

# No Closer to College

NYC High School Students  
Call for Real School Transformation,  
Not School Closings

A report by the



**Urban Youth Collaborative**

April 2011

*They come here all the time to check on our school and give us a grade and all that, but they never come in to see what we need. You come into a school and you don't see a library? Then put one there. It's common sense. If there's a gym missing, put one in there. Don't just say, "Close the whole school."*

- Student attending a closed school

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# ABOUT UYC

## Who we are

The Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC) is a student-led coalition that unites low-income students of color from across New York City to create more equitable and effective public schools. We are committed to building a strong youth voice that can ensure our high schools are respectful to students, prepare students to be successful in college, earn a living wage, and work for justice in society. UYC has emerged as an important grassroots voice for improving the city's high school graduation rates and transforming what is too often the punitive culture inside struggling high schools.

## Why we are organizing

As the “consumers” of public education, youth are uniquely situated to raise forceful demands for the resources and accountability that are critical to the success of educational reform. Because youth have direct experience with schooling problems, they bring important insights about reform strategies. Yet without an organized base of power such as UYC, students' perspectives rarely inform reform discussions.

## What we have won

- **Student Success Centers (SSCs):** SSCs are an innovative model of college access that train high school students to work with their peers to complete the college application process, from choosing a college to completing applications and understanding financial aid. The three SSCs that UYC won have helped hundreds of students apply to a wide range of colleges, access more scholarships, and secure more state/federal aid for college.
- **Fighting school budget cuts:** Along with allies, UYC has worked hard to reverse and minimize state- and city-level cuts to schools. Through this work, UYC has ensured that the voices of low-income students of color—those most affected by these policies—are a part of the fight for educational equity.
- **Safety with Dignity:** Along with allies, UYC worked with the NY City Council to pass legislation in December 2011 that will require the NYC Department of Education (DOE) and NYPD to report on student safety polices in NYC schools, including student suspensions, arrests and expulsion, broken down by race, age, gender, special education status, and English Language Learner status.
- **Free transportation for students:** UYC led the campaign that saved free and reduced-price metro cards for 600,000 students.

## Member organizations

- **Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM)** is a multi-generational organization of low-income South Asian immigrants in NYC. YouthPower! has led a range of campaigns around immigrant students' rights.
- **Future of Tomorrow of the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (FOT)** was founded in 2005, and organizes students at the Franklin K. Lane campus for school reform. In less than three years, FOT has won a Success Center, led a successful campaign to have the school's cafeteria redesigned, and inserted and legitimized youth voice on the Lane campus.
- **Make the Road New York (MRNY)** has been organizing students in Brooklyn and Queens, and, among other things, has won a Success Center for the Bushwick Campus High School and has created a small, autonomous high school with a social justice theme. MRNY's Youth Power Project has organized thousands of students in support of the DREAM Act and has worked with a number of schools to implement non-punitive approaches to safety.
- **Sistas and Brothas United of the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (SBU)** brings together students in the Kingsbridge neighborhood of the Bronx, and has secured improvements in school safety policies, facility repairs, and has successfully inserted student voice at several local high schools. SBU also worked to create a small high school, the Leadership Institute, which also houses a Student Success Center.
- **Youth on the Move:** Launched in 2004, YOM has developed relationships with and draws its membership from six schools. YOM has worked with Mothers on the Move to create green jobs in the South Bronx, and close down a juvenile detention center in the neighborhood.

The **Community Organizing & Engagement Program of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform** has played a significant role in helping to build the field of education organizing in New York City through intensive support provided to community groups including data analysis, research on educational reform, leadership training, and strategy development.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mayor Bloomberg's Department of Education (DOE) has focused its systemic school improvement efforts on one key strategy -- closing poorly performing high schools. The DOE has privileged school closure as its primary school improvement policy, as opposed to major initiatives to transform struggling schools from within. If this policy continues, more than 65,000 students -- more students than the entire Boston public school system -- will have had their high school experience marked by school closure. Because the DOE has a responsibility to ensure that those students do not become policy casualties, it must invest as much effort in ensuring a rich, rigorous, college-preparatory education for students in the final years of a closing high school as in developing and nurturing the new small schools they continue to create.

This report examines what happened to students in the 21 schools that have completed their phase-out since 2000, when the DOE announced the first school closings, and predicts the destructive impact that school closings may have on students in the high schools that may be at risk of closing next.

The students who attended the 21 closed high schools, almost all of whom are Black and Latino, had significantly higher needs and were much more academically under-prepared than the students across the city's high school system.

- 74% were eligible for free lunch, compared to 55% citywide
- 21% of students were English Language Learners, compared to 13% citywide
- 46% were overage for grade, compared to 29% citywide
- 89% were below grade level in ELA and 91% below grade level in math -- compared to 67% and 70% respectively, citywide

Predictably, the academic outcomes of these 21 schools in their final years before closure were also much worse. A much lower percent of the students in the 21 schools graduated, a much higher percent dropped out, and a sharply higher rate were discharged. At some schools, discharge and dropout rates skyrocketed in the final years of phase-out:

- At Taft High School, the dropout rate spiked from 25% the year closure was announced to 70% the year that the school closed
- At Morris High School, the discharge rate rose from 33% the year closure was announced to 55% the year that the school closed

Given that some 33,000 students attended the 21 high schools in their final years, the absolute numbers behind the percentages are quite startling:

- 5,612 dropped out,
- 8,089 were still enrolled,
- 9,668 were discharged,
- Only 9,592 actually graduated.

Moreover, indications are that only 15% of the graduates in the closing schools received a Regents diploma, compared to 41% citywide. Similar outcomes can be predicted for students at the schools currently at risk of closing unless the DOE changes policy and invests in ensuring a high quality education for those students.

Instead of intervening aggressively to help the lowest performing schools improve, the DOE has consistently neglected to provide the comprehensive guidance and supports that struggling schools need. Reports from the NY State Education Department (SED) on 17 schools identified by the state as Persistently Low Achieving (PLA) found that at least 14 of the schools were not provided the assistance from the DOE necessary to raise student achievement. Furthermore, SED reviews of the 11 schools currently implementing the federal transformation model found that the DOE had largely not met their commitment to guide and support the school transformation plans.

The destructive policy of school closings now threatens two additional groups of the city's high schools: 14 high schools that the Panel for Educational Policy recently voted to close, and 24 PLA high schools. To improve the prospects of poor and working class students of color entering high school academically under-prepared, the Urban Youth Collaborative proposes that the DOE suspend its high school closing policy and instead implement a set of comprehensive interventions to improve the schools:

**1. Invest in struggling schools instead of closing them**

- Create a central High School Improvement Zone that brings together struggling and closing schools to help them assess and meet the needs of students
- Create a set of interventions that are put into action when a school is at risk of closure
- Ensure that all schools have the resources and capacity to meet the needs of ELLs, students with special needs, and overage students that are assigned to them

**2. Build meaningful partnerships with students and community**

- Create stakeholder committees at struggling and phasing out schools that include parents, students, teachers, administrators and community organizations to assess the school's strengths and weaknesses, identifying and creating plans for improvement, and hiring staff

**3. Provide an engaging and rigorous college preparatory curriculum**

- Emphasize and integrate literacy and math skill development across courses in ninth grade
- Offer a wide range of subjects instead of just those assessed by high-stakes tests
- Provide access to hands-on, high-level and college credit-bearing courses
- Support teachers through ongoing professional development and mentoring
- Create advisories and summer academies for incoming ninth graders

**4. Support students in accessing college**

- Implement early college preparation and orientation programs
- Hire one college counselor per every 100 students in struggling schools

- Create an early warning system that immediately identifies students who are struggling and off-track for graduation or college, and triggers interventions to help

#### **5. Ensure a safe & respectful school climate**

- Create supportive school environments that utilize non-punitive approaches to safety and get at the root of problems, such as Restorative Justice or Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

No student should be abandoned as a casualty of school reform policy. High school students from low-income communities of color across the city call on the DOE to launch an aggressive effort to provide these supports to all struggling schools, as a step towards the common goal of guaranteeing a college and career-ready education for all students.

