

June 26, 2020

Dear Families,

Today is the last day of the most challenging, most intense school year many of us have ever experienced. I am humbled by your efforts and so proud of your children—our brilliant students.

I know that last September feels like it was years ago, and that time in general seems to exist as “before COVID” and “after COVID.” It might be hard to remember, but before the pandemic upended our lives, we opened more [pre-K Dual Language programs](#) across the city, saw a record number of our students [enrolling in college](#), and learned just how much our [Community Schools](#) have been changing students’ lives for the better—to name just a few of our accomplishments. All that still matters because it has real-life, positive impacts for our children.

And then, all of a sudden, it was Monday, March 16, and the coronavirus forced us to reinvent the nation’s largest school system, closing all school buildings and transitioning our 1.1 million students to remote learning. To me, the “after COVID” time is as stunningly impressive as what came before. I know this because over the past three months I have seen your children complete science experiments in your kitchens, debate the United States Constitution in Spanish from your living rooms, and join band practice and master Shakespeare on Zoom.

Your children accomplished these amazing feats all while the coronavirus was affecting you, your families, and your communities. Sadly, we lost immediate family members, and 79 Department of Education employees, to COVID-19. We will never be the same without the loved ones, friends, and colleagues who gave our lives and work meaning. We will never, ever forget a single one of them. They live on in our hearts, in our memories, and in our children.

I’ve always said that parents and families are our most important partners, but this year that was truer than ever, as you became your child’s teacher, coach, and constant presence in an uncertain world. Your lives were upended in support of a totally unconventional schedule for your children. I know how much you sacrificed for them, how concerned you are about their futures, and how deep your love for them runs. I can’t thank you enough for the effort you have made to support your child’s learning at home.

In recent weeks, you’ve kept the learning going as our city and nation have been enraged and have mourned the senseless loss of more Black lives at the hands of those whose duty it is to serve and protect. It has been a gut-wrenching time for all of us. Systemic racism endangers people of color in this country, period; and true change for New Yorkers of color must begin in our schools.

I pledge that we will take what we have learned this year and double down on addressing systemic inequalities in our system that these crises have further exposed. This includes continuing to build a strong, inclusive, just, and anti-racist educational system. I pledge that we will keep cultivating and celebrating the achievements and accomplishments of your children. I pledge to continue to be there for you and your children, not being deterred for a moment—no matter what challenges come our way. Over the next several months, we will operate [Summer School](#), [Meal Hubs](#), [Regional Enrichment Centers](#), and Emergency Child Care Centers to actively serve our families. I pledge to deliver the education your children demand and deserve—an education that enables them to grow into well-educated, responsible, compassionate adults who are equipped to change the world.



I know you are rightfully anxious to know what that education will look like for your child this fall. We are working day in and day out to develop robust plans for the more than one million children who are in our seats. You will receive information in the coming weeks—including the date for the first day of school—once we receive the necessary guidance from the State and federal government that paves the way for us to finalize our plan. We also need your guidance, too! Please tell us what you want fall 2020 to look like by filling out our Return to School survey at schools.nyc.gov/returntoschool2020 by Tuesday, June 30. This will help us meet your needs as we come back to school.

Given all we have been through together, we cannot end the school year without celebrating our students' remarkable accomplishments. I invite you to join me; Mayor de Blasio; former NYC public school student and teacher, Lin-Manuel Miranda; and other celebrities, elected officials, and special guests on June 30 as we honor the Class of 2020 at a citywide graduation ceremony. You can watch it beginning at 7 p.m. on PIX 11 and at nycclassof2020.com. Please join us!

And one more exciting development for our students: we are thrilled to make more e-books and audiobooks for all ages available for free this summer to all DOE families, and it's easier than ever to access them. Just use your student's DOE login; no special signup necessary. Summer reading is so important to keep learning going and to let imaginations run free, so please visit schools.nyc.gov/summerreading to find these amazing resources. If you received a DOE-issued iPad, it will automatically have the Sora app installed to access these texts—but you don't need a DOE-issued device to use Sora. You can download the app on any device, use your student's DOE login, and start reading.

I have often said that we have the best students, staff, and families anywhere. This year, you have proved that true beyond any shadow of a doubt. You are helping us build a better world. We are grateful for you today and every day.

Have a wonderful summer. We can't wait to see you in September.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard A. Carranza'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'R' and 'C'.

Richard A. Carranza
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education