



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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International Affairs Commissioner Abeywardena Announces First Fully-Virtual Cohort of NYC Junior Ambassadors Program

NEW YORK – Continuing our City's commitment to young New Yorkers, Commissioner Penny Abeywardena of the Mayor's Office for International Affairs today launched the 6th cohort of the NYC Junior Ambassadors program by announcing this year's participants. Representing all five boroughs of New York City, the diverse group of more than 500 seventh-grade students and educators from 15 schools will engage virtually with the United Nations and explore ways to tackle some of the world's most persistent challenges.

This marks the first fully virtual cohort in the program's history.

“While COVID-19 has compelled us to host the NYC Junior Ambassadors program virtually this year, we remain as dedicated as ever to ensuring that our youth are connected to a global community of change makers using the UN's Sustainable Development Goals to take action in their neighborhoods,” **said Mayor's Office for International Affairs Commissioner Penny Abeywardena.** “We are thrilled to kick off this sixth year of Junior Ambassadors with students from 15 outstanding schools from every borough in New York City. We know that by connecting them with resources in our City agencies and our incredible international community, they are becoming the leaders we need them to be.”

Through the NYC Junior Ambassadors program, young New Yorkers are encouraged to think of themselves as global citizens and to help create a better, fairer world while learning about the UN and the Sustainable Development Goals which seek to address poverty, climate change and inequality.

Together with their educators, each class will incorporate the SDGs into their classroom curriculum. In addition, students will receive virtual classroom visits from senior UN diplomats and representatives from NYC agencies, and a virtual tour of the UN headquarters in Manhattan. International Affairs hosted its first Educator Orientation today.

Since its beginning, participants in the NYC Junior Ambassadors program have welcomed UN Ambassadors representing 36 countries to their classrooms. Students also have participated in special global events, such as moderating an event convened by the President of the UN General Assembly for World Children's Day, speaking on a panel with the UN Secretary-General, and participating in the first World Ocean Conference.

Last year's cohort successfully transitioned mid-year from an in-person program to a virtual one due to COVID-19. Approximately 3,000 students and educators from more than 80 classrooms and after-school programs have participated in the NYC Junior Ambassadors program since its launch in 2015.

The Mayor's Office for International Affairs partners with the Department of Education, the Department of Youth and Community Development, the United Nations, and the United Nations Foundation to provide this unique opportunity to middle school students across the city.

"In these challenging times, it is important that we all work together to build a better future -- and what better place to start fostering the spirit of collaboration and global citizenship than the classroom. The United Nations is delighted to partner again with the City of New York and the UN Foundation in supporting and inspiring our sixth cohort of Junior Ambassadors, as well as their teachers and families," **said Melissa Fleming, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications at the United Nations.**

"The Junior Ambassador program provides our young people and educators an avenue to engage meaningfully with the United Nations in their important work of supporting humanity as we work towards a common good. I am excited to see this partnership continue and flourish during this critical year and I look forward to hearing about the learnings our young people take away from this experience," **said Schools Chancellor Richard A. Carranza.**

"At a time when the pandemic can make young people feel more separated from their communities than ever, the NYC Junior Ambassadors program is connecting youth virtually to real-world civic engagement and helping them find their voice as global citizens. From climate change and the history of indigenous peoples to sustainable cities and equality for all, some of the most pressing issues of our time will be addressed by this new cohort of seventh graders. Congratulations to the Class of 2021 for being part of this unique opportunity and for showcasing to the world that the next generation of global leaders can be found right here in New York City," **said Commissioner Bill Chong, NYC Department of Youth and Community Development.**

"Empowering the next generation of youth leaders to build a better world, we applaud the efforts of the NYC Mayor's Office of International Affairs to convene the sixth cohort of the NYC Jr. Ambassadors. We look forward to leveraging the vast assets of the United Nations Foundation and the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA Southern NY State Division) to engage fellow New Yorkers in life-long and life-changing activities that support the vital work of the United Nations at this pivotal time in history," **said Troy Wolfe, Senior Director, Partnerships & Special Initiatives, United Nations Foundation/UNA-USA.**

“The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted and changed the educational landscape throughout New York City. Traditionally, our unique program relied heavily on in-person gatherings and interactions. Given the unprecedented situation, there was a mutual understanding that the time to link the local to global is now. There remains an urgent need to stay connected, build knowledge from the field with our students, and create a growing set of broadly shared resources accessible to all. We are committed to ensuring that every Junior Ambassador can continue to reap the benefits of this program. We welcome the Junior Ambassador cohort of 2021 with the same enthusiasm and we look forward to a full year of virtual programming as we continue to provide the tools and space for NYC youth who will become our global citizens and future leaders of tomorrow,” **said Christie Saint-Vil, Program Manager, Mayor’s Office for International Affairs.**

“I am excited that my students will have the opportunity to use the Sustainable Development Goals to understand the challenges that are facing their communities and the world. I expect they will be eager to connect their lives to these goals,” **said Russell Learner, educator at the Mott Hall School (Manhattan, NY)**

“Last year, as a co-teacher in a NYC Junior Ambassador classroom, I was gratified to see my SWD and general education students grow in their academic confidence, ability to communicate, and collaboration skills. As a new Educator to the program, I look forward to extending this vital opportunity to my current students who are coping with remote learning, physical isolation from their friends, and pandemic-related family issues. My goal is to individually challenge, inspire, and engage each student,” **said Emily Butera, educator at MS 217: The Robert Van Wyck School (Queens, NY)**

“Icahn Charter School 4 is absolutely thrilled to be participating in the New York City Junior Ambassador (NYCJA) program again! Our school believes in giving students choices in how they learn to keep their engagement high, so our team of educators are excited to be a part of this unique student-led experience. In just a few short months, our students have resiliently watched a global pandemic, a social justice movement and a historic election unfold before their eyes. They have seen how inequalities and injustices of certain communities have been magnified and they are eager to take on the challenge of tackling these problems. NYCJA allows our students to find solutions to issues that are important to them; now more than ever, amplified youth voices are so necessary. We are looking forward to the opportunity for the collaboration and creativity that the NYCJA program will add to our 7th grade classroom. NYCJA has always done a great job at showing our youth that they play a key role in reimagining our future! We look forward to another year of fun, learning and growth through the NYCJA program!” **said Krystine Melicio, educator at the Icahn Charter School 4 (Bronx, NY)**

The NYC Junior Ambassadors program will run through June 2021. For updates on the program, please visit nyc.gov/nycja and follow the Mayor’s Office for International Affairs on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

[NYC Junior Ambassadors 2021](#)

1. Brooklyn Science and Engineering Academy, Brooklyn
2. Liberty Avenue Middle School, Brooklyn
3. MS 442: School for Innovation, Brooklyn
4. MS 577: Conselyea Preparatory School, Brooklyn
5. Icahn Charter School 4, Bronx
6. MS 29: The Melrose School, Bronx
7. The Mott Hall School, Manhattan
8. The Clinton School, Manhattan
9. Al-Ihsan Academy, Queens
10. IS 78Q, Queens
11. IS 204: Oliver Wendell Holmes, Queens
12. MS 217: Robert Van Wyck, Queens
13. MS 226: Virgil I. Grissiom, Queens
14. Village Academy Middle School, Queens
15. Michael J. Petrides, Staten Island

About the Mayor's Office for International Affairs

The New York City Mayor's Office for International Affairs works to foster positive relations and encourage collaboration between the international community and New York City's agencies and local neighborhoods. The Office is focused on sharing New York City's policies and best practices globally, as well as responding to requests from foreign governments, the United Nations, and the U.S. Department of State. For more information, follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and on our website.