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Building Health Centers Where Children Need them Most

By MICHAEL MULGREW, PRESIDENT, THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS | JUNE 19, 2018

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It seems common sense: embed medical, vision, dental and mental health services for children where they spend their days - in their own public school or one close by.

That is why the United Federation of Teachers this week will celebrate the opening of a permanent, full-service OneSight vision clinic at PS 188 in Coney Island, one of the UFT's 31 Community Learning Schools.

The vision clinic is the latest addition to PS 188's school-based health center. The state-of-the-art center, run by Family Health Centers at NYU Langone, provides medical and preventive care, mental health services, and dental services for students at PS 188.

With support from vision care non-profit OneSight, LensCrafters and NYU Langone, PS 188 becomes the first school-based health center in the state to be equipped with a permanent, full-service vision clinic; one built to address the vision needs of roughly 5,000 students in neighboring Coney Island schools as well as those at PS 188.

How badly is this needed?

When our partners began vision screenings at PS 188 students this spring, they found nearly 20% of the students had significant vision problems: a statistic that, shockingly, is not unusual according to OneSight's extensive work in New York City and across the country.

"If I can't see, my friend tells me what it says," a PS 188 second-grader explained

during her eye exam at the school's new vision clinic.

From my own time teaching at-risk students in a Brooklyn high school, I know how frustrating it is for educators when their students go without critical supports or services.

That's why we started the UFT's Community Learning School Initiative.

Teachers and school staff at our Community Learning Schools are often the first to know when something is bothering our students.

At PS 188, teachers and staff can refer students to the school-based health center and know that the student's medical, dental, mental health - and now vision needs - will be dealt with on the spot.

"We know that vision goes hand in hand with learning, yet there are still one in four students in the U.S. with an undiagnosed vision correction problem," said one of our partners, Ian Lane, senior director of global planning at OneSight. "We are thrilled to be leading the initiative in solving the vision problem for New York students in partnership with the UFT and thanks to the sponsorship of LensCrafters."

Douglas R. Lazzaro, MD, professor of ophthalmology at NYU Langone, helped launch the pilot program at PS 188 and immediately saw how great the need was for vision services. "In my first three sessions at the school-based clinic, a majority of the children I examined required glasses," he said. "That alone demonstrates just how important vision care is to this community. We will now be able to assess for vision diseases or impairment and provide glasses on-site, eliminating a major obstacle to education."

So PS 188 students with vision problems will get glasses. Students with asthma or diabetes get consistent monitoring. Students grappling with homelessness or parents splitting up or a care-giver losing a job have a counselor to share with, and more serious mental health problems are flagged early for the social worker assigned to the health center.

Since tax dollars are already paying for many of these services through Medicaid, along with student health insurance and city and state support, the health center is designed to be financially self-sustaining.

We know these services are needed because as part of our Community Learning Schools Initiative we provide each school with a Community School Director. That person's job - and passion - is to work with teachers, parents, administrators and the surrounding community to figure out what needs are unmet and how best to fill those gaps. Health and mental health concerns top the list of nearly every school we work with.

That is why we will be celebrating this week at PS 188 - because we are bringing critical services to children in a way that assures they receive them. Education - real education - deals with the whole child, and finds ways to eliminate barriers that get in the way of our students thriving.

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With the help of our partners, and on-going support from the New York State Department of Health and Gov. Andrew Cuomo, we now have a permanent vision clinic as part of PS 188's school-based health center. So that second-grade girl who couldn't see the board will no longer have to rely on a friend to be her "eyes" in the classroom. Instead, she will be fitted with a pair of glasses, at no-cost to her family.

Her future, and ours, will be brighter because of it. [C](#)

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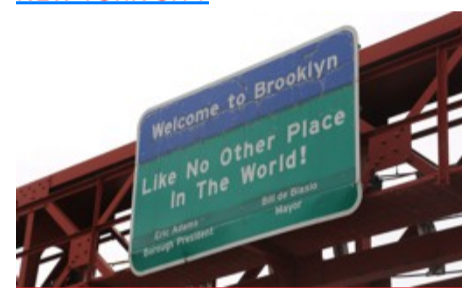
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Missing water tank reports at many NYC hospitals

Gaps in New York City's water tank reporting cited at local hospitals.



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By **FRANK G. RUNYEON** | JUNE 18, 2018

One tank's innards were rusty and discolored, and a dead pigeon lay nearby. A different tank had bird droppings on it and was missing its roof.

Both descriptions were included in inspection records for rooftop water tanks in New York City, which [a recent City & State investigation](#) found are poorly regulated, often neglected and potentially at risk of spreading disease.

What makes these reports different, however, is that they were submitted by city hospitals, where many of the sickest and most vulnerable people in New York City drink water stored in the