# INTRODUCTION

For the past ten years, Mayor Bloomberg’s Department of Education (DOE) has focused its systemic school improvement efforts on a key strategy -- closing poorly performing high schools. Citing evidence of superior academic performance in the new small schools, the DOE has argued that systemic improvement depends on closing large, failing high schools and creating large numbers of new, small high schools to replace them.<sup>1</sup> This strategy has privileged school closure as the primary school improvement policy, as opposed to any major initiative to transform struggling schools from within.

Critics have consistently challenged the DOE’s school closing policy and have argued that:

- Most of the students who would have attended the closed high schools were not admitted to the small schools that replaced them. Instead, most of these students were enrolled in other large comprehensive high schools, which consequently became academically overwhelmed, making them additional targets for closure.<sup>2</sup>
- High schools targeted for closure were set up to fail by being assigned high percentages of students who were overage for grade and whose skills were significantly below proficiency levels. High schools targeted for closure were also assigned large percentages of Special Education and English Language Learner (ELL) students as well as “over the counter” students (those not assigned to any high school by the start of the school year). These large high schools were also consistently starved, by the DOE, of the resources necessary to meet the needs of their challenged students.<sup>3</sup>
- The metrics the DOE uses to identify the supposedly failing high schools are far too limited and one-dimensional and, in some cases, produce flawed and inaccurate readings of school performance.<sup>4</sup>
- Closing high schools is not a viable strategy for comprehensive systemic improvement when the system has 213 high schools in which less than half the student population graduates with a Regents diploma, and hundreds of elementary and middle schools in which the majority of students do not meet state academic standards.<sup>5</sup>

Though the school closings have generated an escalating level of citywide anger and protest, the DOE has intensified its implementation of the policy. Since 2000, the DOE has closed 34 high schools<sup>6</sup> – most of them under Mayor Bloomberg. Some 14 additional high schools were recently approved for closure by the mayor’s Panel for Educational Policy (PEP). Moreover, since the New York State Education Department (NYSED) has identified 32 high schools as persistently lowest-achieving (PLA) schools under federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) regulations, some additional sub-set of these high schools will likely be targeted for closure by the DOE as well.

If the current school closings policy continues, more than 65,000 students’ high school experience will be marked by school closure.<sup>7</sup> The DOE has a responsibility to ensure that those students – as well as the tens of thousands of students in phasing out elementary and middle schools – do not become policy casualties. The DOE should invest as much effort in ensuring a rich, rigorous, college-preparatory education for students in the final years of a closing high school as they do in developing and nurturing the new small schools they continue to create. But thus far the DOE has not developed an aggressive

strategy to ensure an effective high school education for those 65,000 students. As Shael Polakow-Suransky, the DOE’s Chief Academic Officer, has indicated:

*... there’s not been consistent sets of supports for the schools that are phasing out as part of the process of creating new schools. There’s an obligation to the kids and to the adults in those schools to provide thoughtful consistent support and communications, so that people know what to expect and know what is going to happen from year to year as the school changes and gets smaller, and to actually create opportunities for those that want to stay and be part of moving the kids that remain to graduation ...for them to actually have really strong leadership and real resources to do that.*<sup>8</sup>

This report focuses on 21 high schools that have been phased out and closed by June 2009 and have reported full student outcome data.<sup>9</sup> We examine what happened to students in those 21 schools during the four-year phase-out process that began in 2000, when the DOE announced the first school closings. By examining the demographics and academic outcomes of the students in the 21 closed high schools, this report demonstrates the enormous disruption and loss of students during the school closure process. The report argues that extending this loss to the populations of the 14 high schools newly targeted for closing and the PLA schools is too costly to the students involved. It proposes, instead, a comprehensive set of recommendations, developed by the Urban Youth Collaborative and grounded in their experience of the city’s high schools, to improve the performance of those 14 high schools as well as the PLA high schools

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF STUDENTS IN CLOSED SCHOOLS

We begin by comparing aggregated student demographics, over four years of phase-out, for the 21 high schools closed between 2000-2009, to the aggregated demographics of the entire New York City high school population across that same ten-year time period.<sup>10</sup>

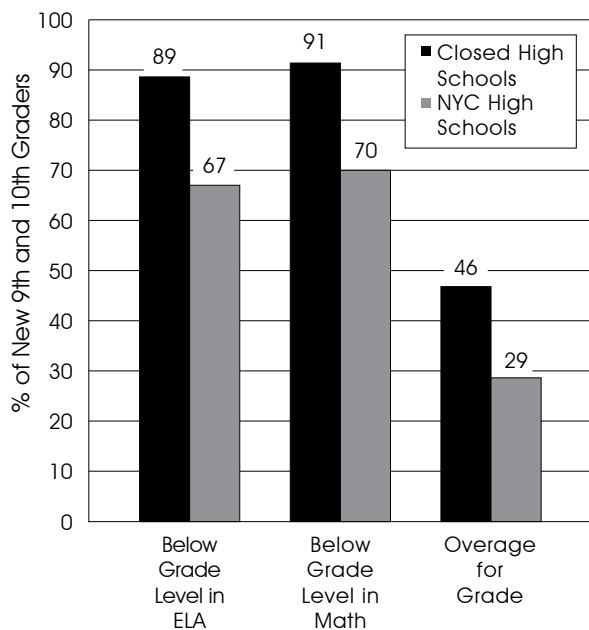
TABLE 1  
Student Demographics in 21 Closed High Schools (2000-09)<sup>11</sup>

	Closed High Schools (%)	NYC high schools (%)
Black	48	34
Latino	47	36
White	1	15
Asian	4	14
Free lunch eligible	74	55
English language learners	21	13
Special education	8	6

Sources: Board of Education, City of New York, 2000-06 Annual School Report Cards. NYSED, Information and Reporting Services, New York State School Report Cards for the 2007-09 school years.

The aggregate student demographics for the 21 high schools closed between 2000-2009 presents a stark contrast to the demographics of the high schools citywide. The population of the 21 closed schools, averaged across their final four years, was 48% Black, 47% Latino, 4% Asian and 1% White – much larger Black and Latino populations, and much smaller White and Asian populations than in the city high schools. Across their final four years, a much higher percentage of students in the 21 closed schools – 74% -- were eligible for free lunch.<sup>12</sup> A higher percentage of these students were assigned to Special Education (8%), and a higher proportion were English Language Learners (21%), compared to the city high schools. As the graph below demonstrates, three years prior to closure (which is the last year that closing schools accepted students, and the first year of their phase-out), a higher proportion of entering 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders in the 21 closed schools were overage for grade, one of the key predictors for school failure – 46% compared to 29% citywide. In terms of academic readiness, much higher proportions of new entering 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders at the closed schools were below grade level in ELA and Math, another predictor of school failure, compared to the city’s high schools – 89% compared to 67%, and 91% compared to 70% respectively.

FIGURE 1  
Academically Unprepared and Overage Students in 21 Closed High Schools, Year Closure Announced<sup>13</sup>



Source: Board of Education, City of New York, 2000-06 Annual School Report Cards

The student needs at some of the schools in the year that their closure was announced are even more extreme:

- At Seward Park High School, 45% of students were English Language Learners, compared to 13% citywide
- At Morris High School, 15% of students were in special education, compared to 6% citywide
- At Evander Childs High School, 56% of students were overage for grade, compared to 32% citywide
- At Taft High School 96% of incoming students were below grade level in ELA and 95% were below grade level in Math, compared to 70% and 71% respectively citywide

These comparisons dramatize the instructional challenge faced by the 21 closed high schools. In every demographic category, those 21 schools enrolled students significantly more disadvantaged and academically under-prepared

than the students across the city’s high school system during the same time period. Given these disparities, one might have expected the DOE to implement policies, supports and interventions to improve student outcomes. The Parthenon report, for example, prepared for the DOE by a Boston-based consulting firm, demonstrated that in many of the city’s high schools, large student size and concentrations of below-proficient students combined to predict very low student graduation rates.<sup>14</sup> Although almost all the 21 closed high schools’ student populations exhibited these at-risk indicators for

years prior to being closed and were therefore predicted, by Parthenon’s findings, to fail to effectively educate large numbers of their students, the DOE did little to alter these at-risk factors. The DOE never attempted, for example, to cap the concentration of low-proficiency students at large high schools, as the Parthenon report recommended. Instead, they allowed the conditions for failure to continue at many high schools, and when schools performed as Parthenon’s analysis predicted, the DOE targeted them for closure.

