

Community District Education Council District 26

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MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS/PUBLIC MEETING

Date: Thursday, April 17, 2008 - **Time:** – 7:00 P.M.

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

The meeting of the Community District Education Council of District 26 (CDEC26) was called to order by Jeannette Segal, 1st Vice President -CDEC at 7:15 p.m.

Attendees: Irene Cheung, Erik DePaula, Jeannette Segal, Irene Fennell, Marie Pollicino & Vince Tabone
Excused - Michael Kaleda & Patrick McShane

Late – Rob Caloras

Present – Anita Saunders, Community Superintendent, Lori Butera – District Family Advocate

Secretary's Report –

1. Marian if everyone had a chance to read/review the March 27th minutes or make corrections. Vincent made a motion to adopt the minutes as is and Irene Cheung seconded. Members voted unanimously to accept the minutes.
2. Marian informed council members that their activity sheets for April is due by the end of the month and all expenses should be put through for signature. Marian also informed the council members that at the May 29th meeting the Ballroom Dancers will be performing at MS 74, 7 p.m.

Treasurers Report – Irene Cheung – read the balance of each account

Irene Fennell suggested that there was a parent who works at PS 41 and does the website for the PTA there who would be interested in looking at what we have.

Balance as of April 7, 2008							
						BUDGET	20,000
EXPENDITURE CATEGORY	QUICK CODE	OBJECT CODE	ACTIVITY CODE	LOC CODE	AMOUNT SCHEDULED	EXPENDED TO DATE	BALANCE
General Supplies	014648	198	0522	QS26	2,881	2,881	0
P-Card	014648	198	0523	QS26	9,799	9,799	0
Copier Equipment	014648	315	0532	QS26	2,320	2,320	0
Local Travel and Food Expenses	014648	451	0525	QS26	1,800	1,127	673
Stipend Reimbursements	014648	496	0526	QS26	2,000	868	1,132
Other Admin Consultants	14648	686	0536	QS26	1,200		1,200
TOTAL					20,000	16,995	3,005

Council members requested to review the other bids. Marian will e-mail other bids to members for review.

New Business

School Visits

Vince stated that attending a PTA meeting at PS 158 in which they had their Science Fair getting the girls more involved. The sixth & seventh graders received proclamations.

PS 158 math’s club had a math competition in reciting the ----- **to the second degree.**

Vince made mention of a park beautification project taking place citywide to combat soil erosion by planting flowers. This will take place on -----

At ----- from 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Irene Fennel spoke about the Science Fair at PS 41 in which one family built the Taj Mahal. Families and vendors supplied the food.

Fundraiser took place April 4th which was the International night. They also had the Lion Dance in which the ballroom dancers performed. 157 raffles were sold along with 600 dinner tickets.

Jeannette Segal spoke about PS 98 in which they raffled off baskets and raised \$15,000. Jeannette will get a date from the principal to do a school visit & inform the council.

Erik DePaula stated he attended the PS 173 PTA meeting. Spoke about the portable sites (which were used for suspension sites) still being on premises. Erik informed attendees that he will write to elected officials to have them removed. Anita also mentioned that she will speak to someone also.

Erik asked that we get another date to do a school visit. Marian to contact principal and set up another date.

Web Navigation

Spoke about the district map showing the schools in district 26 and their location on the website.

