15 President
71. Candice Simon
72. Caolan Madden
73. Cara Marcous
74. Carlos Alegria Ly
75. Carolyn Kelly
76. Carrie Gleason, PS 315 Parent
77. Cassandra Christopher, Mother of 2 NYC public school elementary students
78. Cheryl Freeman
79. Chia-Hua Hu
80. Christina D. Prince
81. Christina DiZebba, NYC public school teacher and parent
82. Christina Gavin, 75X754 UFT Chapter Leader, MORE UFT, IWW
83. Christina Theodoro
84. Christine Sparks
85. Cindy Chau
86. Clayton Patrie

87. Colleen O'Connor-Grant, PS3 Charrettee School SLT
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89. Courtney Epton
90. Courtney Frank
91. Courtney McKee
92. Cristine Maisano, Educator
93. D. Awusi
94. Damali A. Carrington
95. Dana Rappaport
96. Danette Lipten
97. Daniel Alicea, Educators of NYC
98. Daniel Filipak
99. Danielle Marchant
100. Daryll Pierre
101. David Peck
102. David Siren Eisner
103. Debbie Sonu, Assoc Professor of Education
104. Denesia Stroom-Blair
105. Diandra Verwayne
106. Diane Castelucci
107. Dionne Davis
108. D Myrie, UFT CL MS 391
109. D Patricia Jewett
110. Dr. Jonathan Ryan Davis
111. Edgar Alfonseca
112. Elena Chatziliias
113. Elijah Godsberg, 11th grader
114. Elite Chak
115. Elizabeth Jones
116. Elizabeth Martin
117. Elizabeth M D Arcangelo
118. Elizabeth Oltmans Ananat
119. Elizabeth Soto-Cardona
120. Eliza M Bates
121. Elka Samuels Smith
122. Elvita Dominique
123. Emily Earle
124. Emily Fox
125. Emily Grote
126. Emily Hellstrom
127. Emily Mann
128. Erica Masiello
129. Erica Silverman

130. Eric Goldberg
131. Eric Wright
132. Erin Hopkins
133. Erlyn Ikeda
134. Esther B Robinson
135. Eugenie Kim
136. Evan O'Connell
137. Fayola Fair
138. Felicia Martinez
139. Fien Bosiers
140. Flora Ichiou Huang
141. Franca Bonnet
142. Frank Marino, Teacher M.S. 839
143. Frederick J Rood, NYC Department of Education Teacher
144. Frederique Quennie Lamy
145. Gabo Camnitzer
146. Gabriel Fontes
147. Gavin Healy, PhD
148. Gia Wolff
149. Gina Morales
150. Grace Cho
151. Gregg Mitchell
152. Gregory Close
153. Gretchen Nealon
154. Hannah Berkin-Harper
155. Hayley Hernandez
156. Heather Brown
157. Heather Dailey, LMSW
158. Heather Prendergast
159. Helene Abiola
160. Helen Williams-Fishburne
161. Hera Yoon
162. Holly Ellis Spiegel, Secretary, CEC 22
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164. Ian LeBlanc
165. Ian McDermott
166. Idalia Bamert
167. Ilan Desai-Geller
168. Ilona Clara Nanay
169. Iris Soto
170. Isaac P Jones
171. Ivana Espinet

172. Ivy Anderson
173. Ivy Anderson, School Social Worker, D2
174. Jacqueline Gonzalez
175. James Walter Martin
176. Jamie Mirabella
177. Jana Zindell
178. Jane S. Maisel
179. Jane Trachet
180. Janice Bloom
181. Janine Sopp
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183. Jasmine Nicole Garcia
184. Jasmine Y. Ma, Associate Professor of Mathematics and Urban Education
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186. Javier Salamanca
187. JD Davids
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189. Jeff Magness
190. Jennifer Blood
191. Jennifer C. Bernstein
192. Jennifer Dougherty
193. Jennifer Hirshlag-Ward
194. Jennifer Kaufman
195. Jennifer Maravegias
196. Jennifer Milligan
197. Jenny Hirsch, Parent
198. Jenny Latham
199. Jessamyn Lee, PTA of PS 84 Jose De Diego
200. Jesse B Cowling
201. Jesse Phillips-Fein
202. Jessica Baker, CEC4 council member
203. Jessica Byrne, CEC 22
204. Jessica Luck, Parent in District 2
205. Jessica Lysons
206. Jessica Sain
207. Jessica Smith
208. Jessica Vergara
209. Jia Lee
210. Jill Weidman
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212. Johanna Bjorken, Parent
213. Johanna Dominguez, D4 CEC
214. John Antush

