



**Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council  
Committee on Education**

**Re: DOE's Academic Recovery Plans**

**October 27, 2021**

Thank you for the chance to testify this afternoon around the Department of Education's academic recovery plans. My name is Maggie Moroff. I am the Coordinator of the ARISE Coalition, a group of over 100 organizational and individual members working together to push for systemic changes to improve the day-to-day experiences and long-term outcomes for youth with disabilities in New York City schools.

Since the pandemic began, our members have worked with countless families of students with disabilities who have not received all the special education supports and services they required – despite the efforts of the DOE, the students' families, and advocates and attorneys working on behalf of those students. What that has looked like has been different for each student; some struggled to obtain proper technology for remote learning; others required related services that were simply impossible to deliver remotely; still others required support from paraprofessionals during the pandemic that was not feasible; and some students went without the support of special education teachers and service providers for a period of time. The pandemic and all the obstacles to delivering those supports while students learned remotely or in hybrid settings has amplified the divide between students with disabilities and their peers.

ARISE members are encouraged and thankful for the \$7 billion in federal COVID-19 relief funding the city has received. We do, however, have some concerns we would like to share today around the rollout of the recovery services for students with disabilities, as well as literacy supports.

First, let me address the announced recovery services for students with disabilities which will be made available after school and/or on Saturdays. It is clear these services will not be sufficient to provide all students with disabilities with the compensatory services they require and have a legal right to receive to make up for all that they did not receive these past eighteen months. ARISE, and our many member organizations, have been saying since early on that the burden of seeking compensatory services cannot sit on the shoulders of parents. Parents should not have to ask for due process hearings when their children did not get all they needed because of COVID-19. Rather, the DOE should issue guidance to schools on their obligation to determine and provide compensatory services for students with disabilities in cases where recovery services are not sufficient. In addition, the DOE should provide parents with clear guidance on how they can

request compensatory services so parents do not have to resort to the DOE's overwhelmed and backlogged due process system.

Furthermore, while the DOE plans to set up sensory sites in each borough as part of the recovery program, the rest of the recovery services are being left to individual schools to implement. We worry that schools may not have the bandwidth they need to get these services up and running for all students in a way that all students who need them have access.

The DOE must set up a mechanism for overseeing both recovery services and compensatory services processes across the city's school system and ensuring that all students with disabilities, regardless of the schools they attend, have the opportunity to receive adequate additional support.

To date, as we understand things, few, if any of these programs are in place. There's been no School Allocation Memo posted, which leaves schools unsure of what resources they have to spend. Very few schools have notified parents what their school's recovery services program will entail, leaving almost no time for parents to plan. And we have not yet heard whether bus service will be available to get students back and forth from home to recovery services. It's hard to know when most schools will have their afterschool and weekend programs up and running.

I also want to speak briefly about the DOE's announced intent to roll out a citywide Mosaic Curriculum. In announcements thus far, the Mayor and Chancellor have spoken to the need to ensure that curriculum is culturally responsive. We agree. We also want to be sure that curriculum is grounded in the science of reading and delivers core literacy instruction as well as interventions in a systematic and scaffolded manner that guarantees all students receive instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The DOE must ensure this new curriculum helps the city meet the goal of having all students reading.

Thank you for the chance to testify before you today.