

Strengthening the Foundation:

Recommendations to Empower Parent Organizations in NYC Public Schools



By
PTAlink

a Project of
New York
Appleseed

Introduction

PTAlink is a project of New York Appleseed. Our mission is to improve the quality of education for all children in New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) by empowering parent organizations to be accessible, knowledgeable, and effective. As a longstanding technical assistance website that consults directly with thousands of parent leaders as well as the coordinators and liaisons across NYCPS who support them, we have a unique perspective on the common questions and problems that arise for both PA/PTA members and those who assist them.

This policy brief is intended to support the Mamdani administration and Chancellor Kamar Samuels in their efforts to improve communication with and support for parent leaders. PTAlink believes parent leadership structures, PA/PTAs in particular, can play a significant role in advancing equity, inclusion, and integration across NYC public schools. And yet, significant barriers to participation, as well as disparities in the resources available to and cultivated by parent organizations, persist.¹ The following recommendations seek to address some of those obstacles and gaps.

Recommendations:



Invest in Family Leadership Coordinators (FLCs) and Parent Coordinators (PCs), including their professional development and communications tools, to improve stability, accountability, and collaboration:

1. Ensure each Community School District Superintendent has hired an FLC.

Despite the importance of the role, PTAlink often receives questions about the absence of an FLC or about long-term vacancies. Most notably, in November 2024, District 19 parents informed PTAlink that their district had no FLC. This position is still vacant per the NYCPS website.² As a result, parent leaders in East New York have fewer tools to run effective, empowered PA/PTAs than their counterparts elsewhere. According to the District Leadership page on the NYCPS website,³ 8 out of 45 districts do not have an active FLC.⁴ FLC vacancies can also impact adjacent roles such as the Family Support Coordinator.⁵

2. Improve onboarding processes and procedures for FLCs and PCs, including familiarizing them with all relevant support chains and providing them with cellphones.

Currently, job-specific onboarding processes vary across NYCPS, but are, at best, insufficient and, at worst, nonexistent for FLCs, and especially for PCs.⁶ **It is imperative that newly hired PCs and FLCs be connected to the support systems within NYCPS and their Superintendent's central offices.** Onboarding processes for both FLCs and PCs must include making immediate contact with the person serving in the other position, as FLCs and PCs often work in tandem and FLCs have the capacity to—and in certain districts frequently do—provide essential support to PCs.

Any onboarding process should also include the automatic distribution of work cellphones. PCs report that the process for requesting a phone is currently unclear. In addition to streamlining and clarifying the process for PCs to obtain work cellphones, the phones must have updated technology that allows PCs to access appropriate apps to complete necessary tasks.

3. Create and regularly maintain a centralized resource hub that houses all essential documents, forms, and guidance needed by FLCs and PCs.

Beyond onboarding improvements, **NYCPS should establish a centralized resource hub that includes a universal training handbook** developed in partnership with veteran FLCs and PCs. This handbook should include updated resources, frequently asked questions, and key forms to support day-to-day responsibilities supporting PA/PTAs. The handbook should also identify critical parent leadership bodies by including contact information for Presidents' Councils, Title I District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC), and Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council (CPAC), and explain their structure and functions. Several PCs have told PTALink they did not know these other parental guidance/governing bodies even existed.

Finally, NYCPS should audit and update existing resources. While many documents are found in the PA/PTA Resource Folder,⁷ FLCs interviewed for this report state that current information is scattered across multiple locations with broken or outdated links. A maintained, centralized source would reduce confusion and ensure staff have access to reliable information.

4. Increase baseline compensation and benefits for PCs to guarantee a living wage and reflect the full breadth of their responsibilities.

In a recent [ChalkbeatNY article](#) outlining responses from almost 20% of existing PCs across the city on improvements to their roles, increased pay and higher salaries were a main point.⁸ The same article reported that the starting salary for PCs is just over \$44,000. This is supported by NYCPS job listings.⁹

Additionally, PCs are 12-month employees, yet they do not receive the same paid holidays as other school-based staff.¹⁰ They are not granted paid time off during the summer. While they do enjoy the benefit of the full December break, they do not get the full February or spring breaks.¹¹

5. Increase funding and access to professional development¹² for PCs to reflect the breadth and complexity of the roles they play in meeting community needs.