215. John Hartmann
216. Jonathan Greenberg, District 30 CEC
217. Jordan Wright
218. José Alfaro, LCSW
219. Jose Carlos Casado
220. Jose Del Toro-Alonso
221. Joseph Castillo, Parent in District 2
222. Josephine Ishmon
223. Joshua Fox
224. Joy Leonard
225. Judith Kafka, Parent & Professor of educational policy and history of education,
Baruch College
226. Julie E. Sebunya
227. Junior Sanchez
228. Kady Safar
229. Kaliris Salas-Ramirez, Parent in D4 & D2
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232. Karissa Nieves
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245. Katie Tuss
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248. Kay Mack
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259. Kiyoko Fuchimoto
260. Kori Goldberg
261. Kristen Berger, Parent & former CEC 3 Middle School Committee Chair
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272. Lauren Gropp Lowry
273. Lauren Harrison
274. Lauren Scott, District 15 School Leader
275. Lavina Maykut
276. Lawrence Fishburne
277. Leah Oppenzato
278. Leo Godsberg, HS Senior
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280. Leslie King
281. Letitia Doggett, Public School Parent of 2 students
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313. Marielin Heth
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326. Maureen Flaherty, parent of a student with an IEP
327. Meema Spadola, public school parent
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329. Megan Hester
330. Melanie Kotler
331. Melani Etman
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339. Michelle Dellatorre

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- 345. Miriam Nunberg, D15 Parents for Middle School Equity
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- 347. Mizuo Peck
- 348. Molly Dubow
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- 350. Naima Beckles, District 6 Parent
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- 352. Nathan Stripp
- 353. Natisha S Romain
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- 356. Nicole L. Lorenzetti
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- 358. Nildania Perez
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- 362. Nora Keane
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- 365. Patricia Arbelaéz
- 366. Paula Calle
- 367. Pearl Brady
- 368. Peter Dixon-Moses
- 369. Phoebe Lichty
- 370. Phylicia Abrams
- 371. Pierre Roache
- 372. Preeti Natarajan
- 373. Priscilla Chan
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- 375. Rachel Knopf
- 376. Rachel Meeropol
- 377. Rachel Paguaga
- 378. Rachel Posner
- 379. Rafael Lena
- 380. Rebecca Frans
- 381. Rebecca Garte, PhD
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- 383. Rebecca Stein
- 384. Rebecca Stronger
- 385. Reyhan Mehran
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- 391. Rosamaria Noel
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- 394. Rytva K. Soni
- 395. S. Samara
- 396. Samara Smith
- 397. Sameer Gupta
- 398. Sam Rosaldo
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- 402. Sarah Factor, NYC DOE Teacher
- 403. Sarah Slichter
- 404. Sarah Stone, IntegrateNYC
- 405. Sarah W Beck
- 406. Saraivy Orench
- 407. Sara Michelle Gil
- 408. Sari Fensterheim, D15 parent and teacher
- 409. Scott M. Sommer
- 410. Selene Liskka
- 411. Selmira Carrasquillo
- 412. Seth Bomse
- 413. Shamel Lawrence SR
- 414. Shamika Daniels
- 415. Shannon Hartman
- 416. Shaquanna Cicero
- 417. Sharon Rowell, CEC12
- 418. Shayla R Michel
- 419. Sheri Simmons
- 420. Shino Tanikawa
- 421. Shirley Lam-Cheung
- 422. Simone Dornbach, D28 CEC Member
- 423. Simone Hannah-Clark
- 424. Sonja Shield
- 425. SP, D2 Parent

- 426. Stacie Lee
- 427. Stacy Cole
- 428. Steven Wilson
- 429. Sunita Prasad
- 430. Suzanne Troiano
- 431. T. Chan
- 432. Tahisha George
- 433. Tajh Sutton, Public School Parent, PTA delegate
- 434. Tamara Gayer
- 435. Tamar Mintz
- 436. Tamika Mapp, State Committeewoman 68th AD
- 437. Tamuira M. Reid
- 438. Tanesha Grant, Executive Director of PSPNY
- 439. Tanya Wendt
- 440. Tara Grove
- 441. Taylor Hom
- 442. Tazin Azad
- 443. Ted Chang
- 444. Ted Pauly, D15 & D21 parent
- 445. Ted Thompson
- 446. Temu Kramme
- 447. Terrance Johnson
- 448. Theodore S Brooke
- 449. Thomas Sheppard, CEC Presidents' Representative NYC Panel for Educational Policy
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- 451. Tiffany Jones
- 452. Todd Baran
- 453. Tomas Hunt
- 454. Tracy Jordan
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- 462. William Font
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- 464. Windy McCracken
- 465. Ximena Frankel
- 466. Yuichi Seki

- 467. Yvonne M. Brathwaite
- 468. Zaida Vasquez
- 469. Zandra Cuevas