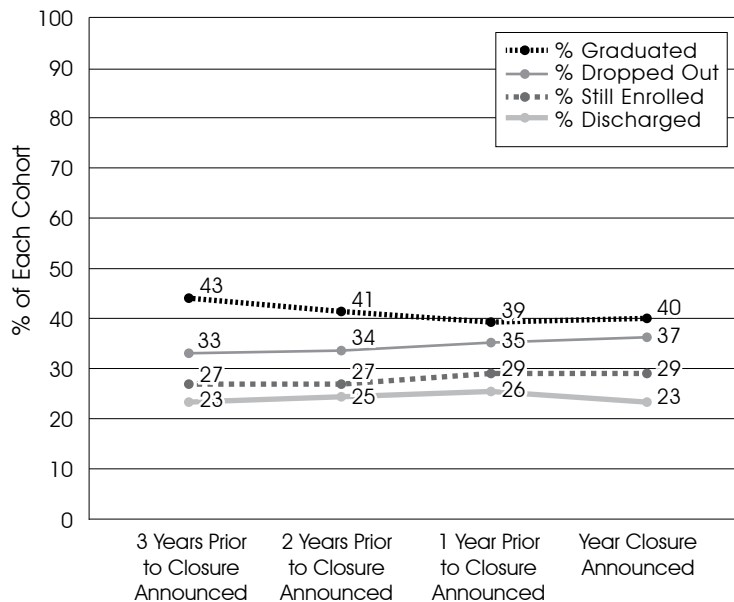
## WHAT HAPPENED TO STUDENTS IN CLOSED SCHOOLS?

*We all started to lose teachers. One day I would have a teacher, and maybe the next day she was gone. I had a sub for like three months, because my teacher had left to another school that was already inside the school. You could tell that the teachers that stayed were worried because some of them didn’t want to be transferred out. Do you know how hard it was to find a recommendation letter for college, because I didn’t have a teacher? I was emailing them but I couldn’t find anyone because the teachers left.<sup>15</sup>*

- Students attending a closing school

These 21 high schools had abysmal academic outcomes for years before they were announced for closure, as shown in the graph below.<sup>16</sup>

FIGURE 2  
Student Outcomes in 21 Closed High Schools,  
Prior to Closure Announced<sup>17</sup>



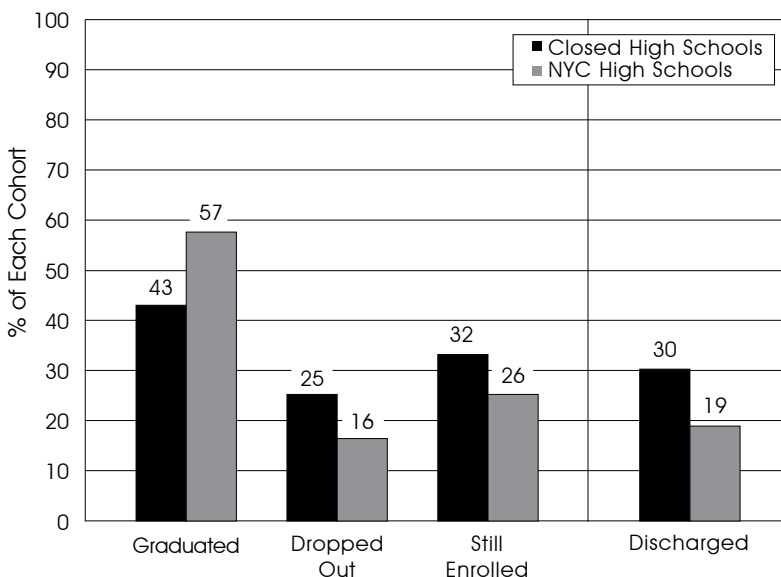
Source: NYC DOE, Graduation and Dropout Reports, NYC Traditional Graduation Rate Archive. 4-Year Longitudinal Reports and Event Dropout Rates for Classes 2000 to 2009.

During the four years of phase-out, school performance often deteriorates as school cultures fragment. The problems that produced poor performance are often exacerbated when closure is announced; school spirit and morale plummet, staff scramble for jobs at other schools, enrichment and afterschool programs move elsewhere, and schools become physically marginalized in their own buildings.

In the aggregate of the 21 closed high schools, across their four years of closing, only 43% of their students graduated, 25% dropped out, and 32% were still enrolled. Across the entire city high school system between 2000 and 2009, a much higher average of 57% of students graduated, a much lower rate of 16% dropped out, and 26%

were still enrolled after four years. Moreover, in the 21 schools a much larger group of students in their respective cohorts -- 30% -- were discharged, compared to 19% citywide, a very significant disparity.<sup>18</sup>

FIGURE 3  
Student Outcomes in 21 Closed High Schools, 2000-09<sup>19</sup>



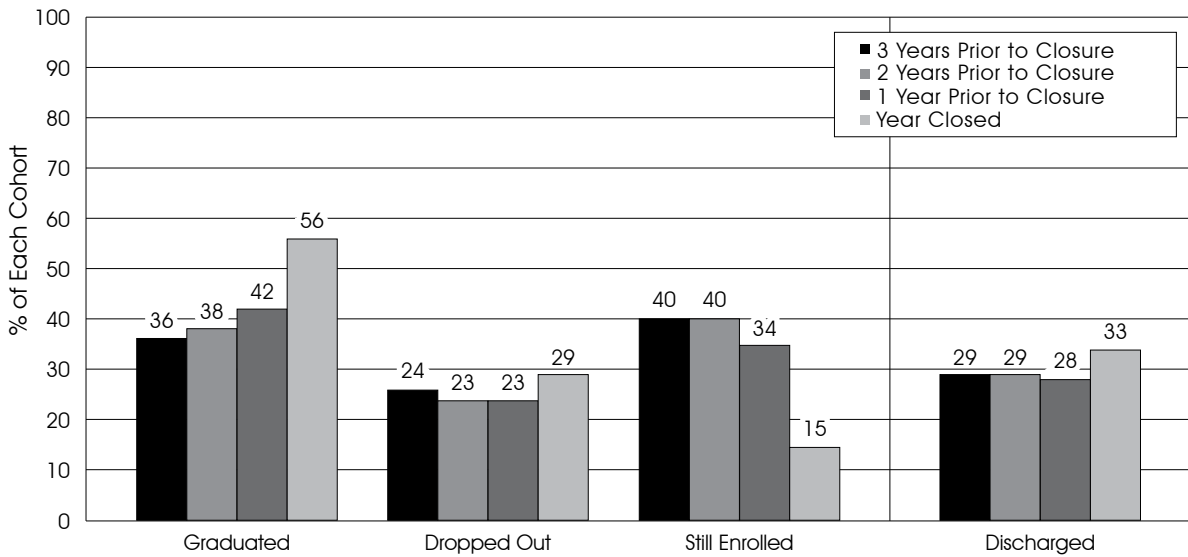
Source: NYC DOE, Graduation and Dropout Reports, NYC Traditional Graduation Rate Archive. 4-Year Longitudinal Reports and Event Dropout Rates for Classes 2000 to 2009.

These aggregate outcomes mask considerable, and potentially troubling, year-to-year variations. Both graduation and dropout rates, for example, rise quite significantly (14% and 6%) in the final year of the schools' close-out processes, as the following graph demonstrates. A 14-percentage point one-year rise in graduation rates is quite unusual. The DOE has celebrated this rise as evidence of an increase in school quality in the final years, but the rise more likely indicates that possibly problematic strategies may have been employed during the 21 schools' final year, to qualify so many additional students for graduation.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, the 6-percentage point rise in the dropout rate across those 21 schools, in a citywide context in which high school dropout rates have been trending steadily downward, suggests the possibility that significantly more students in these closing high schools may have been pushed out. This would not be surprising given the enormous pressures on closing schools to empty the school before it shuts down. Unfortunately the available data do not allow an examination that would specify causes. Moreover, although a large percentage of students are defined as still enrolled when their schools close, there is no publicly available data on what happened to these students, and whether they became dropouts as well, once their schools closed.