The Parent Coordinator role evolves with each new policy and can expand beyond the published job description¹³ depending on the needs of the specific school. PCs [have criticized](#) the lack of financial and professional support their role receives.¹⁴ The PCs with whom PTAlink has recently spoken defined themselves as “jack of all trades,” tasked with anything from technological support to connecting parents to public services, assisting with application processes, school communication functions, performing the role of a Bus Aid during Summer Rising, and more.¹⁵

To fill information gaps, many PCs and FLCs have created informal communication channels that have proven invaluable. **NYCPS should formalize these successful stopgaps into structured mentorship teams** as an actionable and low-lift strategy that provides sustained professional development and peer support.



Expand access and support for programming and communications across parent leadership bodies to improve knowledge, accountability, and collaboration:

6. Provide centrally-run, in-person and virtual orientations for newly elected PA/PTA executive board members, School Leadership Team (SLT) members, and Title 1 Parent Advisory Council (PAC) members during the summer before school begins.

Staff and parent leaders confirmed that NYCPS has not held a citywide training for PA/PTA leaders in many years. In-person events provide the opportunity for parent leaders to connect with both formal and informal mentorship channels in ways that virtual events cannot. [Parent University](#) has the potential to be an effective and needed resource hub for parent leadership training videos, but currently there are no available online training videos specific to PA/PTAs.¹⁶ To increase capacity and the number of offerings listed on Parent University, NYCPS could partner with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) that provide parent support and collaborate on featured courses.

7. Ensure PA/PTA members are familiar with all relevant chains of support available to them both within NYCPS and externally.

PTAlink continues to receive feedback that many parent leaders do not understand the role of PCs or FLCs; some do not even know the positions exist. **Providing an easily accessible organizational chart** for PA/PTA, SLT, and Title 1 PAC members at the start of each school year would help parent leaders execute the work they are responsible for. The 2025 - 2027 CCEC Member Guide¹⁷ provides an organizational chart, but this document is intended for and distributed to the members of Community and Citywide Councils, not PA/PTA members. It also does not seem to be made available online. Additionally, NYCPS must increase outreach to PA/PTA, SLT, and Title 1 PAC members regarding other parent leadership bodies that offer support such as Presidents' Council, District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC), and Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council (CPAC). Many parents do not know these bodies exist.

8. Bolster parent engagement for PA/PTAs by investing in PA/PTA election support, including promotional materials and election training.

PA/PTA leaders report that schools have struggled to recruit parents to run for executive board seats since the pandemic. This anecdotal evidence is consistent with other reported measures of parent participation, such as attendance at parent-teacher conferences¹⁸ and fundraising trends.¹⁹ Enrollment declines at already underenrolled schools further reduce the pool of potential volunteers.²⁰ To combat this decline in participation, parent leaders we spoke with offered several recommendations. They request an investment in the promotion of PA/PTA elections similar to Community and Citywide Education Council (CCEC) elections. FLCs should be strongly encouraged to hold elections training earlier in February to ensure PA/PTA elections are scheduled by the mandated deadline of April 1st.

9. Provide relevant information for parent leaders and professional development for NYCPS staff on Federal Title I parent involvement and education funds and Title III parent engagement funds.

Federal Title I and Title III funds are relevant to PA/PTA leadership because they contain meaningful funding sources to support parents.²¹ Title I funds are available to support parent education and involvement in schools with high percentages of students from low-income families, while the provision of Title III requires enriching parent engagement activities that include appropriate translation and interpretation services for non-English speakers.²² Depending on the status of the school and student body, Title I funds are distributed in consultation with relevant PA/PTA members, most notably: the Title I Parent Advisory Council (Title I PAC), Title I parents, and the SLT.²³

Title III funds²⁴ are distributed to schools through a School Allocation Memorandum²⁵ for the purpose of enhancing services to English-language learners. While some schools designate funds in their budget to provide parents with language support, Title III funds can also be tapped to support non-English speaking PA/PTA members through interpretation and translation services. Nevertheless, parents report to PTALink that they have little understanding of how Title I and Title III parent funds are spent.