Old Business

1. Council members discussed the Governance recommendations which was created by Rob and reviewed by all. Vince stated that he made corrections to this document and sent to council members for comments.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMUNITY DISTRICT EDUCATION COUNCIL 26

Robert Caloras **Jeannette Segal** **Dr. Lana Zinger** **Patrick McShane** **Irene Cheung**
President of the Council *First Vice President* *Second Vice President* *Recording Secretary* *Treasurer*

Council Members: Erik DePaula, Irene Fennel, Michael Kaleda, Minkyung Lee, Marie Pollicino, Vincent Tabone

A general governance principle that has served our nation well is republicanism. The belief that no one person shall rule the community and everyone shall have a part in the public’s business guides and supports all discussions of government rule. We have a representative republic that reflects this concept. We have separation of powers to ensure this principle is carried out. The founding fathers created the U.S. Constitution and imbued it with separated powers for three independent branches of government, each checking and balancing the power and authority of the other branches. This system is time consuming and not the most efficient, but it is a brilliant one. It has enabled the United States to be one of the longest running republics in the history of the world. New York State and all other states adopted this system of separation of powers with checks and balances. New York City is a municipal corporation governed by both state law and the New York City Charter and the New York City Administrative Code (i.e. local law) as well as the Rules of the City of New York. Historically the City has had an exceedingly strong executive branch and a relatively weak legislative branch (previously the Board of Estimates and the City Council – now

solely the City Council). There are City agencies delineated by the City Charter with enumerated powers and Mayoral agencies but all are ultimately answerable to the Mayor although the City Council which controls the purse strings can exercise considerable oversight through hearings and other measures including the budget process. Unfortunately, in the area of education, arguably under the old “Board of Education system and clearly under the present Department of Education model there are insufficient safeguards reflecting a clear commitment to republican principles of governance. For the Mayor alone rules the roost in public’s education and no member of the community has a substantive part in that rule.

The reasons for the Mayor being given this control are manifold and notorious. Suffice it to point out that the immediate predecessor system was deemed corrupt, inefficient and not responsive. Legislators sought to remedy this by giving the Mayor what he and previous Mayors had asked for, control and accountability over the New York City public education system. Unfortunately, in handing over control to the Mayor, Legislators failed to consider that several School Districts thrived under the previous system – District 26 being one. The Legislators also failed to realize and consider that the Mayor had plenty of power under the previous system as a result of his control over the City’s budget. These realities must be factored into the review of the current system.

Also to be factored in, is the power given to the Mayor of New York City by judicial case law. The case of the Council of the City of New York vs. Michael R. Bloomberg, 6 NY3L 380 (Court of Appeals, N.Y. 2006) ruled that the Mayor acted within the scope of his authority when he refused to abide by an anti-discrimination statute passed over his veto by the New York City Council. This case, in effect, overruled 200 years of case laws that gave the Judiciary the power to review the validity of actions taken by the branches of government. This case, in essence, ended the practice of separation of powers and checks and balances relied upon since 1802, as settled in the U.S. Supreme Court case of Marbury vs. Madison. This New York case gives the Mayor the authority to not enforce a law or regulation, passed by the duly elected members of the New York City Council, that he or she believes is unconstitutional or violates a state or federal law.

This authority can be used by the Mayor in refusing to adhere to a City Council Law that seeks to end the ban on cell phone possession at New York City public schools. The Mayor can claim this law violated the State Law on Municipal Home Rule that requires a referendum for legislation that “curtails any power of an elective officer.” The City Council would then have to bring a successful lawsuit to get the Mayor to enforce the law. This is a result of the Court of Appeals case discussed above that changed the old system of checks and balances that would have forced the Mayor to abide by the law and bring the lawsuit seeking to have the law invalidated. Any law regarding New York City School governance must consider this authority of the Mayor. By ignoring the authority inherent in the Mayor’s office, the current system failed to provide effective assurances of checks and balances and republican principles of governance.

The weak checks in place - the Education Panel, Community District Education Councils and Community District Superintendents - were not designed to balance the Mayor’s control, and have proven largely ineffective. Members of the Education Panel risk dismissal if they express any discord with the Mayor’s desired policy. Community District Education Councils have not been utilized as sources of information on community needs and their advice on education matters is neither sought nor given attention. Community District Superintendents have been given responsibilities that keep them out of their district 85% of their time, often traveling from one borough to another.