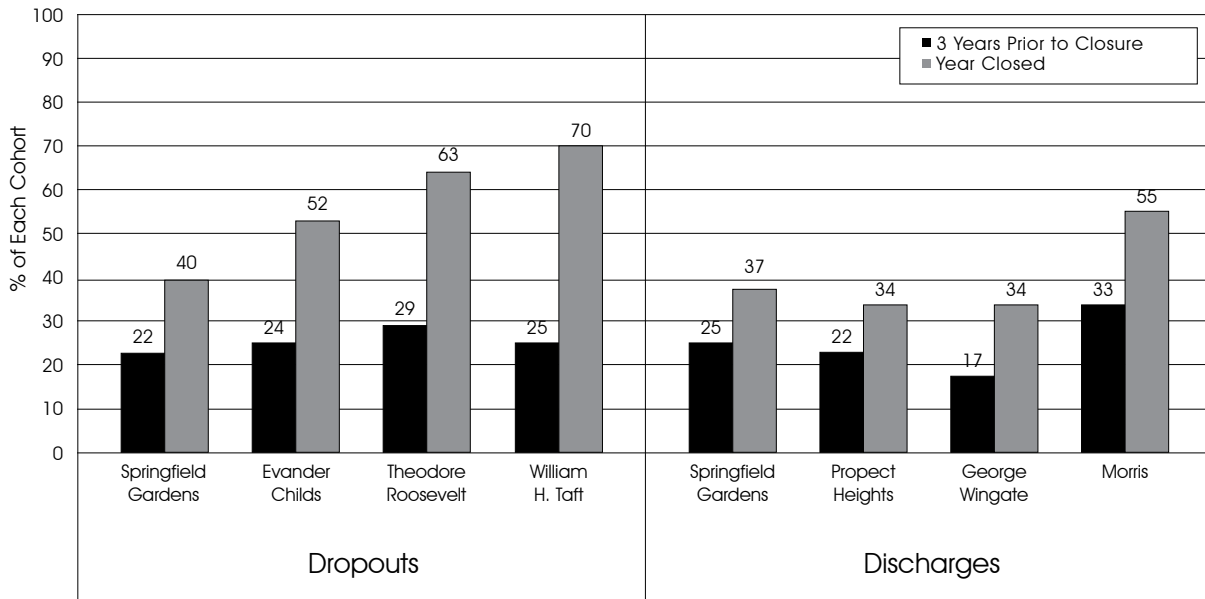
Finally, the discharge and dropout rates for several of the closed high schools increased very significantly in the schools' final year. Across the school system, discharge and dropout rates seldom vary by more than a few percentage points from year to year. Yet as the following graph indicates, a sub-set of the closed high schools had enormous increases in their discharge and dropout rates in the final year of their school's phase-out process. This sharp increase means that a very large number of the students in these schools abandoned their education or were eliminated from the schools' rolls. Such large increases suggest a policy or practice of pushing students out in these schools' final years.

**FIGURE 4**  
**Student Outcomes in 21 High Schools during Four Years of Phase-Out**



Source: NYC DOE, Graduation and Dropout Reports, NYC Traditional Graduation Rate Archive. 4-Year Longitudinal Reports and Event Dropout Rates for Classes 2000 to 2009.

**FIGURE 5**  
**Increases in Dropout and Discharge Rates<sup>21</sup> at Closed High Schools**



Source: NYC DOE, Graduation and Dropout Reports, NYC Traditional Graduation Rate Archive. 4-Year Longitudinal Reports and Event Dropout Rates for Classes 2000 to 2009.

These findings suggest several possibilities:

- Did the graduation rates in these 21 closed high schools' last year increase because the schools managed to help many more students succeed only in that final year?
- Did the graduation rates increase because these closing schools sought to improve their final outcomes through increased use of credit recovery programs and flexible scoring on the Regents exams, as suggested in recent reports?<sup>22</sup>
- Did the graduation rates increase because significantly more students were classified as dropouts and discharges?
- Do the spikes in both dropouts and discharges indicate a policy of purging students unlikely to graduate?
- What happened to the significant percentage of students categorized as still enrolled after the 21 schools closed?

The relationship of the discharge rate to the graduation and dropout rates raises the troubling issue of the misuse of the discharge category across the city's high schools. According to NYSED guidelines, students can be discharged from school rolls only if they have been withdrawn from their high school and have officially enrolled (which requires documentation) in a private or parochial school, a public school outside NYC, a full-time authorized GED program, are over 21 years of age, or have died. In all other cases in which students leave their high school, they must be classified as dropouts. Because a dropout classification increases a school's dropout rate and reduces its graduation rate, high schools are often tempted to misuse the discharge classification, since discharges remove students from schools' rolls and do not negatively affect schools' performance or accountability.<sup>23</sup>

In January 2003, Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) filed a lawsuit against Franklin K. Lane High School<sup>24</sup> for discharging difficult-to-educate and older students. The suit charged that these practices falsely and illegally raised Lane's graduation rate and lowered the school's dropout rate by removing overage and difficult-to-educate students from the high school's rolls.

The DOE quickly agreed to notify approximately 5,000 former Lane students who had been discharged or transferred from Lane that they had a right to return to school and to stay until they turned 21. As a consequence, hundreds of students were offered the opportunity to re-enroll. In fall 2003, AFC filed similar lawsuits against two additional high schools, and under the settlement agreements, discharged students were permitted to re-enroll. The DOE also developed procedures to ensure that students would not be illegally pushed out of school and would be informed of their right to stay in school until the age of 21.

But the use of the discharge classification by the city's high schools has not been reduced; instead, it has risen. A comprehensive report by Jennifer Jennings and Leonie Haimson, *High School Discharges Revisited: Trends in New York City's Discharge Rates, 2000-2007*, released in April, 2009,<sup>25</sup> found that the school system's discharge rate had increased from 18% for the Class of 2000 to 21% for the Class of 2007. Moreover, a very recently released audit report by the New York State Comptroller's Office<sup>26</sup> examined the NYC school system's discharge records for its 2004-2008 general education cohort (the group of students who entered ninth grade in 2004 and were expected to graduate four years later). The

audit found that in a random sample of 500 discharged students, the DOE incorrectly classified 74 students (15%) as discharged when those students should have been classified as dropouts. When the Comptroller's audit corrected for this almost 15% misuse of the discharge classification, the audit reduced the DOE's cohort graduation rate by at least two- percentage points, and increased the DOE's dropout rate by approximately three- percentage points.

Thus the actual loss of students, and the resulting harm inflicted on them, is likely to be considerably higher than our data indicate. Because we used only publicly available data, we were unable to estimate the number of students who transferred out of the 21 closing schools and struggled to achieve their diploma in new and unfamiliar academic settings.

*If you didn't have all the credits you needed, you would get pushed out. They told you, you know, you have to go to this school. They would give you options of schools to go to, but it was just the thought of being pushed out because you can't provide the credits that we should be able to take. And if you're a student and other schools are coming in and you hear you can't take these classes anymore and it doesn't look like you're going to be able to graduate, on time, and you have to go to this other school, you reject it.*

- Student attending a closing school

Moreover, we have not increased the dropout rate in the 21 closed schools to reflect the 15% misuse of discharges, which the Comptroller's audit documented. Finally, because of data limitations, we could not analyze what happened to the very significant percentage of students discharged from the 21 closed schools, or the significant increase in students classified as still enrolled, to determine whether those students' high school careers were permanently terminated.

## IMPACT ON STUDENTS IN SPECIAL PROGRAMS

As previously indicated, the percentages of students enrolled in Special Education and ELL programs in the 21 closed high schools were much higher than across the high school system. In the 21 schools' final years, students in these programs suffered severe disruption of the education provisions they are guaranteed, by law and DOE policy, to receive.

