

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

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

**Date:** Thursday, March 29, 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, Jackie Montgomery, & Marian Mason, Administrative Assistant

Excused: Melissa Dorfman, Yen Shia Chou & Bona Sun

Also in attendance was Judith Chin, Region 3 Superintendent, Janet Won, Local Instructional Superintendent, Marlene Siegel, Regional Operations Center Director

Guest Speaker: Robert Gordon, Managing Director for Resource Allocation (DOE)

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

##### ***President's Report – Robert Caloras***

- a. Reviewed January 25<sup>th</sup> & February 8<sup>th</sup> minutes for corrections, changes or additions/deletions. Rob made a motion to accept the January 25<sup>th</sup> & February 8<sup>th</sup> minutes and Jackie seconded. Council voted unanimously to accept the both the minutes.

##### **Correspondence**

1. E-mails sent out regarding school repairs and projects. Rob received a response from Debra Perry, SCA and was informed that anytime a school is looking for a project to be done that cost more such as capital improvement project that she would like for the CDEC's to submit an amendment to the capital plan. This was introduced by Ms. McGrath, Principal, MS 67 where as they needed three roofs. Ms. McGrath put in the request and was informed that it should come through the CDEC by way of an amendment to the capital plan. Rob has requested more information from the custodian of MS 67 as to what is needed. Rob asked that a vote be taken as to the CDEC's approval to submit an amendment to the Capital Plan to indicate the need of 3 roofs at MS 67. Carol made the motion and it was seconded by Jackie. Council voted unanimously to approve the repairs to MS 67. Rob will do the amendment once information is received from the custodian at MS 67.
2. Letter sent out to the DOE regarding the concerns to the reorganization and waited funding.

3. Rob prepared a resolution format and sent to the CDEC members for their comments and suggestions:

### **To Postpone Department of Education's Children First Restructuring and Fair Student Funding Plan**

Pursuant to New York State Education Law Section 2590-e subsection 14, Community District Education Council 26 has held public meetings and forums and its members have attended meetings and forums on the Department of Education's Children First Restructuring and Fair Student Funding Plan, during which information was obtained and members of the public spoke and expressed their concerns. Pursuant to New York State Education Law Section 2590-e subsection 18, Community District Education Council 26 deems it necessary to advise the Chancellor and the City Board on the following matters:

WHEREAS, having considered and reviewed the Department of Education's Children First restructuring and Fair Student Funding Plan;

WHEREAS, both focus on extensive programmatic and structural changes, and overlook the proven initiative that improves the quality of education, smaller class size;

WHEREAS, our schools and classrooms are severely overcrowded and our children's capacity for learning is suffering from this situation;

WHEREAS, for many middle and high school teachers, given their huge class sizes (within contract limits) and teaching loads, just spending 5 minutes out of class conferring with each student, and another five minutes correcting his or her weekly homework would take an additional 40 hours per week;

WHEREAS, the Department of Education has just contracted with IBM for \$80 million to produce a new computer system designed to help teachers individualize instruction to meet the needs of each student, however, with the current class sizes of 30 or more in many schools, and teaching loads of 150-180 students, this system and any system created to properly assess our students will be impossible to implement;

WHEREAS, reducing class size makes a big difference in a child's education in many ways, including giving students more time to interact with their teachers;

WHEREAS, the proposed programmatic and structural changes to the school system will not be beneficial unless class sizes are reduced;

WHEREAS, Empowerment Schools are less than one year old and have not been fully evaluated regarding their effect on students learning and academic achievement and principals accountability;

WHEREAS, though the Department of Education claims that many principals of Empowerment Schools used their additional funding and flexibility to hire extra teachers to reduce class size, many principals reported that they were simply sent more students by Tweed as a result, effectively eliminating any reduction in class size;

WHEREAS, the Department of Education has admitted this may have occurred in many instances, and yet refuses to promise that it will not happen again;

