

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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Chairperson

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## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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## A P P E A R E N C E S (CONTINUED)

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Former Teacher

Queen Mikkada [sp?]  
Citizen

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay good afternoon and welcome to the Education Committee's oversight hearing on the DOE's restructured school support system. Today we hope to learn more about this new streamlined school support structure which was announced by Chancellor Farina in January 2015 and put into effect starting in July. Before mayoral controls support for elementary and middle schools was primarily provided at the community school district level by the superintendent and district office staff which could number 30 or more. Support for high schools was the responsibility of the Central Board of Education which set up high... which set up high school superintendents and support staff at the borough level. When Mayor Bloomberg gained control of the school system in 2002 his administration embarked on a series of major overhauls of the support structure. First they established 10 geographically based regional offices to support schools. Within five years they eliminated the 10 regions and created school support organizations or SSOs run by DOE staff or by external partners to provide instructional

support and integrated service centers or ISCs to provide operational and student support, student services support. Finally, in 2010 the DOE replaced SSOs and ISCs with roughly 55 children first networks to provide instructional operation and student services supports to schools. Each network had 14 to 16 staff members and served approximately 25 schools. And principals could choose which network to belong to regardless of geographic location. Many networks wound up supporting schools across multiple boroughs which meant that network staff spent a lot of time travelling to distant schools and made it nearly impossible for parents to have X access to network staff. Further each school paid the same amount for network support regardless of its size or needs leading to a one size fits all approach. Worst, networks had approximately the same number of staff whether they served 25 schools with 7,000 students or 25 schools with 40,000 students. And whether most of the schools were high performing or low performing resulting in an inequitable distribution of support resources. Many parents and advocates were critical of the network structure which was confusing and

not accessible to parents. In my own experience I found parents were really confused and didn't know where to go for help. To be honest as a teacher I didn't know who my network leader was and never met any network staff though the network was supposed to provide professional development to teachers. Further a February 2015 analysis by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform found that networks had very little effect on student academic performance. It should come as no surprise then that many people, myself included, welcome a return to a simpler geographically based support structure, something that this committee called for in prior hearings. The main goals of this restructuring which gives superintendents greater responsibility and creates seven new borough field support centers or BFFSs... BFSCs are to provide clear lines of authority and accountability, give families a place to go in their community to resolve problems, and to achieve greater equity by providing more intensive support for schools that need it the most. In essence we are replacing a geographically complicated hard to navigate 55 network system that gave one size fits all support with more empowered

superintendents and targeted assistance from new borough field support centers. This new structure also ensures that schools, particularly ones that have historically struggled or serve high needs communities, aren't getting fewer resources just because of the support structure they happen to sign up for. While we hope these reforms are going to improve accountability, equity, and efficiency across our city's schools we need to learn more about this new support structure and its functions. What are the roles of new staff positions in district offices and BFSCs? How do superintendents serve as intermediaries between schools and BFSCs to arrange needed support? How do so-called affinity groups run by external partners fit into this new structure? We look forward to getting answers to these and many other questions. Today's hearing will provide an opportunity to learn more about the DOE's restructured school support system. The committee also looks forward to hearing the concerns and recommendations of parents, students, educators, advocates, CEC members, and other stakeholders on the new support structure. I would like to remind everyone who wishes to testify today

that you must fill out a witness slip which is located on the desk of the Sergeant at Arms near the front of this room. To allow as many people as possible to testify testimony will be limited to three minutes per person. Please note that all... all witnesses will also be sworn in in this hearing. And before we get started let me introduce my colleagues on the education committee. To my right we have Allen Maisel from Brooklyn, Council Member Antonio Reynoso from Brooklyn, Council Member Margaret Chin from Manhattan, Council Member Debbie Rose from Staten Island, Council Member Chaim Deutsch from Brooklyn, and Council Member Andy King from the Bronx. Okay. Yep. And I'm going to announce my first panel. Deputy Chancellor Josh Wallack is here, Ursulina Ramirez the Chief of Staff to the Chancellor. I used the... the graphic already see, Deputy Chancellor Dorita Gibson as well. And thank you for being here. And I do need to swear you in so I'm going to ask if you'd raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth and to answer council member questions



honestly? Okay thank you very much and if you'd like to begin.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Good afternoon Chair Dromm and members of the Education Committee. My name is Ursulina Ramirez and I am the Chief of Staff to the Chancellor at the New York City Department of Education. Joining me today is Doctor Dorita Gibson, Senior Deputy Chancellor who oversees superintendents and Josh Wallack Deputy Chancellor for Strategy and Policy who oversees our... our bill support center and operations. Thank you for inviting us to discuss the department's work in supporting schools and driving student achievement ultimately preparing students for post-secondary success. Since assuming responsibility of this city's public schools Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Farina have focused the department on ensuring that we are supporting and improving all schools across the five boroughs. As the chancellor and mayor have discussed our work is driven by the dual goal of promoting equity and excellence so that every child has access to high quality schools in their neighborhood just as we know that the success of a child's learning and development can't

be measured by one single test we also know that our schools need to be measured across multiple factors. We have worked to realign the management team and our staff to reflect the priorities of this administration. One of the first changes we made was to re-envision the role of the superintendent. Knowing that families look to their community superintendent we hired experienced educators to lead these offices. Each of our 46 superintendents built their offices to proactively engage their communities and provide principals with guidance and support. This work led by Doctor Gibson and her team has been amplified as we have developed community schools in all five boroughs and strengthen our renewal schools. Chris Caruso and his team in the Community Schools Office are hard at work to ensure our 130 community schools have teams in place. These teams up.. these teams are made up of parents, school leaders, community based organizations, and other community members. They work closely with each school's dedicated community school director to implement this work. This engagement is already having a profound effect. Just this summer our dedicated outreach

1 teams knocked on over 35,000 doors to get parents  
2 and families involved. Amy Horowitz is leading the  
3 Office of Renewal Schools and is... its work to  
4 improve our most struggling schools. Each of our 94  
5 renewal schools has implemented expanded learning  
6 time this school year and is working closely with  
7 their partners to implement their school  
8 improvement plans. Under the leadership of Deputy  
9 Chancellor Phil Weinberg, we have reconstituted the  
10 division of teaching and learning. And for the  
11 first time in many years we are providing  
12 curriculum content and professional development  
13 directly to schools. Our Curriculum Office under  
14 Anna Commitante recently released science and  
15 social studies curricula and a scope in sequence  
16 for high school writing. In addition, we removed  
17 summative grades from our public reports providing  
18 schools with better ways to look at data, set  
19 rigorous and realistic targets, and continue to  
20 evolve accountability reports to align to our  
21 vision for how schools improve. Supports to  
22 students with disabilities include related service  
23 provisions are stronger than every before. Deputy  
24 Chancellor Corinne Rello-Anselmi and her team have  
25

been focused on policies and practices that directly impact the ability of students with disabilities to have rigorous instruction in an inclusive environment through flexible models of services and supports. We elevated the work of the DOE to support English language learners. Recently appointed to a cabinet level position Deputy Chancellor Milady Baez has worked to strengthen and integrate our work to support these students. We have reimagined family and community engagement. The Chancellor recently appointed Yolanda Torres as Executive Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement and she is leading their increased efforts to engage more parents, communicate effectively, and provide opportunities for parent involvement in their child school community. Last... lastly, the work of Josh Wallack and his division has enabled us to launch one of the largest reform efforts of this administration, Pre-K for all. Today New York City has over 65,000 four-year-olds receiving high quality full day instruction ensuring that all of our students come to Kindergarten ready to learn. In addition, Josh and his team also worked in partnership with the rest

of the leadership team to align supports to schools across divisions. Over the past year we aligned the DOE's vision to its current support structure and revised measures for schools. This work has entailed three main bodies of work. First we developed a vision for school improvement that was based on rigorously evaluated research. This has led to the framework for great schools. A holistic approach that focuses on driving outcomes across the entire school community to foster student achievement. Second, we have realigned our evaluative measures across the system. These measures look at school performance in a more holistic way and for the first time set individual targets for each school. And lastly, we revamped our school support structure aligning support and supervision while increasing accountability for all levels of the system. Most importantly, this new support model Strong Schools Strong Communities enables us to tailor support to school base... to... to schools based on individual need thus allowing us to be... us to more efficiently manage and deliver support. The framework for great schools provides the DOE and every school with a blueprint for how

