

Community District Education Council District 26

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MINUTES OF BUSINESS & CALENDAR PUBLIC MEETINGS

Date: Thursday, January 25, 2007

Time: Calender Meeting, 7:00 P.M.; Business Meeting, 8:00 P.M.

Location: MS 74, 61-15 Oceania Street, Bayside, NY 11364-Rm 128

The meeting of the Community District Education Council of District 26 (CDEC26) was called to order and chaired by Rob Caloras, President at 7:10 pm in the Conference Room 128.

Roll Call: Rob Caloras, Dr. Lana Zinger, Jodi Nath, Susan Shiroma, Debra Strassberg, Carol Gomez, Melissa Dorfman, Jackie Montgomery, Yen Shia Chou, Bona Sun & Marian Mason, Administrative Assistant

Also in attendance was Lori Stein Butera, Parent Support Coordinator & Anita Saunders, Community Superintendent

Guest Speaker: Leonia Haimson, Executive Director of Class Size Matters

Business Meeting

Secretary's Report - Carol Gomez, Recording Secretary

- a. Reviewed December 21st minutes for corrections, changes or additions/deletions. Rob made a motion to accept the December 21st minutes and Jackie seconded. Council voted unanimously to accept the December 21st minutes.
- b. Council was reminded that the January activity reports were due.
- c. Invitation from PS 203 inviting the members to the "The Year of the Pig" celebration on February 15th announced.

President's Report - Robert Caloras

Correspondence

1. Thanked local newspapers for covering District 26 education issues.
2. Articles & e-mails regarding education:
 - a. Reforms that the Mayor & Chancellor announced.
 - b. Question at the December 12th meeting regarding Empowerment funds – According to Mr. Nadelstern that there will be additional monies for Empowerment schools.
 - c. Questions sent to Debra Perry that were previously sent to Kathleen Grimm (3 times) & Tom Huser (twice) over 2 ½ years ago. Questions were related to the Capital & Budget Plan. To date no response received.
 - d. Custodial Resolution sent out and mentioned in some newspapers.
 1. Copy of Padavan's letter received in regard to the Custodian cuts. Letter stated that he is not with the cuts and he shares a valid concern with the CDEC.

- e. Class Size Reduction – UFT making this their most important issue as far as seeking legislative & parent support.
 - 1. Mary Vaccaro a UFT representative went around to local legislators.
 - 2. Rob attended a meeting with some UFT representatives and Senator Padavan.
 - 3. UFT representatives, Rob & Jodi also met with Assemblyman Weprin. Elected officials are supportive and aware of the overcrowding, particularly in the middle schools. Rob stated that Senator Padavan explained that one of the major focus points is that any additional money coming to the city being CFE or various other sources be designated for class size reduction.
- 3. Meeting with the “Time Out From Testing” organization. They are concerned with the excessive amount of standard testing given to students. Their concerns are that it will only get worst under the proposed changes from the Chancellor/Mayor. Most of the changes rely on additional assessment of the students. (Booklet distributed) Rob would like to have a representative come to the Business meeting in March and give an overview. The organization is looking to get teachers on board as well. The organization feels that much of the testing is not needed to comply with the various NCLB and other standards. Rob also stated that Randi Weingarten will be attending the March meeting (8 p.m.) also. April would be set aside for the Ballroom dancers.
- 4. Attended the UFT Speak Out on testing and informed the parents regarding the reduction in teaching time, shift in curriculum, cost and the information gathered for the testing is not used. Tests results are given late in the year so how is assessing the child’s weaknesses & strengths reviewed. Certain branches of the DOE are inundated with this data from the tests and are not sure what to do with it.
- 5. Attended the President’s Council meeting and discussed the latest reforms:
 - 1. Discussed some of the problems that President’s Council is having in getting attendance from its PTA presidents. Proposed was a mentoring program.
 - 2. A letter was drafted by President’s Council and sent to the Mayor concerning the new UFT contract which did not deal with a uniform instituting of a “Back to school Orientation” (Letter attached). Rob made a motion to adopt the President’s Council letter and Susan seconded. Council voted unanimously to accept.
 - 3. Discussed setting up a “letter writing campaign”.
 - 1. Reforms
 - a. Custodial
 - b. Empowerment school zones

When parents and communities get involved through letter writing this is what makes the changes.
- 6. Attended the Scholarship meeting with the UFT representatives which will take place on May 3rd at the Floral Park Terrace. More information will be sent out.

Old Business

- 1. Empowerment Resolution not drafted just yet. This will be tabled and discussed at a later date.

New Business – Reform to be discussed at a later time.

