

## **Community District Education Council District 26**

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### **MINUTES OF BUSINESS & CALENDAR PUBLIC MEETINGS**

**Date:** Thursday, November 19, 2009

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

**Location:** MS 67- 51-60 Marathon Pkwy, Little Neck, NY 11004-Room-B44A

The meeting of the Community District Education Council of District 26 (CDEC26) was called to order by Robert Caloras, President at 7:10 p.m.

Roll Call: Rob Caloras, Pia Alexander, Ismael Fuentes, Dina Quondamatteo, Irene Cheung, Erik DePaula, Jeannette Segal, Irene Fennell & Susan Shiroma

Excused: Marie Pollicino - Esther Jung

Also in attendance were Anita Saunders, Community Superintendent & Lori Butera, and District Family Advocate

#### ***Business Meeting***

Rob acknowledged the visitors: Gene McSweeney representing Assemblywoman Carrozza'; Mary Vaccaro, UFT Representative; PTA presidents; Ali Najmi representing Assemblyman Mark Weprin & Jaime Cobham, Queens ISC.

1. Minutes – October 22<sup>nd</sup> minutes – Ismael Fuentes made motion to approve the minutes, Jeannette Segal second and council voted unanimously to accept.
2. ***President's Report***
  - a. Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> – attended the PEP meeting along with Linda Courtney & Kitty Azhar, Co-President's of President's council regarding the article pertaining to ravioli. The next meeting will be Queens also.
  - b. CEC Borough Wide meeting – new incarnation of the Chancellor's statutory obligation to be advised by Education Councils. This took the place of the President's Alliance Group where all councils would meet and discuss issues regarding the city.

Pia, Susan & Ismael attended the Queens School Planning Presentation by Debra Kurshan & Martine on (Date and time). Pia brought up the overcrowding issues in schools (high schools high schools are. Debra Kurshan stated that "As you know high school admissions is city wide so we do not look at the overcrowding by district. We continue to work to address the overcrowding issues by building additional high school seats in Queens and providing additional options for students throughout the city".

Anita stated that she met with the Office of Portfolio regarding the overcrowding.
  - c. Articles covering the overcrowding in high schools. Rob made a visit to Francis Lewis and stated that they do not get that many second round school students. Mr. Shama stated that only about 50 students a year are accepted after they have been non-matched after the first round of non-special H.S. selection. About 30 to 40 percent of his students are zoned for FLHS and the remainder are out of zone that comes for the special programs offered at the school, which

are deferred from other schools, or have been accepted based on their application. There are lots of activities taking place in which security is very much aware of the students who are attending.

Rob visited PS 221 – issue is the students who are not having breakfast are not allowed into the school early so there are students ages 6-7 years old being kept outside the school. There are not enough aides to cover this. Rob stated that there is a regulation that prohibits this from taking place. If the school opens at a certain time they must let all the students in whether they are having breakfast or not.

Anita Saunders stated that she doesn't think there is a regulation like this. There must be teachers in the building to supervise the children. If all the students are let in during breakfast time there must be teachers or aides to supervise the other students. Rob was asking if PTA's could assist in the school with the non-breakfast students.

Rob stated that PS 18 – issue of a crossing guard needed. School will check with community board.

Rob stated that MS 172 – 150 people attended the PTA meeting because they gave out awards. Rob made a motion to the council to give out awards (bags and certificates) at the Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. Rob is asking that every school in D26 to give two names of students in the fifth & eighth grades who are the most enthusiastic (it could be anything). Rob is asking for Anita's assistance in sending letters to the principals.

Council voted unanimously to present awards to students.

Another issue is the ban on the snack sales which is cutting into school funds.

d. Attended President's Council meeting, November 17<sup>th</sup>.

e. Rob spoke about the flyer being made up for backpacking for the Chancellor's meeting, December 16<sup>th</sup>. Translation will be included on the flyers.