to improve student achievement in schools overall. For... for far too long the DOE placed that responsibility solely on the school and its leader. While this worked well for some, some principals who create... who have the resources and educational vision to improve their school we also saw that this created inequity across the city. With the framework in place we are now truly partnering with school communities to improve their schools. We know that schools, when functioning well, are dynamic organizations involving the whole community. The graphic in front of you has the six elements of the framework centered on student achievement. Increasing student achievement has been and will continue to be the primary goal of the DOE. But we know... we know... we now have a research based model on how to get us there. The elements closest to the inner circle are the factors closest to the child and the classroom; rigorous instruction, collaborative teaching, and a supportive environment are cornerstones of how we improve educational practices. Having effective school leadership, one that is helpful and inclusive, combined with strong family and

community ties also leads to higher student achievement. When adopting this model from a body of practices in other cities we purposely added trust, an element we consider absolutely essential to our work. We have redesigned our systems measures to not only reflect this change in approach but more importantly we are providing schools and administration with clear and more robust data and with new ways in which to use this data to improve school practices. We will soon be releasing our new school quality snapshot to schools and families. These reports will have the traditional measures related to student achievement and progress and will also have information about how schools and the system is performing as it relates to the framework for great schools creating a system of shared accountability. We are already seeing powerful results. As we look back over the past year we have seen schools that were strong in most of the framework measures were six times more likely to have higher student achievement in the following year than schools that were not strong in these measures. Again we now have a way to partner with schools to improve overtime. The framework for

great schools, our vision for improving all of our schools and our revamp measures provide a strong foundation for improving student achievement.

However, we need to ensure our vision is reflected in our support systems. That's why this year we

have launched our new school support structure;

Strong Schools Strong Communities. This new

structure is built on premise that we can

efficiently and effectively provide all schools

with the supports they need to improve student

achievement. And we can do it by being present in

the communities we're serving. We have aligned

structure across the DOE to meet the school. As the

diagram depicts central offices, the

superintendents' offices, and the borough field

support centers work closely to support schools.

The roles of each of these offices as it relates to

school... school support are clear. Central offices

play the critical role of policy guidance and

oversight and devise professional development and

training for each of the field offices to implement

with schools. Superintendents are our school's

first stop when seeking guidance on issues that are

sensitive, evaluative, instructional, or strategic



in nature including personnel matters, tenor decision, and allegations of misconduct. The BFSCs seven offices across the city, one in each borough, with two in Brooklyn and Queens, and where schools can go for instructional, operational, or student support services. Schools will receive a number of supports from their BFSCs including teaching and learning where they'll receive instructional practices, academic policy, teacher evaluation, school performance, and accountability tools, business services which means budget, human resources, procurement, payroll operations, school funds, transportation facilities, student services, guidance, school climate, crisis and safety, health and wellness, special education, instructional practice, compliance and related services supports, and English language learners instructional practices, compliance, and program development. We have developed clear communication and escalation protocols for each of these offices and schools to follow and are tracking data to ascertain needs in the field. As we have heard from many of you the impacts are noticeable. Principals now know where to go. This school year we had one of the smoothest

1 school openings in memory thanks to the new support  
2 system. I want to take a moment to provide you all  
3 with some additional information about the new  
4 borough field support centers. This is one of the  
5 most important changes we have made and it is  
6 driven from the chancellor's belief that we needed  
7 to provide better and equitable support to all our  
8 schools. As many of you know in the past there was  
9 a myriad of support entities that schools self-  
10 selected and paid for themselves. This created a  
11 fundamental inequity in our schools. These entities  
12 were hired by the schools and as a result often did  
13 the work for schools rather than build a school's  
14 capacity. We have shifted to one unified consistent  
15 system that truly empowers schools by aligning  
16 support and supervision to build each school's  
17 capacity. By centralizing the centers, we are able  
18 to meet the unique needs of schools. We have staff  
19 with expertise closer to schools. And most  
20 importantly schools are working together. Now  
21 schools near one another can share resources  
22 because these schools are still part of citywide  
23 groups. We are still able to foster collaboration  
24 across schools. To drive innovation, we have  
25

restructured how we work with outside service providers. We have formed affinity groups, groups of schools that have a unique instructional learning approach. Each of these groups... each of these groups of high schools are working with singular superintendents so we can now better ascertain the impact that these organizations are having to both hold them accountable and identify opportunities to bring strong practices to all of our schools. Most importantly with a new support structure we can more effectively align resources to individual school needs. In the past each group of school received the same resources regardless of unique needs. In the Strong School Strong Community support structure, we can differentiate the support in staffing. The new support structure brings expertise closer to schools. Each of the approximately 720 staff are working with schools in their borough. While each of the centers provide the same integrated services to schools that the past model provided we are able to do this more effectively by tailoring these supports. Just a couple of examples. In the Bronx we have seen more schools needing instructional support. So we added

additional instructional specialists to the... to that center who are expert educators providing professional development to teachers to share and learn with their colleague. In Staten Island which is our smallest geographic area we have additional specialized student support leagues working with schools to identify and plan supports for our students with disabilities where we have a high concentration of students with disabilities. As my testimony has hopefully conveyed the DOE has been hard at work to improve our school system and ensure that we continue to see gains in student achievement. We have developed a vision and support structure that brings equity and excellence to all of our schools. We know that in the educational field and in a system this large change does not happen overnight. We have set a three-year horizon for completing this restructure and as noted are excited at the results to date. I look forward to continue working with you to ensure all of our children have an excellent education no matter where in our great city they live. Thank you and we'd be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

And just to note or compliment, I'm very glad to see that trust in that diagram was all around because I believe that that is at the heart of...

[applause]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Let's hold the... the applause. But thank you for that but since we're in a hearing we don't usually have applause. But without trust I don't think we can move forward.

And I think that's so true for teachers with principals, principals with teachers, union with the administration, etcetera so forth and so on. So I'm really glad that that is the heart of what it is that you're trying to do to establish. And from the previous administration that really killed trust in our schools and made it like a war camp, having and working toward that goal of having trust I think is really really something that I welcome an awful lot. That being said I do have questions. And I hope it doesn't break our trust but... we have to ask some tough questions around here as well. So... and... you know I'm very proud that as an outcome of some of the work that we've done here and with the chancellor as well we have seen the

1 restructuring and the elimination I guess of the  
2 network system with the replacement of the new  
3 Borough Field Support Offices also. So there we  
4 have begun to establish that trust also that we're  
5 going to move forward into a new system. So my  
6 question is to start off with are... are really about  
7 the superintendents in district offices. I notice  
8 that in the diagram I was showing the different  
9 districts and the... that the borough field support  
10 offices are going to be in charge of... yes that one  
11 there... that some of them have multiple districts  
12 that they're going to cover. How is that decision  
13 made as to which I guess field support centers  
14 would cover what districts etcetera, so forth, and  
15 so on?

17 DOCTOR GIBSON: Good afternoon everyone.  
18 That's a very good question. But the... the  
19 superintendents are now working in geographical  
20 range and the borough field support centers are  
21 designed in that way as well. So in Brooklyn we do  
22 have a borough center that has... two different  
23 borough field support centers that has clusters of...  
24 of district superintendents. Staten Island, it's  
25 very simple in Staten Island because there's a K to

12 superintendent and one borough field support director and a team. In the Bronx we have one but we have extra supports that you can see and we have all the districts in the Bronx that are under one field support director and an assistant. And we have them broken up into two. Manhattan, all the Manhattan school districts are under one person. And... and I think I left out Queens. Queens is large so we have north and south. So we have two different borough support centers in Queens. And there... the superintendents are designed geographically in those areas.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So there's no instance where you have a borough field support center supervisor that would be going into borough... like between Queens and... and the Bronx.

DOCTOR GIBSON: Well we do have one. We do have an affinity group because we have a... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You have which one?

DOCTOR GIBSON: ...special... an affinity group.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh-huh.

DOCTOR GIBSON: Which is also similar to a borough... borough field support center that... that Ms. Ramirez respond... responded to before which houses four superintendents and they work exclusively with PSOs or... or support centers like Urban Assembly and New Visions. And they work with that... that support center as well as getting professional development from their partners.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So the affinity groups though are primarily for the high schools?

DOCTOR GIBSON: Just high schools and secondary schools. And I think... Josh do you want to talk a little bit about that?

JOSH WALLACK: Well sure I would just reinforce... I would just say that in... in the case of these borough based centers you are right to say you would not have a director going into a different borough. They're all within boroughs. We split Brooklyn and Queens because of the large number of students there and we did that just in order to make that a manageable load for a borough center.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And who do the superintendents report to?



DOCTOR GIBSON: The superintendents actually report to the chancellor. She's the hiring authority. But we do have a person, Doctor Laura Feijoo, who oversees them directly who works for me. And she meets with them on a regular basis.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So how often does the chancellor work meet with the superintendent?

