

# Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council

Tweed Courthouse \*52 Chamber Street, New York 10007

## **CPAC Parent Advisory Council Board**

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May 6, 2021

Chancellor Meisha Ross Porter  
Department of Education  
Tweed Courthouse  
52 Chambers Street  
New York, New York 10007

Dear Chancellor Porter,

The pandemic has laid bare many of the fundamental inequalities in NYC's education system. Lack of student access to digital devices and the internet during the pandemic has had a profound impact on our students, but many high school students have long grappled with this inequality. Laptop computers and easy access to the internet have become basic tools for most high school students – as basic as calculators in math classes. Students are expected to research and write papers and complete projects on their computers and submit them to teachers via the internet by specified evening hours – no excuse if the submissions are a minute late. Students are expected to understand Word, Excel and PowerPoint, among other programs. Group projects are completed using Google Docs. The need to master digital technology has been considered so important that the Board of Regents approved new computer science and digital fluency standards for K-12 in December 2020; yet many of our students cannot afford these basic educational tools needed to complete required homework assignments. As stated in the preliminary [Fall 2020 Digital Equity Survey published by the NYSED](#), less than one-third of NYC high school students have their own digital device.

As we hopefully shift back to post-pandemic school life, we must not forget that our high school students need access to technology to level the education playing field. We urge the DOE to provide all high school students with:

1) **Laptop Computers:** Laptops are preferable to iPads and Chromebooks for high school students. We believe the DOE needs to work with school communities (teachers and students), possibly at the school level, to identify which device is most appropriate for high school students and what software and apps needs to be loaded onto the devices. We recognize that there will be security issues involved in this; however, if the DOE truly wishes to level the playing field for all our students, then all students need access to the same learning tools.

2) **Access to the Internet:** The pandemic has highlighted the disparity among students regarding internet access. While the NYSED's preliminary Fall 2020 Digital Equity Survey did not break down access by grade, it found that just 54% of all NYC students had internet access provided by families – the rest either relied on the DOE for service or did not have sufficient access. The DOE needs to continue to work with internet service providers to ensure that all students have reliable access to the internet. This may entail creating hot spots in underserved communities and homeless shelters to meet the needs of all our students.

3) **DOE Dashboard:** We encourage the DOE to work with high school teachers and students to create a high school dashboard – a one-stop shop integrating educational and instructional programs, links, and apps so that they are easily accessible to assist all high school students.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss this topic with you further.

The Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council

Approved at the May 6, 2021 CPAC meeting

Cc: First Deputy Chancellor Donald Conyers, Chief Strategy Office Edie Sharp, Deputy Chancellor Adrienne Austin, Chief Academic Officer Linda Chen, Chief Information Officer Anuraag Sharma