Parent leaders and NYCPS staff also report to PTALink that a knowledge gap on Title I allocations **is particularly pronounced among PCs in high schools.**²⁶ While it is the responsibility of the principal or the principal's designee to inform the entire school community about Title I at the required Annual Title I meeting, PCs may be responsible for some of the logistics related to elections, meetings, submission of spending plans,²⁷ and related parent activities. PCs are not SLT members,²⁸ but it is strongly recommended that they be invited to attend SLT meetings to gain relevant information to support any administrative tasks related to Title I funds, particularly as new amendments to Chancellor's Regulation A655 give PCs the responsibility to address all inquiries pertaining to SLTs.²⁹

10. Continue to expand translation and interpretation services for schools and parent leadership bodies, including PA/PTAs, and provide both in-person and remote interpreters for hybrid meetings.

PA/PTAs are often a family's first introduction to school governance and parent leadership. For that reason, it is essential that this entry point is genuinely accessible and inclusive of all families, regardless of the language they speak at home. Yet, Chancellor's Regulation A-660 does not mandate that the DOE provide translation and interpretation services to PA/PTAs for meetings or communications. PA/PTAs can fundraise and budget for language access, but this assumes they have the capacity to do so.



Implement policies that increase access, promote inclusivity, and actively work to repair the historical harms of segregation.

11. Form a PA/PTA Fundraising Equity Working Group to explore models to reform fundraising practices and promote a more equitable approach to parent-raised resources across all NYC public schools.

NYC PA/PTAs raise vastly different funds,³⁰ and the glaring disparities have been significant enough to prompt New York City to develop a PA/PTA reporting law, Local Law 171.³¹ Further research by Dr. Mackevicius, presented on PA/PTA equity at a PTALink webinar, examined the data PA/PTAs have reported since 2018. She found that on average, PA/PTAs spend \$139 per pupil, with the majority of the lower 95% of PA/PTAs spending almost \$0 per pupil. Conversely, the majority of the top 5% of PTAs spend \$400- \$2,000 per pupil.³² On average, PA/PTAs hold \$45,458 in reserves.³³ While most hold no reserve, a few schools in the top 25% of NYC PA/PTAs report large dollar reserves over \$250,000, with some higher than \$1 million.³⁴ Chalkbeat's examination of PA/PTA fundraising data for the 2024-25 school year revealed that just 30 schools raised nearly half of all money reported to NYCPS, while roughly one-third of PA/PTAs raised no money, and over a quarter did not report.³⁵ Collectively, NYC PA/PTAs ended the 2024-2025 school year with reserves of \$46,513,132.96.³⁶

A fundraising equity working group should be formed to examine and address these disparities. While PA/PTA fundraising is intended to be supplemental, the additional income stream can enable schools to invest in more teachers and staff, affecting parent choice and educational outcomes.³⁷ Close attention should be paid to excessive reserves, as it conflicts with the parameters of Chancellor's Regulation A660,³⁸ which intends for fundraisers to be tied to the goals of the parent organization, the proceeds of which must "supplement or complement the educational, social and cultural programs of schools..." A660 also intends for parent contributions to be largely spent on students in the school year in which the funds are raised.³⁹ New York City local reporting law⁴⁰ was designed to address disparities among PA/PTAs — yet there has been no substantive follow-up by NYCPS or the New York City Council on the data it has produced.

Further, to support lower-income PA/PTAs, the working group should be tasked with exploring ways the City could supplement funding for PA/PTAs, especially as income inequality can hamper a PA/PTAs' ability to function in compliance from the start.⁴¹ A working group focused on fundraising equity would be a critical first step toward ensuring that existing rules are enforced and that new policies close the gaps they have failed to address.

12. Support parent engagement, particularly at the hyperlocal level for school utilization proposals by reforming Chancellor's Regulation A-190.⁴²

No school merger planning process can be truly collaborative without input from the school's official parent body, the PA/PTA. Chancellor's Regulation A-660 tasks PA/PTAs with the responsibility to "solicit participation and support from all parents."⁴³ Yet Chancellor's Regulation A-190 does not explicitly include them in the merger planning process. While community engagement is outlined and required under A-190, the regulation would benefit significantly from additional details on how schools should conduct this engagement at the PA/PTA level, as well as a timeline for engaging with parents that begins long before the distribution of the Educational Impact Statement (EIS).

At present, A-190 outlines that the EIS be distributed to the Community Education Council (CEC) and School Leadership Team (SLT) of the affected schools, followed by a joint public hearing with NYCPS senior leadership and the affected CEC and SLTs.⁴⁴ While the PA/PTA president is a member of the SLT, successful mergers require broader, deeper parent participation in the merger planning process and the joint public hearing.

