



November 18, 2026

Mayor Zohran Mamdani

City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Chancellor Kamar H. Samuels

New York City Public Schools
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: From Conversation to Action: A Citywide Plan for Real Integration in New York City Public Schools

Dear Mayor Mamdani and Chancellor Samuels:

The Community Education Council for District 4 writes at a consequential moment for New York City public education, which seems to be exactly how we have been engaging the NYCDOE in the last year.

Nikole Hannah-Jones's recent essay, *"In Fighting for Every Black Child, Did I Betray My Own?"*, has prompted a deeply distressing and necessary public conversation about what New York City asks of Black families navigating a profoundly unequal school system. This extremely personal essay highlights what many Black and Latine families experience and the questions that consistently linger in our heads. Families should never be forced to choose between racial belonging and academic opportunities, between culturally affirming schools and adequately resourced schools, or between supporting their community and providing their own children with the opportunities every child deserves, and much less in our public schools.

As [New York Appleseed](#) Executive Director Nyah Berg wrote in response to the essay, it must be understood not simply as a story about parental choice, but as a call to confront the continuing consequences of school segregation in NYC. Berg correctly points toward a central challenge facing this administration: **supportive language about integration must now be translated into policy, implementation, resources, and accountability.**

CEC4 has a longstanding record, over the past seven years, of making the same demand for action, policy implementation, and accountability for school integration through testimony at school board meetings, letters, and resolutions.

We appreciate that Chancellor Samuels has publicly described a vision of schools that are academically rigorous, safe, and truly integrated, and we recognize the June 2026 launch of district working groups in Districts 3, 7, 13, 16, and 25. NYCPS has described these groups as a first step, with expansion to other districts contemplated through 2028. That work can be valuable. But five working groups cannot substitute for a **citywide integration strategy with executive leadership, measurable goals, timelines, resources, and public accountability**. Especially when districts like ours in East Harlem are left out of the conversation.

[The School Diversity Advisory Group](#), commissioned in 2019, issued two reports that provide an extensive framework for an equitable and integrated school system. Its recommendations called for measurable racial and socioeconomic diversity goals, district-level planning, examination of admissions and screening policies, equitable distribution of resources, culturally responsive education, restorative practices, student and parent participation, staff diversity, and transparent public reporting. NYCPS formally adopted many of these recommendations (62 out of 67).

CEC4 therefore believes that this moment calls not for another conversation about whether integration matters, but for a clear plan for **how this administration will achieve it**.

The community commitments already exist

In February, CEC4 unanimously called for the creation of a [Deputy Chancellor for Integration](#) with authority to coordinate admissions, enrollment, transportation, program planning, culturally responsive education, restorative justice, and implementation of the SDAG recommendations. The resolution was responded to by NYCDOE, stating that Chancellor Samuels has made his decision on the organization of the cabinet, and a DC for Integration was not one of the positions. We believe the adoption of this particular recommendation would have been a sign of commitment to truly integrated schools and are needed now more than ever.

CEC4 aligns its vision for integration and racial equity with the [RJPS Policy Roadmap](#), which makes nearly identical recommendations: appoint executive-level leadership for integration; implement the previously adopted SDAG recommendations; adopt the additional recommendations that were left behind; reinvest in districtwide integration initiatives; fund community diversity planning; examine mergers and enrollment imbalances through an integration lens; and reform admissions policies that perpetuate racial and socioeconomic stratification. Through the Spill The Team Campaign in the summer of 2025 RJPS showed that “Inclusive and Integrated” Schools was the second priority for New Yorkers.

New York Appleseed and the Integration Coalition likewise presented your incoming administration with a [First 100 Days blueprint](#). Among its recommendations were a Deputy Chancellor of School Integration; restoration of the School Diversity Advisory Working Group under Local Law 224; sustained funding for district diversity working groups under Local Law 225; elimination of segregative middle-school screens; examination of attendance boundaries; inclusion of District 75 students in integration planning; increased accessibility; and alignment of NYCPS accountability tools with integration goals.

These demands are consistently being expressed by dozens of advocacy groups. The roadmap already exists.

