

# CREATING A JUST VIBRANT SCHOOL SYSTEM



## Full Policy

*Maya Wiley built this plan in close consultation with teachers, parents, administrators, community education council leaders, teaching artists, advocates, policy experts, and most importantly – students. Our plan offers a vision of an innovative, integrated, forward-thinking, student-centered Department of Education that prepares an engaged and creative student body to succeed in life well beyond graduation in partnership with parents, students, educators and more.*

*The nation's largest public school system deserves bold, transformational thinking to meet the moment. Our students, parents, teachers, administrators and communities deserve a school system that is free of systems of oppression, and responsive to our individual and collective gifts, needs and cultures while allowing for structural change. This plan provides the path to move our schools in a direction that harnesses the genius of our students, the visions of our communities for progress, and the energy of the greatest city in the world.*

To accomplish these goals, a Wiley administration will focus on:

- **Elevating parent and student voices** with an active role in decision making and creating a school governance system that is authentically democratic within the structure of Mayoral Control.
- **Healing and helping students thrive despite the trauma of the pandemic by:**
  - Decreasing class size.
  - Providing trauma-informed practices.
  - Delivering intensive academic interventions and supports.
  - Guaranteeing technology for all.
  - Ensuring that all NYC schools adopt a fully culturally responsive approach to all aspects of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.
- **Transforming our schools into centers of creativity, inclusion and exploration by:**
  - Promoting real-world exploration, culturally responsive-sustaining education (CRSE) programming and the arts.
  - Expanding existing innovative school models, like P-Tech and City As School.
  - Supplementing classroom learning with work experiences.
  - Using distance learning effectively and appropriately.

- Addressing misguided state and federal accountability systems, imposed by the Every Student Succeeds Act and other statutes, that restrict and limit the opportunity for innovation.
- Working to keep school buildings open for recreation and other programming on evenings and weekends, especially in communities in need of safe gathering places.
- **Removing barriers that separate students and label them from an early age by:**
  - Creating inclusive classrooms and investing in the gifts of all children.
  - Integrating our schools, in line with the '5Rs of Real Integration' framework developed by the students of IntegrateNYC: Race and enrollment, Resource allocation, Real relationships, Representative staff and faculty, and Restorative justice.
  - Creating safe, supportive schools and stopping the School-to-Prison Pipeline.
- **Prioritizing the rights and safety of students by:**
  - Improving services for students who are housing insecure and for those in foster care.
  - Ensuring that the legal rights of students with disabilities are respected, and that they are provided with expanded programming, including methodologies such as Orton-Gillingham instruction for all who need it.
  - Improving services and programming for multilingual learners.

## Elevating Community Voices in Decision-Making

- **Elevate parent and student voices with an active role in decision making, provide parents and students more effective avenues of input and decision-making and create real accountability.** The Department of Education has lost the trust of families, a fissure ever more apparent in the pandemic. This lack of trust is greatest in communities of color where a legacy of racism, segregation and underinvestment erodes trust in our public schools, as reflected by the high proportion of families who are Black, Latino, Asian, Indigenous and immigrants choosing fully remote learning this year. Multiple oppressive systems currently work together to disenfranchise these families from effecting change within our schools. Maya will re-establish trust in the DOE by co-creating with parents, educators, and students a school governance system that is authentically democratic and delivers real accountability and responsiveness within the structure of Mayoral Control. She will ensure increased, meaningful participation of and decision making by those most impacted by DOE decisions by:
  - Creating a Commission on School Governance with parent, student, community & advocacy representatives to establish stronger checks and balances and more methods for institutionalized parent, student and community input and decision-making. This Commission will be charged with adhering to strict timeframes, so that the Wiley administration can quickly incorporate its recommendations as we rework the DOE in concert with the stakeholders who have historically been the most excluded.

- Making the Chancellor's and the Boroughs' Student Advisory Councils selection processes more democratic and transparent;
- Advocating to amend the state law to give students voting power on existing and new committees and governance bodies, including CCECs and the PEP, increase the number of students on these bodies, and devise a transparent and fair process for appointing or electing them.
- Creating youth steering boards for every city agency that works with youth to meet with the agency head monthly with questions, needs, and ideas.
- Valuing youth agency by giving NYC public school students press passes for the Mayor's briefings.
- Giving parents and students a greater role in school governance by granting more power to School Leadership Teams (SLT). SLTs will have a greater role in not only approving but crafting the school budget. Members will receive more technical assistance and training to empower this decision making.