**Budget** – Pia Alexander (Treasurer)  
As of November 1, 2009

**COMMUNITY ED  
COUNCIL BUDGET**

**CEC #26**

**Balance as of  
November 1, 2009**

**Budget FY 10**

**20,000**

| <b>EXPENDITURE<br/>CATEGORY</b>   | <b>QUICK<br/>CODE</b> | <b>OBJECT<br/>CODE</b> | <b>ACTIVITY<br/>CODE</b> | <b>LOC<br/>Code</b> | <b>AMOUNT<br/>SCHEDULED</b> | <b>EXPENDED<br/>TO DATE</b> | <b>BALANCE</b> |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| General Supplies                  | 062641                | 198                    | 0514                     | QS26                | 8,950                       | 786                         | 8,164          |
| Procurement Card                  | 062641                | 198                    | 0518                     | QS26                | 2,000                       | 2,000                       | 0              |
| Stipend Reimbursements            | 062641                | 496                    | 0519                     | QS26                | 1,300                       | 182                         | 1,118          |
| Local Travel and Food<br>Expenses | 062641                | 451                    | 0515                     | QS26                | 5,700                       | 1,011                       | 4,689          |
| Copier Maintenance                | 062641                | 612                    | 0516                     | QS26                | 850                         | 835                         | 15             |
| Educational Consultant            | 062641                | 686                    | 0520                     | QS26                | 1,200                       | 300                         | 900            |
| Scheduled Sub-total               |                       |                        |                          |                     |                             |                             |                |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                      |                       |                        |                          |                     | <b>20,000</b>               | <b>5,114</b>                | <b>14,886</b>  |

NOTE : General Supplies includes: photocopying (198), printing (101), postage (117) , subscriptions and publications (198)

1. Pia spoke about the Financial Disclosure form which needs completion and turned in by December 14<sup>th</sup>. Reminder will be sent out again to council members regarding disclosure forms.
2. Discussed allocating \$500 toward student recognition. Suggestions - buying a book from Barnes & Noble (\$10) plus their certificate. Rob suggested that Marian check with the DOE to see if this is acceptable. Council voted unanimously to allotting \$500 to recognizing students.

## **New Business**

### **1. School Visits/PTA**

**Susan Shiroma** – Attended PTA meeting at PS 266 – issues raised were regarding the new ELA & math testing April 26-April 28<sup>th</sup>. IEP needing separate testing facilities and school might not be big enough for this project.

MS ----- PTA meeting - Oliver's Scholars program which target Latinos and Blacks youths, deadline January 13, 2010. Susan informed the attendees to inform 7<sup>th</sup> graders, free tuition, very hard to get into. (Susan – please complete)

**Ismael Fuentes** – PS 186 school visit on Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> – no concerns – goal is 100% collaboration working very hard toward that goal – 1/3 school populations is IEP and they are tapping into IEP resources. They have a full-time gym teacher but no Art teacher or Art room. Student population is up to 386. Staff working very well with the D75 school on the premises. Principal hired 12 teachers over the summer.

### **Pia Alexander**

PS 213 Title 1 meeting – met principal and parent coordinator. Will set up school visit and advise council.

PS 133 PTA meeting – well attended – met principal. Will set up school visit and advise council.

PS 188 PTA – attended Title 1 meeting.

PS 178 – (Parent STOP & DROP) safety issue and accidents. Precincts ( 111<sup>th</sup> Pct) informed of this issue (illegal U-turn). Spoke about campaigning where you shame the parents into making them more responsible. Rob iterated that the CDEC had a meeting with the Dept. of Transportation, local community board members, Senator Padavan and other officials. The turn out was not well received.

**Irene Fennell** - spoke about the PTA Meeting at PS 41- Everyone complaining about parking on 35<sup>th</sup> Ave adjacent to the park. They have been given tickets of \$100 +. Will draft letter to precinct.

Rob stated to the attendees that Mary Vaccaro, UFT Representative had prepared a flyer for the December 16<sup>th</sup> Chancellor's meeting and on the reverse side they are collecting "Food for the Needy" at Our Lady of Lourdes Food Pantry, Queens Village on November 23<sup>rd</sup> & December 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Superintendent's Report** – Anita Saunders

- Welcome
- 311 Phone System – expanded and serves between 1200 and 1500 calls per day; calls routed to appropriate departments of DOE
- Promotion Policy Grades 4 & 6 – passed
- Social Studies Test Grade 5 – November 16 & 17
- Presidents Council - Presentation by Superintendent
- MS 158 – Student Art Exhibition Winners at Centerview Partners, “Believing in Our Future”
  - § Patricia Cinco
  - § Lauren Falco
  - § Cynthia Liu
  - § Shirley Qian
  - § Jakaran Singh
  - § Melanie Seah
- MS 67 International Night
- Open School Parent Teacher Conferences

**Happy Thanksgiving to All!**

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**PUBLIC MEETING**

Rob introduced the guest speaker – Ms. Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger, Executive Director-Research & Policy Support

Panel voted to expand the promotional policy for 4th & 6 graders. Previously the promotion policy has been in effect for grades 3, 5, 7 & 8.

