

**NYC Department of Education
Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy
Fact Sheet**

Since Mayor Bloomberg took control of the New York City public school system in 2002, the Department of Education has taken unprecedented steps to serve New York's nearly 2 million parents.

Supporting Families in Their Neighborhoods

Parent Coordinators: In 2002, the Mayor and Chancellor created the position of "Parent Coordinator," so that there would be someone in every school who would be responsible for answering parents' questions. Parent Coordinators serve as liaisons between schools and families, and they are the first person that families contact when they have a question or concern about their children's school.

- In 2006-07, parent coordinators answered 1.4 million phone calls from parents and held 23,000 workshops.

District Family Advocates and Borough Directors: The Department of Education employs at least two District Family Advocates in every school district who receive regular training on issues critical to parents. In addition, every borough is staffed by a Borough Director that works specifically with high schools.

- District Family Advocates answer about 1,500 phone calls and serve several hundreds of parents in person at district offices each week.
- Since October, 2007, District Family Advocates have held a monthly District Family Day to bring parents together for a day of activities with their children.

Staff Trainings and Professional Development: To make sure that all DOE staff in the field is up to date on the department's most recent initiatives and policies, regular professional development sessions are held for District Family Advocates, Borough Directors and Parent Coordinators in every borough.

- Since August, 2007, the department has held 21 Citywide trainings for District Family Advocates and Borough Directors.
- District Family Advocates and Borough Directors hold monthly meetings with Parent Coordinators to keep them updated on important DOE information.
- Already in 2008 there have been five borough-wide trainings for Parent Coordinators and District Family Advocates about the Learning Environment Survey.

Support for Community Educational Councils (CECs): Through the Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy's dedicated CEC support team, the Department of Education assists Community and Citywide Education Councils by providing technical assistance and professional development trainings to CECs throughout the school year.

- Community superintendents attend the monthly meetings for all 32 Community Education Councils, as well as all Citywide Education Council Meetings for High Schools and Special Education

- CEC Workgroup meetings are held to focus on special education, facilities budgets, and parent outreach and training.

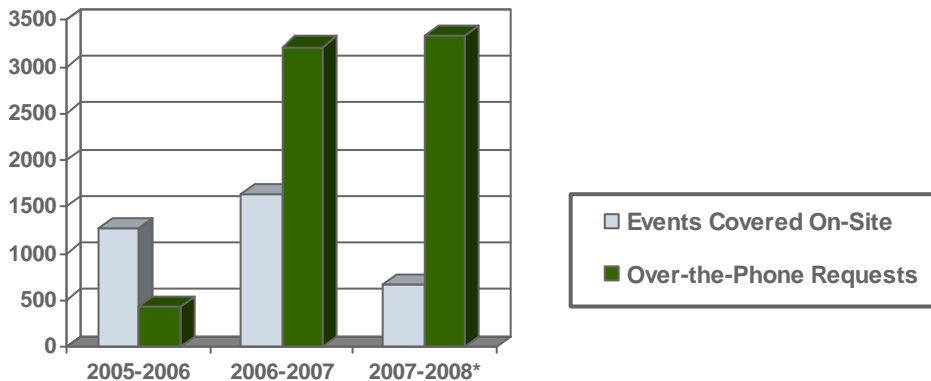
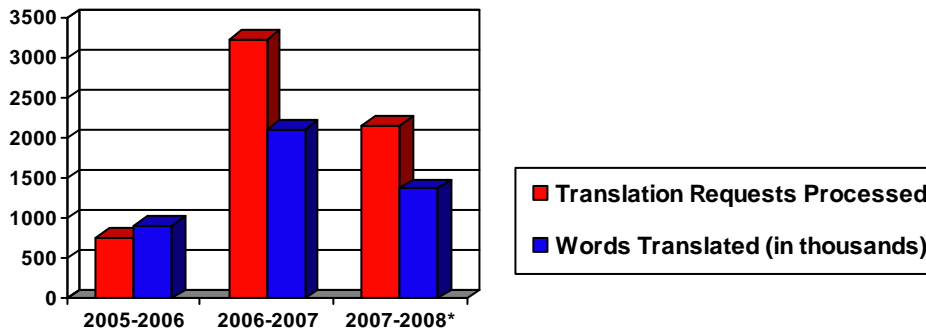
Answering Families’ Questions: The DOE has set up a framework for ensuring that all questions sent to the central office are answered in a timely fashion.

