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**MAYOR BLOOMBERG LAUNCHES WAKE UP! NYC CAMPAIGN
TO REDUCE CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM AND TRUANCY IN CITY SCHOOLS AND
RELEASES EARLY DATA FROM TRUANCY PROGRAM**

Magic Johnson, Jose Reyes, Trey Songz, Big Boi, Jesse McCartney, SchoolMessenger, Viacom, Hot 97 FM, KISS Radio and Others Join Mayor's Campaign To Reduce Truancy

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg today launched the City's first multimedia campaign to reduce truancy and chronic absenteeism in City schools. The campaign, called WakeUp! NYC was developed by the Mayor's Interagency Task Force on Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism, led by John Feinblatt, the Mayor's Chief Policy Advisor. The WakeUp! NYC campaign will begin next week with automated phone calls to students in a core group of 25 schools with principals who have volunteered to participate in the Task Force's work this year, and then expand chronically absent students citywide. Campaign partners including Viacom and their BET Networks division, 98.7 KISS FM, Hot 97 FM and 101.9 RXP FM will also encourage school attendance every day on-air and through social media. Through WakeUp! NYC, students will receive phone calls with pre-recorded morning wake up messages from Magic Johnson, Jose Reyes, Big Boi, Terrence J and Rocsi, from BET's 106 & Park and award-winning artist Trey Songz as well as other celebrities from program partners Viacom. The Mayor also announced early results from the truancy program for the first half of the school year, which showed improvements in many schools.

"Through WakeUp! NYC we're putting on a full-court press, using mass media and digital media to drive home the point that every student should be in school every day," said Mayor Bloomberg. "It's the next step in our efforts to cut absenteeism and put more students on the road to success, in school and in life."

"We believe strongly in the power of media and entertainment to address social issues facing our country," said Viacom Chief Operating Officer Tom Dooley. "Ensuring that our country's young people have the education they need to succeed is critical to the future of New York City and the future of this country. But you can't learn if you don't come to school. That's why Viacom and the Get Schooled Foundation are excited to support Mayor Bloomberg's Wake Up! NYC campaign."

"We want all of our students to excel and become successful adults, and good attendance will help them reach that goal," Schools Chancellor Cathie Black said. "We are working hard to reduce chronic absenteeism, and thanks to the Mayor's Task Force, we have seen a significant drop

(more)

in chronic absenteeism at the Isaac Newton Middle School. We know we have a long way to go, but this is a good start.”

“We are focusing largely on students in elementary and middle school because absenteeism in those grades is predictive of school failure and drop out,” said John Feinblatt, the Mayor’s Chief Policy Advisor, who oversees the Mayor’s Task Force. “Research shows that if we can change attendance patterns in those years, we will reduce high school drop out rates, and produce better educational outcomes. And if we don’t deal with the problem now, we’ll be stuck dealing with much worse problems in crime, government dependency and poverty.”

“The WakeUp! NYC campaign will help educate students and parents about the importance of attendance every day and the dangers of chronic absenteeism for school, and life, success,” said Leslie Cornfeld, chair of the Mayor’s Task Force. “Our media partners in this campaign will help us generate a new awareness about the importance of school everyday –amplifying the impact of the many new, multiagency strategies the Task Force is piloting at our schools and elsewhere this year.”

The Mayor was joined at the announcement, held at Isaac Newton Middle School in Manhattan, by Chief Policy Advisor John Feinblatt, Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott, Schools Chancellor Cathie Black, Department of Homeless Services Commissioner Seth Diamond, Task Force Chair Leslie Cornfeld, NYC Service Chief Service Officer Diahann Billings-Burford, Administration for Children’s Services Assistant Commissioner Dale P. Joseph, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Assistant Commissioner for School Health Roger Platt, Department of Youth and Community Development Assistant Commissioner William Chong, and Isaac Newton Middle School Principal Lisa Nelson.

The Mayor was also joined by media partners including Viacom Chief Operating Officer Tom Dooley; Emmis Communications Community Outreach Director Reggie Nance; Jose Reyes; Terrence J and Rocsi, from BET’s top-rated 106 & Park show; and award-winning artist Trey Songz.

Wake Up! NYC Absence Alerts and Good News Calls

Through the WakeUp! NYC campaign, chronically absent students and students at-risk of becoming chronically absent will receive inspirational wake up phone calls to encourage them to attend school. The pre-recorded messages stress the connection between success in school and success in life, because research shows that children and parents too often fail to make the connection.

The WakeUp!NYC campaign will start next week when over 6,500 students at the 25 schools, who have missed 10 or more days of school this academic year, will receive a phone or email message inviting them to participate in the WakeUp!NYC campaign. After this introductory period, the WakeUp! NYC campaign will expand to approximately 250,000 chronically absent students citywide.

