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Dr. Edwin M. Quezada
Superintendent of Schools

September 3, 2019

Dear Yonkers Public Schools Parents/Guardians and Employees:

Equity and access for all children begins with the best possible education. This requires a strong base with many opportunities for young people to achieve their highest potential today and in the future. To succeed, the community and educational system must believe in the uniqueness of every child and ensure each has a strong foundation. This commitment exists in the City of Yonkers. Four years ago, the Yonkers Board of Education adopted a mission, Sustainable Solutions for Student Success. Today, we are well underway to achieving this undertaking.

Take pride in the school district's accomplishments. Every improvement required steadfast consistent focus on clear expectations for students, parents/guardians and educators, as well as monitoring and follow up. Below are some of our incredible accomplishments.

- Increased graduation rate by more than 10 percentage points, achieving three years of over 85% graduation rate, higher than all New York State Big 5 cities.
- Increased student proficiency in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics on the New York State assessments in grades three through eight by more than five percentage points on both, with improvements in every subgroup. Yonkers gains significantly exceeded New York statewide and Big 5 large cities gains.
- Reduced the dropout rate by 6 percentage points from 2014 at 9% to 2018 at 3%.
- Removed seven of eight schools from State Education Department Receivership status.
- Reinstated intramural sports for grades seven and eight.
- Reinstated the All-City Concerts and Art Presentations.
- Diversified the Central Office Administrative team.
- Increased the in-district educational programs for autistic students.
- Implemented a Yonkers History curriculum that culminates with a districtwide Yonkers History Program open to the community.
- Implemented successfully Computer Based Testing (CBT) districtwide for State assessments in grades three through eight for English language arts and mathematics. Yonkers is the only large city in the state to undertake the challenge.
- Received national and state recognition for our model Yonkers My Brother's Keeper movement to improve the life outcomes for young men of color.

Maintaining a strong foundation requires consistent sustainable resources. Considerable progress has been realized. The Inter-Municipal Agreement (IMA) between the City of Yonkers and Board of Education is a true collaboration of shared services that provides efficacies and cost savings. This year Mayor Mike Spano and the City Council members increased the Board of Education Maintenance of Effort by an unprecedented \$12 million in recurring revenue.

Yonkers' State delegation of Senate Majority Leaders Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Shelley Mayer and Assembly Members Gary Pretlow and Dr. Nader Sayegh were able to increase recurring and bullet aid to education by \$27 million this year. This level of investment must be sustained.

The goal has and will continue to be to provide more services and support for our students. The District has assumed a student-centered approach focused on these tenets: addressing academic needs, social-emotional learning, and following culturally responsive teaching. We cannot arrive at a place where equity and access is available to all unless we implement these tenets well.

Advocacy goes beyond additional revenue for operating expenses; it is also identifying resources for safe efficient school facilities to support today's educational needs. Over the summer, \$28 million in major capital construction projects were undertaken at nine schools addressing health and safety repairs and five schools received security upgrades.

Sustainable solutions occur through collaborative efforts among parents, teachers, administrators and civil service employees. Only when the data reveal that all students have equity and access to achieve their potential, can we say we did enough. Until that is achieved, our work for 2019-2020 will be to meaningfully improve:

- All staff members knowledge and skills regarding how to approach their work with high expectation for all students,
- Grades three through eight English language arts and mathematics assessment results,
- School climate,
- Parental and student engagement,
- Student participation in high school Advanced Placement and College Link courses, and
- Graduation rate for Multi-Lingual Learners-English Language Learners as well as Students with Disabilities.

Over the summer, we launched two new integrated secure web-based systems delivering real-time student information and enhanced communications. The student information system, PowerSchool, and the mass notification system, Blackboard, significantly expand student data management and communications accessibility for administrators, teachers, students and parents/guardians.

PowerSchool consolidates student data for attendance, grades, assignments, schedules, and student management. The Parent Portal, former Home Access Center, will allow parents/guardians to stay connected with current information about their children's academic performance.

Blackboard allows school and district administrators to send day-to-day information and emergency messages to the entire school district community. Communications will have the capability to be sent via telephone, text and email as well as posted on school and district social media and websites.

Later this fall, both of these systems will be available to parents/guardians online and in mobile apps.

On a final note, our students are this community's most precious human capital. Across the school district, educators and staff respect and value their diversity and are committed to high levels of achievement for every child. When we work with a unified commitment almost anything can be possible for our students. As educators and parents/guardians, we must accept and fulfill our responsibility for our students' future, which begins with a solid educational foundation.

The mission remains steadfast for Board of Education President Rev. Steve Lopez, Vice President Judith Ramos Meier, the Trustees and myself. We look forward to a successful and productive 2019-2020 school year with countless student and staff achievements and successes to celebrate.

Sincerely,



Dr. Edwin M. Quezada

C: President Rev. Lopez, Vice President Ramos Meier and Board of Education Trustees