DOCTOR GIBSON: She meets with them personally once a month. In between that she has brought them in and she's met with every single one of them over the summer, had a one on one interview with each one of them. She meets with them more than you can imagine. She goes to all the principal conferences that they've had. This summer each one... all 42 of them, she's still visiting them. She visits them in their... in their districts. She visits in a... in a conference center. And she meets with them quite often. It's very clear that they're getting directions from the chancellor which is very different.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So goals and expectations for the superintendents are directly or I guess most directly supervised by the chancellor... [cross-talk]

DOCTOR GIBSON: Definitely by the  
chancellor... [cross-talk] Definitely by the  
Chancellor.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So the... the  
expectations that they have, the Chancellor could  
intervene and say that something should be you know  
done differently or it's not being followed  
correctly?

DOCTOR GIBSON: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And that was a big  
problem I think with the networks, if I'm not  
mistaken, because with the networks you had network  
leaders telling principals and superintendents one  
thing... or actually the superintendent didn't really  
have much interaction with the networks, am I right  
about that?

DOCTOR GIBSON: That is correct. And the  
networks were the... the group that received all of  
the information. And I think in this structure the  
Chancellor is the one who's giving the direction  
directly to the superintendents and that  
information filters into the school but... but we  
have to work hand in hand with the borough field  
support centers. So that's the most important way

1  
2 to make this work. That... that superintendents and  
3 borough field support center directors work  
4 tandemly to support the schools.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So how do principals  
6 receive support from the superintendents?

7 DOCTOR GIBSON: Superintendents as you  
8 know... officer. They... they... visits the schools,  
9 they... they ask the hard questions about who are  
10 your strong teachers who are your weak teachers on  
11 a regular basis, but they really go in there and  
12 have principal conferences and the differentiating  
13 structure so they know which ones are their strong  
14 superintendent... principals and which ones are their  
15 principals that would need a little bit more work.  
16 And they... they... they visit them. They report out to  
17 the borough field support centers. If they go into  
18 a school and they see there's... there's a need to  
19 get extra support around special education the  
20 super... each of the superintendents has a special  
21 person on their team, the field support liaison who  
22 works directly with the field support centers. And  
23 that is like the bridge... the go between. So they'll  
24 go to them and they'll make sure that they get the  
25

right kinds of PD or professional development or any kind of support in their school.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So superintendents are primarily interacting with principals around areas of curriculum and educational support?

DOCTOR GIBSON: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And then borough field services are working with principals on technical issues, how do you access this department or make something happen in pupil transportation or something like that?

DOCTOR GIBSON: In... in HR, human resources, and the budget and transportation, yes.

JOSH WALLACK: The way we... the way the Chancellor laid this out was that the borough field support centers were really there to support the superintendents as instructional leaders for the... for the system. And so there are instructional supports that sit at the borough field support center. But the idea is that the superintendent working with principals works with the borough field support center directors to give the schools the support they need when they need it. And so they... they're there as a... as a... as a source

of expertise. They have a lot of expertise in... in that borough. And then the superintendents call on the director when they need that assistance for schools and get them the targeted support they need.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So the instructional support providers within the borough field support centers are accessible to principals and teachers or just to principals?

JOSH WALLACK: Typically, the way it works is that as... as... as Doctor Gibson said the Superintendent's Office, for... for a lot of the sort of key instructional strategic decisions, reach out to the borough directors and have that conversation. And once the initial strategy is set, you would have a lot of contact between borough field support center personnel and school personnel because they're going to be supporting them in that work. And so there's that first contact that's really at the guidance and leadership of the superintendent's office and then after that a lot of rich and varied contact between borough field center staff and school staff at all levels.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So if teachers are having difficulty implementing some curriculum area, social studies let's say because we both like that, where would they turn to for help?

DOCTOR GIBSON: They should first turn to their principal.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mm-hmm.

DOCTOR GIBSON: That is the right place to go. And the principal can't answer that question should really turn to their superintendent. And that's when the borough field support center would come in in terms of teaching and learning and any of the supports that they need there.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do we have teacher centers? I think we have a hundred and... a hundred and something teacher centers left in the system? Do they fit into this plan at all?

DOCTOR GIBSON: We do have teacher centers left. I don't know how many we have but they do fit into the plan because we work very closely with all teacher centers that are in schools.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sometimes there's hesitancy on the part of teachers to go to the principal to ask for help.

DOCTOR GIBSON: But not all schools have teacher centers.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No I know.

DOCTOR GIBSON: And... and... and you know this is not a 'got you' system. And we want teachers to feel comfortable enough to say that I need some support around this and... and they should get the support that they need.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But you know one... one thing that was helpful to me when we had district offices was that I knew that where... where the social studies coordinator for the district was and I could go to that person or go to their workshop...

DOCTOR GIBSON: Mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...or something like that. And I... I... I hope that as we move forward we can go back to some of that stuff as well so that we can... so the teachers know who to turn to within districts to ask for that type of support directly.

DOCTOR GIBSON: And... and I think one of the things that has happened this summer with the professional development that came out of the borough field support centers under teaching and learning and Anna Commitante's team abundance of teachers were going there this summer. So I think that teachers actually know where if you want some support in social study to... or in Stem work where to go. Because I think that was sort of laid out to them. So they don't often have to go through... you know they made a connection with... with who the professional development trainers were. And I think that will go very far with them. I... I also want to just stress the fact that we don't want teachers to be afraid to go to their principals to say we need more support around this. Because in order for the schools to work and for us to be successful on a local level that we have to have that trust that we talked about in the beginning in the schools with the principals and the teachers as well.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mm-hmm. Okay so district superintendents' staff was terrible in the past...

DOCTOR GIBSON: Well they had two.



CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry?

DOCTOR GIBSON: They had two staff members.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right. I mean you know to do all that work in the district and to try to work with parents and stuff that was really not enough I... in my opinion. And I think you've increased it now to six?

DOCTOR GIBSON: Six, and seven in some cases, yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Some cases. And you feel that that's adequate to meet the superintendents' new responsibilities?

DOCTOR GIBSON: I mean staffing is always a... a problem in support staff. But I think what we stress is that... that the borough field support centers are... that's also part of your staff. And if they work closely together there's no reason why you're... you're... hoping that just the seven people in a... in a superintendent's is doing all the work. The work is being done collectively by the support staff that's in the borough field support... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And... and who are those support staff and what do they do?

DOCTOR GIBSON: On the superintendent's team?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

DOCTOR GIBSON: The... the first person is the principal lead facilitator, leadership facilitator. And that is probably what we'd have known as an old name would have been a deputy chancellor. But that is the second person in command. They are able to... to do observations in schools. They're able to rate principals and do principal evaluations and walk through with schools. So they are the second person in command. They have two family support team members. One was the, and Ursulina is giving me the list here, thank you Ursulina, the family leadership coordinator that we have that... That is... is an important role because they... they were the... formerly the form... the borough field support... the DFAs, the district leadership... and they're doing the work to support PTAs SLTs to make sure that those... those persons are in place in schools and they're... and they'll do the training in the PD... and they'll work very

1  
2 closely with Yolanda Torres' group in FACE. The  
3 family support coordinator is a very important  
4 role. It's... it's a new role in that they work  
5 directly with families in schools. So that they are  
6 the direct link that, the hand holder if you will,  
7 if there is a question that parents have they make  
8 sure that the... not only the question's answers are  
9 answered but there's a follow up. So they'll always  
10 have that go to person in the schools... they'll work  
11 closely with the... with the school system and the  
12 schools and the... and the parent coordinators that  
13 are there. The tech... teacher development and  
14 evaluation person... That is a formerly... like the  
15 person that went out in the past and worked around  
16 the mozels [sp?] which is the data work and the  
17 training for Danielson. These were the coaches and  
18 we put those two positions together and made one.  
19 They do the data. They read the data. They help the  
20 schools with their data. They help the  
21 superintendents read the data for each of the  
22 schools in the district. And they really work  
23 closely also with the borough field support  
24 centers. The field support liaison which I call the  
25 bridge person because that's the person... the go to

1 person with the... within the superintendent's office  
2 that's going to work very closely with the field  
3 support person and the directors in the borough  
4 field support office so there is no gap. That's the  
5 person that's going to make sure that if a  
6 principal has a question that he gets those answers  
7 right away, that you don't have to wait a day,  
8 there's not a lag time there. But those happen very  
9 early. Not every one of our superintendents, but  
10 many of them, have an early... director of early  
11 childhood and that is with our universal pre-k  
12 programs that are in our districts and they work  
13 very closely with them. But they also work closely  
14 with the early childhood team as well to make sure  
15 that those things are being met. The director of  
16 school renewal those... that's the person that... that  
17 goes into our most struggling schools, our 90... 94  
18 schools that... that are struggling. And they work  
19 very closely not just with the superintendents but  
20 with the renewal school director Amy Horowitz and  
21 her team as well to make sure that the targets are  
22 being met. They really help them with writing their  
23 CECs... their... their targets for the year and they  
24 really work closely with them. And that makes up  
25

1  
2 their team. But that's only part of their team  
3 because we can't... they can't work in isolation  
4 without the borough field support centers and  
5 central as well.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So I know you  
7 mentioned uh... FACE and Yolanda Torres. Can you just  
8 describe for me a little bit more some of the  
9 changes in restructuring of FACE?

