



BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

HAROLD O. LEVY, *Chancellor*

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

110 LIVINGSTON STREET - BROOKLYN, NY 11201

May 3, 2002

The Honorable John E. Sweeney
416 CHOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney
2430 RHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Sweeney and Maloney:

I write in appreciation of your efforts on behalf of the 1.1 million children comprising the New York City Public Schools community. We are particularly grateful for your diligence in trying to secure the funds necessary to aid the recovery of our schools in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

As you know, the school system has incurred significant expenses as a result of last fall's tragedy. These costs—approximately \$18.5 million—include clean up and repair of impacted buildings, loss of textbooks and classroom supplies, transportation for relocated students, and loss of perishable food and lunch revenues.

In addition, the mental health needs of our students rose dramatically as a result of the events of September 11th. While the U.S. Department of Education and FEMA did provide a combined grant of \$5.5 million in the days immediately following the attacks, it has not been sufficient to cover the extraordinary level of additional attention these children need. In fact, the majority of students with problems resulting from the attacks have not received counseling due to a lack of adequate resources. To this end, our system desperately needs an estimated \$40 million to expand our current efforts aimed at addressing the mental health needs of impacted students. A recent study commissioned by the Board of Education and conducted by Applied Research and Consulting LLC and the Columbia University School of Public Health illustrates the importance of increasing mental health services. The report discovered disturbing evidence detailing the extent to which last fall's tragedy affected the mental health of schoolchildren across the City. The report detected at least one trauma-related disorder in more than a quarter of the City schoolchildren surveyed (grades 4-12) in the wake of last fall's attack on the World Trade Center. These disorders include post-traumatic stress disorder, agoraphobia, major depression, separation anxiety, acting out, general anxiety, and panic attacks. I am deeply concerned that absent new resources, many of these psychological ailments will go untreated and compromise the long-term educational and personal development of these schoolchildren.

Finally, approximately \$102.4 million is needed to provide extended classroom instruction for students to compensate for lost class time as a result of closing schools in-and-around the "Ground Zero" area, post-September 11th drops in attendance, and

relocating students to other instructional settings. On September 12 all schools were closed. While a majority of the schools opened the next day, schools in the "frozen zone" remained closed and some of these students did not attend classes for up to 5 days after the disaster. Overall, the disaster displaced nearly 6,000 students from schools closest to Ground Zero, a number which is more than two-and-a-half times the average school district in the U.S. The following week, these displaced students were relocated to alternative sites, during which additional instructional time was lost. Additionally, system-wide attendance plunged by at least twenty percentage points and dropped by a far higher proportion in lower Manhattan in the days following the attack. Finally, the closing of certain bridges and tunnels to Manhattan in the aftermath of the disaster impacted students outside of Manhattan. In fact, 50,000 students — a population that exceeds the individual enrollments of the Atlanta, Oakland, Minneapolis, and Seattle school districts — from other boroughs that attend school in Manhattan were affected by travel disruptions and lost instructional time as well.

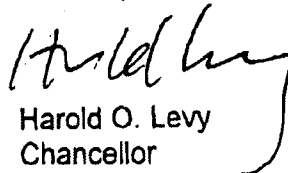
Overall, we estimate that students lost 22 to 30 hours of classroom time in the wake of this disaster. We would like to offer each of these students 30 hours of extra class time — the equivalent of nearly a full school week — to address this shortfall. As you know, all of our students are required to pass "high stakes" State and City examinations. Without the \$102.4 million in federal assistance that we are seeking to underwrite our plan to provide this extra help, I am concerned that student performance on these standardized tests may suffer. Failure to adequately prepare students for those examinations will increase the risk that they have to repeat a grade and further strain the already limited resources of the school system.

I believe that our ongoing negotiations with FEMA in recovering the costs attributed to September 11th have been strengthened by your efforts in Congress to ensure the availability of federal assistance to cover these extraordinary expenses. Nevertheless, I support your efforts to introduce legislation authorizing FEMA to provide funding to the Board to cover these expenses. I am hopeful that this bill can also serve as the basis of an amendment to the FY 2002 House Supplemental Appropriations bill to achieve our shared goal.

Overcoming the effects of September 11th presents many real challenges to our school system, but not ones that allies like you have shied away from confronting. I hope that you will both continue to be our advocates in Washington as we work together to ensure that the needs of New York City's schoolchildren are not overlooked.

Thank you for your consideration of the New York City Board of Education's views on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Harold O. Levy
Chancellor

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