NEW YORK, NY - Today, the Healing-Centered Schools Working Group, a coalition of parents, students, educators, advocates, and mental health providers, joined Public Advocate Jumaane D. Williams, City Council Member Kevin Riley, and others to announce a first-of-its-kind Task Force to ensure that NYC schools are implementing healing-centered, supportive strategies to address students’ Covid-19 related trauma and longstanding trauma created by racial and social inequities in NYC schools. The Task Force is pushing NYC schools away from punitive-based responses to trauma, including suspensions, police intervention, and adverse disciplinary measures, which have long inhibited students’ ability to learn and inflicted further social-emotional harm.

As a student graduating from NYC public schools, I want current and future students to have the resources that I didn’t have. I do not want them to be criminalized in a space that’s supposed to be a learning environment,” said Rayne Hawkins, Youth Advocate for Parents Supporting Parents NY & Moms United for Black Lives.

Students are clearly not getting the resources and support they need to excel in school right now but this task force will work to make sure they do so they can show their full potential. I look forward to advocating for more counselors, social workers, restorative justice groups, culturally-responsive curriculum for students instead of relying on police,” said Amy Tsai, a member of the Healing-Centered Schools Working Group.

Our scholars have been largely affected by this COVID-19 pandemic,” said Council Member Kevin C. Riley. “As we prepare to advance towards a new normal and some level of normalcy, it would be remiss of us not address the trauma experienced by our children. We must look towards incorporating more resources that are not only culturally responsive but also support in the social, emotional, and mental health resources. We must work together to addresses these concerns and ensure the successes of our students and I am elated to be a part of this task as our goal is to do just that.

While Department of Education leadership has taken initial steps to advance healing-centered change, city leaders have taken too few meaningful steps to remove structures that criminalize and traumatize students and families, to invest in the leadership of families and front-line staff, or to create the time and space schools need to train their staff and implement policy changes.

For decades, NYC’s low-income and unhoused students, multilingual learners and immigrant students, Black and Latinx students, and other students of color have attended schools ill-equipped to support students who have experienced trauma or who have significant social-emotional needs.

Students, parents, and educators report that punitive responses to behavior, including suspensions and police intervention, classroom dynamics and management techniques that trigger trauma, staff responses that minimize or neglect students’ needs, punitive or adversarial behavior toward families, and experiences with bullying and discrimination inhibit students’ ability to learn and inflict social-emotional harm that carries long-term consequences. Many report that their schools lack mental health resources, investment in parent and student voice, and culturally-responsive education resources necessary to create a supportive learning environment. In addition, school communities report that staff lack the training, resources, and administrative support to meet students’ needs. As a result, students’ social-emotional and academic well-being suffers and staff members experience mental health consequences of secondary trauma.

This pandemic has laid bare many disparities within our educational system and has forced us to rethink what every student needs in order to be successful,” said Shavon Glover, an educator and member of the Healing-Centered Schools Working Group. “Now more than ever, we see the need for healing centered schools that provide the training that educators, students and parents need to build and maintain healthy relationships and provide the tools and skills we need to create mutual systems of support for every student. Anything less than that is unacceptable.

This task force is critical in bringing healing centered practices to our schools at a time when staff, students and our families need it the most,” said Amy Tsai, a member of the Healing Centered Schools Working Group, Parent Action Committee Steering Committee Member, parent member of the Citywide Council for District 75, and mother of five NYC public school children. “Communities are hurting everywhere. My daughter lost a teacher to Covid-19 and my 15-year-old son with autism faces discrimination as an individual with a disability an as an Asian & Black young man. We need to create trauma responsible schools that are safe and responsive to our children’s needs and implementing healing centered practices in our schools is a way to do just that.

The Task Force to Advance Healing-Centered Practices in NYC Schools will examine how spending, professional development practices, curricula, policies and practices, and interactions with students, parents, and front-line staff should be
changed to promote effective healing-centered change in NYC schools during the upcoming school year. The Task Force will then issue a report to Mayor Bill de Blasio and Chancellor Meisha Ross Porter in July 2021 describing what steps the Department of Education must take to advance healing-centered change.

Recommendations will include:

- How Department of Education leadership, including Superintendents and Executive Superintendents, can support the rollout of healing-centered practices at the borough, district, and school level.
- Citywide and borough-specific recommendations about the change school communities want to see.
- Providing flexible options for healing-centered practices tailored to each school.
- Allocation of funding and professional development time to support implementation.
- Defining a framework for accountability to ensure schools engage in healing-centered change.
- Policy changes the DOE must make to advance healing-centered education at the district, borough, and citywide level.

The Task Force will hear from citywide cohorts representing key groups and conduct listening sessions in each borough on June 3rd from 11am-1pm, June 12th from 10am-12pm, and June 16th from 5:30-7:30pm. The Task Force encourages community members to register for these listening sessions by visiting @HealBxSchools or @nycpa on Twitter or clicking the following links:

**June 3rd, 11AM-1PM**


**June 12th, 10AM-12PM**


**June 16th, 5:30PM-7:30PM**


Task Force members include Youth Representatives, including Rayne Hawkins of Parents Supporting Parents NY and Keneisha Buckley of the Urban Youth Collaborative; Parent Representatives Tajh Sutton of Teens Take Charge and Parents for Responsive Equitable and Safe Schools and Amy Tsai of the Citywide Council for District 75; Educator Representatives, including Bronx educator Shavon Glover; Cultural Group Representatives including the Coalition for Asian-American Children and Families; Mental Health Representative RueZalia Watkins of Vibrant Emotional Health; and Elected Official Representative Councilmember Kevin C. Riley.

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