10 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yes. So over the past  
11 year we heard a lot from... from families and from  
12 communities regarding how we were doing engagement.  
13 And we really thought that we needed some expertise  
14 from somebody's who's had experience being a  
15 principal and being a superintendent. So Yolanda  
16 joined the team approximately... I think about two  
17 months ago, and she's the Executive Superintendent.  
18 And we're really going to be focusing on both  
19 parent leadership, outreach components, and then  
20 effective communication between families. And so  
21 we've developed a... a robust strategic plan on  
22 improving our family engagement. And over the  
23 course of the next you know three to six months  
24 engaging additional families to have feedback on  
25 what we think that the... should look like and how we

1  
2 should be engaging people in the community. So it's  
3 very exciting. She really hit the ground running.  
4 And I think she'd be excited to hear from... from...  
5 from yourself on what you think parent engagement  
6 should look like.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I was fortunate last  
8 night that I went to family night at the Pan Am  
9 International School in my district. And they had  
10 about 200 parents there which was amazing. Much of  
11 the conversation was conducted in Spanish as  
12 mostly... I think the overwhelming majority of  
13 parents there speak Spanish. But to see 200  
14 parents... high school parents there was incredible  
15 because it was really difficult I think sometimes  
16 to get high school parent... the parents of high  
17 schoolers into parent teacher nights.

18 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Mm-hmm.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So it was very well  
20 planned... happen to be there with the... maybe one of  
21 the draws was the fact that Chirlane McCray was  
22 there. But whatever it takes to get them to come,  
23 to get them there, I think is really vitally  
24 important. And I think we need to think of creative  
25 ways if and... even if it makes you know...

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...sense to have special speakers like that to get them into the schools. But... and they had food. That was the other thing.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Food draws people as well.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yes it does.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So they know what they're doing in that sense in that school. And I want to compliment them but also you know maybe we should look at that and replicate that as well in other schools.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: No, we could... we'll definitely look at that. And what... what she's just started to do is last year in our... our negotiation with the UFT for the new contract we have 40 extra minutes every Tuesday for parent engagement. And what we're trying to do is have her go out to see what schools are doing so we could see what best practices are to make sure that we are celebrating them and also getting information out to schools

who might need some support in family engagement.

Mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mm-hmm. Another thing they did which was really interesting that they had a signup sheet for every parent to find out what their volunteer interest might be.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Oh.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And they distributed it. And they didn't let anybody out the door until they filled out that sheet. And I thought that was a really good thing to get parents to understand that they really want to have their involvement in the school. Plus, they were asking for, and I think this is the other piece of it, is that the parents themselves want to have courses in English, job training, resume writing, those types of things. They ask for that from the... the first lady as well, that question was asked of the first lady. So to the extent that we can provide those types of resources to parents I think that's really important also.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: And I think... well within in our community schools, the 130 community schools that we launched this September, you're



going to see a lot more of that. But I do think we should be taking some of those things and amplifying across all 18 hundred schools. So we will definitely look into that.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And just before I turn it over to my colleagues because we have some questions from them as well I'd like to ask just about the LGBT liaison which the council provided funding... [cross-talk]

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you for that.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And it's really to me very personal and historic that we're able to get that liaison. And so where do they fit into the structure? What is your view of how that's going to take effect and... and what will that mean? And will there be a strategic plan? I'm very interested in finding out if there's a strategic plan to implement across the board LGBT inclusion and LGBT visibility.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: So thank you so much for the funding for that. We... we really appreciate it. And it... it's going to be incredible. The... the liaison starts next month. And the way we see this... the liaison, the LGBT liaison, is going to be

1  
2 working closely with our Office of School Use and  
3 Development but really looking and working closely  
4 with teaching and learning as well so that we are  
5 both focusing on the youth development and support  
6 systems it... and the school climate issues as well  
7 as you know where this fits into our teaching and  
8 learning and our curriculum and how we're talking  
9 about the LGBT community within our curriculum.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So I met with  
11 Crestar [sp?] this morning...

12 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Mm-hmm.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...to urge them as  
14 well to you know look at possibly including some...  
15 the intersection of sexuality and racial issues,  
16 etcetera so forth in some of their testing stuff  
17 that goes on because I really believe that in some  
18 ways testing drives instruction. And instruction is  
19 driven also by the results of testing etcetera...

20 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Mm-hmm.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...so forth and so on.  
22 So I would also ask you to in terms of that liaison  
23 person, in terms of the strategic plan that we're  
24 going to look forward to having for them to  
25 concentrate on that component of it as well. And I

1 know that the new commissioner of education on the  
2 state level has pulled together this new team to  
3 again look at restructuring what the state is doing  
4 on... on that level.  
5

6 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And... and hope that  
8 from what we do in the city can be spoken to them  
9 up there as well in regard to LGBT issues in the  
10 public school system. So I would appreciate that  
11 very much if you would make sure that that happens  
12 there as well.

13 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Definitely.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. The first  
15 person with questions is Council Member Alan Maisel  
16 and then followed by Margaret Chin, Council Member  
17 Rose, and Council Member Barron.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Thank you Mr.  
19 Chairman. And welcome to our guests. Back in 2003 I  
20 guess I thought it would be a wonderful idea if I  
21 would revisit my role as a school board member and  
22 became a member of the CDECs. It was a mistake. I  
23 went on in June and I left by November because the  
24 education councils had really no role, there was  
25 nothing really them... for them to do. It was a...

basically a... it was a situation where they had to have it because otherwise if they didn't have it they'd be... the board would be criticized. And the chancellor whose name I hate to mention, so I don't, never quite understood the idea that parent involvement needed education councils to replace the old school boards. I don't see anything here... nothing in any of the documents that shows that there is a plan or a role for the education council. So if you could just enlighten us and tell us is there a plan for the education councils. And is there an attempt to maybe make them a little bit more involved? I should tell you that in 2006 or seven I met with that chancellor and I asked him about expanding the role of parents in the selection of superintendents as an advisory role and he turned me down flat. I even introduced legislation in Albany when I was a member there to actually require that the parents have a meaningful role in the... in the selection of superintendents and principals although it didn't go anywhere. So I believe that the education councils need to have a much more meaningful role. It would be nice if they could give an advisory opinion on the selection of

principals and superintendents, maybe even assistant principals. And it'd be great if something could be done about that.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: So I'll speak to it first and then I'll give it over to my colleagues. But I do think... and as you can see in our... in... in the 'Framework for Great Schools' parent and... and family engagement is actually incredibly important to the point where it's on a... you know on this chart. I think from the... from the CEC point of view... well we've work really closely with the CECs and the family engagement office. So Yolanda Torres, part of her responsibility is overseeing How we engage the CECs, how we're liaising with the CECs, and really making sure that we are both helping our parent leaders on... on their training and where they want to develop as leaders but also get them involved in how the... at... at the school base level you know how the bud... school base budgeting is happening, getting more involved in SLTs and PTAs. So I think the... Yolanda Torres is really going to take a big lead here on how she engages CECs. But I think over the past year the chancellor has made it very clear that the role of

1  
2 the CEC is incredibly important. And she is out in  
3 the field all the time. I think she's gone to every  
4 single CEC this past year to do a town hall. And  
5 is... is... is really on the front line and answering  
6 questions when parents have issues that arise. But  
7 I'll let Dorita talk to you and... and Josh on...  
8 [cross-talk]

9 JOSH WALLACK: Yeah I would just add one  
10 note quickly which is in addition to the  
11 Chancellor's personal involvement with CECs, in the  
12 structure we did when we expanded the  
13 superintendents offices we took what had been one  
14 role that dealt with families mostly with issues  
15 and concerns that they raised at the school level  
16 that couldn't be resolved at the school level we  
17 dedicated a person to that and then added another  
18 person who's sole function really is to work with  
19 family leaders and family leadership in each  
20 district so that there could be that connection and  
21 Doctor Gibson will speak more to it. But we did try  
22 in expanding... in... in creating that new role to make  
23 sure that each superintendent's office would work  
24 very closely with family leadership in the  
25 district.