Talk about the findings from the Rand Corporation study in which they did a first of its kind study. There are very few research cities on the effectiveness or the lack thereof of promotion policies. We are committed to having the outside evaluators study this important promotion policy for four (4) years since 2004 when the program was implemented. It studied children through the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The 300 page document is on the DOE website under News/Announcements listed as the Rand Report (10-20-09). Decision to make all grades 3 through 8 have standardized promotion criteria. All students go through the same process in order to be promoted to the next grade prior grades 4 & 6 before the promotion policy was implemented in 2004; teachers used the multiple promotion criteria instead.

- a. Children in D26 actually were then held to a different promotion criteria perhaps different from D15 because teachers in schools were using the criteria that was not standardized across the system so there was no objective criteria.
- b. Struggling students were not identified early which is one of the cornerstone's of this policy, so the first time that family would really hear that their child's promotion was in doubt was in January or February of the school year but there was no intervention prior, early on in the school year that triggered that intervention. The same promotion in doubt still exists but there no mechanism for identifying the students earlier. The proposal was in 2004 and then it was implemented this is what is in front of you then they entered a new promotion policy at grades 3, 5, 7 & 8 and now to complete, at grade 4 & 6. Now all students grades 3-8 will have the same promotion criteria, must meet the Level 2 on both the English Language Arts & Math test and if you don't meet the

Level 2 because you we know that kids are not always wonderful test takers. You have your Level 2 on the test, if you don't pass – only families who advocate for their child before the objective criteria are put in place. The parent would say to the principal or teacher that they disagree with this decision or they don't see why this is happening or they want to appeal. The policy as it stands now which is a very strong part of the policy is that children because they don't reach Level 2 automatically get an appeal and that appeal is in the form of a portfolio. The whole city administers the same portfolio at the same time of the year to all students who may have not met the Level 2 promotion criteria. Then if they exceed those benchmarks they are automatically promoted at the end of June. The promotion policy was not put into effect to hold over more students, let's weigh that out now. If you look at the comparison of the retention rate or the promotion rates, pre-promotion policy to now, you will see that less students being held over now especially in D26 you have hardly very few students that are below the Level 1. Again the policy was not to be put in place to hold over many more children and I think that was one of the misconceptions to identify the students who needed help who needed actual services, who needed the intervention and get these students who were retained that they would have a personal intervention plan. The former criteria was in effect a form of social promotion, because teachers relied much more on judgment than it was about what was the results on a standardized test that was a benchmark criteria for everyone, so in the old policy what you saw was children who were very well behaved, who did their class work everyday who were getting promoted. Children who were acting out and giving the teachers a hard time were the ones who were held over but in a lot of cases it was not about the skills the children had but rather about the teacher's "un-objective" judgment or subjective judgment. Social promotion is pushing kids through who may not have been ready but because of other factors we allowed them to be moved on to the next grade.

Rob talked about the newspaper articles and the perception was laid out by the DOE and the Mayor that what went on before was that they were pushing kids ahead that had no reason to be pushed ahead and it is being done almost for political reasons. Ms. Bell-Ellwanger stated that families who knew could go to the principal or teacher and say "I want my child promoted". Teachers and principals were uncomfortable and they did not have this type of solid standardize criteria to say that your child is not meeting standards. Level 2 is not meeting standards, it means that you are approaching standards and you have a long way to go. Rob stated that the Mayor got his way.

Question – under the old system there were no checks and balances, weren't there exams given? Ms. Bell-Ellwanger stated they were used in part. If a child had a Level 1 but had good attendance and good craft work they could have been promoted. If you go back to earlier data (would be willing to send to Anita) that there were many many students who were being promoted.

In grades K-2 as it stands today, it is a decision to be made with the family and the core, it is a child by child basis, you need to look at the development of the child, and some think it should be the subjective criteria.

In grades 3-8, prior to the promotion policy there was a multiple criteria, a child could have been promoted but have not met the promotion criteria of the test yet someone else could have been promoted, met the Level 2 but poor attendance. Two different outcomes.

## Promotion Policy

RAND's findings – 8<sup>th</sup> graders – getting them ready to go to high schools - not only is it Level 1 & 2 on the assessment but they must now pass their core subjects (ELA, Math, Science & Social Studies). They still have the opportunity same as the other grades but if they fail one or more core courses; they must attend summer school and pass the course they failed during the school term. Studies show that when students come in with failing courses, failing test scores it's a recipe for drop outs rather than graduation. In order to support students academically to meet promotion standards is to make sure that schools have the tools they need to help fourth and sixth grade students, especially those struggling, to meet and exceed promotion standards.

