

Community District Education Council District 26

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SPECIAL MEETING

MINUTES OF BUSINESS PUBLIC MEETING

Date: Thursday, January 29, 2009

Time: 7:00 P.M.

Location: MS 67, 51-60 Marathon Parkway, Little Neck, NY -Rm B44A

The meeting of the Community District Education Council of District 26 (CDEC26) was called to order by Robert Caloras, President at 7:05 pm in Room –B44A.

Roll Call: Rob Caloras, Erik DePaula, Irene Fennell, Marie Pollicino, Patrick McShane, Irene Cheung
Excused – Jeannette Segal & Vincent Tabone

Present – Anita Saunders, Community Superintendent

Business Meeting

1. *President's Report – Rob Caloras*

a. Attended Assembly Hearings on School Governance on January 29th along with Erik DePaula & Irene Fennel at Queens Borough Hall. Betsy Gotbaum-Public Advocate, Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott & Martine Guerrier and other DOE representatives who spoke on this topic. Community education councils 29 & 32 were present. Testimonies from Rob, Erik & Irene Fennel were submitted. (Rob & Erik's testimonies attached)

b. Queens Civic Association's next meeting is scheduled for Feb. 2nd. Rob will be speaking at this meeting.

c. Rob updated the School Governance & Recommendations and asked that hard copies be sent to all members of the NY State Assembly, NYS Senators and the Governor. Rob will do a cover letter to be attached. Rob made a motion and Patrick seconded. Council voted unanimously to accept.

2. Minutes – December 18, 2008

a. Rob asked had everyone had an opportunity to review the December 18th minutes. Rob made a motion to accept the December 18th minutes, Patrick seconded. Council voted unanimously to accept.

3. *Treasurer's Report – Erik DePaula*

a. Transfer of some funds to General supplies:

	Balance as of 1-28-09	Transfer	To
Equipment (332)		11	General Supplies (198)
Rental of Water Cooler (403)		16	General supplies (198)
Copier Maintenance (612)		90	General Supplies (198)
Total		\$117.00	General Supplies (198)

Erik made a motion to accept the changes and Patrick seconded. Council voted unanimously to accept. Council asked that paper be ordered (6 cases) since the supply was getting low.

New Business

1. Voting on prospective candidates – Dave Kerpen & Dina Quondamatteo
Votes taken for Dave Kerpen – 6 YES – 0 NO
Votes taken for Dina Quondamatteo – 6 YES – 0 NO
Rob welcomed Dave Kerpen & Dina Quondamatteo to the council.

VACANCY RESOLUTION – January 29, 2009

Resolution - To fill a vacancy on CDEC 26 this occurred on January 29, 2009

WHEREAS, Community District Education Council members are representatives of the parents and community-at-large; and

WHEREAS, a vacancy has occurred on Community District Education Council 26 (CDEC 26) effective 4-10-08 & 10-29-08

WHEREAS, Department of Education rules and Chancellor's Regulation A-140 state that when a vacancy occurs on a CDEC, the CDEC shall fill the vacancy at a public meeting, after consultation with Presidents' Council and other education groups; and

WHEREAS, CDEC 26 has followed the regulations regarding filling of the vacancy; and

WHEREAS, CDEC 26 has selected a the best qualified person to fill that vacancy; now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that in accordance with Department of Education procedures, Community District Education Council 26 hereby appoints **Dave Kerpen & Dina Quondamatteo** fill the vacancies as Council Members of CDEC 26, effective immediately.

APPROVED unanimously by vote: 6 – 0 (6 Yes; 0 No)

PASSED and ADOPTED this 29th Day of January, 2009

Rob announced that Dave Kerpen & Dina Quondamatteo are now members of the CDEC and welcomed them.

2. Irene Cheung – informed the council of her attendance at the Intergovernmental meeting which took place on January 29th. They mentioned about the cut on the fiscal budget due to the financial crisis. The initial budget proposal included cuts across the board and mostly the after-school programs. Since the numbers are changing day to day, they are not giving out the hard copy. There are no official figures for public announcement. They are asking the elected officials in Albany to give them flexible in their fiscal budget. Also, they are looking forward to receive some shares from the Federal Economic Stimulus Package.