DOCTOR GIBSON: Thank you. And... and also as you know when the chancellor actually hired new superintendent which is October of last year, almost a year ago, that each one of them had to reapply for the positions and they had to go through a C37. And in the C37 which brings the CEC president to the table to actually meet the candidate even though the chancellor is the hiring authority and she selects that person she does take them out into the field. And each one of the districts had their CEC, the presidents of Presidents Council. And... and the unions were also at that meeting and that they could voice their concerns and their approval of the hire. And in... in cases where they were not happy that information was taken back to the chancellor.

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Well you know under the C30... the C30R also the community school boards participated... [cross-talk]

DOCTOR GIBSON: Mm-hmm.

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: ...in the interview with parents and they made recommendations. Will that ever happen?

DOCTOR GIBSON: That... that would have to go back to what it was. That... that... they... they don't select because... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: No, not select but if there's going to be an interview the parents as individual parents associations and the education council should be part of an interview process and make recommendations to the chancellor.

DOCTOR GIBSON: I know the... I understand what you're saying and that's the way that it was done in the past and... and... and you can...

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: And it was good.

DOCTOR GIBSON: Before that though the school board actually selected the superintendent. We're so far removed from that. But I think that...

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Well I... I don't advocate these... the... the CDEC selecting the superintendent. We're... you're right, we're... we're gone from there. But it's important for them to... if you're going to give them a... a role to play it has to be meaningful. And it's only meaningful if they have an opportunity to make recommendations. Otherwise it's a charade.



DOCTOR GIBSON: I... I understand but I... I will say that... because I participated in many of these meetings where the CEC and the parents were present they were very vocal in terms of what their feelings were. And a part... another part of that is that at the end of every year the CEC does send an evaluation to the chancellor about their concerns. And... and I will tell you that that evaluation played a part in the selection of the superintendents moving forward because before Chancellor Farina made the selection she went through each one of those recommendations that were sent. And I think that when she meets with the CECs that's one of the things she said in the... in the summer, that everyone needs to send this procedure through and... and tell us what the evaluation is and what the concern is. So she spent a lot of time before this election of... of the superintendents and listened to what each of the district people said. So they did have a hand in it. And many of them... I know there may be some that may not still be happy with the way the outcome was but she actually did a lot of outreach. She spoke to a lot of people in the field. She spoke to parents. She had a good

1 understanding of what wasn't working with their  
2 superintendent and what they were looking for in a  
3 superintendent. And that also came out in the C37  
4 when we brought the parents together and they  
5 voiced their opinions and we left the table with a  
6 next step. And if there were some concerns that's  
7 something that the superintendents have to continue  
8 to do and the chancellor does monitor that. But I  
9 understand what you're saying that... that they don't  
10 do it beforehand, it comes... [cross-talk]

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Well I just  
13 think there should be a formal role, not contingent  
14 on whether or not the chancellor is going to be  
15 taking the role that you've described. It has to be  
16 a formal role. It has... they... they should be part of  
17 the flow chart.

18 DOCTOR GIBSON: Mm-hmm.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: And not just off  
20 some place depending on the vagaries of whoever  
21 happens to be the chancellor.

22 DOCTOR GIBSON: Yes I understand.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Okay thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay thank you. And  
25 I just also want to remind my colleagues that we

are putting everybody on the clock which we forgot to do but we're going to do that starting now so... next for questions will be Council Member Chin. But I... before I go to here I want announce if I haven't done it already we've been joined by Council Member Dan Garodnick, Council Member Jumaane Williams, Council Member Vinny Gentile, Council Member Mark Treyger, Council Member Mark Levine, Council Member Steve Levin, and I think I said Council Member Inez Barron... no, okay, now I have. Thank you all for joining us. And Council Member Chin has questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you Chair. I think it's... I'm happy to see in the new structure that there is a Deputy Chancellor for English Language Learner and also in Field Support Center Director there is a deputy that is also responsible for English language learners. Because more than 40 percent of the student in our New York City public school speaks a... another... speaks a language other than English at home. And we have more than 14 percent of student in New York City public school that are classified as English language learner. But on the... I think the statistic on the 2015 state exam, only four percent are the ELLs were



1 we share the commitment of... of improving our  
2 services of translated documents and to our  
3 parents. And so as... as the chancellor would say,  
4 stay tuned, we... we hear your concerns and we are  
5 moving quickly to address them. As it relates to  
6 our services for ELL students... I'll... I'll... I'll  
7 start it off and then my colleague is going to... to  
8 jump in. But we... it... it was... it was obviously an  
9 incredibly important decision for the chancellor to  
10 have a deputy chancellor for English language  
11 learners. And Milady Baez really hit the ground  
12 running and the work that she's doing in  
13 professional development and making sure that we  
14 are both in... serving our students but also making  
15 sure that they have the best quality education and  
16 making sure that parents understand their options  
17 between all the various programs that they're  
18 allowed to have so... But I'll let Josh talk about  
19 the role, the BFCs, and what we're doing with ELLs.

20 JOSH WALLACK: Thanks. Just briefly I  
21 think... the function that the borough field support  
22 center plays in this is really three folds. One is  
23 to ensure that the... the... the best practices in  
24 instruction and the best citywide initiatives that  
25

we have are shared throughout schools and that we're providing the instructional technical guidance to schools that they need, and then obviously providing cycles of professional development for classroom teachers to help them be more effective in... in working with immigrant families and engaging those communities. And then third we're providing access points for English language learner students who need special services and support as well. I think there are two big changes that we made as part of this... as part of the support structure in addition to creating the... the office that Milady Baez now chairs... heads up. One is in... we tried to design the system so that it was no longer a one size fits all system where the same supports were provided throughout the city. What we tried to do was create a system where we would allocate resources, more resources for English language learners to areas of the city that had more of them and more with more needs. And we believe we succeed in that in the way we've allocated our expertise around the borough. And the second important I think change in our approach is that we really view English language learner

1 instruction as part of the core instructional work  
2 that we do. It... it is a separate department but the  
3 way the borough field support centers are organized  
4 is that the... the... the... the deputy for English  
5 language learner instruction, the deputy for  
6 specialized instruction in student support, and  
7 the... the deputy for teaching and learning work  
8 together to create one comprehensive cohesive  
9 instructional strategy for a particular area rather  
10 than each working in... in different ways with  
11 different schools. So I'll stop there.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I... I'm just glad  
14 to hear... And I want to see more of that in terms of  
15 the collaboration and the sharing of expertise and..  
16 and best practices because even time you might have  
17 to cross borough and I'm glad that you have..  
18 Mariano Guzman heading up all the boroughs and he  
19 can make sure that these experiences are shared.  
20 Because English language learner have common  
21 languages all over five borough. And it would be  
22 unfortunate... you know it would not be good if you  
23 don't utilize those experiences. But one of the  
24 main thing in terms of parent engagement is really  
25 making sure parents can access information. That is

one of the biggest complaint is when they don't know that support are available for them. Because navigating the middle school process, the high school process, college application is not easy. But if we can centralize and really get those information to the English language learner's parent I mean I think that will have a great impact on our students' education. So I'm looking forward to seeing success and some good work coming out of this. Thank you. Thank you Chair.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council Member Rose followed by Council Member Barron.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you so much Chair Dromm. And thank you for having this hearing on such an important topic. And I'd like to thank the administration for coming to testify today and being so straightforward. I... I really am enthusiastic about the administration's new school support system which provides students' parents with more resources for resolving issues, empowers superintendents, and allows educational supports to be rooted in communities. However, I have significant concerns as to whether the resources promised to struggling schools will actually reach



the struggling schools in my district, in particular since several primary schools in my district have not been identified in any of the number of categories that the city and state used to describe struggling schools such as priority, focus, renewal, underdeveloped or developing. I would like reassurance that the schools in my district which are consistently underperforming will get the resources that they desperately need from this new school support system. Because I believe that equity across the system cannot come at the expense of struggling Staten Island schools. And repeatedly in... in the report DOE refers to the importance of ensuring that struggling schools receive more intense... intensive support through this restructuring process. But it doesn't define what it means by a struggling school. So would DOE consider a primary school where under 20 percent of the students score at the proficient levels on state E... ELA and math tests... would that be considered a struggling school? Because I ask because nine of... of such schools are in my district. And although less than... under 20 percent of the students score proficient the schools are

1  
2 rated proficient by DOE. So I'm concerned that... how  
3 do I ensure that these schools are flagged as  
4 struggling? And will they receive you know more  
5 intensive support? Because they also have needs.  
6 And since they don't fall into renewal status what...  
7 you know what supports are going to be made  
8 available to them?