While avoiding the school governance laws’ limited check on his power, the Mayor’s Chancellor has, whether by design or by haphazard trial and error embarked on the most destabilizing policies in the history of New York City’s public education system. Two major reorganizations of the school structure have been instituted. From a region system, comprising of districts, to a single school system within five years. Just when the first reorganization was being understood and implemented, the Mayor changed course and instituted a new organization system. Given that both reorganizations have been well documented, a further detailed description is not needed. However, it must be noted that neither reorganization was preceded by meaningful community nor non-DOE input. The Chancellor announced the policy change desired and then conducted public hearings. CDEC 26 conducted hearings on the second reorganization and offered recommendations; no response was given by any member of the DOE to these, and no meaningful change to the policy was effected as a result of the public hearings.

In a similar manner, a new funding formula was devised and announced by the Mayor and Chancellor. CDEC 26 had hearings and made recommendations. Once again, no response from a member of the DOE, but one recommendation was

adopted in the final plan. Significantly, this recommendation was also pursued by the United Federation of Teachers since it concerned schools being held to charge teachers' salaries against the schools' budgets. The change on this policy came a few days prior to a planned rally by parents and teachers in opposition that was expected to have several thousands in attendance. Clearly, the pressure for this change to the announced funding formula was tremendous and is not easily replicated.

In the most telling example, the Department of Education created the office of the Chief Family Engagement Officer without seeking the Community District Education Councils' advice. In fact, the Chief was appointed without any CDEC input or the input from any parent organization. How oxymoronic, appointing a person to serve as a liaison to parent organizations without consulting parent organizations. There were also the policies regarding Progress Reports and increased numbers of standardized tests and the concomitant greater reliance upon them. Again, no effective checks or balances on these major policy changes, that were enacted despite much opposition and criticism.

In sum, it is the observation of CDEC 26 that no significant change has occurred to a significant policy of the DOE as a result of the public hearing process. Nor has there been any such change as a result of the mechanisms in place that are designed to check and balance the Mayor's authority. Consequently, the current law lacks an effective method to curtail the ability of the Mayor to effectively do as he or she pleases with the public education system in New York City.

The current system is also without a mechanism to hold the Mayor accountable for his/her performance. There are many issues that are addressed by candidates seeking to become Mayor and education is not necessarily a determining one in the minds of the majority of voters. Moreover, once elected, it is too easy to excuse lackluster results due to insufficient time for the "new" policies to work. Also, too few in the electorate understand education issues in a way to question and understand the enormous data put out that is supposed to track student performance and school effectiveness. In any event, this data is often self-contradictory or divergent from non-DOE data. Thus, the elections for a Mayor's first and second terms may not be construed as referendums on education issues. Then, in the second term, as a term-limited official, the Mayor needs to heed no voice but his/her inner one. Such lack of accountability is frightening in light of the level of control given and cannot continue.

CDEC 26 firmly believes that improving the New York City Education system requires paying attention to the proposals and ideas from those closest to the system – the students, parents, teachers and administrators. The current system does not institute this and allows the Mayor to ignore these vital members of the education community. The system also lacks any check or balance or accountability system on the Mayor's control. Coupled with the case law in New York State, the current school governance is by dictate. Policies are implemented at the Mayor's will and whim. The current system lacks any ability to offer and impose upon the Mayor the need to vet policies for their efficacy prior to implementation or even thereafter. For example, during the past five years, several elected officials, school principals, district superintendents, parent leaders and media people have stated that they have been ignored by members of the DOE and the Mayor on education issues. If not from these members of the education community, to whom does the Mayor seek advice on education matters? Perhaps only the like-minded? It follows then that for effective school governance the system must be changed to impose republican principles that ensure a broader scope of inquiry. The education of our children is too important to be decided by one person. The budget of this system is too large to be decided by one person. A system of checks and balances must be instituted under Mayoral control of our schools to ensure accountability and responsiveness.