WHEREAS, restructuring of the entire school system, after the restructuring of 2003, will once again destabilize and impose hardship

on students, parents, teachers, and administrators trying to obtain services; which did happen in 2003;

WHEREAS, despite claims to the contrary, there is no independent evidence that in the last round of reorganization, \$200 million was ever redirected directly into the classroom;

WHEREAS, the reorganization proposals place emphasis on a principals management skill at the expense of a principals pedagogical skills;

WHEREAS, many material details of the proposed restructuring plan are still being determined;

WHEREAS, weighted student funding, as constituted in this plan, will create competition for scarce resources in the schools such that schools will have an incentive to hire lower-paid, inexperienced teachers and that other implications of the plan for schools' budgets are not clearly spelled out;

WHEREAS, to have more effective and experienced teachers, the best way to do so is to improve the classroom learning environment and reducing class size and improving instruction are the most effective methods to do so;

WHEREAS, according to the Educational Priorities Panel, a smaller percentage of the overall Department of Education budget has gone to instruction each year;

WHEREAS, the headcount and salaries of Department of Education employees and consultants has grown substantially, and continues to grow, with a projected increase of 12% in spending for Department of Education staff next year;

WHEREAS, there is no evidence that any school system that has adopted weighted funding has made significant progress in student achievement;

WHEREAS, the Department of Education's Children First Restructuring and Fair Student Funding Plans were created without any meaningful participation by parents, guardians, or teachers;

Therefore, be it RESOLVED that the Community District Education Council 26 rejects the Department of Education's Children First Restructuring and Fair Student Funding Plan and calls upon the Mayor and the Chancellor to postpone implementation of this plan and immediately call public hearings on the priorities for education spending and restructuring of the New York City Public Schools.

Jackie made a motion to pass the resolution and Rob seconded. The council members voted unanimously to accept the resolution.

The following was passed on March 29, 2007 by the Community District Education Council 26.  
COMMUNITY DISTRICT EDUCATION COUNCIL 26 RESOLUTIONS

Discussion – Debbie Strassberg stated that once the Mayor & Chancellor makes up their mind, nothing will change and that Rob did a magnificent job in drafting up this resolution but felt it was long, lengthy and wordy and if someone reads the first sentence you would be lucky. Rob stated that he did a lot of cutting and pasting from different sources and a lot these sources also sent resolutions. Rob feels that the CDEC still needs to state its position on this plan. Rob stated that the when the DOE got wind of District 30's they felt compelled to address every concern.

4. Rob stated that the Legislative breakfast was well attended. Spoke on some issues of the CDEC's such as Class Size Reduction.
5. Rally attended with Susan Shiroma at Borough Hall sponsored by the Alliance for Quality Education.
6. Attended PS 115 – Planet Earth Day – story told by a mime.
7. Informed the attendees that the UFT Scholarship Dinner met in March to select the candidates. Winners from PS 205, 221, 266, 74 and 213. Dinner is set for May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

***Treasurer's Report – none***

## ***Committee Reports - Zoning & Outreach; Curriculum & Grants Information***

### **1. Zoning & Outreach**

- a. Susan mentioned that at the March 8<sup>th</sup> meeting (Alliance for Quality Education) the politicians asked parents that when you look at reducing class sizes, kindly pay attention to reducing class sizes at the middle and high school levels.
- b. March 26 – represented the CDEC 26 President at a TWEED meeting for all the city-wide CDEC Presidents to get a feeling as to whether or not they would like to meet regularly to work on issues together with the Administrative staff at TWEED. Susan stated that the presidents were quite angry and frustrated at TWEED and did not want to meet as a group but agreed unanimously not to work to distribute memos. They wanted to point out to the Office of Parent Engagement is that TWEED has not demonstrated that it is listening and paying attention to parents throughout the city and did not want to meet regularly.
- c. March 12<sup>th</sup> – attended a Parent Leader’s meeting at TWEED and met with the new Chief Family Engagement Officer, Marie Guerrier. Marie gave a presentation in regard to what her plans are.
- d. March 21<sup>st</sup> – attended a grant meeting with New Visions organization to speak about the new reform.
- e. School visits – Feb. 13, MS 158 with Lana; PS 173, March 1<sup>st</sup> with Carol. Susan spoke a situation at PS 173 that was also sent to the politicians asking that the DOE remove the Region 3 Suspension Site off the property at PS 173. Would like to discuss at the next meeting; March 20<sup>th</sup> –school visit at MS 67 with Rob.
- f. Circulated around the room information on a workshop for principals, parents & teachers thinking about writing a proposal regarding a VH1 save the music foundation and sample grants.