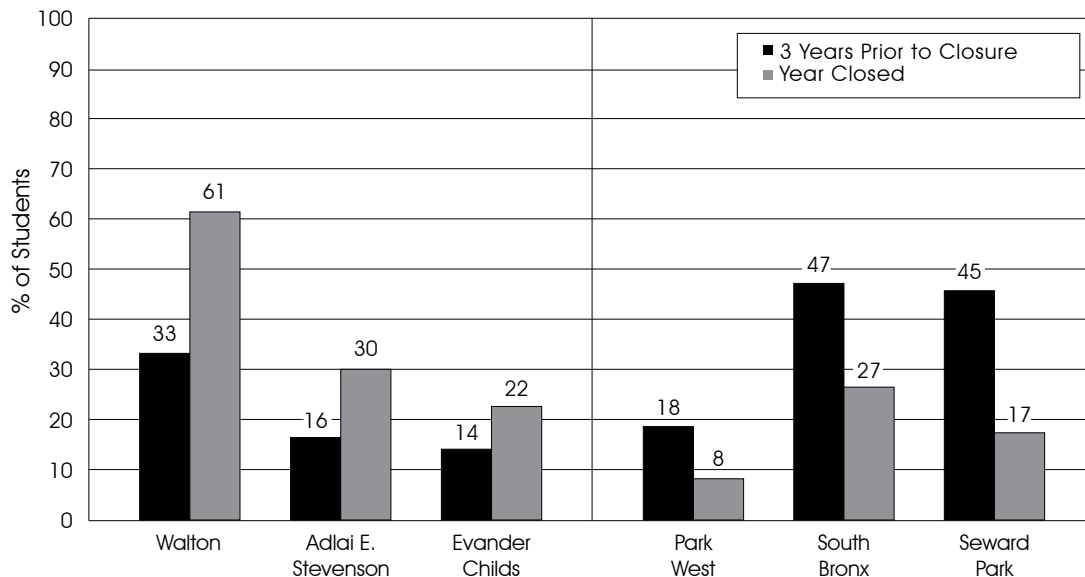
A 2009 report by Advocates for Children of New York and the Asian-American Legal Defense and Education Fund, for example, examined the closing of two large Brooklyn high schools, Lafayette High School in Bensonhurst and Tilden High School in East Flatbush.<sup>27</sup> The report found that, before the closing began, Tilden and Lafayette had a substantial number of ELL students, students with special needs, and overage and under-credited students. The ELL students who remained in the schools after the phasing-out process started received less support and fewer services and, in some cases, were pushed into GED classes. But most of the small schools that were created in Tilden and Lafayette accepted very few, if any, ELL students, or failed to provide those they accepted with legally mandated ELL programming. The closing of Tilden and Lafayette in 2010 resulted in the loss of two large and diverse bilingual education programs, including a unique program for Haitian-Creole students. No bilingual programs were created in the new small schools placed on those campuses. Moreover, as Tilden and Lafayette began to

phase-out, ELL enrollment in surrounding large high schools rose, which may have put those schools at greater risk of being closed.

Sharp fluctuations in student demographics and outcomes in specific schools among the 21 closed high schools suggest that a variety of limiting scenarios were imposed on these schools' special programs as closure approached. Sudden or large changes in schools' demographics often cause a distressing level of disruption of those schools' special programs.

The left side of the graph below shows significant increases in the students classified as English Language Learners (ELLs) in three high schools during those schools' closing year. Since it is unlikely that those schools would have admitted large numbers of new ELL students in their final years, these significant increases in the ELL population suggest that other student populations had significantly decreased, and that the ELL students were not getting the supports they needed to graduate. The right side of the graph shows large decreases in the ELL population in another sub-set of schools, which could indicate that the ELL students were being transferred to more effective schools, or that they were dropping out or pushed out in large numbers.

FIGURE 6  
Fluctuations in English Language Learners at Closed High Schools



Sources: Board of Education, City of New York, 2000-06 Annual School Report Cards  
 NYSED, Information and Reporting Services, New York State School Report Cards for the 2007-09 school years.

# THE ABANDONMENT OF STUDENTS LEFT IN CLOSING SCHOOLS

*Sometimes our schedules will be really off. They'll give us a math class freshman and sophomore year, then you won't have a math class your junior and senior year. Last time I had a math class was sophomore year. And I don't think I'm ready to be taking college work. I haven't had social studies since sophomore year.*

- Student attending a closing school

All these student outcome disparities illustrate the impact of leaving students in closing schools without an aggressive strategy to support them through to graduation. Given that some 33,000 students were enrolled in the 21 high schools in their final years, the absolute numbers behind the percentages are quite startling.<sup>28</sup>

- 5,612 dropped out<sup>29</sup>
- 8,089 were still enrolled
- 9,668 were discharged
- Only 9,592, the assumed success of the phasing-out process, actually graduated.

Worse, a very low percentage of those 9,592 graduates achieved a Regents diploma, which used to represent the minimum standard for predicting college success. At the four closed high schools that reported Regents graduation data,<sup>30</sup> only 15% of the cohort achieved a Regents diploma during their four-year phase-out. Yet across the city school system in those years, 41% of the student cohort achieved a Regents diploma.

Experts on the nature of the skills acquisition necessary for success in college have long argued that current Regents diploma requirements are insufficient indicators of successful preparation. The New York State Regents have recently redefined their College- and Career-Ready state standard -- a student score of at least 80 on the Math Regents, and at least 75 on the English Regents, is now the new minimum requirement. Only 23% of NYC's high school students reached those standards in 2009, and only 13% of Black students and 13% of Latino students. Given these numbers, we can assume that an extremely small number of the students who achieved Regents diplomas at the closed high schools reached the college-level standards established by the Regents.

The dismal statistics raise a critical question: once the DOE defined those 21 high schools as failing, should it not have invested in a major effort to improve student outcomes in the schools' final years? The DOE knew that without significant intervention, the 21 schools slated for closing would continue to fail to effectively educate most of their students. A concerted DOE strategy to provide effective interventions, leadership and necessary resources might have improved outcomes for many of the 21 schools' vulnerable students. Instead, school system inaction has meant that tens of thousands of students in the closing schools have become casualties of the DOE's systemic reform agenda, which has sacrificed the education of these students to the projected gains of students in the new small schools created to replace them. The cost of this strategy is too high to continue.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS AT RISK OF CLOSING

*If you were on track with the credits you needed—if you already had everything—you could stay. But if you were behind by a good amount, a big amount, then you were eventually pushed out. I know people that transferred and they didn't do well. They went to John Addams and they didn't do very well. Everywhere you go is phasing out.*

- Students attending a closing school

### On the 14 high schools slated to close

In February 2011, the Mayor's Panel on Educational Policy voted to close 14 additional high schools, and begin their phase-out processes in September 2011. As the following table indicates, the demographics of these 14 high schools are similar to the demographics of the 21 closed high schools in terms of race/ethnicity, and free lunch eligibility. But the 14 closing schools have a much higher percentage of Special Education students and a lower percentage of English Language Learners.

TABLE 2  
Student Demographics in Closed High Schools and Schools Targeted for Closure (%)<sup>31</sup>

	14 high schools slated for closure (2009)	21 closed high schools (2000-09)	NYC high schools (2009)
Black	45	48	32
Latino	46	47	39
White	3	1	13
Asian	5	4	16
Free lunch eligible	70	74	52
English language learners	15	21	11
Special education	18	8	12

Sources: Board of Education, City of New York, 2000-06 Annual School Report Cards. NYSED, Information and Reporting Services, New York State School Report Cards for the 2007-09 school years. New York City DOE, CEP School Demographics and Accountability Snapshots.

Some of the 14 schools newly targeted for closure have even higher percentages of high-needs students:<sup>32</sup>

- At Paul Robeson High School, 16% of entering students are overage for their grade, compared to 4% for the city.
- At John F. Kennedy High School, 22% of students are English Language Learners, compared to 11% citywide.
- At Performance Consortium High School, 20% of students are in special education, compared to 12% citywide
- At New Day High School, 86% of students are eligible for free lunch, compared to 52% citywide.