To effectuate needed changes, the CDEC 26 offers the following as possible changes to the school governance:

1. Change the Department of Education into a New York City Agency and give the City Council oversight. This must be equal to its oversight of other city agencies.
2. Create five separate Borough Commissioners who shall be appointed by the Mayor upon the advice and consent of the City Council and the Borough President of the affected borough. The Borough Commissioner shall report to a New York City Commissioner, who shall report to the Deputy Mayor of Education.¹
3. Increase authority of the Community District Superintendent to enable this person to coordinate and evaluate instruction and operations in district schools. The Education Commissioner of the Borough will appoint this person, upon the advice and

¹ By dint of standing practice or by law City Parks, City DOT and City Board of Elections have Borough Commissioners more in tune with the needs and concerns affecting their Boroughs.

consent of the district's Education Council. The Community District Superintendent shall be responsible for the education in the schools of their respective district and shall have no responsibilities toward schools not within that district.

4. Give each Borough President control over a budgetary aspect of education for their respective Borough, e.g., transportation.

5. Do not endeavor to recreate School Boards. An effective check on Mayor's control cannot depend upon volunteers notwithstanding the value we place as a society on volunteerism, community participation and most of all parent involvement. It remains that there is insufficient time for volunteers to become sufficiently versed in education issues to become effective advocates in opposition to Mayoral dictates. Volunteers, who give of their own time, most in limited intervals, cannot effectively counter the ability of a Mayor or Chancellor, supported by full-time paid officials. An effective balance must come from full-time, paid professionals, e.g., City Council members and Borough Presidents supplemented by CDEC members and their localized insights.

Regardless if any of the above is accepted, the current system must change. The system has wrought many changes and yet, it is unclear as to the actual results achieved. City, State and Federal tests results differ in scores that indicate either no improvement, minimum improvement, or significant improvement. There are also different results concerning high school graduation rates that obscure its clear evaluation. There are even different results concerning class size reduction. However, the DOE does implicitly acknowledge not achieving significant academic improvement by sixth, seventh and eighth grade students since we have the "Middle School Crisis" task force. These students are the product of one Chancellor, serving one Mayor, implementing their own policies. Thus, it is the position of CDEC26 that the results of Mayoral Control cannot justify the current school governance system.

In conclusion, CDEC 26 has reviewed the current school governance system and has heard from members of our education community. Based on these, we ask for changes to the current system that reflect our concerns.

Adopted by the Community District Education Council 26 on April 17, 2008

Vince made a motion to adopt the School Governance Report and Recommendations as provided & Irene Cheung seconded. Council members voted unanimously to accept. Report will be sent out to all.

Erik brought up the topic of Family Day taking place. Lori informed him that it takes place every month. Lori stated that May was for "Caregivers" and June is "Queens Farm" day. Information was given to the members at the last meeting. Irene Cheung suggested e-mailing the council the flyers for each month.

Anita mentioned that PS 115 had a "Grandparents Day in which all neighbors in a square block were invited. Most were elderly people of all cultures.

President's Report – Rob Caloras

- E-mails during the month – asking members to read and respond back as quickly as possible.
- Sent e-mail to Chancellor

Per your request, I am sending some suggestions for cost savings in the budget. I am also seeking some amplification on some of your comments made at the meeting.

A. As discussed, after consulting with members of the Education Community, the following are specific cuts that can be made in the Central budget:

1. Do away with the Cambridge Quality Review and allow the Community District Superintendent to provide this service. It seems that the Supt. is supposed to do this review and, since they are on payroll, it would be at a significantly reduce price.
2. Do away with Progress Reports. The purported benefit from the information on these reports is not seen as sufficient to warrant the expense, especially when education programs are threatened with being cut. It also was expressed that the information in these reports is available in other formats for any interested person to find with minimum effort.
3. Reduce the Office of Parent Engagement and Advocacy and utilize Education Councils and existing Parent Organizations in efforts to increase parent involvement and understanding of their children's education. The volunteer organizations clearly are cost efficient and if used, offer the same service as paid DOE personnel. This savings has the added benefit of energizing members of the education community. In this vein, schools should be given the choice of having a parent coordinator and the ability to keep the money for education programs if a PC is not used.
4. Reduce the Public Relations Department.