- The Chancellor’s Strategic Response Group answers about 200 letters and emails sent to Chancellor Klein every week.
- The Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy responds to approximately 2000 emails every month sent to the Chief Family Engagement Officer.

Serving New York City’s Non-English Speakers In Our Schools

Translation and Interpretation (T&I) Unit services: As a result of a Citywide awareness campaign, more and more schools are taking advantage of the department’s Translation and Interpretation Unit services.

- Since the creation of the T&I Unit, the number of translation requests has increased from 19 in 2004 to 3,237 in 2007.
- As of January 2008, T&I had already responded to 1,912 translation and interpretation requests since the beginning of the school year.



Native Language Forums: The Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy has launched a series of forums for immigrant families delivered in eight major native languages. The forums have ranged from presentations and discussions of the

accountability and progress reports to the more recent proposal for promotion for 8th grade. OFEA will continue to provide these forums throughout the school year

- Since October 2007, OFEA's Translation & Interpretations Unit has held 49 Native Language Forums in different neighborhoods around the City.
- More than 300 foreign-language speaking parents have taken advantage of these forums.

Public Events and Town Hall Meetings

“Ask Martine and Friends” Town Hall Meetings: Between June and November 2007, the Chief Family Engagement Officer, Martine Guerrier, held five major city-wide town hall meeting for parents to ask general questions about family engagement.

Approximately 650 parents attended these meetings.

Rise and Shine Breakfasts: Since January, 2008, the Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy has held a series casual breakfast meetings with different District Presidents Councils. The meetings are open to all PA/PTA members, and are forums to exchange ideas and discuss issues of concern within the district.

- Twenty-two Rise and Shine Breakfasts have been held since the beginning of the year.
- More than 804 parent leaders have attended these meetings.

Lobby Day: Every year, the Department of Education organizes a trip to Albany, where parents can voice their educational priorities to State legislators.

- Lobby Day 2008 was the most successful yet, with more than 500 parents, students and concerned community members joining DOE officials in Albany.

Other DOE public/parent engagement events: The Department of Education has organized public hearings to get community feedback about important DOE proposals and initiatives:

- Between February 2006 and December 2007, the Chief Accountability Officer, Jim Liebman, and his staff met with over 40 groups of educators, education experts, and school district officials, and directly reached over 20,000 parents in conversation about the Progress Report and associated accountability tools.
- Town hall meetings were organized in every borough to hear parent feedback and answer parents' questions about the new Gifted and Talented Admissions proposal, the proposal to standardize Pre-K and Kindergarten Enrollment and the proposed 8th Grade social-promotion policy.
- Since the start of the 2006-2007 school year, the Office of Public and Community Affairs has held over 750 meetings with Community-Based Organizations, civic groups and Community Education Councils to foster a partnership between the DOE and the greater New York City community.

Giving Parents Access to the Information They Need

Parents today have more information about schools and students than ever before: DOE has made publicly available the information parents need to make the right choices for their children. We are:

- **Tracking school progress.** With the annual Progress Reports, schools are graded based on student achievement, student progress, and the school's learning environment
- **Monitoring school quality.** Each year, we conduct three-day Quality Reviews of each school. These reviews help us assess how well each school is organized to help children succeed.
- **Asking parents for their feedback.** The annual Learning Environment Survey asks every member of a school's community—parents, teachers, and 6-12 grade students—for their opinions about their school. In 2007, one in 12 New Yorkers over the age of ten filled out the survey. Never before has a school district gone to such lengths to learn what its parents have to say. Parent feedback counts towards schools' Progress Report grades, and it also provides principals with valuable feedback about how to improve their schools.