The four-year graduation rate in these schools is 43%, compared to 59% for high schools citywide, a 16-percentage point gap. However, their six-year graduation rate, 59% compared to 66% for the city high school system, significantly narrows that gap. (Four of the schools newly targeted for closure have six-year graduation rates that equal or surpass the citywide average).<sup>33</sup> This more favorable six-year graduation rate suggests that, given the high needs and academic unpreparedness of their student populations, this group of 14 schools needs more time to prepare students for graduation, and could ultimately prove more successful with comprehensive, coordinated improvement efforts.<sup>34</sup>

Since the 14 high schools newly targeted for closure have student demographics roughly similar to the 21 closed high schools (except for their higher rate of Special Education students), phasing out those 14 high schools may well replicate the scale of student loss seen in the 21 closed schools, unless there is a change in DOE policy.

## On the 24 Persistently Lowest-Achieving high schools

*This school lacks a lot of resources. We don't have a gym, a library, an auditorium. Stuff like that doesn't attract students or make for a good learning environment. We had a creative writing class and there would be more than 30 students—the whole senior class in one classroom, sitting on desks, leaning against the radiators -- there was no space to sit, literally. I am a senior now and I can't keep my basketball jersey because we can't afford it because we're that broke.*

- Students attending a PLA school

The recent availability of significant federal funding for low-performing schools provides the DOE with a new opportunity to improve struggling schools without the trauma of school closings. In the past two years, the New York State Education Department (SED) has put 55 schools on the list of Persistently Lowest-Achieving schools (PLA), making them eligible for up to \$2 million of federal funds every year for three years to implement one of four federal restructuring options – restart, closure, transformation, or turnaround.<sup>35</sup> Currently, there are 43 NYC schools on the PLA list, 32 of which are high schools, as well as 11 schools currently implementing the turnaround option. Eight of these 32 schools are slated to be closed, leaving the DOE to choose a fate for 24 remaining high schools before SED's April 30<sup>th</sup> deadline.

To project the impact on students if the DOE deploys the closure option in some of these current PLA schools, we analyze the demographics, level of academic preparedness and outcomes of the students in the 24 remaining PLA high schools. First, we compare the demographics in the 24 PLA high schools to high schools citywide in 2009.

TABLE 3  
Student Demographics in 24 PLA Schools (2009)<sup>36</sup>

	PLA schools (%)	NYC high schools (%)
Black	33	32
Latino	47	39
White	7	13
Asian	13	16
Special education	15	12
English language learners	16	11
Free lunch eligible	67	52
Overage students in entering class	8	4
Average 8th grade proficiency for entering class	2.73	2.94

Sources: Ethnicity -- NYSED, Information and Reporting Services, New York State School Report Cards for the 2009 school year. Special education, ELL, Free lunch, Overage -- NYC DOE, CEP School Demographics and Accountability Snapshot 2009. 8th grade proficiency - NYC DOE, detailed Progress Reports.

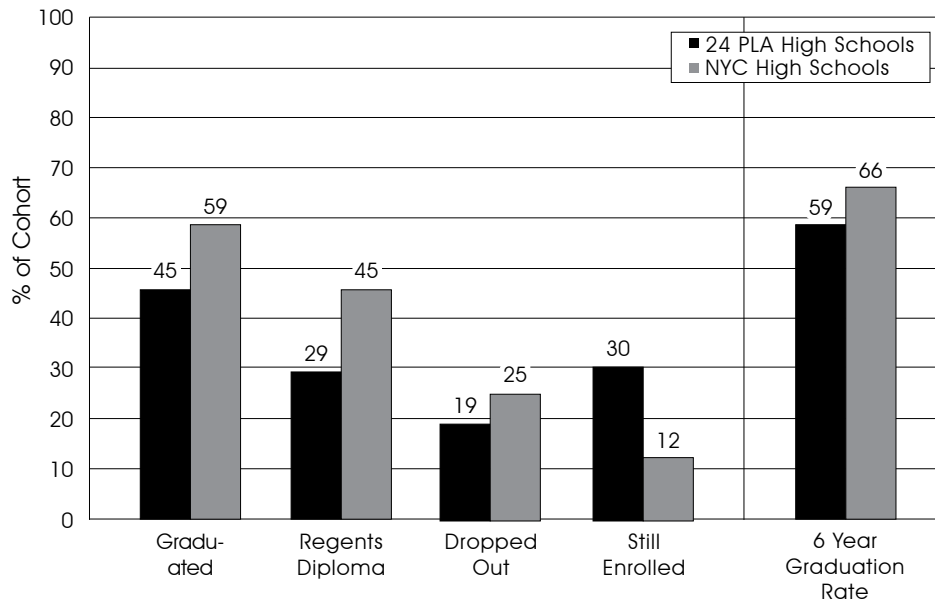
While PLA high schools and city high schools overall serve similar proportions of Black students (33% and 32% respectively), PLA schools have a higher proportion of Latino students (47% compared to 39%), more ELLs (16% compared to 13%), and lower proportions of White and Asian students. PLA high schools also serve a higher percentage of students who are eligible for free lunch compared to the city (67% to 58%).

PLA high schools have twice as many overage students in their entering classes, compared to NYC high schools – 8% to 4% respectively. This discrepancy remains even when the four transfer schools in the group, which are designed to serve overage students (7% of PLA schools vs. 4% citywide), are excluded. PLA high schools also serve a higher proportion of students receiving special education services compared to city high schools – 15% to 12% respectively. The entering class of students in PLA high schools is also less academically prepared, in terms of average eighth grade proficiency levels, than NYC high school students as a whole. The demographics in some PLA high schools show more extreme disparities:

- At Lehman High School, the number of homeless students increased from 1% (22 students) in 2006 to 7% (288 students) in 2008
- At Fordham Leadership Academy, the number of homeless students increased from 1% (6 students) in 2006 to 15% (78 students) in 2008
- At Washington Irving High School, 26% of students are English Language Learners, compared to 11% citywide
- At Bushwick Community High School, 67% of entering 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders are overage for their grade, compared to 4% citywide
- At Samuel Gompers High School, 23% of students are in special education, compared to 12% citywide
- At Richmond Hill High School, 87% of students are eligible for free lunch, compared to 52% citywide

In terms of outcomes, the rates for four-year graduation are significantly lower across the PLA high schools than in high schools citywide – 45% compared to 59% citywide.<sup>37</sup> While a lower proportion of PLA students drop out – 19% versus 25% for the city, a higher proportion of PLA students are still enrolled after four years – 30% compared to just 12% for city high schools. Only 29% of students in PLA schools graduate with a Regents Diploma, compared to 45% citywide. However, the PLA schools’ six-year graduation rate significantly narrows the gap with the citywide average – 59% compared to 66% citywide.

FIGURE 7  
Student Outcomes in 24 PLA High Schools, 2009



Sources: 4-year rates -- NYC DOE, Graduation and Dropout Reports, Cohorts of 2001 through 2005 (Classes of 2005 through 2009) Graduation Outcomes (NYS graduation rate calculation method). 6 year rate for schools -- NYSED, Information and Reporting Services, Public School Total Cohort Graduation Rate and Enrollment Outcome Summary - 2008-09 School Year All Students. 6 year rate for city -- NYSED, Information and Reporting Services, Commissioners Data Presentation, 2005 Cohort Graduation Rates Summary - PowerPoint.

These data demonstrate that the PLA schools serve more disadvantaged and academically under-prepared students than the school system as a whole, and produce, for the most part, lower academic outcomes. Yet, similar to the 14 schools slated for closing, the PLA schools show much better graduation outcomes in six years than four years, which suggests that, with a longer time-span

to meet their students’ needs, these schools perhaps can be successful. This buttresses the argument for intervening to improve the PLA high schools rather than allowing them to close and sacrificing the students within them.

Moreover, demographic and monitoring evidence suggests that the struggles faced by the 24 PLA schools may be, at least in part, because they have not received the systemic supports they need to improve. First, many of the 24 PLA schools are overcrowded, especially when their higher need student populations are considered. Half of the PLA high schools operated at more than 100% organizational capacity in 2009.