9 DOCTOR GIBSON: I'll start and then my  
10 colleagues can... can answer that question. The... the  
11 good thing is that... that there are no state  
12 identified schools in Staten Island. So that's  
13 good. But the other part that we've done in... in... in  
14 New York City and in our office is that we... we try  
15 very hard to identify schools that are close to  
16 that. And we don't want schools to fall into the  
17 category of priority focus or renewal. And because  
18 of that... because we have a good structure, an  
19 academic instruction... instructional structure in  
20 place for the renewal school program they can be  
21 duplicated in... in other schools that... that we would  
22 not want them to get the... the... the label so to  
23 speak. But there... there's funding that... that goes  
24 into each of the schools that should be used  
25 appropriately. They're grants that we've identified

1 that should go into each of the schools  
2 appropriately. And... and in Staten Island  
3 particularly where we know that there is a large  
4 need for... for specialized support we've given  
5 Superintendent Lodico an extra support person there  
6 to help him to go out there and look at the  
7 schools. We've also charged Superintendent to look  
8 at schools that could be struggling and what are we  
9 going to do for them and what types of programs  
10 that we're going to give them as well. We... we've...  
11 we... we know that there's a Staten Island foundation  
12 that really supports the work for schools in Staten  
13 Island around reading and they have a double M type  
14 of a program for reading for middle schools in  
15 there. And... and he's in the process of enhancing  
16 that as well. But he has identified his schools on  
17 Staten Island that possibly are struggling. And  
18 they are getting adequate support. And if he needs  
19 support he... he does ask. He works very very closely  
20 with the borough field support center and Kevin  
21 Moran in that district to make sure that they're  
22 getting the types of professional development that  
23 they need. What we don't want them to fall into a...  
24 another category or struggling and they should be  
25

1 identified to getting the right kinds of resources.  
2 And as I said the best part of... of having designed  
3 a renewal structure that the mayor and the  
4 chancellor have put together is a good best... best  
5 practice of how do you adopt from that and taking  
6 it to other schools that need the support as well.  
7 [cross-talk]

8 JOSH WALLACK: I would just... I'm sorry.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Sorry go ahead.

10 JOSH WALLACK: No I'm sorry... I would  
11 just add quickly that we... we did when thinking  
12 through the staffing in the borough field support  
13 centers put additional support for schools that are  
14 working with students with special needs and  
15 English language learners because we do see high  
16 numbers of those students in Staten Island schools.  
17 So again we varied the... we varied the staffing in  
18 this interest to try to meet those needs to help  
19 all schools improve. And we tried to respond to  
20 those needs in... in Staten Island but will continue  
21 to look at it as we go forward and make adjustments  
22 as needed.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: I... I'd just like  
24 to know how many districts there are that do not  
25



1 making sure that everything is getting implemented  
2 but also making sure that they are elevating issues  
3 to the central renewal staff team which is a... led  
4 by Amy Horowitz if there are issues within that  
5 particular school. But yes there are.

7 DOCTOR GIBSON: Can I... can I add to that  
8 as well. Even though they're working directly  
9 within renewal schools are charged for the  
10 superintendents and that team person is to go into  
11 schools that are in that district that may be on  
12 the verge, that they are not renewal schools but  
13 could be renewal schools but they should be working  
14 with those schools as well.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSE: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So does Amy Horowitz  
17 work with the superintendents in the districts? Is  
18 that how... what's the relationship there?

19 URSULINA RAMIREZ: That is correct. So  
20 Amy Horowitz oversees the entire renewal school  
21 program, so all 94 schools. And she works closely  
22 with all of the superintendents to make sure that  
23 they are... that they have a vision for how they're  
24 going to improve the school. Every school had the  
25 responsibility of developing a renewal school last...

at the end of last school year. And so her... her responsibility is really to make sure that that is being implemented and that we're seeing improvements across all 94 schools.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay and I imagine the Chancellor also will be...

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...checking in on... with us? Okay.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: The chancellor is very... very involved in our renewal...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: ...school program.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Okay so next Council Member Barron followed by Council Member Treyger.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you Mr. Chair. Thank you to the panel for being here. I have a lot of questions so I'm going to try to get all of them in. What is the relationship between the district superintendent and the director of the Borough Field Center? Who... what's that hierarchy? Who relates to who? Can the district superintendent go and tell staff people at the Brooklyn for... at

the borough field office what she wants done or does she have to go through the Director?

DOCTOR GIBSON: Well that's a very good question. And... and because Deputy Chancellor Wallack and... and I work closely together and the superintendents sit in my shop and the borough field sit in his... their shop we model...

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yeah So what's the relationship?

DOCTOR GIBSON: The relationship that they need to collaborate and they work together. There is not a hierarchy. They work together. And what... we encourage superintendents and the borough field support directors is to work hand in hand.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay so who supervises the personnel in the borough field office?

DOCTOR GIBSON: The borough field director.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Can the superintendent go and tell people in that field office what she would like to have done or does she have to go through the director?



DOCTOR GIBSON: She would speak to the borough director but she would also speak to her field support liaison who is on the... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So she doesn't have direct supervision over them?

DOCTOR GIBSON: She doesn't supervise them but she can speak to them. But...

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay.

DOCTOR GIBSON: ...but... but it...

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well...

DOCTOR GIBSON: ...doesn't... it doesn't... I mean in a way that it really works out is that the superintendent and the borough field director sit together, the look at the plan for the district... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right so they look together but if they don't agree as to what should be happening...

DOCTOR GIBSON: We have an elevation protocol in place that it will elevate to the... to the central office. We hope it doesn't get there but I'll let... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay now... [cross-talk]

DOCTOR GIBSON: ...Josh talk to that...

[cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...I'm going to move on because I have a lot of questions.

DOCTOR GIBSON: Okay. That's fine.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I have several schools in my district that are renewal schools and that are receivership... on the receivership list. I've been to I think three meetings thus far.

DOCTOR GIBSON: Mm-hmm.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And as the chair has indicated we've got to find ways to get parents to understand how severe the situation is and get them out. At one school I believe there were about 12 parents. At another school there were about 10. And at a high school they were two. So we need to make sure that these persons that we're having for family engagement and doing all of this understand that they've got to get in those schools and talk to those principals and staff and get parents to understand what lies down the road if they don't meet those standards and get parents out. We've got to find ways to make it attractive, personalities to come, and yes providing food is a way of making

1  
2 sure that they don't have to rush home to prepare  
3 that. In terms of the re... receivership possibility  
4 when I was a principal I was assigned to a school  
5 that was a school in need of progress. That was  
6 during the time where they had... schools. So I was  
7 given the assignment and I was told if you accept  
8 this here are the targets that you need to meet  
9 each of the next three years. I did it so I know  
10 that it can be done. It takes a lot of work, a lot  
11 of support, a lot of cooperation, a lot of long  
12 hours, a lot of sacrifice, but it can be done.  
13 However, at three of the schools that I went to,  
14 the three that I went to, not one principal could  
15 clearly identify for me what the target was that  
16 they needed to meet at the end of this year. That's  
17 troubling that you're a principal... and one of the  
18 principals was brand new. So you're a principal of  
19 a school that has a specific target over the next  
20 two years and you don't know what that target is,  
21 that's very very troubling.

22 DOCTOR GIBSON: So I'll answer part of  
23 that because I was at district 19 when you spoke so  
24 eloquently to the crowd that was there. And you  
25 said the same thing that... that it's important that

1 we have parent participation. And you're absolutely  
2 right. Because the principal had been there for  
3 three years, the principal could actually talk  
4 about her targets and talk about where she was  
5 going. But you're right it's important to get more  
6 parent input and more people to come to the table  
7 to hear what's going on. The superintendents have  
8 worked with each of the principals to come up with  
9 their CEP and their targets are in there. So the...  
10 maybe the principal needs to go back to their  
11 targets and share their targets with the... with the  
12 you know the community based on what was presented  
13 to the state and what was presented in their CEPs  
14 as well and what each of the superintendents  
15 reviewed. The targets are there. Maybe... I mean  
16 principals need to be able to share that  
17 information more... [cross-talk]

18  
19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I think that's  
20 critical. That's where we're starting from and  
21 knowing where we're headed. And is the renewal plan  
22 in fact a part of the CEP? Or is separate from the  
23 CEP?

24 DOCTOR GIBSON: Not separate, it's a  
25 part of the CEP.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: It's a part of the CEP.

DOCTOR GIBSON: ...called CEP... SCEP I think... I believe...

