



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
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**On United Nations Day, International Affairs Commissioner Abeywardena Announces  
New Cohort of Participants in NYC Junior Ambassadors Program**

*- Innovative program empowers New York City seventh-graders to take action on global issues  
through a partnership with the United Nations -*

**NEW YORK** — Penny Abeywardena, Commissioner of the New York City Mayor's Office for International Affairs, marked United Nations Day today by announcing the cohort of classrooms and after-school programs selected to participate in the 2017-2018 NYC Junior Ambassadors program. Comprised of seventh-grade students from across the five boroughs, this innovative program educates participants about the work of the United Nations in order to empower young New Yorkers to address pressing global issues by taking action in their own local communities.

“On this day when we celebrate the founding of the United Nations, we are proud to announce the latest group of seventh-grade students across all five boroughs who will have the opportunity to engage with the international community here in New York City, and receive the tools to make an impact on global challenges from climate change to migration, starting in their very own neighborhoods,” said **Penny Abeywardena, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for International Affairs**. “The NYC Junior Ambassadors program leverages our unique position as host city to the United Nations and the world's largest diplomatic community to foster a diverse group of young global citizens dedicated to the principles of international peace, cooperation, equality, and human rights embodied by the United Nations.”

Each class selected for the NYC Junior Ambassadors program will incorporate the United Nations and its work on the Global Goals to end poverty, tackle climate change, and achieve economic and gender equality into their curriculum, with educators teaching subject areas ranging from science to arts to language. All participants will receive a curated tour of the UN headquarters tailored to their class's curricular interest, and a classroom visit from a senior diplomat.

NYC Junior Ambassadors will also attend a special year-end celebration and receive a certificate acknowledging their participation in the program. Graduates gain access to an alumni network of young, future leaders, while participating educators receive professional training and materials supporting the implementation of their lesson plans throughout the duration of the program.

Some 100 applications from educators across the five boroughs were submitted during this year's application period, and 20 classrooms and after-school programs were chosen to become members of the latest cohort of NYC Junior Ambassadors. With this new cohort, more than 1,000 students and educators from more than 50 classrooms and after-school programs have participated in the NYC Junior Ambassadors program since its launch in 2015, including approximately 540 students and educators expected to participate this year.

Since its launch, participants in the NYC Junior Ambassadors program have experienced classroom visits from UN Ambassadors representing over 25 countries. Students also have participated in special global events, such as addressing a UN youth assembly in recognition of World Peace Day, speaking on a panel with the UN Secretary-General, and participating in the first World Ocean Conference. Participating classes have organized walks for world hunger and children's rights, written letters to elected officials about climate change, and raised funds for women's and girls' education worldwide, among other activities.

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. New York City-based local and global leaders participated on the Selection Committee. The selection process takes into consideration classroom diversity – both geographic and demographic – as well as class size and educator commitment.

“The NYC Junior Ambassadors program is an important investment in our students and educators,” said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña, a member of the selection committee.** “Teaching students how to become thoughtful global citizens is a game changer and I congratulate the classrooms and after-school programs selected to participate this year.”

“When it comes to finding solutions to the most challenging global issues, we must not overlook the wisdom of our young people. By bringing New York City students together with UN policy experts, senior diplomats and Ambassadors, the NYC Junior Ambassadors program gives students an extraordinary opportunity to contribute to the future of our city, our country and our planet,” said **Richard Buery, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives of the NYC Office of the Mayor and member of the selection committee.**

“I am thrilled to be involved in this initiative which meaningfully engages our youth to become change agents in their communities. Through participation in NYC Junior Ambassadors, students recognize the importance of civic engagement at an early age and are empowered to think critically about important global issues,” said **Melissa Mark-Viverito, Speaker of the New York City Council and member of the selection committee.**

“I am honored to be a member of the NYC Junior Ambassadors Selection Committee in the third year of the program. This program has had a meaningful impact on the two alumni cohorts and their teachers. The program transcends the classroom, allowing the students to take lessons about human rights and sustainability to the streets of New York City,” said **Bill Chong, Commissioner of the Department of Youth and Community Development and member of the selection committee.**

“As the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, my focus is on bringing the UN closer to young people and young people closer to the UN. It’s critical that young New Yorkers feel they have a home in the UN, and the NYC Junior Ambassadors program is leading by example,” said **Jayathma Wickramanayake, Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth for the United Nations and member of the selection committee.**