Second, assessment reviews of 17 of the PLA high schools, carried out by the New York State Education Department’s (NYSED) Joint Intervention Team (JIT), found that at least 14 of them were not provided

the assistance and support from the DOE necessary to respond to their improvement needs. The JIT review teams – comprised of a representative from NYSED, a representative from the DOE, an outside educational expert such as a retired principal or superintendent, and specialists in areas in which low-performing schools are traditionally challenged - cited three consistent problems across many of these schools:

1. A lack of concerted, comprehensive efforts by the DOE and each school’s respective network to prioritize the school and take action to raise student outcomes,
2. A lack of support, from the DOE and each school’s respective network, targeted to the areas in which each school needed most help, and
3. A lack of support from the DOE and each school’s respective network for monitoring and implementation of each school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan.

The following excerpts from the JIT reports indicate the nature of the problems the review teams found:<sup>38</sup>

- There is no evidence that the district/Network has supported school improvement efforts (John Dewey High School).
- The Network Team has not adequately assessed school needs and, therefore, has not provided critical support (Maxwell High School).
- School leadership has received minimal guidance and support from the Network (Monroe Academy).
- The team found no evidence of a concentrated and coordinated effort by the district/Network to support the improvement of student performance in ELA, mathematics or graduation rates (Metropolitan Corporate Academy).
- The Network has not provided support in the areas the school has identified as priorities, i.e., writing and differentiated instruction (John Adams HS).

Specifically, the JIT review for Norman Thomas High School (NTHS) notes:

*Development of a strong, working relationship with the District seems to be imperative for the success of NTHS. Services to the school that would provide a clear sense of direction and prioritization of student needs would be key in moving toward student success....A school facing the challenges that NTHS faces cannot “go it alone” but must turn to the District for critical support and nurturing while on its road to improvement.*

Across the PLA schools, the JIT review teams recommended much stronger support from the DOE and each schools’ respective networks, to improve student outcomes.

NYSED teams made similar recommendations in their reviews of the 11 PLA schools currently implementing the transformation model.<sup>39</sup> In particular, NYSED found that the DOE had not met their commitment to provide expert staff to guide and support the school transformation plans, and that, for example:

- Areas of the model that are not being implemented are in relation to the services the district is to provide to the school (Chelsea Career and Tech HS)

- The implementation of the improvement plan is sporadic at best, with positions left unfilled, and funds drawn back to the district level...with no explanation to the school. Timelines have been ignored (Brooklyn Global Studies)
- The district has not incorporated all of the recommendations its own review team put forth. Most notably, two turnaround teachers, a school improvement manager, and a district-wide response to intervention (RTI) model have not been provided to the school (Franklin D. Roosevelt HS)
- School leaders at Long Island City HS were not aware that a school improvement manager (SIM) would be hired to guide and inform the school during its transformation period (Long Island City HS)

The SED teams clearly document the necessity of coordinated, comprehensive central supports to improve struggling schools, a need well-documented by research.<sup>40</sup> These reviews suggest that such supports would go a long way towards generating significant improvements in student outcomes.

## ALTERNATIVES TO THE DOE'S SCHOOL CLOSING POLICY

*Have consideration! When they announce [the school closing] to students you have only a year before it actually happens so you just have a little time to come up with a plan. Tell the students, and maybe the students can come up with other ideas, some sort of panel so students can get their ideas across and represent the other students. If you are the Chancellor and her staff coming up with what to do with the school and you don't have any students, what does that look like? Students know schools better than anyone else. Incorporate them!*

- Student attending a closing school

To improve the prospects of low-income students of color entering high school academically under-prepared, the Urban Youth Collaborative proposes that the DOE suspend its high school closing policy and instead invest in improving those schools, by implementing the following interventions for the 14 high schools slated for phase-out as well as the 24 PLA high schools.

### **1. Invest in struggling schools instead of closing them**

- Create a central High School Improvement Zone to that brings together struggling and closing schools to help them assess and meet the needs of students, and gives them the strong supports they need
- Create a set of interventions that kick in when a school is at risk of closure, including strong supports for the school leader, hands-on assistance with implementing recommendations of state review teams, and access to expertise in areas of weakness
- Place teams of expert principals and teachers in the highest needs schools
- Use six-year graduation rates as the evaluation standard for schools with large numbers of students entering below grade level
- Take measures to draw talented, experienced and committed educators to these schools including alternative assessment systems for principals and network leaders and create strong supports for individuals in taking on these challenges

- Ensure that all schools have the resources and capacity to meet the needs of ELLs, students with special needs, and overage students that are assigned to them
- Create a fair and transparent method for rating Transfer Schools as part of the PLA process, since these are not traditional high schools and should not be judged by the same criteria

## **2. Build meaningful partnerships with students and community**

- Create stakeholder committees at struggling and phasing out schools that include parents, students, teachers, administrators and community organizations in assessing the school's strengths and weaknesses, identifying and creating plans for improvement, and hiring staff
- Create a central stakeholder committee to guide and monitor implementation of the High School Improvement Zone citywide

## **3. Provide an engaging and rigorous college preparatory curriculum**

- Emphasize and integrate literacy and math skill development across courses in 9<sup>th</sup> grade
- Offer a wide range of subjects that engage students in topics that are relevant to their lives, histories, cultural backgrounds and aspirations (e.g., music, art, social science, sports, instead of just those assessed by high-stakes tests)
- Provide access to hands-on, high-level and college credit-bearing courses
- Support teachers through ongoing professional development and mentoring
- Create advisories and summer academies for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders

## **4. Support students in accessing college**

- Implement early college preparation programs such as college orientation courses, summer transition programs and Student Success Centers that train youth leaders to counsel their peers about college access
- Hire at least one college counselor per every 100 students in struggling schools
- Create an early warning system that immediately identifies students who are struggling and off-track for graduation or college, and implement aggressive interventions to help

## **5. Ensure a safe and respectful school climate**

- Create supportive school environments by utilizing non-punitive approaches to safety that get at the root of problems, such as Restorative Justice or Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

A comprehensive, coordinated initiative to provide these supports to struggling schools could usher in a new era in the NYC public school system, an era in which struggling schools are given the best possible chance to succeed, not set up to fail; no student is abandoned in the name of education innovation; and students, parents, teachers, community members and the DOE work in genuine collaboration to guarantee a college and career-ready education for every student.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Quint, J.C., Smith, J.K., Unterman, R. and Moedano, A.E. 2010. *New York City's Changing High School Landscape: High Schools and Their Characteristics, 2002-2008*. New York: MDRC; Kemple, J. J. 2010. *Children First and Student Outcomes: 2003-2010*. New York: Research Alliance for New York City Schools, New York University.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Hemphill, C. and Nauer, K. 2009. *The New Marketplace: How Small-School Reforms and School Choice Have Reshaped New York City's High Schools*. New York: Center for New York City Affairs, Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy; Jennings, J.L. and Pallas, A.M. 2010. *Do New York City's Small Schools Enroll Students with Different Characteristics from Other NYC Schools?* New York: Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, New York City Independent Budget Office. 2011. *Demographics, Performance, Resources: Schools Proposed for Closing Compared with Other City Schools*. New York: IBO; Bennett, J. 2011. *Third Turn of the Screw: The DOE and Closing Schools*. New York: United Federation of Teachers, UFT Blog, <http://www.uft.org/node/28350>.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Hemphill, C. and Nauer, K. 2010. *Managing by the Numbers: Empowerment and Accountability in New York City's Schools*. New York: The Center for New York City Affairs, Milano The New School for Management and Urban Policy.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, NYC Coalition for Educational Justice. 2009. *Looming Crisis or Historic Opportunity? Meeting the Challenge of the Regents Graduation Standards*. New York: NYCCEJ.

<sup>6</sup> The DOE has also moved to close over 60 elementary and middle schools under Mayor Bloomberg.

<sup>7</sup> 66,318 students is the sum of student enrollment in the 21 closed high schools (N= 37,439) and enrollment in the 12 high schools closed/closing post-2009 (N= 17,431) during the years their closures were announced, and enrollment in the 14 schools announced for closure in 2009 (N= 11,448). There are tens of thousands of additional students who experienced school phase-out in their elementary and middle schools. Sources: Board of Education, City of New York, 2000-06 Annual School Report Cards; NYSED, Information and Reporting Services, New York State School Report Cards for the 2007-09 school years.

