



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

**RE: Remote Learning - The Impact of COVID-19 on the City's Schools**

**May 27, 2020**

My name is Maggie Moroff and I coordinate the ARISE Coalition, a group of parents, advocates, educators, academics, and other stakeholders focused on the day-to-day experiences and long term outcomes of students with disabilities in New York City public schools. Our members have been working together for the past 12 years to provide a collective voice in support of NYC's 220,000 students with disabilities. Our member parents and organizations have been on the front lines as remote learning has rolled out and I'm here to share some of what we've seen and what we hope will come next.

To begin, we know that this period of remote learning has been difficult for students and families. We also know that the staff in the central DOE offices – as well as educators at many schools – have been working very hard to make remote learning and services possible. That said, however, ARISE members have seen many challenges in providing instruction and services to students with disabilities during remote learning, which took a while to get up and running for many students. ARISE members continue to hear from families of students with IEPs who have only the most minimal of services now. We continue bringing individual case examples to the DOE's Special Education Office where staff work to address our concerns, but we worry that these cases demonstrate systemic challenges that remain several months into students learning from home.

Let me offer a few examples:

- We have heard from families with children whose special education needs mean they function considerably below their chronological grade who are being given work meant for students at their age level – making it impossible for those students to complete the work and causing frustration for the students and their parents;
- Other families have reported that their children are getting all their work through assignments to do independently with no live instruction or meaningful teacher interaction despite their child's need for instruction and support from a special education teacher;

- We have heard from families whose children are not yet receiving all of their mandated related services remotely and who have not been asked for input into their children's Remote Learning Plans;
- Other families are concerned that remote instruction and services are not effective for their children who typically would be receiving their services through a much more hands-on method;
- Families continue to be told by school staff that evaluations and IEP meetings can't be done until the school buildings reopen -- causing students to go without needed services; and
- Families of students with a range of disabilities – from dyslexia to autism to behavioral challenges – are concerned that their students' specific needs are not being met. For example, students who are D/deaf are feeling isolated because they lack access to teachers and friends who sign. Many parents of D/deaf children either don't sign or lack the command of American Sign Language (ASL) necessary to do remote education.

Students with disabilities are at particular risk of falling behind during this time of remote learning. Their needs are greater than those of their general education peers or they wouldn't require the special education supports in the first place. They are also more likely to rely on in-person adult support—meaning that a student's ability to benefit from the instruction and services offered during remote learning often depends on their parent's availability, language, resources, and technology skills.

The number of students required or recommended for summer school is increasing to 178,000 students, a significant increase from last year due, in part, to the challenges of remote learning. Yet, summer school will continue with remote learning. We eagerly await information from the DOE about how summer school will differ from the remote learning offered since March in order to make what comes next more effective than what we've seen thus far. One recommendation is for the DOE to use IEP teachers and Universal Literacy coaches trained in evidence-based reading instruction to support students who need help with reading this summer since we no longer need to limit students to the staff members who happen to work in their school buildings.

As ARISE works with the DOE to improve remote learning for students with disabilities now, we are also looking ahead. We know how critical it will be for students with disabilities to receive the compensatory services they are legally entitled to receive to make up for the instruction and services they have missed. We look forward to working with the DOE and the City Council to ensure that students with disabilities get the support they need to help them get back on track.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



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