Conclusion

When families are empowered to participate meaningfully in school communities, the benefits are immediate for district schools and long-term for the broader goals of equity, inclusion, and integration for the larger public school system. As NYCPS continually endorses, families remain an integral stakeholder group, "...not symbolically, but in practice," to sustain a successful educational system.⁴⁵ Therefore, investment in parent leadership and corresponding support roles cannot be overlooked. We thank NYCPS staff and family leaders, who continue to contribute their insights through PTAlink. We are especially grateful to parent leader Shirley Aubin, who provided thoughtful feedback during the creation of this brief; PTAlink's founder and Appleseed board member Rachel Fine, who provided editorial support; and New York Appleseed's Antonia Martinelli, who conceived, researched, and realized this brief. We also thank Rodriguez Valle Creative for their graphic design.

We look forward to future collaborations with NYCPS central staff to advance these recommendations.

Endnotes

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2. District Leadership, N.Y.C. DEPT OF EDUC., <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/leadership/district-leadership> (last visited Jun. 15, 2026)
3. Ibid
4. Note: In addition to the 32 K-8 community school districts across New York City, there are 2 specialized districts, District 75 and District 79, as well as multiple high school districts under the supervision of different superintendents.
5. Note: In some districts, when one of the positions is vacant, the FLC is forced to perform the role of the FSC and vice versa. Both roles are essential and perform very different tasks, with the FLC focusing on the particulars of parent leadership bodies and the FSC connecting individual parents with school staff.
6. Note: All the FLCs and PCs that PTALink spoke with reported that their onboarding experiences were inadequate for the breadth of the role. They all agreed that a job-specific, initial on-boarding would be beneficial for both FLCs and PCs. While some FLCs come into the role with the experience of being a PC, not all do and it is not a requirement, see, *Administrative and Central Office Careers, Vacancy - Family Leadership Coordinator* <https://nychb.teacherssupportnetwork.com/guest/ShowVacancyDetails.do?vacancyId=26415> accessed on May 21st, 2026.
7. *Parent and Parent Teacher Associations*, N.Y.C. DEPT OF EDUC. <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/get-involved/families/parent-as-sociations>
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14. Amy Zimmer, *NYC Parent Coordinators are Essential School Workers. Many Feel Undervalued and Underpaid*, ChalkbeatNY (Mar. 27, 2023) <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2023/3/27/23655403/nyc-schools-parent-coordinators-pandemic-essential-workers/>
15. Note: Additional roles and responsibilities that PCs have noted include: OMNY card distribution and issues; NYCSA account issues; Communications: website design, newsletters, bulletin board; Decorate or maintain the lobby; Cell phone policy: locking and unlocking cell phone pouches and communicating the cell phone policy; Communicating other school policies; Relaying messages between students and parents; Virtual Learning and Tech Support; 3K, Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Middle school applications; Supporting parents to access myschools.nyc; Summer Rising applications; Recording attendance and Attendance Committee; Promotion: Instagram, Classdojo, E-blast; Events: clothing & toy drives, back to school fairs, school info fairs, open houses, academic workshops; Community Resources: food pantry, dental and eye clinics; PTA support and financial audits; Lunch Duty; Transportation Coordinator (field trips, OPT); Bus Aid during Summer Rising (may require a disciplinary skill set); Kids Rise 529 Savings Accounts (promotion and opting out); Writing Reso A Grants; Picture Day; and the School Survey.

16. Parent University, N.Y.C. DEPT OF EDUC. <https://parentu.schools.nyc> (last visited Jun. 15, 2026)—
17. 2025–2027 CCEC Member Guide, N.Y.C. DEPT OF EDUC. (Mar. 2025) in print.
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28. Regulations of the New York City Chancellor, A-655, § I(B)2 Eligibility, N.Y.C. DEPT OF EDUC., (Jun 18, 2026) <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/docs/default-source/default-document-library/a-655-english.pdf>
29. Regulations of the New York City Chancellor, A-655, § IV General Guidance for SLTs and DLTs, N.Y.C. DEPT OF EDUC., (Jun 18, 2026) <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/docs/default-source/default-document-library/a-655-english.pdf>
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