<sup>8</sup> Walz, M. 2011. "Chief DOE deputy to parents and teachers: Check our work," GothamSchools (March 15).

<sup>9</sup> Although 22 high schools completed the closure process by June 2009, we exclude one night high school due to lack of data. We also exclude 12 high schools that closed in June 2010 or are scheduled to close in June 2011 or 2012 because final year outcome data for those schools is not yet available.

<sup>10</sup> When possible, we average variables across "3 years prior to closing" to "year of closure" for each of the 21 high schools. Because the 21 high schools were closed across a ten year time period (2000 to 2009), we compare these closed school averages to an equivalent 10-year city high school average. When specific demographic school data are limited, we use only "3 years prior to closing" for each school, which spans a seven-year time period (2000-2006), and compare these outcomes with a city average over the same time period.

<sup>11</sup> Averages are weighted by student enrollment. These figures represent four-year averages across 2000-2009; from three years prior to closure to year of closure. Due to missing or unavailable data across all four time points: one closed school was not included in the ethnicity aggregate, one closed school was not included in the ELL aggregate, six were not included in the free lunch average, and eleven closed schools were not included in the special education aggregate. Special Education percentages were not reported in the School Report Cards post-2006 (when the reports moved from DOE to NYSED), so any high schools that closed since 2006 were not included in this aggregate – resulting in the under-reporting of students receiving special education services.

<sup>12</sup> Eligibility for free lunch during the 2008-2009 school year was an annual income of \$27,650 for a family of four. See, United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2008, April). *Federal Register*. Retrieved April 7, 2011, from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/notices/iegs/IEGs08-09.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Because these two variables were not reported in the School Reports cards post-2006, we examine them by averaging across the 2000-2006 years, which are equivalent to the "3 years prior to closure" for the closed schools.

<sup>14</sup> The Parthenon Group, 2005. "NYC Secondary Reform Selected Analysis," Presentation to New York City Department of Education.

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<sup>15</sup> Student comments come from two focus groups with students from schools that are closing and schools that have been recently identified by the New York State Education Department as Persistently Lowest-Achieving.

<sup>16</sup> To examine longitudinal trends in closed schools, outcome analyses for these schools are based on the New York City traditional four-year graduation calculation. The cohort consists of all students who first entered ninth grade in a given school year, excluding students in self-contained classrooms and District 75 students. Graduates are defined as those students earning either a Local or Regents diploma, a special education (IEP) diploma, or a GED. August graduates are included. The New York State Education Department's calculation (employed since 2005 but not used in the analyses for the 21 closed schools in order to maintain a consistent longitudinal scale), includes Local and Regents Diplomas and all disabled students. It does not include GEDs and Special Education diplomas.

<sup>17</sup> Four high Schools could not be included due to the fact that the data is only available for the Class of 2000 onwards.

<sup>18</sup> Our denominator for discharge rates is the total cohort plus the number of discharges. Discharges are taken out of the official DOE reported cohorts on which graduation, still enrolled, and dropout rates are based.

<sup>19</sup> These figures represent averages over four years of phase out. Discharges are defined by the DOE as students who left the school system primarily to enroll in another educational program or setting. Students who aged out of the school system, i.e., reached the age of 21, and students who died prior to completing high school, are also counted in this category.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Dee, T.S., Jacob, B.A. and McCrary, J. 2011. "Manipulation in the Grading of New York's Regents Examinations," *The Wall Street Journal* (In Progress Draft, February 1). Also see Bloomfield, D. 2009. "Credit Recovery – Joel Klein's Race to the Bottom," *GothamSchools*, (June 10); Hernandez, J.C. 2009. "Makeup Work Allows Students to Slide by, Critics Say," *The New York Times* (July 12); Otterman, S. 2011. "City to Toughen Auditing of School Test Scores," *The New York Times* (February 18).

<sup>21</sup> See footnote 18 for note on discharges and cohort.

<sup>22</sup> See footnotes 20.

<sup>23</sup> See discussion that follows on misuse of discharge classifications.

<sup>24</sup> Franklin K. Lane High School is one of the twelve high schools currently phasing out, and is scheduled to close in June 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Jennings, J.L. and Haimson, L. 2009. *High School Discharges Revisited: Trends in New York City's Discharge Rate, 2000-2007*. New York: Report released by the Public Advocate of the City of New York.

<sup>26</sup> Office of the New York State Comptroller. 2011. *New York City Department of Education: Accuracy of Reported Discharge Data*. New York: OSC.

<sup>27</sup> Advocates for Children of New York. 2009. *Empty Promises: A Case Study of Restructuring and the Exclusion of English Language Learners in Two Brooklyn High Schools*. New York: Advocates for Children of New York and Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund.

<sup>28</sup> These numbers greatly underestimate the casualties of the school closure process, because they do not include students in the 12 high schools that completed phase-out in June 2010 or will complete phase-out in June 2011 or 2012, for which there is no final student outcome data.

<sup>29</sup> A small percentage (approximately 1%), which we cannot calculate because of data limitations, got GEDs

<sup>30</sup> Percent Graduated by diploma type was only reported for the Class of 2005 onwards -- limiting the number of closed schools that could be examined. Source: NYC DOE, *Graduation and Dropout Reports*, NYC Traditional Graduation Rate Archive. 4-Year Longitudinal Reports and Event Dropout Rates for Classes 2005 to 2009.

<sup>31</sup> NYC high school averages (except for ethnicity) are based on those reported in the recent 2011 IBO report entitled, *Demographics, Performance, Resources: Schools Proposed for Closing Compared with Other City Schools*. Averages for the 14 schools slated for closure (except for ethnicity) are based on DOE CEP Reports. Data for 21 closed schools are based on School Report Cards

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Since Special Education percentages were not reported in the School Report Cards post-2006, any high schools that closed since then were not included in the closed school aggregate – resulting in the under-reporting of special education. All averages weighted by student enrollment.

<sup>32</sup> 2009 DOE CEP School Demographics and Accountability Snapshot Reports

<sup>33</sup> The six-year graduation average for city high schools in 2009 was 66%. Metropolitan Corporate Academy had the same rate as the city, while three schools slated for closure had higher rates -- Paul Robeson (72%), The Academy of Environmental Science Secondary School (73%), and Global Enterprise High School (81%).

<sup>34</sup> Graduation outcomes for the 21 Closed schools are based on the DOE traditional calculation in order to maintain one longitudinal consistent source, while outcomes for PLA and schools slated to closed are based on the currently widely used NYS calculations.

<sup>35</sup> The four options in brief are: restart (convert to charter or EMO), closure (students transfer to other, higher performing schools), turnaround (replace principal and at least half the teachers, evaluate teachers based partially on student scores, increase learning time and implement plan to transform school), or transformation (remove principal but not staff).

<sup>36</sup> City high school averages (except for ethnicity) are taken from the recent 2011 IBO report entitled, Demographics, Performance, Resources: Schools Proposed for Closing Compared with Other City Schools" All averages weighted by student enrollment. The 4 transfer high schools did not have any data on 8th grade proficiency in the Progress Reports. For 8th Grade Proficiency -- 1.00 is the lowest possible score, 2.00 is the lowest possible level 2 score, 3.00 is the lowest possible level 3 score, 4.00 is the lowest possible level 4 score, and 4.50 is the highest possible score.

<sup>37</sup> For the PLA schools we rely on the New York State graduation rate calculation method, used since 2005, not including summer graduates.

<sup>38</sup> New York State Education Department. (2011, April). Joint Intervention Team Reports. Retrieved April 1, 2011, from [http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/School\\_Improvement/JIT.html](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/accountability/School_Improvement/JIT.html)

<sup>39</sup> New York State Education Department. (2011 March). Persistently Lowest-Achieving Reports. Retrieved April 1, 2011, from <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/pla/PLAReports.html>

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Bryk, A.S., Sebring, P.B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S. and Easton, J.Q. 2009. Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; Shea, J. and Liu, M. 2010. School Improvement Grants: Take 2, Lessons Learned from Round 1. Boston: Mass Insight Education, School Turnaround Group.