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Union Concerned About Mayor's Plan To Keep 'Immigration' Out of Schools

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SENSE FEAR IN THE AIR: Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña said she believes a decline in parent participation at school events in some neighborhoods is a result of wariness about stepped-up enforcement by Federal immigration agents since President Trump took office, but she reaffirmed that the Department of Education does not track students' immigration status and will not help agents in that regard.

In what he called a “deepening of policy,” Mayor de Blasio released new guidelines for schools that include blocking Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents from entering buildings without a warrant, but the president of the union representing School Safety Agents said it puts his members in direct conflict with the Federal Government.

Mr. de Blasio said the changes were made to ensure that parents who may be in the

country illegally continue to send their children to school without fear of deportation.

“We think it’s crucial to fight for all New Yorkers and to help immigrant New Yorkers to know their rights,” he said. “This is your city. Your city will stand by you. Your city will protect you.”

No Warrant, No Entry

The new guidance states that School Safety Agents are to gather as much information from Federal law-enforcement agents as possible, including the nature of their visit and any paperwork or warrants they may have. Federal agents must wait outside of the school building while supervisors contact either Department of Education or city lawyers for further instruction.

Agents will be allowed in only with a valid warrant, and will be escorted to and from the location specified on the warrant—not allowed to freely walk through the school.

“With these updated guidelines, we are reinforcing the fact that a school is a safe and protected location. We will not allow ICE agents to threaten that protection, disrupt classes or take any action that would be detrimental to our students, whose safety is our Number One concern,” said Mr. de Blasio.

Both he and Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña said there had not been any cases of ICE agents visiting schools—with or without a warrant—nor had there been cases of parents keeping children home.

Parents Less Active

But Ms. Fariña said there had been a decline in parents participating in school events in some neighborhoods, and she suspected fear of immigration agents was the reason.

She said the DOE does not track the immigration status of students, and will not do so in the future. Schools also will not release any information about students or families to Federal agents unless required by law.

“All students, regardless of immigration status, deserve a great education in public schools,” said Ms. Fariña, “and today we’re providing additional guidance and resources

to ensure students have a safe and inclusive learning environment in every building.”



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The city is also holding “Know Your Rights” legal seminars for immigrants, offering free legal advice on what to do if they’re concerned about deportation—including how to create plans for their children.

Ms. Fariña said the DOE is encouraging all parents to make sure their children’s emergency information is updated, including contact information for a family member who can take in the child if the parents are arrested by Federal authorities.

‘Want To Know Intentions’

Greg Floyd, president of Teamsters Local 237, which represents School Safety Agents, said he’s concerned about the new policy.

“We haven’t been informed of new training,” he said in a phone interview, “but we want to know [Mr. de Blasio’s] intentions because we believe this is putting School Safety Agents in direct conflict with the Federal Government.”

Mr. Floyd said he hadn’t been briefed on the protocol change, but he was concerned about creating conflict between SSAs and Federal law-enforcement.

“If the plan is to not have kids taken out of school and deported, the Mayor should sit down with ICE and make a plan to declare schools a safe haven,” he said. “There has to be a better way to accomplish those goals without the Federal Government and New York City government being at war.”

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