CEC4 also rejects a narrow definition of integration based solely on student demographics.

The framework advanced by students and integration advocates—the [5 Rs of Real Integration](#)—recognizes that meaningful integration includes **Race and enrollment, Resources, Relationships across difference, Restorative Justice, and Representation** among educators and school leadership. New York Appleseed explicitly incorporates culturally responsive and sustaining education into that vision.

This distinction is especially urgent for Black children.

In March, CEC4 unanimously adopted a resolution responding to the [anti-Blackness and systemic racism within our education governance structures](#). We called for strengthened accountability against racial discrimination; mandatory anti-racist and anti-bias education; restorative justice practices throughout NYCPS; full alignment with New York State's Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework; and standing school and district equity councils that include parents, students, educators, and community members.

Integration without protection from anti-Blackness is not integration.

Integration without a culturally responsive curriculum is not integration.

Integration that places Black and Latine children into schools while leaving inequitable discipline, exclusionary academic tracking, unequal access to advanced coursework, discriminatory admissions practices, and disparities in resources untouched is not true integration.

These concerns are particularly acute after the previous mayoral administration moved the system away from several equity initiatives, including shelving the Universal Mosaic curriculum. CEC4's September resolution calls for renewed investment in [culturally responsive and sustaining education and meaningful participation by educators, students, families, and communities in curriculum development](#).

We therefore call upon the Mamdani Administration and NYC Public Schools to take the following actions:

- 1. Appoint a Deputy Chancellor for School Integration.**

Create an executive-level position with the authority, staffing, and budget necessary to coordinate integration across enrollment, admissions, transportation, facilities, curriculum, special education, school climate, and resource allocation, as requested by CEC4, RJPS, and New York Appleseed.

2. **Immediately reconvene the School Diversity Advisory Group and revisit its recommendations.**

Publicly identify which recommendations have been fully implemented, partially implemented, abandoned, or never implemented; revisit the recommendations that were not adopted; establish timelines for action; and provide regular public progress reports. The original SDAG framework already addresses enrollment, resources, curriculum, school climate, student voice, parent participation, restorative justice, accessibility, and educator representation.

3. **Build and release a comprehensive Citywide Real Integration Plan from the above work.**

In tandem with the reconvening of the SDAG, NYCPS must use SDAG reports and recommendations to inform and enact a comprehensive citywide Real Integration plan. The five district working groups should become components of—not substitutes for—a systemwide strategy. The City should establish measurable goals and timelines for racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, disability, and housing-status integration and report publicly on progress.

4. **Fully implement Local Laws 224 and 225.**

Restore a permanent citywide diversity advisory structure and provide stable funding and technical support for community-led diversity and integration planning in every community school district. Appleseed specifically recommended baselining \$2 million annually for district diversity working groups.

5. **Examine the structural policies that create and maintain segregation.**

This must include district and attendance-zone boundaries, screens, Gifted and Talented programs, geographic priorities, admissions algorithms, program placement, selective programs, school utilization decisions, and high-school admissions. Appleseed has specifically called for examining attendance boundaries and phasing out middle-school screens. This includes the dismantling of G&T and support for initiatives like [BrilliantNYC](#) that focused on quality, evidence driven pedagogical practices for all children throughout NYC.

6. **Act on specialized-high-school admissions.**

CEC4's August resolution calls upon the [Mayor's Panel for Educational Policy appointees to remove the specialized-school designation from the five schools whose designation is controlled locally and calls upon the Chancellor to develop new admissions criteria for those schools](#). Broader reform of admissions to the three schools governed by state law should also be pursued with Albany.

7. **Make CRSE a central component of integration policy.**

Restore and expand culturally responsive and sustaining curriculum; ensure Black Studies, Latine Studies, Hidden Voices, LGBTQ+ histories, disability justice, and the histories and experiences of New York City's communities are embedded throughout curriculum rather than treated as optional enrichment; and meaningfully include educators, families, students, and communities in curriculum development. We could look to the [Mosaic curriculum and plan](#) as what would have been a comprehensive implementation to CRSE in our NYC public schools.