Jodi & Rob– school visit – March 2<sup>nd</sup> -PS 186 – read Dr. Seuss to the students-received thank you letters from the students. The only issue they have is a flooding issue when it rains; school visit at PS 188.

Carol – school visit, March 20<sup>th</sup> with Rob, MS 67; PS 191 on March 27<sup>th</sup> and they house D75. Wheelchairs were lined up but everyone fits right in and they get along very well; PS 266, March 19<sup>th</sup>, very small class sizes and the only problem is the elevators don’t work sometimes.

Lana – school visit 158; 159 has a great track record and the only problem is safety (double parking). Rob stated that they should contact the community board they are very perceptive about helping the schools with this problem but the CDEC would not mind in writing a letter and that they should also get in touch with the DOT so that they can come and do an assessment. They are interested in a nutrition grant program. Susan stated she would be willing to go and give them some information.

Susan that the school visits is one of the key roles of the council to get out there and meet with principals. The CDEC learns about different things in each school, such as, which middle schools in the district teach French & Spanish to sixth graders (MS 67 & MS 74). It’s the principal’s choice as to which curriculum they bring into the schools. Susan also acknowledged Melvin Meer in inviting the Council members to the Community Board meeting and introduced them to the Network Team Leader of the Queens High Schools of Teaching. Would like very much to work with the President’s Council and Community Boards and also educating the PTA presidents in what

the Community Boards can do for them with regard to traffic safety issues. Every school in the districts is having the same or similar problem. This is why it is important for the CDEC to do school visits and walk throughs.

### ***New Business –***

1. Carol stated that middle school children are not getting their choices of high schools in the district. Susan stated that D26 is strong because we have excellent local high schools that are academically sound. The new application process continues to be a daunting process for parents and students. Susan suggest in having someone come in and talk about high school selections and also to update us on progress being made at the new small high schools in Queens that our District 26 students should be interested in attending. Carol feels that it should be brought to the table and spoke about. Debbie stated that there are children who have not even been processed and this has been going on for three years. Rob suggested bringing in a DOE High School representative to speak about how the selection policy is ran.

### ***Old Business***

1. Debbie spoke about the Hall of Science project and stated that there is no way that this will get off the ground due to the cost and trying to organize it. This will not take place this year. Rob reiterated that President's Council and the CDEC had allocated funds to do a district wide event such as a day at the Hall of Science. Debbie mentioned that she came in contact with a Child Lifeline Center parent coordinator who had done a program at the Hall of Science and she stated that it was done on a much smaller scale and a controlled environment. Debbie & Cathy spoke about having a fun day in the park.
2. Rob spoke about the Wish List where the CDEC would send out paper to the schools.

### ***Superintendent's Report – Judith Chin***

Ms. Chin informed the attendees that the details of the reorganization process are ongoing and will be completed soon. She spoke about the four Learning Support Organizations and more specifically the Integrated Curriculum and Learning Support Organization in which she is the CEO. She informed the attendees of that the website: [icilso.com](http://icilso.com) or [org](http://org) has more detailed information.

