

Community District Education Council District 26

Address: 61-15 Oceania St, Bayside, New York 11364

Tel: 718.631.6927 **FAX:** 718.631.6996 **Email:** central/cec26@nycboe.net

PUBLIC FORUM ON SCHOOL GOVERNANCE/MAYORAL CONTROL

Date: Wednesday, October 29, 2008

Time: – 7:00 P.M.

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

The meeting of the Community District Education Council of District 26 (CDEC26) was called to order and chaired by Rob Caloras, President at 7:05 p.m.

Rob Caloras welcomed everyone to the CDEC 26 forum on School Governance/Mayoral Control.

Rob introduced the CDEC members: Patrick McShane, Jeannette Segal, Marie Pollicino, Vincent Tabone, Erik DePaula, Irene Fennell & Irene Cheung

Rob introduced the elected officials who were present – Senator Frank Padavan, Assemblyman Mark Weprin, Senator Toby Stavisky & Assemblywoman Margaret Carrozza’

Elected Officials Representatives – Bruce Eiber (Councilman D. Weprin) – Diane Barrett (Assemblyman Rory Lancman) – Anne Krzyzanowski (Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan)

Rob stated that the state legislature gave the Mayor total control over the school system in 2002. In doing so, the state dissolved the 32 local school boards and created the Community Education Councils, similar to the boards but without their power.

Rob stated that last year the CDEC had a meeting on this issue and members went to PTA meetings and spoke on this. As a result of the meetings the CDEC prepared a report and resolution.

Rob stated that he invited the City & State elected officials, the Mayor, the Chancellor or any DOE representative.

Speaker #1 – Senator Frank Padavan

1. Law sunsets in June of 2009- The law needs to be changed so that the CDEC's will have the ability for increased oversight.
2. Hearings will be held in all boroughs of the city along with the State Senate to discuss the changes.
3. Main component is that parents & communities need to have input. Parents and stakeholders are routinely shut out by the Department of Education. (ex.: cuts to school bus routes, cell phone ban, the revamping of the special education evaluation process and the opening of new small schools within established ones)
4. Spoke about Betsy Gotbaum’s recommended changes that would spread the mayor’s current power and give more muscle to the Panel for Education Policy along with parents and communities in education decision making of their schools. Senator Padavan agrees with the recommendations made by the Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum.
5. Stated that the Community Superintendent should be re-established and staffed to oversee the schools within the boundaries of respective districts and provide information to parents.
6. The PEP needs to be changed so that it no longer will be a rubber stamping panel.

7. Spoke about testing to kindergarten students which is harmful due to the fact that they cannot sit still for 90 minutes and the results would not be accurate.

Speaker # 2 - Senator Toby Stavisky

1. Position is to keep Mayoral Control, but make changes to fix it.
2. There needs to be true accountability since there is none now.
3. Chancellor should be required to consult with the CDEC's when selecting/evaluating the District Superintendent. A process should be developed to assure the CDEC's have a meaningful input into decisions that concern the budget, general education practices and the opening and closing of schools within their districts.
4. Parents & its communities should have more of a role play in deciding up's good for their district. There is no venue where parents can both learn about and have a meaningful dialogue on proposed policy and program changes.

Speaker # 3 - Assemblyman Mark Weprin

1. Mayoral Control is good in theory, but there has been no accountability.
2. The law specifically states there should be 32 school boards and superintendents. Parents need a place to turn to for help.
3. Principals should not be in charge of budgets. Principals are spending more time working on budgets when they should have more time to run their schools.
4. Superintendents should be monitoring teachers instead of running around to other schools out of their district.

Speaker # 4 – Assemblywoman Margaret Ann Carrozza

1. Agrees with everything Assemblyman Mark Weprin stated but also believes that we should have meaningful parent input.
2. Get rid of outside assessors and rid of waste (ie) \$5 million courier services.

Speaker # 5 - Bob Friedrich (candidate for City Council)

1. School governance will continue but changes must be made. We must have the ability for parents to have more of a voice. Parents have been denied a reliable resource to help solve school-related problems.
2. Testing does not provide a measure of learning.
3. Lifting of cell phone ban

Speaker - Dave Keprin (parent and current candidate for CDEC)

1. On the right track with Mayoral control but changes need to be made.
2. Believe in accountability.

Speaker - Mel Meer – Chair – Community Board 11

1. There is no legislative oversight to the current law.
2. Superintendents should be in there own districts and not all over the city.
3. States not giving power to CDEC's.
4. Bring back old school board – received public attention.

Speaker – Diane Barrett (representative for Assemblyman Rory Lancman)

Will take information back and discuss

Speaker - Rob Speranza (Candidate for the 26th Assembly District)

1. Kids education based on test scores.
2. Parents need to be involved in their children's education & parent's need to take the schools back.

Speaker - Alessandra McNally (parent from 221)

1. There have not been any clear answers from elected officials where the money is being spent.
2. How and why can money from the budget be taken away overnight from schools without any recourse. Where is the accountability?
3. Need independent auditor to review how money is being spent.
4. Why are we spending thousands to bring over Consultants from other countries to review our schools?

Rob stated that the DOE should be a city agency that can be audited.

Speaker - Don Freeman (Time Out for Testing Organization)

1. Spoke about required testing

Speaker - Giuseppe Vaccaro (parent)

Spoke about the DOE not answering requests from parents. Called several times regarding a bus issue at his child's school and is still awaiting response. He stated that there is no place for parents to turn to on the local level.

Speaker - Dena (PS 46)

Dena wanted to know what parents can do to insure that pressure is placed on our elected officials to change the law.

Rob replied that we will send our resolution to PTA's asking them to adopt them and then send the resolution to elected officials.

Speaker - Mary Vaccaro (UFT Representative)

1. Teachers are upset & nervous due to testing practices taking place until January.
2. Spoke about quality review – teachers want their schools to look good.
3. Informed audience of a rally Nov. 18th in Albany regarding budget cuts.

Speaker - Suzanne Windland (PTA Co-President)

1. Spoke about how can parent change this policy?
2. Must find someone to be the Mayor.
3. Meeting taking place at Borough President's office (Helen Marshall).
4. Meeting locations are a problem for some working parents.
5. Focus on the problem that the Superintendent is being sent out to work in different parts of the city.

Rob thanked everybody for coming out and voicing their concerns.

Meeting adjourned 9:00

Respectfully submitted by Marian Mason, Administrative Assistant, CDEC