

August 21, 2020

Chancellor Richard Carranza New York City Department of Education  
52 Chambers Street  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chancellor Carranza,

We are members of the ARISE Coalition, a group of parents, advocates, educators, academics, and other stakeholders who have been working together for over a decade to push for systemic changes to improve education for students with disabilities. We write today to state clearly our support of the City's Universal Literacy Initiative and to **urge you in the strongest possible terms to ensure that the Universal Literacy coaches are not redeployed for classroom work unrelated to the teaching of reading in the coming year.**

We firmly believe that the Universal Literacy coaches, along with the IEP teachers overseen by the Special Education Office and trained in delivering evidence-based literacy interventions, have added to the ability of NYC's public schools to provide quality instruction in the five pillars of reading. It would be a grave mistake to waste the expertise those staff have gained over the past several years, particularly at this critical point in time. Learning to read is foundational for all other learning. Tasking the Universal Literacy coaches and IEP teachers with other roles would divert their attention from the teaching of reading—perhaps the most fundamental purpose of our public schools—at a time when more students than ever will need the evidence-based literacy intervention and small-group support they are already trained to provide.

We recognize that schools are facing significant staffing challenges due to the pandemic, but sacrificing the City's recent—and long overdue—investment in improving literacy instruction is not the answer. Please ensure that Universal Literacy coaches and IEP teachers continue to focus this year on the critical task of helping students learn to read.

Sincerely,

Ursula Abbott  
Advocates for Children of New York  
AHRC NYC  
Celia M Blackman  
David Bloomfield  
Grisel Cardona  
Center for the Independence of the Disabled, New York  
Citywide Council on Special Education  
Cooke School and Institute  
Ziograin Correa  
Susan Crawford  
Monica Enciso  
Yuvania Espino

Johanna Garcia  
Goddard Riverside Community Center  
Olga Gonzalez  
Paul Hutchinson  
Include NYC  
Revere Joyce  
Jeaninne Kiely  
Rebecca Kostyuchenko  
Shamel Lawrence, Community Education Council for District 75  
Metropolitan Parent Center of Sinergia, Inc.  
Debbie Meyer  
Michelle Noris  
Jaclyn Okin-Barney  
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Donna Pompei Johnson  
Melanie Rivera  
Marilyn Rubinstein  
Iriss Shimony  
Amy Tsai, Community Education Council for District 75  
United We Stand  
Vibrant Emotional Health  
Chevion Weaks Lopez, Queens High School President's Council  
Josh Weitzman