8. **Fund restorative justice and confront anti-Blackness institutionally.**
Every school needs the infrastructure to prevent harm, respond to racial bias, repair relationships, and address racial disparities in discipline. CEC4 has called for restorative-justice implementation across all schools and trained coordinators to support that work.
9. **Integrate resources, not simply students.**
Schools serving historically marginalized communities must have equitable access to experienced educators, counselors, social workers, librarians, arts, athletics, advanced coursework, special-education services, multilingual services, mental-health supports, after-school programming, accessible facilities, and college and career preparation. SDAG specifically recommends investments that ensure high-poverty schools have curricular, extracurricular, and after-school opportunities comparable to more affluent schools.
10. **Make students, families, and communities partners with actual power using the Community Schools model.**
Integration cannot be something done to communities. District plans must be co-created with Black and Latine families, multilingual families, students with disabilities and their families, students in temporary housing, educators, students, CECs, and community-based organizations. D4 East Harlem is effectively a community school district and we believe this is a huge part of why we were ranked among the [top 10 districts in NYC](#). Community school students have [consistently outperformed](#) other students in NYCPs.
11. **Use school mergers and utilization planning as tools for equity rather than displacement.**
Where enrollment and building capacity permit, the City should consider intentional mergers or enrollment balancing—but only through a process that protects historically marginalized communities, preserves valued programs, equitably distributes resources, and advances Real Integration. [New York Appleseed's work on intentional school mergers](#) demonstrates how such approaches can simultaneously address enrollment, class size, resources, and integration when community is centered.
12. **Create public accountability benchmarks and an annual Real Integration report.**
Using the [“Real Integrated hub”](#) from NYU Metro Center to track integrated schools in the system. NYC families should be able to see whether schools and districts are becoming more integrated, whether resources are becoming more equitable, whether disciplinary disparities are declining, whether staff representation is improving, and whether students report greater belonging and opportunity. SDAG itself called for publicly reported diversity metrics and integration measures within school accountability systems. Further, Local Law 224 of 2019 also calls for annual reporting and accountability on progress made on implemented policies. Transparency under mayoral control has been an issue, so we must have accountability benchmarks in order to restore trust in our communities.

Mayor Mamdani and Chancellor Samuels, this administration did not create New York City's segregated school system. But you now have the responsibility, and an extraordinary opportunity, to decide whether another generation of children will continue to live in it.

Nikole Hannah-Jones's essay should not leave New York debating whether an individual Black mother made the right educational decision for her child. **The more important question is why New York City continues to maintain a system in which any parent must make such a choice at all.**

Black children should not have to leave Black communities to receive rigorous academics. They should not have to leave culturally affirming environments to access advanced coursework and enriching experiences. Families should not have to possess money, social networks, test preparation, private counseling, or extraordinary knowledge of an extraordinarily complicated admissions system to secure an excellent education.

Our goal cannot be to help the 2% navigate segregation more successfully.

Our responsibility is to dismantle the structures that reproduce and reinforce it.

CEC4 has passed resolutions. Students and families have testified. SDAG produced recommendations. RJPS produced a policy roadmap. New York Appleseed and the Integration Coalition provided immediate actions for this administration. Communities across New York City have already done much of the work of identifying the solutions.

What is needed now is implementation, something that no other administration has been able to accomplish.

We call upon your administration to convene CECs, students, families, educators, the Integration Coalition, RJPS, New York Appleseed, civil-rights organizations, and other affected communities and present a comprehensive **Citywide Real Integration Plan**, with executive leadership, funding, measurable benchmarks, public timelines, and accountability.

New York City should not spend yet another decade documenting segregation.

It should spend the next decade disrupting and dismantling it.

Respectfully,

Community Education Council District 4
East Harlem, New York

D4 CEC Council members:

Dr. Kaliris Salas-Ramirez, Sophie Oulai, Lacey Jordan, Lawanda Joyner, Vandana Bonilla, Elizabeth Soto-Cardona, Johanna Dominguez, Adriana Tlacomulco, Tia Jackson and Kiera Jerez Alston.