

June 15, 2017

Dear Council Member Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, Council Member Daniel Dromm, and members of the City Council School Planning & Siting Working Group,

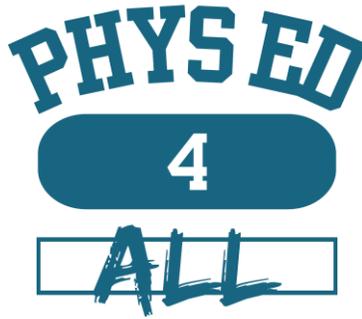
The Phys Ed 4 All Coalition appreciates the opportunity to comment on the new Council School Planning and Siting working group to address issues of school planning, siting and overcrowding. The Phys Ed 4 All Coalition is comprised of community-based organizations, advocates, parents, educators, and health professionals dedicated to improving the quality and quantity of physical education in New York City schools.

The Phys Ed 4 All Coalition strongly requests that any school planning address the need for adequate indoor and outdoor space for effective physical education (PE) for all students, regardless of where they go to school, and which accommodates students of all abilities. When students receive effective PE they do better physically, mentally, and emotionally, which is good for kids and good for schools). PE improves kids' judgment, self-confidence, and self-esteem and reduces stress and anxiety. Physical inactivity contributes to heart disease and diabetes, chronic diseases that have greater impact on communities of color and low-income communities.<sup>i</sup>

Yet too many schools currently are overcrowded, have inadequate and insufficient space to provide the full state-mandated PE curriculum. Many schools are co-located and share already limited space with other public schools and charter schools, or have "gymnatoriums" that are used for other school activities, all of which further limits time for PE, space for students and instructors to move safely without risk of injury, and storage space for equipment.

Numerous reports and studies have documented that currently, NYC's public schools lack appropriate and adequate space for PE. According to a 2013 analysis of NYC Independent Budget Office (IBO) data by the Women's City Club of New York (WCC), there are significant disparities in public school gymnasium space available for PE throughout the city. NYC public schools with the most floor space have 3-5 times more space than those whose PE facilities are scarce or non-existent. When schools shared space, almost 25% of them had a lower proportion of the available space than the size of their student body called for.<sup>ii</sup>

In addition, the Office of NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer found that 28% of schools lack designated space for physical fitness.<sup>iii</sup> According to a 2016 report of the District 9 elementary schools in the South Bronx by the Bronx Health Reach, 25% of the schools surveyed lacked gymnasium space. In addition, many of the surveyed schools with gymnasiums often struggled with interruption of PE classes, as groups of students passed directly through the gym. A number of schools have limited capacity for full physical education classes, such as having



pillars in the middle of the gymnasium which obstructs the full range of activity and movement in the space.<sup>iv</sup>

In many overcrowded schools, it is not uncommon for PE teachers to have gym class sizes that exceed those recommended by the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE). SHAPE's recommendation for maximum ratios of PE teacher to students for elementary school is 1:25, middle school is 1:30, high school is 1:35. For some PE teachers in New York City, a class size of 50+ students is not unusual, in addition to sharing limited teaching space with multiple classes. As class size increases above recommended levels, safe and effective instruction may become compromised (NYC Zone, NYS AHPERD).

The Phys Ed 4 All Coalition calls on the city to continue its investment in adequate facilities that allow students to engage in the state-mandated amount of and intensity of physical education. We look forward to continuing to lend our collective expertise and experience to the City Council School Planning and Siting working group as you work to ensure our schools are meeting the needs of our students.

Sincerely,

The Phys Ed 4 All Coalition  
[www.physed4all.org](http://www.physed4all.org)

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<sup>i</sup> Learning for Life: Physical Education in Public Schools," American Heart Association, 2014, available at <http://physed4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Fact-Sheet-Physical-Education-in-Schools.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> The Persistent Problem of Physical Education in the NYC Public Schools, October 29, 2015, available at [https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/wccny/pages/32/attachments/original/1449178607/PETF\\_POSITON\\_PAPER\\_3\\_IBO\\_1\\_7\\_12\\_FINAL\\_DRAFT.pdf?1449178607](https://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/wccny/pages/32/attachments/original/1449178607/PETF_POSITON_PAPER_3_IBO_1_7_12_FINAL_DRAFT.pdf?1449178607).

<sup>iii</sup> Dropping the Ball: Disparities in physical education in New York City schools, May 2015, available at [https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Phys\\_Ed.pdf](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Phys_Ed.pdf).

<sup>iv</sup> "Bronx Health REACH District 9 Physical Activity & Education Assessment," September 1, 2016, available at <http://bronxhealthreach.blogspot.com/2016/09/bronx-health-reach-district-9-physical.html>.