Superintendent's Report – Anita Saunders

- Passing of Rick Hallman, former Principal, Cardozo High School
January 23, 2009
- PS 188 Annex, American Martyrs School – will be ready in September
- ELA Assessments – completed and currently being marked (teachers will be asked to mark papers due to cuts in the budget)
- CEC Elections
Selector Training – MS 74 – PTA Executive Board, President, Treasurer, Secretary
Candidates Night – March 2009
- English Language Learners (ELLs) – Citywide
148,401 = 14.1% Citywide ELLs
41.8 percent of students speak a language other than English

65,075 = 6.2% new immigrants
55% = Elementary K -5
17% = Middle School 6-8
28% + High School 9-12
Of those ELLs - 56.3% are native born
Dual Language Programs have increased to 81 programs

- February Break – 16th – 20th

Rob made a motion to adjourn Business meeting and Erik seconded. Council voted unanimously to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Calendar/Public Meeting

Rob called public meeting to order at 8:15 p.m.

Speakers

1. Gwen Sachs – gave the council an update on the electrical upgrade issue which is to take place at PS 26. They are working with the ISC department which met on January 16th. The next meeting is scheduled for February 11th for further discussion.
 - a. Speed bump – Advised to contact their local precinct and community board.
 - b. Crosswalk blocked – advised to contact the DOT
2. Mary Vaccaro, UFT Representative -
 - a. SLT – congratulated those on the win
 - b. Budget cuts – 15,000 teachers will be laid off in September (5 yrs or less of service)
Nationwide - Feb. 10th - wear BLUE to rally against budget cuts
March 5th – rally downtown City Hall
 - c. Scholarship applications are out and have started receiving them from students – Scholarship Dinner will be held on May 14. Teachers with 30 years of service will also be honored.
 - d. UFT School Governance report will be coming out.
2. Robin Appel – Yoga Instructor – program that serves to help children be physically fit, learning ready, self-aware and apply self-care as well as increase self-confidence. There are two parts:
 - a. Yoga Education program itself, which is a nationally recognized, cost effective program for schools that fulfills the national standards for health and PE.
 - b. Yoga Education – tools for Teachers – allows classroom teachers to be trained to use simple yoga-based techniques as effective behavior and classroom management activities.

Guest Speaker – Lori Benson –Director of the Office of Fitness and Health Education (DOE)
Rob introduced Lori Benson. Spoke about an article in the Newsday highlighted an audit that was conducted which found that very few schools in New York State mostly Long Island are in compliance with the DOE regulations.

Ms. Lori Benson gave an overview of the curriculum:

- a. study in 1999 of students
- b. 2003 assessment of elementary school students and their BMI (Body Mass Index) which showed they were overweight (50%)

- c. Rolling out professional development courses – have workshops for teachers which are free.
- d. Outlined different programs such as C.H.A.M.P.S.

Overview

- § Provide an update on physical education and comprehensive health education K-12 in New York City under Children First.
- § Review the achievements and progress of District 26 schools in these two content areas.
- § Discuss how families and communities can support student development of lifelong healthy fitness habits.

Fitness & Health Education: Objectives

Rationale:

- § The New York State Education Department establishes instruction requirements.
- § NYC students are at the epicenter of national epidemics including obesity, diabetes, asthma, pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS.

Goals:

- § To build capacity among school educators and administrators to provide high quality instructional programs that meet the NYSED requirements and the needs of their student populations.
- § To help students develop life-long healthy fitness habits.

Fitness & Health Education: Priorities

Priorities for Fitness & Health Education Under Children First

- Create Office of Fitness & Health Education to support schools in meeting instructional standards.
- Implement curriculum and out-of-classroom opportunities for health related fitness and comprehensive health education.
- Provide free professional development to increase the capacity to deliver effective teaching.
- Develop the NYC FITNESSGRAM assessment with student and parent reports in 9 languages.
- Expand rigor in Adaptive Physical Education classes for students with disabilities.

Fitness & Health Education under Children First

Curriculum Reform

- § Physical Best curriculum for physical education classes
- § Comprehensive health education curriculums for K-12.
- § Updated HIV/AIDS curriculum with age-appropriate lessons for each grade

Increased Accountability

- § Each principal’s annual Performance Review requires schools to: meet NYSED instructional requirements, 75% minimum of students participating in NYC FITNESSGRAM, and completion of a survey related to the annual delivery of K—12 HIV/AIDS lessons.