## Healing and Helping Students Thrive After the Pandemic

Due to the pandemic our children have urgent social, emotional and academic needs for our schools; needs that require that we change the ways schools support our children. We will provide teachers with the tools and training to address the unprecedented academic challenge for our students, especially for those students who are already left behind, such as those with disabilities, multilingual learners, students in temporary housing and those in foster care. At the same time, this pandemic has forever transformed the way we understand how learning can happen, and we will innovate classroom learning strategies based on this experience. We will leverage our newly found experience with technology and remote learning to provide students with new learning opportunities.

- **Allocate a minimum of \$250 million dollars to hire 2500 new teachers** to shrink class sizes and help our students meet the academic and social emotional challenges of the past year through tailored individualized learning. This addition will decrease class size in almost 10,000 classrooms, as adding a new teacher lowers class size for all the other students in a school in the same grade or subject. Smaller classes will provide the social distancing that families and health experts now see as essential and benefit all students, allowing teachers to do the deep work required to support our students. The new teachers will be paid for by leveraging the newly available resources for NYC schools from the federal stimulus packages and from the commitments made by the state government (such as the \$1.3 billion increase in Foundation Aid) as well as federal and state resources dedicated to capital and infrastructure improvements. We will begin by reducing class sizes in early childhood and grades K-5, first in areas with overcrowded elementary schools, and in the communities hit hardest by COVID-19.
- **Major new investment to build student support teams at each school to provide academic intervention for students and assist with their mental health needs.** Our students and communities have been traumatized by the pandemic, and they need support beyond the academic. New York City has a successful network of community

schools; using significant funds from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), we will build on this network by providing increased resources to schools to provide wrap around on-site services such as healthcare and mental health services, and work with community partners at Community Care Centers (CCC) to provide extended day and tutoring services. This means that every school will have a mental health team that includes, at a minimum, a guidance counselor, a social worker and a psychologist at ratios recommended by the National Association of School Psychologists. Each school will also be assigned a team of academic specialists to provide targeted interventions to students in need. Maya will prioritize high needs schools to phase in the program. This new investment is in addition to previously announced spending on Universal Community Care.

- **Support all NYC schools in using curriculum, pedagogy, assessments and policies that reflect and respect the histories, cultures, languages, identities and experiences of NYC students in every class, every grade, every day.** There is a cultural gap in NYC public schools: 85% of students are Black, Latinx and Asian, yet 60% of the teachers are white; 83% of books used in K-8th grade curricula are by white authors, and 51% of those books have white main characters. Students engage less deeply and achieve at lower levels when their identities and experiences are not represented in the classroom. Culturally responsive-sustaining education is grounded in a cultural view of learning and human development in which multiple expressions of diversity (e.g., race, social class, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, ability) are recognized and regarded as assets for teaching and learning. Maya will fully invest in the NYC Department of Education's definition of Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education with an expansion of the Office of Equity and Access, and require that all new curriculum purchases are culturally responsive and aligned with the NYC DOE's definition of culturally responsive-sustaining education. She will fund and ensure resources for an Ethnic Studies courses in all NYC middle and high schools that include intersectional topics such as Black LGBTQ history, and expand and deepen ongoing anti-bias, anti-racist, trauma-informed and healing-centered professional learning grounded in the experiences of communities of different nationalities, cultures, languages, abilities, immigration statuses, racial groups, genders, socioeconomic status, and other identities. She will center community engagement in all school practices and decisions, and provide training for all staff on disability justice and gender justice, to ensure stronger support for youth with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ youth. Finally, Maya will mandate an advisory program in every school, with a culturally responsive, locally determined curriculum based on population, languages spoken, and need.
- **Provide universal broadband access and increase access to technology for all students.** We will devote both public funding and build private partnerships to increase access to devices and connectivity. We would work with internet providers to offer accessible, low-cost packages for communities in the hardest hit Covid-19 areas, and develop wireless technology to expand connectivity for public school families at home. Maya's technology plan will outline how to close the homework gap permanently by extending connectivity from schools and libraries; expand free public Wi-Fi to all corners

of the city by upgrading FDNY call boxes; and follow through on the City's Internet Master Plan.