“It is an honor to welcome the third cohort of the NYC Junior Ambassadors program. This program teaches the principles of civic engagement, and inspires these students to take action to make a difference in their own communities and become stewards of change on a global, and local, level,” said **Paula Gavin, NYC Chief Service Officer and member of the selection committee.**

“The United Nations Foundation is delighted to continue to partner with the Mayor’s Office for International Affairs on this exciting initiative. We need passionate youth leaders to get involved with pressing global issues to help us build a better tomorrow. Through this program students not only learn about the UN and its mission of addressing some of the world’s most urgent challenges, but graduate knowing that they have the agency to be catalysts for change,” said **Kathy Calvin, President & Chief Executive Officer of the United Nations Foundation and member of the selection committee.**

“NYC Junior Ambassadors helps youth find their voice as global citizens and as members of their local communities. The program provides an opportunity for 7th graders and their educators to collaboratively work together and engage in inter-generational conversations in their home, schools, and city. Our alumni network has already created meaningful change in their local communities, and I look forward to working with this year’s cohort. We are truly creating global diplomats, locally,” said **Aissata Camara, NYC Junior Ambassadors Program Director, NYC Mayor’s Office for International Affairs.**

“The NYC Junior Ambassadors program empowered our students to be leaders in their classroom, school, community, and world. Each student chose their own Sustainable Development Goal to learn about and they conducted extensive research, created solutions, and made a difference. At the end of the year they took everything they learned and made a book called ‘SDGs for Kids,’ to inspire the next generation to get involved. I welcome the new cohort and I know they will walk away empowered and changed,” said **Valarie Hunsinger, Educator at Hyde Leadership Charter School and member of the selection committee.**

“Nearly all of our Ambassadors’ families arrived in America over the past two generations. They are some of the most brilliant students America has to offer, and their stories are examples of the value of opening our borders to those who seek a better life. After meeting with the Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations to discuss Canada’s response to the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis, their stories were shared as part of a social media campaign and fundraising effort to illustrate the real connections we all share with refugees. The New York City Junior Ambassadors program is a prime example of our city’s students benefiting from, and being empowered by the tremendous resources of the city they live in,” said **Philip Hammack, Assistant Principal, Bronx Park Middle School and member of the selection committee.**

The NYC Junior Ambassadors program will run from November 2017 to June 2018. For updates on the program, please visit [nyc.gov/nycja](http://nyc.gov/nycja) and follow the Mayor's Office for International Affairs on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

**NYC Junior Ambassadors 2017-2018:**

1. Academy of Applied Mathematics and Technology (M.S. 343), The Bronx
2. Archimedes Academy for Math, Science and Technology Applications, The Bronx
3. Entrada Academy, The Bronx
4. Icahn Charter School 3, The Bronx
5. Icahn Charter School 4, The Bronx
6. Lab School for Children (P.S. 315), The Bronx
7. William W. Niles (J.H.S. 118), The Bronx
8. Andries Hudde (K240), Brooklyn
9. Brooklyn Science & Engineering Academy, Brooklyn
10. New Heights Middle School, Brooklyn
11. Joseph F. Lamb (P.S./I.S. 206), Brooklyn
12. Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy I Charter School, Manhattan
13. Al-Ihsan Academy, Queens
14. Queens Collegiate: A College Board School, Queens
15. Robert A. Vanwyck Middle School the Green Magnet School for Career Exploration (J.H.S. 217), Queens
16. The Robert F. Wagner Jr. School (P.S./I.S. 78Q), Queens
17. The Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria, Queens
18. Virgil I Grissom Middle School (J.H.S. 226), Queens
19. Marsh Avenue School for Expeditionary Learning, Staten Island
20. Michael J. Petrides School, Staten Island

**NYC Junior Ambassadors Selection Committee Members:**

1. Penny Abeywardena, Commissioner for the NYC Mayor's Office for International Affairs
2. Richard Buery, NYC Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives
3. Kathy Calvin, President & Chief Executive Officer of the United Nations Foundation
4. Bill Chong, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development
5. Carmen Fariña, Chancellor of the NYC Department of Education
6. Paula Gavin, Chief Service Officer at NYC Service
7. Phillip Hammack, Assistant Principal, Bronx Park Middle School
8. Valarie Hunsinger, Teacher, Hyde Leadership Charter School
9. Craig Kielburger, Founder, WE DAY
10. Melissa Mark-Viverito, Speaker of the New York City Council
11. Valerie Rockefeller Wayne, Chair of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Board Member of the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors
12. Jayathma Wickramanayake, Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth for the United Nations