Improving Teacher Qualifications and Facilities

- § Recruitment and retention of certified teachers.
- § Improvements in school facilities through the DOE Capital Plan.

§ Innovative strategies for increasing physical activity in classrooms.

Targeted Support for Schools

§ OFHE provides free curriculum and training for all schools.

§ Staff can attend professional development sessions or OFHE staff can go to schools to provide technical assistance and model effective instruction.

Physical Education Requirements

New York State Requirements

ü **Minimum 120 minutes per week**

ü **K-3:** all students on a daily basis.

ü **Grades 4-6:** not less than 3 times per week.

ü **Grades 7-8:** not less than 3 times per week in one semester and two times per week in the other semester.

ü **Grades 9-12:** not less than 3 times per week in one semester, and not less than two times per week in other semester for a total of 8 semesters, or daily physical education for a total of 7 semesters. This is the equivalent of 4 credits in physical education to qualify for a diploma.

Additional NYC Requirement:

ü **NYCFITNESSGRAM** reports for a minimum of 75% of students in all schools each year.

Looking to the Future

§ Extending training opportunities for educators and parents to leverage the ability of school and home to create and foster healthy lifestyles among young people.

§ Expanding the use of NYC FITNESSGRAM data in collaboration with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

§ Increasing opportunities for Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity in classrooms and in before and after school programs.

Ms. Benson stated that she has 10 openings for elementary schools to participate in a **special free program** for classroom teachers entitled, **“Let Me Play.”** It involves training classroom teachers and who are given \$759 in equipment and shown activities they can do in their classrooms, the auditorium, gym, outdoors, etc. She can even come to the school and do the training. Rob Caloras ask that she hold the spots for D26 schools. Anita Saunders will e-mail the teachers to see what schools are interested in this program.

Rob made a motion to adjourn meeting and Marie seconded. Council voted unanimously to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

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

Marian Mason

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

PUBLIC HEARING

SUBJECT:

Governance of the New York City School District

PURPOSE:

To review the impact of governance changes which granted mayoral control of the New York City school system

QUEENS

Thursday, January 29, 2009

10:00 a.m.

Queens Borough Hall - Meeting Room 213

120-55 Queens Boulevard, Kew Gardens, NY

Good morning Assemblywoman Nolan and members of the Education Committee. My name is Erik De Paula and I am the Treasurer of Community District Education Council 26, located in Northeast Queens. First, I would like to thank all of you for giving us parents the opportunity to weigh in on the issues of school governance and mayoral control. Last year, in response to Assemblywoman Nolan's efforts to reach out to the CDEC's and seek our input on this issue, CDEC 26 passed a resolution on this subject. I won't go into detail, as I believe it has been sent to you and as the President of CDEC 26, Mr. Rob Caloras, is also hear today and plans to put our resolution into the record. However, I would like to summarize the recommendation contained in our resolution and explain why we believe these changes would improve the DOE. In a nutshell, our resolution recommends that the legislature keep the NYC DOE under the control of the Mayor, but with significant changes which would increase the ability of other government officials to check the mayor's authority with respect to the DOE. Our recommendations are as follows:

1. Change the Department of Education into a New York City agency with City Council oversight and an Education Commissioner.
2. Create five separate Borough Commissioners appointed by the Mayor upon the advice and consent of the City Council and the Borough President of the affected borough.
3. Increase the authority of the Community District Superintendents to enable them to coordinate and evaluate instruction and operations in their district schools. The Education Commissioner of the Borough should appoint Superintendents, upon the advice and consent of the affected CDEC's and the District Superintendent should be responsible for education in their district schools and should have no responsibilities toward schools outside their district.
4. Give each Borough President control over a budgetary aspect of education for his or her respective borough, e.g., transportation.
5. Don't recreate school boards, as an effective check on Mayor's control cannot depend upon volunteers and must come from full-time, paid officials such as City Council members and Borough Presidents, supplemented by CDEC's and their localized insights.

We believe more checks on the mayor's authority are necessary because our present situation is one in which the mayor and the chancellor have almost unlimited authority in the area of education and, as a result, don't listen to anyone other than the foreign consulting companies that they employ, companies that are not familiar with NYC Schools. When their plans don't work, they wind up going back to the old system or instituting a completely new one. We have a situation where the registration process for Kindergarten and pre-K seems to change every year, where the gifted and talented testing process seems to change every year, where we go from districts to regions and then back to district a few years later, and

where the Chancellor tries to take away some of the core responsibilities of the School Leadership Teams, in violation of the New York State Education Law and state regulations.