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: SEP? Not... [cross-talk]

DOCTOR GIBSON: SCEP. Those are the ones that are... they... the renewal... the renewal schools have to do those. They have an extra piece to it.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So in addition to the CEP they do a FTEP?

DOCTOR GIBSON: ...correct... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...part of that?

DOCTOR GIBSON: S... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. And... and just in terms of the comment about parents being more critically involved in selection of those who are charged with teaching and supervising their children... I don't have a problem. One of my colleagues talked about parents selecting superintendents. So just as a comment; I don't have a problem with parents being involved, yes, in selecting who the superintendent is that they want to have oversight of their children. And there is a

1  
2 provision that if the superintendent... if the  
3 chancellor feels that it is an egregious selection  
4 that's been made there's a mechanism for the  
5 chancellor to override the community in that  
6 regard. So I don't have a problem with parents  
7 having that ability to say who they want to see in  
8 those positions of power and responsibility for  
9 educating their children. Thank you Mr. Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So just to be clear  
11 we do have a C30 and a C37 process still in place  
12 for those positions?

13 DOCTOR GIBSON: Correct, yeah. And I  
14 just want to add one piece to that for the C30  
15 because we didn't speak about that... selection of  
16 principals and the selection of assistant  
17 principals. As you know the assistant principals  
18 are selected by the principal and the principals  
19 are selected by the superintendent. But there is a...  
20 a new part of that provision which is the SLT has  
21 to have... before that... that process can be complete  
22 and that principal or assistant principal can be  
23 hired the candidates have to go before the SLT and  
24 a conversation takes place there before the  
25

superintendent or the principal makes the final decision.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So it's kind of like advice and consent.

DOCTOR GIBSON: Advice and consent. And... and there has been occasions... and I will say in occasions with the superintendents as well where you went to a committee and there was a concern that that person may not have been hired or may have done another year of an interim acting... that can actually happen. So if there're you know are egregious concerns that are there that... that team does have... have some say in what should happen. And... and I... I've been a recipient of that before. So sometimes you may not make that appointment or you hold that appointment for a while and... and we've done that in the past. We haven't done that this year but we depict on that in the past.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And just to Council Member Barron's point also about parent... A lot of the organizing around family nights and stuff like that, actually last night when the... was the parent coordinator who pulled it all together. But I think sometimes parent coordinators need training in

community organizing. Is that something that you're looking at doing? Not... you know they're good parent people and you know they have no education but maybe they're not the greatest community organizers.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: And that was... well I mean one of our large efforts this summer and in August when we did the door knocking on 35,000 parents' or students' doors was really to get folks out to our curriculum nights so that parents knew that there was a night in September that they needed to come to. So we're really... that was focused on our renewal schools and our community schools but we really do want to amplify that across the system. As you know it takes a lot to knock on 35,000 doors. And so we're really assessing you know where is the greatest need and how do we target our resources and efforts when it's a critical time to... to door knock. But yes we... we agree with that premise.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That 35,000 number is very commendable and as is the efforts to knock on doors and make phone calls to parents for UPK. I mean I had parents coming up to me saying I can't



1 believe I got a call from the Department of  
2 Education to ask me to enroll my child in... in UPK.  
3 So I think what... what we did... whatever was done  
4 right there is something that we need to continue  
5 to build upon moving forward with the... with the...  
6 with the 35... [cross-talk]

8 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...thousand as well,  
10 yeah.

11 URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yep.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But thank you.  
13 That's good. Alright next Council Member Treyger.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you Chair  
15 Dromm for holding this very important hearing and  
16 thank the panel and I... I want to begin by thanking  
17 Doctor Dorita Gibson and Deputy Chancellor. She's  
18 been very responsive to me and to my office. I  
19 appreciate that. Couple things. The... the renewal  
20 schools I... I've said this before and I'll say it  
21 again. The... many of the schools that were a part of  
22 the renewal schools program it... it didn't take one  
23 to three years for these schools to get into this  
24 situation. And I really believe it is not fair to  
25 say that it's going to take one to three years to

1  
2 get them fully out. And I... I... I take issue with the  
3 way Albany has imposed these artificial deadlines  
4 and dates to say that by a certain timeline... I wish  
5 Albany can produce the billions of dollars that  
6 they owe the city in one year and we'll see some  
7 impact for... from... from there. But having said that  
8 I... quick question Deputy Chancellor with regards to  
9 enrollment at these renewal schools and movement of  
10 staff and students at these renewal schools.  
11 Because parents who are reading about this in... in  
12 the papers and in the media, staff that are in  
13 these schools I'm sure they're on edge, what... what  
14 can you tell this committee and tell... tell me about  
15 enrollment at these schools, staff turnover, and  
16 the number of kids looking to transfer out of these  
17 schools?

18 JOSH WALLACK: So we're still... we're  
19 still seeing enroll... some enrollment activity. It  
20 happens through the first week of October. But in  
21 some cases we've seen it hold steady and even  
22 increase a little bit and in some cases we've seen  
23 some... some decline. And... and we'll sort of get to  
24 the final figures quickly. I think the... the overall  
25 point though is that in... in many of these schools

1 we're seeing tremendous signs... good signs and  
2 positive signs of improvement. We're seeing chronic  
3 attendance go down, we're seeing suspensions go  
4 down. We saw at the beginning of this year the  
5 addition of... of extended learning time and of our  
6 community school programs and our partners. And we  
7 think that as the word gets out about that and as  
8 our door knocking and other outreach efforts  
9 continue we're going to see improvement at these  
10 schools that families are going to see and feel  
11 quickly and that that will... will attract people to  
12 those schools.  
13

14 DOCTOR GIBSON: I want to add too, that  
15 also that for out of time schools we have six of  
16 them, eight of them right now and what we did for  
17 the out of time schools we suspended the over the  
18 counter enrollment which was very helpful because  
19 during the summer the schools could actually have  
20 their teachers and do professional development and  
21 they knew exactly what their student population  
22 would look like. And so for year one in terms of  
23 boys and girls automotive and actually Long Island  
24 City they actually did not take over the counter  
25 children. And it was really a good indication that

1 they could work with the populations that they had.  
2 They could work with their teachers this year  
3 because they're in year two. They've met a lot of  
4 their targets and they're starting to take some  
5 more over the counter students and... and as you know  
6 Long Island City came off of the list and... and boys  
7 and girls there have made gains in automotive has  
8 also made gains. But we try and... and... and work with  
9 the population that's there. We don't want to  
10 reduce the population but we want to... we want  
11 principals to get a handle on who their student  
12 population is. To be able to do the right kinds of  
13 intervention services and to give the teachers the  
14 right kinds of professional development. As you  
15 said it didn't take one or two or three years to  
16 get there. But we want to have realistic targets  
17 and we want them to be successful because we don't  
18 want to close these schools.

19  
20 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And I... and I  
21 appreciate that. And would you say... and I would  
22 just appreciate that if we also monitor whatever  
23 decisions we take with renewal schools that they  
24 don't impact neighboring schools as well. Because  
25 if you're suspending over the counter in one kids

1 have to go somewhere and making sure that other  
2 schools that might be overcrowded aren't getting  
3 more overcrowded. So I don't... we have to make sure  
4 that we're not you know impacting other neighboring  
5 schools. I just want to go over in my... my... so many  
6 questions with so little time. Making sure that  
7 superintendents... I certainly support the idea of a  
8 clear line of accountability. I think that...  
9 because... in the last administration was very  
10 unclear. Is it... is it in your view that  
11 superintendents have enough capacity, enough  
12 staffing to oversee all the schools in their  
13 portfolio? Because how we define support is really  
14 important. It's not just simply responding to an  
15 email. It's about making sure that they're there,  
16 they're engaged, not just being compliant but being  
17 engaged. So if you could speak to that I... I'd  
18 appreciate it.

20 DOCTOR GIBSON: The superintendents have  
21 a heavy lift and... and they are working very hard, I  
22 will say that. But I do believe we have the right  
23 superintendents in place. An example of do they  
24 have enough staffing to do the work, they do have  
25 the support of the borough field support centers

1 and that's number one, but in the case of... in  
2 example of Anthony Canelli [sp?]?... Anthony Lodico  
3 who is a superintendent in Staten Island which is K  
4 to 12 at the moment he has actually two extra staff  
5 members to make sure that he has someone overseeing  
6 the high school, someone overseeing the elementary  
7 and the middle schools so that principals can get  
8 the right kinds of support that they need. I don't  
9 want principals to feel that they don't have anyone  
10 to go to. I mean they can go to anyone on the  
11 superintendent's team but they also have the  
12 borough field support centers. That's why I say  
13 it's very important for them to work very closely  
14 together because they should view both the  
15 superintendent's office and the borough field  
16 support center as their support team to make sure  
17 that they get what they need.

