



# ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

*Helping children succeed in school*

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### Statement on NYC Schools Identified for Closure

*December 12, 2011. The following is a statement by Advocates for Children of New York, Inc. in response to the New York City Department of Education's announcement of 25 schools it has identified for closure.*

Since 2002, we have seen the Bloomberg administration close more than 100 schools. Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott has now announced his plans to close or truncate 25 more, including 10 that were opened during the Bloomberg years. As he moves to implement this latest round of closures, we urge the Chancellor to learn from the lessons of prior years. In particular, previous school closures have taught us three things:

1. *Closing a school has real costs for the students left behind.*

Recent reports from the Urban Youth Collaborative (<http://www.urbanyouthcollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/No-Closer-to-College-Report.pdf>) and Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project (<http://www2.flanbwayan.org/news/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/tcr1pdf1.pdf>) shed a light on what closure is like from the perspective of students who have nowhere else to go. These and other costs of closure must be weighed against the benefits in school closing decisions. In addition, the Department of Education must take affirmative steps to safeguard the educational rights and options of students remaining in schools it identifies for closure.

2. *Closing a school does not necessarily mean that students who would have attended will now receive a better education elsewhere.*

Replacement schools are not always better schools – and often do not take the same students. The Department of Education (DOE) now wants to close or truncate 10 schools that it created to replace schools that it previously closed. Moreover, it is now well-documented that many of the schools replacing those that were closed have not admitted comparable percentages of students with high needs, such as students with disabilities or students who are homeless. As a result, students with high needs who would have attended the closing schools have been assigned in disproportionate numbers to schools that then became at risk of closure and were not necessarily better equipped to educate them well. We documented this problem in 2009 in a report called *Empty Promises: A*

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(<http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/Empty%20Promises%20Report%20%206-16-09.pdf>).

3. *School communities need more opportunity to participate in decisions about their fate.*

Schools create communities, where students, teachers, parents, and others are invested in their success. Public reaction to school closure announcements shows that school communities feel like victims of school reform, rather than participants with a stake in the changes being made. Instead of treating community participation requirements as legal hurdles that need to be managed, the Department should approach school communities as real partners in developing solutions to address the unmet needs of students they are created to serve.

The decision to close a school does not, in itself, improve educational opportunity for New York City's students. The critical factor is what happens to the students who are attending, or would otherwise attend, the school that is identified for closure. The Department of Education has an obligation to plan for the quality education of these students and ensure that their needs are met.

*For more than 40 years, Advocates for Children of New York has been protecting the educational rights of New York City's most vulnerable students. More information on the organization and its programs is available at [www.advocatesforchildren.org](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org).*

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