Treasurer's Report – none

Committee Reports - Zoning & Outreach; Curriculum & Grants Information

1. **Zoning & Outreach-** reinstatement of assigned schools. Members will be assigned schools to attend. This will make it easier for PTA and other contacts.
Jodi made a motion to go back to the old way of assigned members to assigned schools and Jackie seconded. Council voted unanimously to accept this change.
2. **Curriculum** – per Melissa the committee has not met recently but will set up a meeting for next month.
3. **Grants & Information** – Susan stated that they have not met recently and would like to do a joint meeting with the Outreach committee. Susan started calling other CDEC's to find what they are doing as far as grant writing & training. CEC 15 in Brooklyn held a 2 hour workshop for parents and teachers in which they spoke about fundraising. Awaiting for the agenda and attendance numbers. Susan stated that Monday, January 29th she would be attending the President's Council District 13 meeting in Brooklyn. A call has been put through to one of the senior grant officers to find out regarding the new reform, what is happening with the grant writing help that's being given to the principals? Hopefully by the next meeting she would have more information.

Superintendent's Report – Anita Saunders

1. Congratulations to our Ballroom Dance Winners!
Gold – PS 26, PS 159, PS 173, PS 221
Silver – PS 133
Bronze – PS 98, PS 186

Rob suggested that letters go out to the schools winning the gold and congratulate them on their advancing to the finals and the members unanimously agreed.

2. Restructuring School System
 - A. Principal Choices
 - Empowerment Organization
 - Learning Support Organizations
 - Judith Chin – Integrated Curriculum & Instruction (ICI)
 - Kathleen Cashin - CORE
 - Laura Rodriguez - Leadership
 - Marsha Lyles – Community Service Partnership Organization

There will be a network of schools no matter what choice the principal makes. There will be a network leader who will be an instructional helper to the principals but will not evaluate them. There will be a Community School District Superintendent no matter what choice they make.
 - B. Fair Funding – equity among all schools –average teacher's salary will remain the same in schools the first year. Chancellor is seeking input from all constituencies regarding fair funding for the future.
 - C. Accountability – Quality Review – Quantitative Review - attendance-surveys. Standardize test scores – every school will be judged on how much each child progresses for at least one year. Every child will be held accountable.

3. New Bus Routes – January 29, 2007
4. Parent Workshops – Lori Butera
5. Congratulations to the winners of:
 - iTeach Lite Technology Mini-Grant – 1 Dell LCD Projector and 1 Dell Laptop, 12 Hours, 2 Days Professional Development
 - MS 158 – English Language Arts, Melissa Gluszak
 - MS 172 – Science, John WalshRob requested that letters go out congratulating the winners and the members unanimously agreed.
6. Congratulations Middle School 158:
 - Jen Schecter, Music Teacher selected as part of the committee to write music curriculum for NYC
 - Mr. Sampson and his Math team are tied for 1st place for the Martin Luther King Jr. Competition – interviewed today in Westchester
 - Chosen by Avella for a Technology Grant
 - Selected as a focus school for Schools Attuned

Jackie stated that the District Map was made up adding MS 266 and copies distributed to the members to review before finalizing and having it blown up to a poster size bulletin.

Debbie brought up the subject of the Legislative Breakfast that was mentioned at the President's Council meeting. A tentative date of March 9th and more information by President's Council will be sent out.

Rob made a motion to adjourn the Business portion of the meeting and Debbie seconded, council agreed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

PUBLIC MEETING

The meeting of the Community District Education Council of District 26 (CDEC26) was called to order and chaired by Rob Caloras, President at 8:20 in the Conference Room 128.

Rob introduced the speakers:

- a. Melvin Meer – Chair of Community Board –
 1. Mentioned the Empowerment schools
 2. Math curriculums – spoke the damage being done in the schools as far as what is & what is not being done in the schools and informed the attendees to check out the U2.com website.

- b. Bernard Hanisch who distributed information on the math stats from 1991 to 2006 and summarized the stats between 1999 – 2006. Spoke about the students not passing the ELA exams.
- c. David Fields – spokesperson for the Ident-A Kid-Services of America which take photos & fingerprint children for protection purposes. Parents & guardians can carry this card in case of an emergency to give to any law enforcement. Representative looking for feedback to see if the schools would be interested.

Anita Saunders stated that this has to go before the DOE to get approval & to see if this is legitimate.

Rob introduced our Guest Speaker – Ms. Leonie Haimson – Executive Director of Class Size Matters – one of organizations that have been at the forefront of trying to reduce the class sizes in the schools. Rob informed the attendees that there have been many reforms in the last four years & class size reduction is not one of the reforms. Ms. Haimson is here to state why it should be at the top of the list & how the attendees can help to get it to the top and make sure it stays there.

Ms. Haimson passed around a sheet asking if anyone wants to be on her e-mail list of class sizes to write name & info on the sheet. She also stated a meeting will be set up with the legislators & that the UFT has been very active in this matter.

Ms. Haimson stated that class size matters all the way through high school.

