



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

Re: FY 22 Preliminary Budget - Education

March 23, 2021

Good afternoon. I am Maggie Moroff and I work as the Coordinator of the ARISE Coalition. ARISE is a group of parents, advocates, educators, academics and other stakeholders who have been working together since 2008 to push for improved day-to-day experiences and long-term outcomes for New York City's approximately 220,000 students with disabilities. I am also the Senior Special Education Policy Coordinator at Advocates for Children of New York. I am here today, however, speaking on behalf of the more than 100 organizational and individual members of ARISE.

With an historic federal investment in education, there are many steps the DOE should be taking as part of the FY 22 budget to help address the needs of students with disabilities after a year of educational disruption. I want to focus my testimony today on (1) the need to offer compensatory services to students with disabilities in NYC for all the supports and services the DOE has failed to deliver to them during the pandemic and (2) increased literacy supports for all students, including those with disabilities.

Compensatory services - The DOE must provide compensatory services to make-up for the instruction and services that students with special education needs did not receive over the past year. All students have had their school life thrown into upheaval this year. Among those students most impacted, students with disabilities, who are disproportionately Black and Latinx, have lost countless hours of critical instruction and many have regressed – losing skills they had already worked hard to gain prior to the pandemic. The City needs to develop a plan for determining the extent of special education supports and services every one of our students with disabilities has missed since March of 2020. They then need to provide make-up instruction and services. Compensatory services will require hiring or contracting with additional special education teachers and related service providers – over the summer and into the 2021-22 school year. The City Council should make sure there is funding in the budget for this purpose.

Literacy – When students leave school without learning to read, the system has failed them. For most of our students, including those with disabilities, teaching students to read is possible with evidence-based core instruction and targeted intervention. This is one of the great equity issues of our time, given the embarrassing and unacceptable disparities in reading proficiency. In 2019, for 3rd through 8th grade students, the data was appalling – with less than half of students overall, just over one-third of Black and Hispanic students, and only 16% of students with disabilities reading proficiently. We recommend that funding be included in the DOE’s budget to train and support teachers and coaches to provide effective, evidence-based, and appropriately targeted literacy instruction and intervention to all students. The City should use this funding to purchase evidence-based, culturally responsive literacy curriculum to improve core instruction and to expand a program launched by the DOE last summer to pair well-trained educators with small groups of students who need additional support in literacy, among other steps.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I would, as always, be happy to answer any questions you may have about my testimony – today or anytime in the future.