*Tools:* Guidance Counselors – Inquiry Teams – Ongoing Assessments – Accountability tools - Academic strategies and programs – ARIS Parent Link

Irene Fennell? – Schools that have to cut guidance counselors, cut the IS program, cut their special programs. We still have the same amount of demographics and children that require these services but there is no money to help them this is what it comes down too. D26 is very fortunate because there are not that many children but there are schools in the district where 50% of their population requires all of this attention and less than 50% of what they need to do it.

Ms. Ellwanger stated the situation is real and that no one is disagreeing with that challenge. There are a lot of different ways to serve students needs. There are after school programs and schools do have control of their budget to make decisions about how best to serve their population. Under this administration, schools have much more discretion on how they need to serve their population

RAND findings between March 2006 - August 2009 follows the 5<sup>th</sup> grade promotion policy –data analysis done – thousand of surveys/studies done on teachers, administrators, case studies in 8 schools and found study to be much more useful than they thought it would be and going through it in order to make the policy better. 5<sup>th</sup> graders who scores level 1 or 2 in fourth grades performed better under the policy than comparable students who were not subject to the policy.

Fifth graders subject to the policy performed significantly better on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade assessments than they would have in absence of the policy. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade those students who were retained under the policy did actually better than the comparable students. Before the RAND study they looked at the Chicago promotion policy & the Florida promotion policy that's about all the world had before New York City. In Chicago what they said they saw a little bump up but in subsequent years there was no difference but all that good that happened in the year they got retained actually went backwards once they went into a different grade. They're saying that those students who were retained in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and went on in other years actually did better than those students who were promoted at level 1 or had been retained under the former policy. This policy is about the early identification and the provision of giving children at level 1 & 2 the academic intervention so that they don't fall behind. Everyone thought about how the students would feel about school, their environment, their teachers, what are their reactions going to be? They surveyed thousand of students and found no negative socio-emotional affects; in fact the children who were retained under the policy actually had more positive feelings toward their school. They were more attached to their school, more attached to their teachers; felt that their teachers had given them help. It was a really important finding. It gave a lot of feed back that they were expecting to receive. What they want to do is follow this study and follow these students through high school. Positive impacts on student achievements were also sustained into middle school. Compared the children who were retained and found that the children did not have bad feelings toward their school, they in fact felt they were attached to their school. Maybe they felt that because of the extra attention, they were not sure. You could still receive intervention and not feel good about the place your in what was found was that the children felt good because they had actually in the subsequent years they had went forward and not backwards.

Administrators reported that the promotion policy focused the school instructional efforts of schools and made parents more concerned about their child's progress and provided additional resources to support low achieving students.

The study also made some important discoveries about what works and what needs improvement in terms of interventions: One on one tutoring; small group tutoring; Schools should consider that Saturday prep academies were only effective if students attended. What the survey found is that most of the time, families and children did not want to go to Saturday school because of other things happening in their life. They would have to attend a certain number of sessions in order for it to be effective, so that when you're implementing summer school it's a little bit easier. Success academies also had a significant and positive impact on math performance. Programs are entered into but they don't consider how much of an impact and will the children go? Two interventions were put in place (Saturday & summer school) and found that the attendance was quite poor.

#### RAND Recommendations

Continue early intervention of students and provision of Academic Intervention Service (AIS). This is one of the key factors.

Enable AIS providers to work consistently with students who need services.

Encourage schools to consider the expected duration and participation when constructing Saturday programs and continue to encourage students to attend summer school.

#### Timeline for rollout of grades 3-8

The Timeline for 2009 has shown that the schools have already identified the average student and working on giving them academic support and intervention.

Winter, 2010 the "promotion in doubt" letters will be distributed to families and there will be conferences to see what is needed and many will continue provision of academic support.

Spring 2010 - ELA and math assessments – communicate promotion decision to families – summer school placement and support

Summer 2010 – summer school – August assessments – communicate final promotion decisions to families.

In the consultation process, it was presented at CEC meetings by Community Superintendents and questions were answered throughout October and November. Superintendents encouraged parents and community members to review the proposal and provide feedback.

**In the Chancellor's regulation, the Promotion policy should be made for a promotion for a child under grade 3 should be made in conversation with the family and the school but in the end the school makes the final decision. Families have the opportunity to appeal any decision along the way once it is captured and embedded and all the avenues have been exhausted.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

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