The fight to challenge the removal of the SLT's responsibilities is a good example of why the primary checks on the mayor's authority needs to come from government officials with staffs and resources. When the Chancellor took away the authority of the SLTs to develop school Comprehensive Education Plans and school budgets, a parent filed an appeal the NYS Education Commissioner. CDEC 26 intervened in this appeal and I acted as their attorney. Fortunately, we won on most of the points that we raised in this appeal. However, the appeal placed a tremendous burden on the parent and CDEC members who pursued it. I had to take a great deal of time away from my law practice to adequately represent CDEC 26 and if the appeal to the commissioner was not an available option, I do not believe we would have had the time or the resources to pursue litigation in the court system. This is why the primary checks on the mayor's authority ought to come from full-time government officials. Simply put, parent volunteer organizations do not have the time or the resources to fight City Hall and CDEC's, although they are officially part of the DOE, are, in reality, parent volunteer organizations.

Now, we would like parent volunteer organizations to have some role, just not the primary role, in checking the mayor's power. I would love to see the mayor and DOE officials give serious consideration to the input of CDECs and other local groups. Currently, they do seek the input of parents, but I feel, and I know many other parents share my belief, that these efforts are just for show and that the Chancellor really doesn't give serious consideration to our input. I believe that giving CDEC's some power over the selection of district superintendents, as CDEC 26 has recommended, would put pressure on the DOE to actually listen to our input.

Finally, I would just like to point out that this mayor appears to be quite influential when it comes to the issue of education and many of your colleagues do not represent districts in the City of New York so they do not hear complaints and horror stories from city parents like those of you that do represent the city. Therefore, my concern is that the mayor may be able to go up to Albany and convince a lot of people that he is doing a great job and the current system should remain unchanged. And my hope is that you, Assemblywoman Nolan, and you colleagues who do represent the city will ensure that your colleagues who don't represent the city are fully aware of what is really going on so that they will not be misled by the Mayor's spin and agree with him that the current system should remain unchanged. Thank you.

**SCHOOL GOVERNANCE
QUEENS BOROUGH HALL FEBRUARY 5, 2009**

Respectfully submitted by Robert I. Caloras, Community District Education Council 26, President

Good morning, my name is Robert Caloras and I am the parent of 2 children in our public schools. My daughter is a fourth grader at PS221 and my son is a 7th grader at MS67. For the past 6 years, I have been the President of Community District Education Council 26 and before that I was a co-President of the PTA at PS221. During that time, CDEC26 has conducted public meetings about education matters, including science curriculum, school report cards, the new budget formula for schools and the organizational structure of our schools. CDEC26 has recently conducted 2 forums on school governance and I have discussed school governance at our District's school's PTA and President Council's and Community Board 11 meetings and I testified at the hearings conducted by the Public Advocate. CDEC26 has prepared a report on school governance with findings and recommendations that has been submitted to several members of the committee and will be provided to all members. Based on the above and other observations, it is clear that the current law on school governance must be changed.

There are two main reasons for this conclusion: 1. The current law's rules and intent are not being followed. For example, the Panel on Education Policy, district superintendents, and community district education councils have been marginalized to the point of irrelevance. 2. The current law lacks meaningful checks, balances, and oversight. The findings in the Final Report of Commission on School Governance Volume 1 and CDEC26's report on School Governance support this conclusion. However, the recommendations made in the Final Report are not sufficient to ensure the current law is carried out as originally designed. More is needed to create a system where parents and other interested parties have meaningful input.

Changes are needed to protect against the Mayor seizing more power than allowed and limiting the power and authority of others referred to in the current law. During the last six years there has been much deliberate disobedience of the law by the Mayor and Chancellor. For example, the stripping of authority from district superintendents to the point that in some districts, principals bar their superintendent from entering the school. The Chancellor has also made district superintendents spend over 75% of their time out of their own district facilitating data assessment at out of district's schools. Several district superintendents are responsible for schools not only out of their own district, but in several other districts with schools in the Bronx and Brooklyn.