- **Drive funds to serve students who need them most, especially in communities most impacted by COVID-19.** For decades, Albany has shortchanged the students and families of NYC by holding back billions in school funding we are legally owed. With the welcome news that the State has finally agreed to provide the City's schools with an additional \$1.4 billion for each of the next three years, we have the opportunity to provide every child with a sound, basic education. We will recover from the impact of the pandemic and move from scarcity to abundance by smartly managing existing funds, and ensuring the equitable distribution of our existing resources. We will also create a transparent system of accountability to ensure efficient, equitable and appropriate spending. And we will seek out opportunities for new funding, such as federal magnet funding, and any additional state or federal grants that may arise. In the meantime, we have a responsibility to revisit the way our schools are each funded to ensure that we are doing so equitably. We will reexamine the formulas we use to allocate funding to schools to ensure that we are driving funds to serve students who need them most, especially in communities most impacted by COVID-19.
- **Empower teachers and school leaders to lead us in recovering from the pandemic.** Teachers have been bearing an outsized share of the load during the pandemic. Many have suffered personal loss and trauma, and have nevertheless done a heroic job of showing up for their students. We must recognize the burden our teachers have borne, and ask for their input and draw from their experience in determining next steps for their students. We will support, respect and listen to our teachers and find more collaborative and effective methods of teacher evaluation. We must ensure that the faculty, staff and leadership of all of our schools better reflect our communities and do more to redistribute power in our school system for our teachers of color. Maya will evaluate the success of the DOE as a whole according to metrics related to teacher well-being, equity and inclusion for all members of the school community, and resource equity for all schools.
- **Ensure that every school building has a full-time nurse.** We will make a \$10 million commitment to hire a full-time nurse in each school.

## **Transforming Schools into Centers of Exploration, Inclusion and Creativity**

*"Schools without Walls" will bring children together and into our vibrant City.* The racial and academic isolation children have experienced in our schools means that a new model is required to foster collaboration between groups of students, one that is capable of differentiating and individualizing to meet all learners where they are. Research shows that project and place-based learning is well suited to achieve this goal. We also know that students do better in college if they come in with a career plan – even if it ultimately changes. We will prepare students for life as adults through real-world projects and work-based experiences directly tied to their academics. A Wiley Administration will bring children out of schools and bring the City into schools to create a culturally-responsive and hands-on educational experience that leverages NYC's vibrant urban ecosystem, museums and cultural institutions, civics and activism, and physical and social

infrastructure. All children will participate in extended collaborative projects that draw from all of these resources and bring them outside traditional school walls as much as possible. They will design sustainable gardens, participate in citizen science studies and work in maker spaces, in culturally responsive activities that span their curriculum. Our teachers and schools will be scaffolded and assisted in developing these projects with high-quality resources and training. For older students, schools will offer more opportunities for work-based learning and internships, using real-world experiences that tie into programs of study. NYC already boasts a number of innovative programs, which we will build on or expand, such as P-Tech, City As School, the Brooklyn STEAM Center and the Harbor School. These schools incorporate a mix of Career and Technical Education (CTE) with academic coursework to study a subject from all angles, and give students a concrete career pathway upon graduation. The City will expand graduation pathways, increasing opportunities for college / career readiness, and expert verified online credential programs. Finally, Maya will use the lessons learned from the pandemic to take the positive aspects of remote learning to increase students' options across the board.

- **Expend \$12 million to create Innovation Resource Hubs to give teachers and administrators the tools to differentiate instruction and weave students into the texture of our city to take learning beyond the classroom.** To support all schools to support all learners, we will create a “think tank” of education innovation within the DOE. These hubs will provide the space, tools, resources and time for teachers and administrators to work collaboratively to build models and practice to create schools that are centers of exploration, inclusion and creativity. The hubs will consolidate resources and offer curricula, supplies and professional development to support the creation of authentic, culturally responsive, differentiated projects inside and outside of schools. They will be staffed by master teachers with deep expertise in this work, who will be available to support teachers. Teachers will be given sufficient paid planning time to determine the best ways to innovate and incorporate use of these hubs into their lessons. We will also fight at the federal and state level to expand the autonomy and flexibility to fully develop this model within federal and state constraints, building upon existing models such as those used in the PROSE and Consortium networks of schools.
- **Provide a minimum of \$20 million to supplement classroom learning with work experience by creating a year-round, universal Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) with multi-year continuity for all high school students who need employment.** SYEP provides subsidized jobs to tens of thousands of young people in New York City. As part of Maya's Community Plan to Address Gun Violence, she will double the numbers of slots available in this program, making them available for all the students who want to participate. She will also create seamless, coherent and timely college and career readiness by connecting relevant agencies more extensively, and providing students who work for a city agency with a certification upon completion.
- **Build on lessons learned during the pandemic and use distance learning more effectively and judiciously to supplement existing course offerings.** For example, The National Education Equity Lab uses technology to connect high school students from underserved communities with classes at universities and earn college credit while in a

New York City classroom with a live teacher to support them. We must build on this and other promising programs.