B. Regarding amplification,

1. You discussed my responses to Ms. Grimm's itemized list of cuts to Central. In such, you agreed and disagree with some. Would you please provide your comments to my responses in a more formal manner? This would be helpful for Councils members' understanding of these cuts. I am including a copy of my responses at the end of this message.

2. You also mentioned 170 million dollars in cuts to Central that were made this year and offered to provide a list of such and an indication as to where this money went. Would you be so kind as to provide such?

C. Regarding Hold Harmless money, permit me to remind you of the concerns raised by schools that have received this money. Additionally, does the announced State budget alleviate the need to reduce the Hold Harmless money? My understanding is that this budget provides for the full amount of CFE money that was previously promised. I make no comment as to the fiscal responsibility or lack thereof indicated in this budget.

Rob stated that Kathleen Grimm will be attending the next Chancellor's meeting.

Vincent spoke about a sales tax which is about to lapse which will now be added into the budget by the Mayor.

Rob informed the attendees

- April 10th - attended Community Board 11's committee meeting – Dave Palmer was also present. Dave Palmer made a pitch to get the community boards to endorse CDEC 26's resolution and it seems like it was an attack on Senator Padavan and he did not want to be involved. Rob outlined that Padavan's bill leaves the decision making up to the Community District Education Councils. The bill would be protection for a leased buildings as well as new structures. Prior leased buildings such as the LI City HS (toxic) had environmental problems so they are looking for an independent buyer. Rob reiterated that the council passed a resolution endorsing the Nolan bill which relates to the leasing of buildings also. Rob informed the attendees that he made a pitch regarding the cell phone resolution that was passed by the CDEC and they endorsed that. They will be writing letters to their legislators allowing possession of the cell phone but does not allow the child to take it out. If phone is out in view, it will be confiscated.
- Attended PS 221 PTA meeting on April 14th & made a pitch on the budget; attended IS 266 on April 15th and made the same pitch; attended PS 18 on April 16th and made the same pitch.

Superintendent's Report – Anita Saunders

1. DCEP – 2007-2008 (outlined the criteria's)
 - a. will increase ELLA criteria
 - b. math – did well – two step problem solving
 - c. beginning 2007-08 high schools implementing algebra-geometry
 - d. Science – good throughout the district
 - e. Social studies – good throughout the entire district
2. MS 158 Awards – received an award called “Go Green NY” students will appear on FOX News on Monday morning. April 22nd is “Earth Day” – NY Post's cover will feature one of the students.
3. Summer School Sites:
 - PS 46
 - MS 216
4. Gifted Magnet – 50,000 students applied citywide – May 9th letters to go out
 - a. 100 slots open – 50 students with the highest scores will be chosen first
 - b. 4 sites to be created
5. Principal Retirements:
 - Diane Hobbs (PS 178) – June 26, 2008; Susan Sherer (PS 205) – July 15, 2008 & Michael Levine, Assistant Principal (MS 216).

- New process for hiring a principal
 - a. Candidates must submit an essay & resume to the principal's pool.
 - b. Office downtown that reviews paperwork & they interview the candidates first and if they feel they qualify, it is sent to the superintendent
 - c. C-30 process (Janet Wong will review-Level 1); Level 2 will be the superintendent
 - d. There will no longer be an interim acting principal at any school.
 - e. Mandated to interview a candidate from the Academy.

Rob informed the attendees that PS 221 had a group of students (5th graders) who showed their science project on Channel 21 on **date needed**

Rob reiterated again that two positions are open on the council; one borough president position, and the other through the regular channels. Marian will send out notice of vacancies to all.

