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**MAYOR DE BLASIO, DYCD COMMISSIONER CHONG VISIT TRAINING BOOT CAMP
FOR CITY'S 'SONYC' MIDDLE SCHOOL AFTER-SCHOOL PROVIDERS**

Thousands of students have already applied for expanded and enhanced after-school programs; SONYC subway ads begin today as part of community outreach and awareness campaign

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Commissioner Bill Chong visited a Sports & Arts in Schools Foundation (SASF) training “boot camp” for more than 130 after-school professionals who will be administering SONYC (School’s Out New York City) after-school programs for middle school students beginning on September 8. The week-long training event is among the preparations being made by 108 community-based organizations in all five boroughs who will oversee the City’s SONYC programs. Enrollment applications for City-funded middle school and elementary school after-school programs are available at nyc.gov/afterschool.

Mayor de Blasio addressed the gathering at the Boys and Girls Club of Metro Queens Clubhouse in Richmond Hill, Queens, and observed a panel of middle school students who spoke to the trainees about the value of SASF’s Champions Club After-School Program and the role afterschool is playing in their development.

“I’m extremely pleased to see this group of professionals getting ready for a major expansion of after-school programming. Middle school is a tough time for students and parents alike. We must do right by our families and ensure we’re continuously giving middle schoolers the tools they need to succeed. This includes deepening their learning and offering them safe places and quality programming during after-school hours. Whether it’s finding a passion in basketball, cooking, fashion design, or getting a little extra homework help, programs like SONYC will help provide our children with a supportive environment that enriches their educational experience,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

“One of the keys to successful SONYC programs is giving a voice to young adolescents in the types of programming they want to see,” said **DYCD Commissioner Bill Chong**. “This weeklong ‘boot camp’ will enable staff to learn from their peers about strategies to engage young people and ensure they are exposed to high-quality, diverse opportunities that make learning fun.”

“SASF will open a record 33 SONYC middle school programs on September 8, and in the upcoming school year, we will be providing sports, arts, and academic help in more than 158 New York City schools in all five boroughs. We are working very hard with the City to help equalize educational opportunities for all children in the critical hours when school is out,” said **Ross Sandler, Chairman of the Board of Sports & Arts in Schools Foundation (SASF)**.

“I am delighted that we have so many highly capable people who will be administering SONYC’s after-school program for middle school students throughout New York City. The week-long training that this group of professionals is receiving will go a long way toward ensuring that they are fully prepared to give our students the education they need to achieve success. As the Chair of the Youth Services Committee, I commend these fine professionals for their commitment and dedication to the children of this great city,” said **Council Member Mathieu Eugene**.

As part of an unprecedented \$145 million (FY15) investment to increase educational and recreational opportunities for New York City students ages 11-13, SONYC programs will be available in 562 schools (including 60 in District 75), a 143 percent increase over the previous 231. The total number of middle school seats will nearly double this year to 78,903 and to over 85,000 in FY16. Enhancements include programs being open five days per week for 36 weeks during the school year, and a higher price per participant to cover the additional hours and to enable providers to hire and retain qualified staff and provide high-quality programming. A separate RFP for non-public schools and community sites will be issued this fall.

Middle school can be an especially challenging time for students, parents and teachers, with young people undergoing extraordinary changes and facing obstacles to becoming successful adults. After-school programming helps develop new skills and interests; prepare students for high school, graduation, college and beyond; encourage young people to pursue their passions during the challenging years of early adolescence; keep youth out of trouble between the hours of 3 and 6 PM; and help reduce the achievement gap in diverse communities.

The SONYC offerings mirror the highly successful Summer Enrichment programs ending this week at more than 300 middle schools and Beacon and Cornerstone sites. The number of Summer Enrichment seats doubled this year to more than 34,000, and enrollment exceeded 100 percent citywide.

About COMPASS

The newly-renamed Comprehensive After-School System of NYC (COMPASS NYC) comprises more than 800 programs serving young people enrolled in grades K-12. Through its network of providers, COMPASS NYC offers high-quality programs with a strong balance of academics, recreation, enrichment and cultural activities to support and strengthen the overall development of young people. Programs are offered at no cost to families and are strategically located in public and private schools, community centers, religious institutions, public housing, and recreational facilities throughout the City.

About SONYC

COMPASS NYC's middle school model, renamed SONYC (pronounced "sonic"), serves as a pathway to success for youth in 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Structured like activity clubs, SONYC offers young people a choice in how they spend their time, with opportunities in leadership, academics, arts, physical fitness, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), and literacy. Activities range from basketball, fitness, volleyball and tennis to dance, culinary/chef, fashion and shoe design, service learning, and homework help. The City itself becomes a classroom, through field trips and instruction outside of the traditional educational setting.

About the Transition to High School Program

The COMPASS NYC Transition to High School Program (THS) is designed to help incoming high school ninth graders navigate their new surroundings with targeted academic and social and emotional supports, and advocacy within the school community. Research shows that when freshmen get off track, they are more likely to drop out than finish high school.

For more information on applying for SONYC and COMPASS after-school programs, visit nyc.gov/afterschool, or call 311 or DYCD Youth Connect at 1-800-246-4646.