April 23<sup>rd</sup> is the kick-off for the announcement of all the School Support Organizations where the Chancellor, the Mayor and other dignitaries will attend in NYC, including the Partnership School Organizations which are the non-profit organizations, colleges and universities that submitted proposals and will be identified. Questions were asked as to how many choices schools will have. Principals will have their first choice honored. Principals who choose an Empowerment School Organization or a Learning Support Organization as their 1<sup>st</sup> choice will not have to choose a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>, however if anyone chooses a Partnership support Organization (which can only support a number of schools) and if they are not in that number they default to their second choice, same as with the second choice, they will default to their third choice. Everyone will know their choice by the 1st of June, if not sooner.

Informed the attendees that she invited Marlene Siegel, Regional Operations Center Director to answer any questions regarding the Fair Student Funding policy for District 26 in regard to its impact on D26 schools.

Rob introduced Mr. Don Freeman, member of the Time Out for Testing Organization to give an overview and an understanding of his organization and what it is about.

Mr. Freeman spoke about the article in the Ledger newspaper from Rob Caloras about the reorganization and felt it was well written. Mr. Freeman stated that there was a meeting of 1500 parents who met regarding the reorganization and they were quite upset & there were disgruntled parents. Parents are starting to be heard. Mr. Freeman felt that the CDEC's need to start judging the Chancellor and that parents are not being heard but this is about to change.

Mr. Freeman distributed a handout from the researcher Martha Foot which outlined data. Informed attendees that Assemblyman Weprin will be holding a meeting April 11<sup>th</sup> opposing high-stakes testing. Outlined that the high-stakes testing focuses on test preparation which often results in children having fewer opportunities to learn about and experience art, music and culture. The pressure forces teachers to teach the test instead of allowing students to explore new areas express their creativity and enjoy learning.

Rob informed the attendees that Mr. Freeman will be invited back due to a time factor and thanked him. Ms. Chin stated that we should get this information out to the parents and tell them who this gentleman is and the information he has & she would like for a DOE representative to be present also.

Susan asked whether the CSA (Principals Union) supports the Time Out for Testing. Mr. Freeman stated that the principals union does not have a stand on it but Randi Weingarten supports Time Out for Testing.

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

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## ***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 8:35 in the Conference Room 128.

Rob introduced the speakers:

Marlene Siegel – Regional Operations Center Director on budgets & Robert Gordon, Managing Director for Resource Allocation (DOE) who will speak on the Fair Student Funding Plan.

Marlene Siegel – stated that the budget remains complexed & unfair. There are approximately 90 different funding streams with different rules. It is unfair that two schools with the similar characteristics but getting two different amounts of money. The Fair Student Funding is based on four principles: 1. funding follows each student to the public school that he or she attends; 2. each student receives a base level of funding dependent only on grade level – students also may receive

additional dollars based on their special needs or other factors; 3. the dollars arrive at schools as real dollars-dollars that principals and their teams can decide how to spend-and schools are held accountable for their results; 4. key funding decisions are based on clear & public criteria.

Fair Student Funding means a school funding system that is: *simpler*, which means that 2/3 of school's budgets will be allocated and shown on a single page; *fairer*, which means that the number of schools receiving far more or less per student than the average for general education tax dollars would shrink and there will be differences in school funding based on schools' unique needs, but the differences will be based on clearly stated principles and *better results* which means principals have more freedom to choose the best way to spend their dollars but they will be held accountable. Principals will receive more money to educate students with low levels of achievement but not failing to improve the achievement of the students.

Mr. Robert Gordon did not agree with the results of Mr. Freeman and stated that test scores have gone up in NYC in the last four years.

Informed attendees that the proposal was put out in January and the DOE met and spoke to 100's of parents, principals & spoke to CDEC's.