- **Work to keep school buildings open for recreation and other programming on evenings and weekends, especially in communities in need of safe gathering places.** Making our public school buildings accessible to the community will provide a valuable community resource and will strengthen ties with the community. We will also expand access to outdoors play for children by making a \$2.2 million investment in keeping school playgrounds open year-round.

*We will bring students together with inclusive, culturally responsive programming* Our schools must become places where the brilliance and multiple intelligences of every single student are recognized and nurtured in an inclusive environment. Maya is committed to meeting the needs of all students, including those who need more challenge and those who need more support. She will do this in settings that include all students to the greatest extent consistent with their learning needs. When differentiation in integrated classrooms is done well, it increases the performance of all students. Our Innovation Resource Hubs will also build teachers' capacity to develop high quality lessons with multiple entry points for all learners, so that children who are capable of tackling higher level work can excel, and those who require additional support will receive it. We will also ensure that building level administrators have the tools to support their teachers in working with more heterogeneous populations. Smaller class sizes will allow for individualization, so that the needs of the vast majority of children can be met within classrooms designed to serve a range of abilities. This is not a new model: successful Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classrooms have been flourishing within the DOE for years. We will build on positive examples of these settings, and provide teachers with the tools needed to create a successfully integrated classroom.

- **Create leading edge accelerated learning and invest in gifts and talents of all children.** Maya will create new models of delivering accelerated learning that support all students in finding their gifts and talents, while also advancing fairness and school integration. New York City does not have any curriculum for the program we currently label "Gifted and Talented." In fact, what we are actually doing is testing for resources, and denying meaningful opportunities to far too many children, particular children of color. The majority of similar separate programs nationally also fail to deliver accelerated learning. The research shows that all students benefit from an education that provides strengths based, culturally relevant enrichment, not just those who can pass a standardized test at the age of four. One example will be school-wide enrichment created by experts in gifted and talented education. This model offers high levels of engagement and enjoyable and challenging learning experiences constructed around students' interests, learning styles, and preferred modes of expression. We will also invest in supporting schools in developing ideas for innovation in this space, with clear principles and parameters to promote fairness and representation so that we can advance equity in education.
  - **Because school wide enrichment is one way of differentiating instruction the Innovation Resource Hubs will support the development and implementation**

**of this initiative according to best practices and provide robust training for teachers.** The necessary funding can be met from the cost saving in replacing admissions examinations and the busing currently spent on moving children to special programs. The full cost of administering the Gifted and Talented test can cost up to \$5 million per year.

*Dismantle the high stakes testing machine and revitalize the arts in schools* Maya will work to end the use of standardized testing that cannot provide substantive actionable performance information to students, caregivers, and teachers. As certain tests are state mandated, a Wiley administration will work with the state to reform and dismantle the high stakes testing machine as far as possible, including disassociating test scores from evaluating schools, principals and teachers. However, she will preserve the positive disaggregation of student achievement markers to ensure that our schools are properly serving all students.

- **Redistribute money spent on testing contracts, Discovery, test prep, tests, test administration, and test grading to fully fund arts programming and revitalize art education by:**
  - **Providing daily arts education programming for all of the city's students in every year of the system, including in non-arts focused high schools.**
  - **Creating a pathway for every child who wants training in the disciplines** evaluated in auditions / portfolio assessments for arts high schools, so that students interested in these disciplines do not need private lessons to be eligible to attend.
  - **Better funding and streamlining the hiring of qualified certified arts teachers/specialists**, and removing the evaluation of arts teachers currently tied to student performance in subjects other than art.
- **Revitalizing and funding the creation of robust, long-term partnerships with the city's vast arts and creative resources**, including and especially with grassroots, neighborhood organizations rooted in the community.
- **Supporting partnerships between arts teachers and mental health professionals and related service providers for trauma-informed healing arts practices.**
- **Using the arts to support our schools in becoming more representative of all cultures and lived experiences** so that our students can see that the arts belong to them, and learn about other students and/or communities whose experiences vary from their own.