During the last six years the Panel for Education Policy has not been sought out for advice on education policy by the Chancellor. Rather, the members are but a rubber stamp and risk dismissal if disagreement is suggested on policies created by the Chancellor. Similarly, Community District Education Councils are not sought for advice on education matters and only learn about policies after they have been fully formulated by the Chancellor. Any discussion with CDECs, after formulation is a charade that has not created any change in the already set policy. Moreover, the limited power in the law given to CDECs over zoning lines has been circumvented by the Chancellor. The law provides that CDECs approve proposed zoning changes. Prior to Mayor Control, zoning included student placement, including those for the Gifted and Talented programs. Under the current system, the Chancellor determined that only the central office at Tweed could do student placement. He has also designated most new schools as lottery or application schools and as such are not subject to existing zoning lines and CDEC approval. Furthermore, even if the concerns of CDECs are listened to, these concerns are never accommodated in policies. Finally, the Mayor and Chancellor have shown utter disregard for the local school districts by first eliminating them and then eviscerating them of any semblance of authority.

It is clear that the Mayor and his Chancellor want to aggrandize their own extensive power at the expense of all other people and organizations, even though the current law requires input by these others. It seems they want to force these others to bring lawsuits, however, CDECs cannot afford the expense or time of

litigation, the Panel for Education will not sue since it is controlled by the Mayor, and district superintendents will not sue, since they risk dismissal by the Mayor or Chancellor.

In taking the stance that there should be no change to the current law, the Mayor and Chancellor seek to preserve a situation that has given them a level of power not contemplated by the current law. Yet, they claim this power is needed to enable them to continue their policies which they argue have been so successful. Logically, they should be seeking changes to the current law that codifies the power they have obtained and claims are necessary. Perhaps they aren't, because such absolute power violates fundamental principles of fair government that members of the Senate and Assembly and the Governor would not abide. So it is better to argue for the continuation of the current law and pretend it authorizes the current policies and attitudes and belittle those who seek changes.

Based on the above, the School Governance Law must be changed to ensure a meaningful role, with clearly delineated powers and authority, for the Panel for Education Policy, CDECs, district superintendents, and local school districts. Furthermore, it is necessary to give oversight authority over the education system to an independent organization. In the CDEC26 report, such oversight is found by making the Department of Education a City Agency. The Public Advocate's Report on page 10 paragraph V & VI, in essence, supports this by recommending that the City Comptroller should have auditing authority over the Department of Education and the Independent Budget Office should report on the Department's performance. These recommendations are prerequisites for ensuring appropriate control of and the integrity of the New York City Public Education system.

In drafting the new law to reflect these recommendations, it bears repetitive emphasis that authority and responsibilities must be clearly expressed. I suggest itemizing both to preclude, or at least limit, any power grabbing and overstepping by the Mayor and Chancellor. In this vein, there must be a mechanism to enforce the Law. The past six years have shown that informal political pressure and complaints from CDECs and other parent groups, and teachers and principals cannot be relied upon for this responsibility. A sufficiently strong full time, paid organization is needed to make sure that the law is followed. CDEC26 suggests that the City Council have this authority, at least to the degree it has oversight authority over all City agencies.

Other changes needed to bring more balance to Mayor Control are: Making the CDECs viable by giving them an integral role in the system. One way to do so is to give these councils the power to advise and consent to the Chancellor's choice for their respective district superintendent. Also, the CDECs should have the authority to do a yearly report to the Chancellor that evaluates the district superintendent is also necessary. The Chancellor must provide the CDEC with an official response to this report. Making the Panel for Education Policy more than a rubber stamp by giving non-Mayor appointees a majority of one and not having the Chancellor as a voting member. This would require the Mayor or Chancellor to show the worth of a policy in a way that should not be too difficult, if the policy has merit. Making district superintendents meaningful in their respective districts. One way this can be accomplished is by giving them clear authority over instruction and student placement in the District.

In conclusion, the current School Governance Law must be changed. It was not written to equate Mayor Control with dictatorial power. There is a difference between Mayoral energy and autocratic license, between leadership and authoritarianism. It is a challenge to create a law that allows leadership without allowing for easy degeneration into authoritarianism. The current law does not meet that challenge, but if you change it by creating effective checks and balances, clear lines of authority, and meaningful oversight, that challenge will be met.