1. Committed to all schools – do not want to destabilize
2. The reason this is being done now because there is lots of money coming in from the CFE and wants to make sure the dollars go out in a fair way. It is not about taking away what people have it's about making sure that new dollars are allocated in a way that people can understand.
3. Mr. Gordon did an overview. Stated that the system is unfair. Outlined that there is a situation in NY where you can go to two schools, not far apart, and they have the same number of students and they are getting different levels of funding like a difference of \$1000 per student apart. This transfers into different levels of experienced teachers, the number of teachers.
4. Dollars should match the student & each child should have a certain amount of funding and additional dollars for those students with special needs.
5. Mr. Gordon spoke on grade levels weights from the handout given. They are the proposed weights allocated at each grade level:

<i>Grade level weights</i>	<i>FSF weights</i>	<i>Dollars per student</i>
K-5	1.00-1.25	\$3000-3750
6-8	“ “	“
9-12	“ “	“(should be more)
<i>Needs based weights</i>		
Poverty		
K-5	0.15-0.25	\$450-750
6-8	0.05-0.20	\$150-600
9-12	0.05-0.20	\$150-600

English language learners; Low academic achievement extra dollars (depending on the level upon entering); Special education (core); Transfer under NCLB. Every school will continue to receive a base level of funding or a foundation. There will be a “hold harmless provision” which assures that successful school will not be destabilized by reduction in funds. Schools will carry forward their hold harmless from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009. A commitment to fund schools so they can continue paying for existing faculty, even as their salaries increase in the future. This protection will be available to all faculty positions where it is currently available.

Teacher's salary – will not change or lose its resources. No school will lose money in regard to the changes.

Spoke about hiring of new teachers and the way it will be handled. Proposing under the Fair Student Funding, schools should not be asked to pay the actual costs of teachers who are already on their budgets, however, when hiring of new teachers into their schools for the first time, principals will be asked to pay the actual costs. This will protect schools that already have many high-cost teachers and will encourage greater fairness and transparency over time.

Q. Rob reiterated to Mr. Gordon that after the plan was introduced did you attempt to talk to parents, communities prior to creation of the plan.

A. Mr. Gordon stated that he spoke with principals and had a lot of input over a number of years, but did not attempt to talk to parents.

Q. Rob asked once the plan was introduced, he asked can you give one specific change that was made as a result of the feedback that you received from the communities.

A. Mr. Gordon had 100% confidence when all done, there will be a significant number of changes. At this time cannot discuss.

Q. Rob stated that on page 3 of the handout you compared 3 schools (huge variation in school funding) where you talk about the historical, inequitable funding. Is it true that all the schools compared will receive different funding?

A. Mr. Gordon stated "yes". He spoke about poverty and Title I schools. He also stated that there are no Title 1 schools in D26.

Rob's concern is that the Chancellor said at least 130 non-Title I schools might receive cuts as a result of this program. Rob feels that these schools should not be subjected to concerns that they might have cuts in their budget. Mr. Gordon reiterated that there are 150 schools that were not Title I schools (50% poverty) that received above the typical per capita level of funding. Mr. Gordon outlined poverty and non-poverty. The share of schools above and below the average were the same among high poverty and lower poverty schools, in other words, the general drift of this is that schools that are similarly situated are getting the same level of funding.

Q. Debbie asked that if a child comes from a Title 1 school to a non-Title 1 school, will the money follow if the school is a non-Title 1 school? Mr. Gordon stated "yes".

A. Mr. Gordon outlined those schools receiving NCLB students that the schools will be receiving support.

Q. Jackie – spoke about level 3 & 4 students.

A. Mr. Gordon will not get funded. Gifted & Talented students will be looked at next year. There are programs set up for Gifted & Talented not weights.

Q. Jodi spoke about teacher's salary and the funding process.

A. Mr. Gordon stated that the new teacher's salary would be reviewed.

Q. Debbie Strassberg outlined to Mr. Gordon that no parent was ever questioned by Mr. Gordon's committee and have not received anyone's opinions in regard to the FSF policy and feels this is a work in progress and that the children are being used because a dollar amount has been attached to each child and the committee is not looking at each child as a child but rather as a dollar amount. If a child is coming to a school at a certain level and they are funded at that level, and if that student drops and needs additional help, will there be additional funding for that child? Feels that it is unfair to attach a dollar amount to a student and feels that this money will not be fair funded because each child is different and each child changes from day to day. Feels that if a child hits a road block and need extra help, where would it come from? The

school will now be short money because they will not be able to pay for this additional help. Where is the money coming from to support the child?