Lori Butera

- Attended meeting April 17th with the Office of Family Engagement – they put together a best practice where parent coordinators highlight their activities and programs that they bring to their schools. Asking parent coordinators to come together do a presentation for citywide where they can present to others and see what works and what doesn't work. Trying to find the best practice.
- 5 summer programs – PS 46, PS 173, PS 213 & PS 221. MS 74 will have the enrichment programs. PS 203 will have a full day's program.
- SLT Team – training taking place – next meeting is May 17th regarding the New Regulation #8655 from 4-6 p.m. at PS 173.

PUBLIC MEETING

Mary Vaccaro advised the attendees that they will be picketing every Wednesdays at different locations and that teachers would be wearing red ribbons/shirts – beginning May 1st.

Informational Picketing for Budget Cuts

District 26

- Schools Picket Dates, Times and Contact May 2nd--PS 203 (8:20-8:40) Denise Balbushka May 6th--PS 188 (8:00-8:20) Stacy Gangi
 PS 115 (7:50-8:10) Pat Anderson May 7th--PS 162 (7:45-8:00) Susan Singer May 8th--SCHOLARSHIP DANCE--Floral Terrace May 9th--PS 18 (8:00-8:20) Dawn Dibendetto
 PS 41 (8:00-8:20) Jason Castoro May 12th--PS 213 (8:00-8:20) Jennifer Ialenti May 13th--PS 186 (7:30-8:00) Joan Kron
 PS 178 (7:40-8:00) Tricia Gomes
 PS/IS 266 (7:40-8:00am) Rebecca Farkas May 14th--Delegate Assembly--52 Broadway May 14th--PS 46 (7:40-8:00) Amy Gruttando May 15th--PS 94 (7:40-8:00) Ed Gutterrez
 MS 67 (7:40-8:00) Mike Camera May 16th--PS 205 (8:20-8:40) Fran Bosi
 MS 74 (7:40-8:00) Dina Mayer May 19th--PS 191(7:30-8:00) Jessica Marquis May 20th--PS 98 (8:00-8:20) Janette Schwartz
 MS 158 (7:40-8:00) Dave Waltzer May 21st--Chapter Leader Meeting(Tentative) May 21st--PS 26 (8:00-8:20am) Arlene Goodman May 22nd--PS 31 (8:00-8:20) Darylle Brent
 PS 133 (7:40-8:20) Sharon Stulberg May 27th--PS 173 (8:00-8:20) Jean Regan May 28th--PS 221(8:00-8:20) Karen Strauzer
 PS/IS 499 (7:50-8:10) Diane Jellema May 29th--PS 159 (8:00-8:20) Janice Testa
 MS 216 (7:40-8:00) Carol Sitler May 30th--D.26 Happy Hour--Rollin'Greens

Teachers will be wearing red every Wednesday beginning April 30th.

Each Chapter Leader and Delegate is also going to attend their PTA meeting this month to give out the leaflets to parents attending.

- Scholarship Dinner
 - a. 480 essays received
 - b. District 26 Scholarship Award Winners
 - Early Childhood**
Ryan Kim-PS 188; Emily Gan-PS 162; Yuni Park-PS 205; Chloe Kandel-Wong-PS 98
 - Elementary Education**
Jonathan Louie-PS 186; Renee Grasso-PS 188; Upsana Saha-PS 31; Elliott Goldstein-PS 178
 - Middle School**
Margot Yale – MS 158
 - High School**
Jason Casale – Bronx High School of Science
 - Honorable Mention**
Hannah Byun-PS 26; Anu-Shree Rajagopal-PS/IS 266; Juno Lee-PS 26
 - District 26 for District 75**
Abed Camille – MS 158

Jeannette made a motion to adjourn and Marie seconded. Council voted unanimously to adjourn Business/Public meeting at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Marian Mason, Administrative Assistant, CDEC