



Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR DENNIS M. WALCOTT ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH NEW YORK SPORTS CLUB TO REDUCE ABSENTEEISM AND IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLNESS

New York Sports Club Distributes “Skip Rope, Not School” Jump Ropes

Schools Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott today announced a partnership with the New York Sports Club (NYSC) to support student fitness programs and engage students in school as part of the Mayor’s Interagency Task Force on Truancy, Chronic Absenteeism & School Engagement. The partnership will support the CHAMPS morning and after-school fitness programs in middle schools participating in the task force, including distributing NYSC “Skip Rope, Not School” jump ropes to amplify the innovative strategies being implemented to reduce absenteeism.

In addition, NYSC donated gym equipment to Boys and Girls High School in Brooklyn to improve student fitness and further engage students so that they attend school every day.

To support one of the Task Force’s core initiatives -- the NYC Success Mentor Corps, which has matched over 4,000 at-risk students with Success Mentors and is the largest school-based mentoring effort in the nation -- the NYSC will offer a reduced Lifetime Membership rate (\$29.95 per month) for all Success Mentors. The special membership will also be available to all Department of Education (DOE) employees. Further information about this program can be found at each New York Sports Club location or visit MySportsClubs.com/NYCDOE.

“Our truancy initiative has dramatically reduced absenteeism in target schools, and helped keep our students on track for success in college and careers,” Chancellor Walcott said. “The generous support from the New York Sports Club will go a long way towards building upon those efforts.”

“Absenteeism is a signal that something is wrong in a student’s life, and it is predictive of poor academic outcomes, including poor performance and likelihood of dropping out,” said John Feinblatt, the Mayor’s Chief Policy Advisor, who oversees the Task Force. “We are grateful to the NY Sports Club for supporting our efforts to combat absenteeism and improve educational outcomes for our most vulnerable young people.”

“New York Sports Club's generous support creates incentives to keep our students healthy, while helping to amplify efforts to motivate them to go to school every day,” said Leslie Cornfeld, Chair of the Mayor's Interagency Task Force on Truancy, Chronic Absenteeism & School Engagement. “We are delighted that the New York Sports Club has spearheaded this public-private partnership to promote student attendance by promoting fitness.”

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“We’re honored to partner with Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Walcott on this important initiative,” said Robert Guardian, CEO of Town Sports International, owner and operator of NYSC. “Improving the overall fitness and lifestyles of our youth is a top priority for our company, and we’re delighted to support the Mayor’s efforts to boost school attendance, as well as continue to encourage teachers and other staff to live a healthy lifestyle and serve as role models for students.”

Asthma-Friendly Schools Campaign Expanded

The Chancellor also announced today the expansion of the Asthma-Friendly Schools Campaign to 16 Task Force elementary schools. Asthma is a leading cause of absenteeism for younger students, and the most common reason that children aged 14 and under are hospitalized. Roughly 17 percent of students have asthma, with the highest concentrations in low-income communities. The Asthma-Friendly Schools Campaign was developed by the Task Force, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to help reduce asthma-related school absences by launching innovative models to heighten awareness and prevention.

The program is aimed at strengthening the partnership between school leadership, school health teams, and community organizations to manage student asthma and educate families about available school resources. As part of this effort, the Task Force has developed and trained in-school Asthma Ambassadors to provide additional support to students with asthma and their families; provided training for families at schools and homeless shelters; developed in-school staff trainings; enhanced targeted outreach to families of children with asthma; and created a new 311 resource for families with information on asthma and schools.

“Asthma management is critical to student health, and school success,” said Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas Farley. “By offering our students more opportunities for exercise, they’ll be able to better manage their asthma, stay healthy and attend and succeed in school.”

About the Task Force: The Asthma-Friendly Schools Campaign is part of the *Every Student, Every Day* anti-truancy campaign. The campaign was developed by the Mayor’s Interagency Task Force on Truancy, Chronic Absenteeism & School Engagement, which is overseen by John Feinblatt and chaired by Leslie Cornfeld. One of the Task Force’s core programs, the NYC Success Mentor Corps, has seen impressive results. In its first year, chronically absent students who received mentors attended a total of more than 7,000 additional days of school, and students in the mentorship program were more likely to see improvements in attendance than chronically absent students who were not in the program. This school year, the program doubled the number of chronically absent students receiving in-school Success Mentors to more than 4,000 and doubled the number of elementary, middle and high schools that are part of the initiative to 50 schools.

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Other initiatives of the Task Force include the Operation Start Strong, Stay Strong campaign to strengthen supports for chronically absent students at homeless shelters; the WakeUp! NYC celebrity wakeup call program reaching over 30,000 students; first-ever data sharing agreements and new early warning tools for chronic absenteeism and school disengagement; new models for connecting local resources and supports to schools; and the Transition Coach initiative to provide support for students returning from suspensions, placements at juvenile facilities, foster care, or temporary housing, who are especially vulnerable to chronic absenteeism.

About New York Sports Clubs: New York Sports Clubs is owned by Town Sports International Holdings, Inc., a leading owner and operator of fitness clubs in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic regions of the United States and, through its subsidiaries, operated 160 fitness clubs as of December 31, 2011, comprising 108 New York Sports Clubs, 25 Boston Sports Clubs, 18 Washington Sports Clubs (two of which are partly-owned), six Philadelphia Sports Clubs, and three clubs located in Switzerland. These clubs collectively served approximately 523,000 members. For more information on TSI, visit <http://www.mysportsclubs.com>.

About CHAMPS: Through the DOE's CHAMPS Middle School Sport and Fitness League, students are empowered to become Cooperative, Healthy, Active, Motivated, Positive Students—for life. Regardless of athletic ability, student participants in CHAMPS have opportunities to engage in a wide variety of physical activities before or after school, including traditional and non-traditional sports, along with fitness activities that can be maintained long after their school days are over. For more information, visit www.champsnyc.org.

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