## **Removing Barriers that Separate Students and Label them from an Early Age**

As a civil rights lawyer and co-chair of the School Diversity Advisory Group (SDAG), Maya will pay particular attention to breaking down the structural inequities that unfairly sort and segregate our children. She will eliminate admissions policies that have created segregated schools and limited access to resources for families across the city; expand the use of restorative justice programs that minimize the use of harmful disciplinary tactics, including an unnecessary



reliance on the NYPD and EMS; fully support multilingual learners and their parents; and ensure that students with disabilities are given their legal rights and an effective and inclusive continuum of services. She will also address the current impartial hearing crisis, so that parents of students with disabilities will have a functional and timely mechanism for addressing concerns. *Collaborative Creation of Integrated Schools* Maya will build on the recommendations of the SDAG, and remove the many barriers that have led our richly diverse city to become the most segregated large district in the country. Drawing inspiration from the “5 R’s of Real Integration” model developed by the students of IntegrateNYC and the bold policy proposals of Teens Take Charge, she will eliminate admissions policies that have segregated schools and limited access to resources for families across the city, such as using redlined district boundaries, discriminatory admissions screens, and overly complex and time-consuming application processes. Additionally, she will convene the redistricting advisory study group required by State law to review and make recommendations on school boundaries. To finally bring about long-overdue school integration, Maya will:

- **Appoint a Chief Integration and Equity Officer** to oversee the process, ensure tight, achievable timeframes, and coordinate between agencies to reduce mutually reinforcing patterns of residential and school segregation.
- **Create racially integrated schools through community collaboration and innovation.** Maya will build an inclusive, community-based approach to assigning children to our public schools. As recommended by the SDAG, this integration planning will be borough rather than district-focused. And we must ensure that every public school in the City is bountiful, joyful and equipped to meet the needs of all learners.
- **Eliminate discriminatory admissions “screens.”** Discriminatory screens in middle and high schools have a profound segregating effect on the system. Of the 30 most academically screened high schools, 27 are majority white and Asian (in a system that’s less than one-third white and Asian). None of those 30 schools approach the system average for economic need. Meanwhile, hundreds of unscreened schools are at least 85% black or Hispanic and 85% low-income. To end this tale of two school systems, we must eliminate all discriminatory admissions screens, including state exam scores, GPA, attendance, punctuality, zip code, portfolios, in-person interviews, and specialty exams. All middle and high schools will offer rigorous academic and arts programming while avoiding exclusionary tracking, using innovative and research driven programs such as [Peer Enabled Restructured Classrooms](#).
  - **Screening may be continued to be used in order to meet students’ specific needs** that cannot be met in more inclusive settings, such as the [Internationals Network for Public Schools](#), which support newcomer immigrants, or schools or programs for students with specific disabilities, such as ASD NEST and Horizon programs.
  - **Audition/ Arts Schools** – We will preserve our rich portfolio of talent-based schools, but will ensure that they are not assessing students for skills that can only be acquired as a result of private lessons.
- **Make admissions as simple to navigate as possible**, by ensuring that the DOE simplifies the processes so that all schools at each level of schooling will have the same

application process, including charter schools. Maya will also increase support to help families with application processes from 3-K through high school using resource centers, and leveraging existing partnerships with community-based organizations.

## Prioritizing Safe, Just and Restorative Schools

School safety should be about creating a safe and healthy environment in which students can thrive. Now that this function is moving to DOE, we have an opportunity to recenter it around a holistic approach to safety instead of an overreliance on discipline and police intervention.

