



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTONIO REYNOSO

Brooklyn Borough President

Thank you Speaker Adams and members of the Council for holding this hearing today. I also would like to thank the multiple City agencies that have testified on this critical issue. Our city has welcomed more than 30,000 asylum seekers from South America in recent months¹ and with the prospective Federal Order to end on December 21st, we can expect to be welcoming more families. Coordination on this effort is key, and while I applaud this administration's efforts, there is more work to be done, particularly in Brooklyn schools.

Our public schools have been critical to welcoming and supporting our migrant families with the necessary resources to thrive. While I acknowledge the great work our agency partners have done with Project Open Arms, I am concerned that students are being placed in schools that lack both adequate support systems for migrant students, and the resources to develop them.

After conducting an internal analysis of DOE School Allocation Memorandum (SAM) Funding for Project Open Arms FY 2023 and DOE's 2021-2022 Bilingual Program List, my office discovered that an estimated 51 Brooklyn schools that have received funding for Project Open Arms have no sited Dual Language and/or Transitional Bi-Lingual Education programs. As of the most recent SAM Allocation, these 51 schools had received an estimated 592 new students who live in temporary housing. This accounts for more than half new students assigned to Brooklyn schools through Project Open Arms, and more than half of the 95 Brooklyn schools that received funding to support these students. Essentially, more than half of Brooklyn schools that migrant students are attending are likely triaging students' basic needs with limited staff who are either not Dual Language Certified and/or may not even speak another language.

Studies show dual language immersion supports long-term academic outcomes² as well as cross-cultural appreciation and understanding,³ building on students' strengths and leveraging families' native language as a resource in the school.⁴ It is imperative that our new students receive the right educational supports and resources to thrive and succeed in their new environments. When we fail ELL students and students in temporary housing, it can have staggering effects, such as

¹ [Source](#)

² [Source](#)

³ [Source](#)

⁴ [Source](#)

lower 4-year graduation rates and higher dropout rates⁵ leading to lower career trajectory, negative impacts to student self-efficacy and well-being,⁶ and their eventual reliance on public and private aid. Supporting students now is the best long-term use of public funds.

To address this, I recommend stronger coordination between DSS, DOE and all other relevant agencies to locate families close to schools that are best resourced to support students' language needs. I understand that transportation is a barrier and the importance of prioritizing proximity to shelters with school bus access -- an issue this Council and Education Chair have raised. However, I believe we can do better to place migrant families in districts that have Dual Language/Bilingual Education programs, while increasing these seats across districts – particularly Brooklyn Districts 17, 18, 21, and 23. I also implore DOE to continue to build pathways for more ENL/Dual Language Certifications for teachers.

I applaud the great work being done in schools despite limited resources and commend this administration on quickly pivoting to support these families. I look forward to supporting our schools and our administration to welcome migrant families into our education system – spreading love the Brooklyn way!

⁵ [Source](#)

⁶ Li, C., Kruger, L. J., Beneville, M., Kimble, E., & Kalyani, K. (2018). The Unintended Consequences of High-Stakes Testing on English-Language Learners: Implications for the Practice of School Psychology. *School Psychology Forum*, 12(3), 79–90.