

June 18, 2021

Dear Families,

We made it!

Despite a pandemic that turned our lives upside down, we are at the finish line of this school year. I want to take this moment to honor and celebrate all that our families and students have accomplished during this difficult year and a half. We are ending this school year strong because of you. Because you and your children made education a priority.

There is a quote from my favorite author, Maya Angelou, which speaks to the strength and resilience of the human spirit. In an essay in her 2009 book *Letter to My Daughter*, Angelou wrote: “You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.”

This sentiment, of rising in the face of adversity, describes our amazing students and families, who persisted despite untold challenges. Together, you:

- Adapted to learning from home, and in some cases returning to buildings after months away.
- Stayed focused on schoolwork.
- Learned a new way of connecting with family members and friends.
- Made the most of every single day, whether studying remotely or coming to school with masks on.

You also raised your voices when you saw terrible acts of violence towards your neighbors and made it clear that you would not tolerate anti-Black violence, anti-Semitism, anti-Asian violence, Islamophobia, xenophobia, homophobia, or any acts of bias or discrimination that cause harm every day. You have stood in solidarity with your communities—because that’s what New Yorkers do.

In that same spirit of solidarity, I want to call your attention to an important date, June 19, which commemorates Juneteenth and the end of slavery in the United States. As an educator, I believe that it’s critical to teach our students about the ongoing legacy of slavery in both the context of Black history and American history at large. And now Juneteenth will enter the history books for another reason: this week, President Biden signed legislation making June 19 a federal holiday. This year, Juneteenth occurs as we continue to reckon with systemic racism, and the harm and hurt it causes our neighbors, fellow New Yorkers, and fellow Americans. I think about the ways the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on people of color. I think about our nation’s first true reckoning with the Tulsa Massacre, 100 years later. And I think about all the work we must do to create equity in all our schools.

If you want to learn more about Juneteenth and its significance to New Yorkers and Black Americans, please visit schools.nyc.gov/Juneteenth to watch our video and find resources for learning and thinking about this important day.

As your Chancellor, it’s my job to ensure that our one million students learn to think critically and have the skills to succeed in a world we adults cannot even imagine. Honestly, I am awed by you. You and your children taught us so much this year—from how to use your voice to create change to how to stay strong when times get tough. How to adapt to the things we cannot control, and how to follow Maya Angelou’s lead and not be reduced by them.

Although I have been in this role for less than four months, I am certain of one thing: Together, there is nothing we cannot achieve. If we made it through the last year and a half, we will be ready to rock in September. In advance of in-person learning for all students this fall, I encourage everyone ages 12 and older to get vaccinated for COVID-19! It's the best way to keep our communities and city safe. You can make an appointment for yourself and your child by visiting vaccinefinder.nyc.gov.

Being an educator for more than 20 years, I also cannot help but close with an assignment (don't worry, there won't be a test). I want you and your children to celebrate all that you have achieved this year. I hope you spend a lot of time together, hug often, have new experiences, find reasons to laugh. And recharge your batteries.

We made it this far together, and I cannot wait to see what we do this fall.

In partnership,



Meisha Porter
New York City Schools Chancellor

P.S. A quick reminder that all students in grades K–12 are eligible to participate in Summer Rising, our free, fun summer academic and enrichment program. To learn more and to sign up, please visit nyc.gov/summerrising.

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