1. What did court of appeals say about class size in the CFE case?
 - a. classes too large in all grades
 - b. classes have excessive sizes & it affects learning
 - c. high dropout rates; d. poor academic achievements
2. Professional judgment panels
 - a. professionals concluded that smaller classes in all grades are required in NYC schools.
 - b. No more than 14 students per class in grades K-5, 22 students in middle schools & 18 students in high schools.
3. Class sizes in district 26 schools.
 - a. wide disparities in class size exist, especially in elementary schools across the district.
 - b. Kindergartens rang from 16-25 students; 1st grade from 16 to 25; 4th grade from 19 to 36; 5th grade at PS 41 at 34; 8th grade at MS 158 at 34; most high schools have classes of 30 or more.
4. Graduation rates in high schools in Dis. 26.
 - a. Van Buren at 62% of 9th graders graduate in four years; Bayside only 66% of its students on time; Francis Lewis only 68% and Cardozo on 76% of students graduate in four years.
5. Benefits of smaller class sizes in middle & upper schools.
 - a. At least 10 studies have shown that smaller classes in grades 4-12 to higher achievement.
 - b. A study look at 2,561 schools across the nation.
 - c. Only factor correlated with higher scores was smaller classes, not school size, not teacher qualification or any other variable.
6. HS class size and dropout rates.
 - a. studies have shown that HS students with smaller classes are likely to remain in school to graduation and smaller classes have positive effect on wages later in life.

- b. National survey found that 75% of dropouts believe they would have graduated if smaller classes existed.
- c. Graduation rates rise with teacher/student ratio among Blacks & Hispanic students.
- 7. NYC middle school class sizes. NYC average 28 students in 7th & 8th grades. Nationally the 8th grade average 23.
- 8. In NYC most High Schools have about 150 students each. Nationally, high schools have an average teaching load of 89. In conferring with each student it would take an average of 37 extra hours a week.
- 9. Capacity and enrollment figures in D26 and citywide are highly flawed.
- 10. It would take \$7 billion to create about 120,000 additional seats so that class sizes could be reduced. Capital funds will not be used so instead, \$4 billion on new school construction will be used to create 120,000 seats. By including schools in commercial & housing developments might be something that should be considered in NYC.
- 11. Capital Plan compared with other cities. We need to expand & reprioritize NYC capital plan to create 120,000 extra seats.
- 12. Lawsuit of New Yorkers for Smaller Classes, Pena vs. Robles are suing to put class size charter amendment on the ballot so that 25% of CFE funds can be spent on reducing class size in all grades.
 - a. New Governor will ask to adopt accountability measures & that class sizes be reduced to levels on a par with successful school districts across the state.
- 13. Accountability plan of New Yorkers for smaller classes:
 - a. Achieve adequacy; b. Definition of adequacy; c. State approval; d. Local approval; e. Annual reports and audit.

Class Size Matters working with Assemblywoman Cathy Nolan to go for a resolution. Leonie asked the attendees to push your legislators.

Ms. Haimson ended with a quote from Ms. Norma Genao, principal at PS 185 in Harlem on class size reduction:

“Finally the children in a public school ... have a fair chance to succeed. The government is investing in our schools the right way, providing the resources the children really need ... For decades its been the thing we knew would make all the difference for our children, but I never thought I would live to see the day where it would actually happen.

...Now it should be expanded to all the schools in the city. All children in this city, this state, this country are entitled to the benefits of smaller classes. Speaking as an educator, it should not be a privilege, it should be a right.”

Question – Bernie Hanisch – why do HS have unsatisfactory graduation rates?

Answer – Leonie – 40% of high school students come in at grade level and fall behind. Larger class sizes cause disciplinary problems where as smaller classes reduce disciplinary problems.

Question – Melvin Meer – questioning funds

Answer – Leonie – setting up a commission to find sites for new schools. Why aren't they acquiring parochial schools, buildings setting around abandoned for years, why isn't the BOE buying these buildings? If the city is mandated to build schools these sites would be available to them.

Question – Dr. Portnoy – fire codes – are they violated?

Answer – Leonie – laws are not enforced.

Ms. Haimson states that everyone should make it known to their legislators that their children/schools deserve smaller classes. The legislators must be made aware of what is important in their district.

Rob spoke about adopting Ms. Haimson’s proposal and getting legislative approval but not one penny would come to district 26 based on the CFE decision. Ms. Haimson stated that if a proposal is adopted that it would not get any better. Everyone must unite. Ms. Haimson stated that parents, communities and constituents must flood their legislators within the next two months. The budget will be out April 1st.

Ms. Haimson stated that the Principals Union (CSA) is not cooperating. Principals feel smaller classes mean more classes would have to be supervised.

Ms. Haimson also mentioned that PTA’s need to raise money to hire more teachers and some of those teachers can come from NYU.

Ms. Cahn, Secretary of the President’s Council is asking that Ms. Haimson come to the President’s Council meeting and do a presentation.

John Tozzi – asked about teacher quality – Ms. Haimson stated that teachers leave due to low performing schools & class sizes. Most teachers go to Nassau County where they are paid more. Effective teachers perform in a smaller class environment and with their level of experience.

Rob thanked everyone for coming out and participating/discussing Class Size Matters.

Meeting ended at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Marian Mason, Administrative Assistant, CDEC 26.