The WakeUp! NYC campaign will also include “good news” calls to congratulate students for strong or improved attendance. Research suggests that celebrating improved attendance helps promote attendance. Conversely, students whose chronic absenteeism does not improve, in addition to additional interventions by the Task Force, will receive telephone absence alerts notifying the student and parents about the serious nature of the student’s attendance patterns. The WakeUp!

NYC telephone calls will be made through SchoolMessenger, a communications company focused on connecting schools and families, which has underwritten the cost of implementing the call campaign to all chronically absent students in NYC.

In addition, the WakeUp!NYC campaign's media partners will run public service announcements and discuss the importance of attending school every day on their morning shows. The media partners will also mention WakeUp! NYC through social media and using testimonials from formerly chronically absent students and their parents, and will help the campaign spread the word about the importance of attendance every day.

"I am proud to be a part of this campaign," said Magic Johnson, who recorded several messages as part of WakeUp! NYC. "We need to do whatever it takes to let kids know that getting to school every day is the best way to succeed in school, and in life."

"School really is a kids' best hope for a better future. But kids don't get that these days, neither do parents," said Jose Reyes, of the NY Mets. "I am ready to go tot bat for the Task Force's Campaign, and do what I can to spread the word. This Campaign is what people need to really WakeUp about education and their future."

"I want to help kids and parents realize that education is the best path to a good future," said award-winning artist Trey Songz. "By joining forces with Get Schooled, I hope to use my fame as a positive influence and keep kids in school and out of the streets."

"We are proud to partner with the Mayor in getting kids to school every day," said Reggie Nance, Vice President of Emmis NY. "Hot 97, and KISS FM are committed to spearheading this campaign on the air by spreading the word about WakeUp! NYC – so that all New Yorkers, students and parents alike, understand that school every day is the best way to a better future. So, listen to us and hear what we are doing to help fix this problem for the future of our kids, and our City. Stay tuned."

Early Data Show Preliminary Positive Results

The Mayor's Task Force released its early results from the first half of the academic year, showing that the schools in its pilot program had reduced their rates of chronic absenteeism this year, as compared to last year. At the Task Force's ten elementary schools, chronic absenteeism was down by 24% over last year; at the Task Force's eight middle schools, it was down by 16%.

Because students in temporary housing have above average rates of chronic absenteeism citywide, as part of it's comprehensive strategy to reduce absenteeism, the Task Force also piloted a number of new initiatives at 15 of the City's Tier II family shelters, including tracking attendance and chronic absenteeism bi-weekly, creating homework centers at all Tier II shelters citywide, creating new data sharing agreements between agencies, and creating a new culture of school success and attendance every day at the shelters.

"The Task Force initiative is changing the culture of attendance in Tier II shelters," said Homeless Services Commissioner Seth Diamond. "We are pleased that the preliminary results of our work reflect attendance success among our shelter children. Chronic absenteeism decreased at the pilot shelters from this year to last, and we also saw a lower rate of absenteeism in the pilot

shelters than other similar Tier II shelters. By continuing the partnership of the Task Force, we can only make further progress for our children.”

“New York City has clearly become the national leader in developing innovative strategies to reduce truancy and chronic absenteeism,” said Dr. Robert Balfanz, research scientist at Johns Hopkins, and Task Force advisor. “The positive early outcomes seen today in reducing chronic absenteeism in New York City schools and shelters reflects the strength of the comprehensive strategies that the Task Force has implemented in a remarkably short period of time,”

“We are thrilled to be partnering with the Mayor’s Interagency Task Force on developing models leading the nation in reducing truancy and chronic absenteeism,” said Richard R. Buery, President and CEO, Children's Aid Society. “The Task Force is demonstrating what outcomes are possible when data-driven strategies, citywide collaboration and unwavering energy for improving attendance and educational outcomes for our most at-risk students, are so successfully executed for the children of New York City. The work being done here should have the attention of every urban center and school system in the country.”

Task Force Tackles Pockets of Chronic Absenteeism

The Task Force, launched by the Mayor on June 10th of last year, has focused its first efforts on developing responses to early warning signals in a child’s early years – before truancy is an entrenched habit. About 20 percent of all City school students missed one month of school or more last year – totaling over 250,000 students. The Task Force has worked with a series of partners to develop incentives for attendance including Old Navy, Starbucks, Office Depot and NY Skyride, which donated tickets to their unique simulator inside the Empire State Building that provides a virtual tour of New York City.

Research shows that three out of four students who are severely chronically absent in the sixth grade never graduate from high school. In New York City, approximately 80 percent of children in the juvenile justice system had missed a month or more of school; 40 percent had missed two or more months. Absenteeism rates are highest in low-income communities, where school offers students the best opportunity for future success.

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