- **Reform school safety efforts to make a holistic commitment to supporting the well-being of students rather than using punitive and reactive measures.** Our student support teams will help identify students at risk who need support to manage trauma, bullying, difficulties at home, learning differences and other conditions that can produce inappropriate and dangerous behaviors. We will expand school counselors and social workers so that every school has these capacities on student support teams, along with teachers, administrators and School Safety Agents, whose position descriptions, training and role will be appropriate to a student support model. Behavioral issues will no longer be treated solely as problems to be resolved by School Safety Agents.
- **Ensure that every student is well known and supported by at least one adult** by building capacity at middle and high schools to provide robust advisory programs.
- **Ensure that every child attends a school with a full-time social worker,** and can access other needed support through partnerships with community-based mental health providers.
- **Minimize the role of police, EMS, or child welfare services in responding to the vast majority of student behavior,** including emotional crises or distress. We will develop the protocols and rules that ensure that police or EMS are called appropriately and rarely. School safety will focus on meaningful support and the prevention of problems.
- **Remove the school safety role from NYPD and transform the role to one of supporting restorative justice and retrain school safety agents so they can effectively support students' social-emotional and behavioral needs.**
- **Expand and implement school-wide restorative justice practices in all schools.** Schools will be given the tools and resources to properly implement these practices in a sustainable and robust fashion, including behavioral specialists to train the adults in the building on examining behavioral data to determine needed adjustments to practices in the building. We will create a long-term feedback loop in every building that allows each school to constantly evolve by responding to the data and providing consistent and high-quality training for school staff in implementing restorative practices.
- **Eliminate disparities by race and disability in school discipline, including suspensions.**

**NOTE ON FUNDING:** The City must re-allocate the \$450 million NYPD budget for school policing to support the mental health and social-emotional needs of NYC's students by funding student support teams and expanded mental health services through community schools.

## Ensuring Student Rights

Prioritizing the rights and safety of students also means ensuring the civil rights of all students, including those with disabilities and multilingual learners (MLLs) who for too long have been denied their legally mandated services and protections due to DOE mismanagement. Our schools will also become safe harbors for children of all identities; A Wiley administration will make sure that no child is denied a positive, inclusive school experience because of their race, ethnicity, ability to speak English, disability, LGBTQIA or socioeconomic status. ***Students who are housing insecure and those in foster care*** Maya supports Advocates for Children's recommendations for children who are housing insecure and for those in foster care. Even before the current crisis, more than 100,000 students were identified as housing insecure, and 38,000 lived in a shelter. Approximately 6,000 New York City students are in foster care each year. Students in foster care are disproportionately Black and come from NYC's poorest communities. These students are among the most likely to repeat a grade, be chronically absent, or leave high school without a diploma—and were impacted particularly hard by the closure of schools. It is imperative that the City provide intensive support to these children, and to build sensible and realistic priorities that recognize the unique needs caused by the trauma they have too often experienced, as well as by the instability that characterizes much of their experience.

- **Improve services for students who are housing insecure and for those in foster care by creating a DOE office to address the unique needs of these students.**
- **Launch an interagency initiative that tackles educational barriers for students who are housing insecure and in foster care, and provides:**
  - \$5 million for bus service for students in foster care to increase school stability
  - Intensive social services in shelters that serve families, including connections between the shelters and the schools attended by their children.
  - Full restoration of and expansion of DOE field staff who support housing insecure students.
  - Ensuring that housing insecure students and students in foster care with disabilities receive their full spectrum of mandated and compensatory IEP services.
  - Providing staff in each shelter who are qualified and equipped to support students' educational needs.
  - Universal wireless access in shelters.

***Students with Disabilities*** More than 200,000 NYC students—about one out of every five—are classified as students with disabilities. Of these students, 31,600 did not receive their full mandated special education instruction in the 2019-2020 school year. Black students, MLLs, and students from low-income families are over-represented in segregated special education classes with limited curricula and offerings. For example, 35% of students in District 75 schools are Black, even though Black students comprise 22% of all DOE students and 27% of DOE students with IEPs. Only 53% of students with disabilities graduate from high school in four years, 30 percentage points lower than the graduation rate for their peers without disabilities. We will focus much needed attention and resources on improving educational services, programs, and outcomes for these students. NYC also has one of the most contentious special education

systems in the country; around 45% of special education administrative hearings filed nationwide in 2018-19 were from NYC. We will reduce the number and nature of these hearings by prioritizing a change in culture, and by ensuring that the process of developing and implementing IEPs and Section 504 plans is a true collaboration with families. The DOE also currently fails to follow the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which mandates that schools be physically accessible to students with mobility impairments. The vast majority of the City's schools are not open to these children as a result of decades of ignoring the requirement of the ADA. A Wiley Administration will make many more schools available to children with physical disabilities. To fully make our schools serve children with disabilities, a Wiley Administration will:

- **Ensure that students are provided their legally mandated rights**, and improve accountability so that students with disabilities are served according to established legal requirements.
- **Ensure that students with disabilities have access to a wider range of high-quality programs and services**, which will be provided on time, in accordance with legally mandated procedures and in inclusive classrooms as much as possible. Maya will also expand specialized programs for students with specific needs, develop new ones, and ensure programs are placed in high-needs schools and historically marginalized communities. We will replicate successful programs, such as ASD NEST and Horizon, which serve children with autism, and develop new models to meet instructional gaps, including for students with ADHD, dyslexia and those with twice exceptional needs. We will also prioritize underserved communities, such as the Bronx, where 24% of students with IEPs attend schools, but which receive only 14% of funding for specialized programs.
- **Aim to serve as many children in as integrated settings as possible.** Break down unnecessary boundaries between the system that serves students with the most significant disabilities, District 75, and the broader school system.
- **Providing an intensive focus on early diagnosis and remediation of learning disabilities, especially reading disabilities.**
  - Provide intensive, high-quality training to teachers in every elementary school to identify reading needs early, and implement a low-stakes dyslexia diagnostic assessment system across all elementary schools in kindergarten.
    - Appropriate guardrails will be put in place to avoid inappropriate identification of students of color as dyslexic, such as improved systems of interventions, and higher quality and more comprehensive and culturally appropriate evaluations.
- Bring a focus on literacy by providing personalized evidence-based instruction to students that need it without separating children wherever possible, and without sacrificing knowledge building courses in science, social studies, arts or physical education. Such methodology will be implemented with fidelity to ensure effectiveness. To this end, a Wiley Administration will increase the number of highly trained literacy specialists at each school to guide literacy instruction and evaluation referrals, and ensure that the Orton-Gillingham methodology is available in every school; educators will have the appropriate training in this methodology.

- Increase the number of special education teachers that understand and can implement evidence-based literacy interventions, so students in all grades can access a path to literacy in any school, minimizing the impact of loss of grade level content as much as possible.
- **Take aggressive steps to reduce the backlog of special education hearings.**

**Costs:** All told, in 2020 alone, the DOE spent \$710 million on expenses associated with special education litigation. This money increases every year, and is used to provide students with tuition and other services that the DOE either does not provide internally, or agrees to provide and fails to do so properly. \$23 million alone of this money was attributed to attorney's fees and other litigation costs. \$130 million was spent on external related service providers who delivered physical, occupational and speech therapy (amongst other services). A significant amount could be saved by overhauling the DOE's approach to delivering special education services within local schools, and by not contesting cases where a child clearly requires a highly specialized program that the DOE cannot provide. **Multilingual Learners** 42% of NYC students speak a language other than English at home, and NYC public school families speak 176 different languages. MLLs continue to have the highest dropout rate (23%) of any subgroup in New York City. Additionally, in 2019, only 19% of ELLs were proficient in math, 8 years after implementation of the [Corrective Action Plan](#). Research shows a strong relationship between family engagement in school and improved educational outcomes such as attendance and grades. However, many parents do not feel welcome in their child's school or cannot find someone to help them because their home language is not English. The DOE has struggled to communicate with immigrant and LEP families in their home language and via accessible forms of communication that do not rely on families having access to the internet. Many Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents cannot participate meaningfully in their children's education because they cannot understand the school documents they receive or meetings they attend about their child. To address these problems and fully integrate MLLs and their families into our schools, Maya will:

- **Implement and fully fund the New York Immigration Coalition's Education Collaborative's Communications Plan.** Maya will ensure that parents receive all school-related documents in their home language, in a form that is accessible to them, and that families have access to high-quality interpretation for conversations with school staff, school meetings, and events, through increasing the number of full-time, dedicated translators and interpreters at the DOE.
- **Ensure that MLLs have access to a broader range of high-quality and inclusive programming so they can fully participate and thrive in the classroom, and collect disaggregated data to break down which students are not receiving appropriate support.**
- **Expand dual language and transitional bilingual programs in communities with high populations of multilingual learners,** starting in 3-K. To address the shortage of teachers for these programs, this initiative will be coupled with pathways for bilingual licensing that provide additional incentives and support.
- **Create additional programs and support for MLL high school students,** such as night school and remote options to address the higher dropout rates among this group.

**Partner with multilingual communities and the trusted non-profits who support specific immigrant groups** to expand offerings that honor and celebrate the gifts of emerging multilingual learners.

**Provide specialized support to Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFEs)**, through incorporating strong home language literacy development with more traditional English as a New Language (ENL) classes, as well as increased access to trauma-informed counseling, and the creation of support groups for students in similar situations, and their families.