A. Mr. Gordon stated that they will not receive extra funding if they drop a level.

Q. Debbie asked if the schools will be funded properly for all the additional help they need meaning, will each school based on the amount of children per school, will each school have enough money for assistant principals, guidance counselors, all school base support teams. Will each school be funded properly so that each school has exactly what it needs?

A. Ms. Chin stated that nothing will change. Each school will be looked at separately.

Q. Susan Shiroma pertains to middle schools. There are five large schools that feed into three high schools. Wouldn't the base dollar go up?

A. Mr. Gordon stated that there's a misprint in the handout on page 8 and that the funds would go up.

Q. Carol Gomez – wanted the explanation of students with interrupted education.

A. Mr. Gordon stated that they are immigrants who didn't get a lot of schooling. A program has been set up to serve these students.

Q. Principal Dapolito – What will happen to special education students in CTT (Collaborative Team Teaching) classes.

A. Mr. Gordon stated that 95% of classes will be funded with 6 students or less. Funding will be given to open the class if 6 students are enrolled. Students may participate in these classroom types on a part-time or full-time basis.

Q. Rita questioned components (weights regarding low achievements & teachers salary).

A. Mr. Gordon stated that the principal will make those decisions. Will be pushing as many dollars as they can into the schools (221 million) have gone to schools).

Q. Mary Vaccaro, UFT Rep – doesn't understand why teacher's salary are a part of this plan and fears that principals will hire the cheapest teachers available, meaning they would have to spend more time helping out the new hires instead of running the schools. Ms. Vaccaro stated that D26 has the highest seniority rate which means the most expensive.

A. Mr. Gordon stated that the purpose is to free up dollars. Principals will work with the school leadership reps and make judgment calls regarding experience, seniority, educational quality and they will in turn figure out what is the best way to go. In D26 they will have experienced teachers. The average salary was about \$2500 above the city average.

Q. Andrew Chin – why is his child being penalized to be in a good school and why are they allocating more money to people who have lower incomes? Just because the kids are higher performers, why should they be penalized because it's not fair to a child in this district? Feels that they are taking from high performance schools and giving to low performance schools.

A. Mr. Gordon said that while there is no current plan to give extra funds to high performers, it may be considered in the future. Under this plan they are attempting to distribute equally. There will be lots of schools in middle class neighborhoods that are eligible for additional funding but the plan will not be taking from high performance to give to low performance.

Q. Melvin Meer – questioned asked about “breakage” and project arts funding. Feels that as a parent the principals should not have the authority to make decisions on what curriculums to have in their school. Feels that children will only be graded on standardized testing not on their singing or poetry which he feels is important. Feels that some principals are not sensitive to the arts and the money will be used for other projects.

A. Mr. Gordon – introducing a number of ways to measure the quality of arts program in the schools. Quality reviews will be done; parent survey will be done to grade the school. Will keep an eye on every dollar that is spent. Stated that empowerment schools spent more on the arts this year and next year art spending will increase. Mr. Gordon stated by next year the arts spending will go up. Mr. Gordon also stated that breakage will be put in which will fully fund Special Education classes.

Q. Bernie – spoke about more money going to the schools means a better education. He stated he didn’t believe that. Ernie spoke about classes that were not disciplined also and children who cause the others not to learn should be taken out and put into another school so as not to disturb those who are trying to learn.

A. Mr. Gordon stated that the money will be distributed fairly as they can & hold the schools accountable for their results. The principal has the right to seek higher security if needed.

Q. Karen – questioned teacher’s salary.

A. Mr. Gordon described how the rules under which schools pay for teachers and other staff. Schools will continue to be able to afford experienced teachers but will also have more freedom to make the choices that best serve the students.

Rob thanked Ms. Judith Chin, Ms. Marlene Siegel & Mr. Gordon for taking the time to come out an answer questions for the community.

***Meeting ended at 10:15 p.m.***

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