18  
19 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And very  
20 lastly, Chair this is the last point and then I'll  
21 turn it over, just with regards to... I see in the  
22 organizational chart they... there's a community  
23 communications, there's chief information officers,  
24 and all that... how does the DOE get the word out to  
25 the general public about progress of its schools as

1 well? We... the media times... those are... those are...  
2 tries to do a number on certain schools but for  
3 example I'm very proud to say that PS100, the Coney  
4 Island school in District 21, is a national blue  
5 ribbon school which is a national program which  
6 honors schools that have made significant progress  
7 in closing the achievement gap and they're doing...  
8 they're doing great. How do we get the word out?  
9 Because many times people are looking to hammer  
10 and... and hit our public school system. But schools  
11 have to teach kids but who is responsible in the  
12 DOE to get the word out about the progress that  
13 we're making in our school system? Because this...  
14 this is now... since the state and federal government  
15 are looking to create what... what's competition so  
16 to speak and in my opinion we shouldn't be  
17 competing, we should be educating kids, who is  
18 responsible to get the word out about progress that  
19 we're making in our school system?  
20

21 URSULINA RAMIREZ: I mean I think it's  
22 our collective responsibility to get the good news  
23 out. But I do think... on our end we do have a  
24 communication... we have a communications office that  
25 is amplifying our work across the city and we're...

and we're really trying to get the good news out.  
But I do think it's really important that if you  
are seeing good things in your district that you're  
talking about it...

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I share it.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Okay. And I know you  
do. But I just want to make sure that we're all  
doing this because I think it's... it's really  
important and I think with the role of the  
superintendents and the borough field support  
centers, now that we have people who are  
geographically based who can really talk to the  
needs of... of a community I think we're going to be  
more successful. So I'm... I'm excited about the year  
to come in terms of how we're... how folks are going  
to be talking about our schools. But again we would  
that... we... we love the support if you would speak  
highly about the... the public schools in your  
district.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: I would like to  
follow-up on that afterwards, thank you Chair.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Of course.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thanks for your  
time.



CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So thank you for that question Council Member Treyger as well. I had a... a briefing with the Alliance for Quality Education recently where every council member who attended was asked to kind of adopt a school to get word out about what is good that's going on in a particular school in their district. And so hopefully we can get other council members on board with that. Because I do agree, you know there are many good things happening in our public school system. Miracles every day are occurring in our classrooms. And we need people to understand exactly what is going on in our public school system. Getting a little tired of all this negative stuff that always goes on. So... anyway that's for another hearing. Council Member Barron has some follow-up questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you Mr. Chair. I have just two questions. After the two... some schools have to meet their target by this... the end of this year. Is there any movement afoot to try to get the state to move from that firm deadline to give them an extension if they've shown

significant growth but perhaps have not yet met the target?

DOCTOR GIBSON: It's really not this year. It really is next school year so I...

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I'm sorry say again.

DOCTOR GIBSON: It's really not this year. It... it started this year so it's really they have one year. So we... kicks them into next school year. [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Oh so... then I'm not clear because when I went to FDNY... they said that they needed to do it at the end of this year. So...

DOCTOR GIBSON: End... [cross-talk] of 2016.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: At...

DOCTOR GIBSON: Yes, the schools that have been identified as the receivership schools?

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.

DOCTOR GIBSON: Yes, they have the end of this school year that they've...

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.

DOCTOR GIBSON: ...already been identified. But they have targets that they have to meet and then we will monitor them mid-year. We constantly meet... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right so my question is... [cross-talk]

DOCTOR GIBSON: ...asking if... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...if NDN... if FDNY, fire department of...

DOCTOR GIBSON: Oh... fire department...

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...New York high school does not meet their target in June but they have made significant progress is there any attempt to have the state make some considerations to extend their time?

DOCTOR GIBSON: There's an appeal process that we would partake in.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. Okay. And secondly have you identified a family support coordinator for District 23 which have somebody at schools... I don't think they had one... [cross-talk]

DOCTOR GIBSON: I can check to see if they don't have one.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And... [cross-talk] lastly is there somewhere that I can go online and look to see what in fact is the renewal plan for the schools in my district?

URSULINA RAMIREZ: I don't... I mean I will... I'm going to double check on whether our renewal school plans are online. But if... we can definitely sit down with you and talk through the renewal school plans in your district. But I'll double check on the... on whether they're on the school's website.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Good and...  
[cross-talk]

DOCTOR GIBSON: ...I will tell you what is on the website for your... for all schools is the...  
[cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes.

DOCTOR GIBSON: ...CEP or the SCEP. You can go online to look at that. That is on the DOE website. They're public.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.

DOCTOR GIBSON: They should all be there.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay and finally in terms of the additional funding for all of the schools in my district you know all the rest of the council members have the ability to give them discretionary funds. And my predecessor, Council Member Charles Barron, and I saw a pattern with certain schools and in fact gave them additional funding for those items that they had indicated they thought would help the progress of the students. So as... as these schools had been identified... in one instance a school got 250,000. Another instance over the last three years they've gotten over a million dollars. So as schools in this plan have been identified as a struggling school or renewal school how will they be able to identify in dollar amounts what it is that their school has received to help support what they need to do to achieve their targets? I know there's a big pot but how will schools be able to clearly identify what they have gotten from that pot?

DOCTOR GIBSON: When they... when they make the decisions on how they want to spend the money that they get they have to identify how they're going to use the funding sources and where

1  
2 they're... those funding sources are coming from. So  
3 there has to be a clear plan in place on how that  
4 money is going to be spent.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So can they ask  
6 for a dollar amount and that's what they get or how  
7 is that determined?

8 DOCTOR GIBSON: They can make a plan.  
9 And they can say... make a proposal. And the proposal  
10 comes with a dollar amount at the end. And then  
11 they make that request to the superintendent's  
12 office.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So then some  
14 schools may get more than other schools in this  
15 renewal... [cross-talk]

16 DOCTOR GIBSON: It could happen. But I  
17 think there's money that's there and I think it's  
18 up to the superintendent and the schools and the...  
19 and the... and the DSR to make sure that they're  
20 there to really work with them to get the funding  
21 that they need.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So how can a  
23 principal know that... what the pot is that they can  
24 draw from and what they can expect as they try to  
25

decide what would be a way to identify improvement in their schools?

DOCTOR GIBSON: The principal is expecting that they're going to get a dollar amount but they're not getting a dollar amount. They're... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: They're not getting a dollar amount? [cross-talk]

DOCTOR GIBSON: They're not getting a dollar amount but they're getting what their needs are. But they are getting dollar amounts in certain areas. So they get different funding sources that come through. So they get funding sources so... sort of SIG grants so they know what a SIG grant is for their school that's coming and it could be 100,000 dollars, 200,000 dollars and they have to say how they're going to spend that money. There's certain funds that come into a school. Different schools get different amounts based on the needs of the students. And they have to be able to identify how they're going to spend that money. Not unlike what we do for Title 1. So you get the Title 1 money that comes in and it's earmarked for... for programs... interventions but it's also earmarked for parents.

And I think a principal has to include that in that budget on how that money's being spent.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: But Title one money... isn't that done by... [cross-talk]

DOCTOR GIBSON: It is a formula but it's separate... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yeah.

DOCTOR GIBSON: But a principal still has to identify... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: But it's a formula... [cross-talk]

DOCTOR GIBSON: ...how they're going to spend that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...there's some equity there. My concern is that some schools may not know... especially a school as I described who has a brand new principal may not know all of the things that are available to increase the funds that will come to make that school successful. So...

URSULINA RAMIREZ: What I... I wanted to note that... So last year... I mean schools get funding based on their... their... their student population.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.



URSULINA RAMIREZ: And then we ask our renewal schools to create renewal plans at the end of the school year and...

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Right.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: ...throughout the summer. So... because we didn't want money driving the solution. I want... I want are the... the... the academic leaders to create a vision for their school... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: We don't want money driving the solution but you can't run a car without paying for the... [cross-talk]

URSULINA RAMIREZ: A... a...

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: ...gas to go in the car.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: A hundred percent. So it... when they created their academic vision they had an opportunity to appeal about... on their budget based on their student population today I actually really want to do X, Y, and Z in my school and I don't have the resources to do it. And that is a discussion that they have with their DSR in their district. And it's a discussion that they have with the renewal school team.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Do they still have that opportunity to...

URSULINA RAMIREZ: There is constant opportunities throughout the year... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: ...on... on funding opportunities.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. Thank you Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay thank you. Council Member Kallos.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you Chair Dromm. It's... this is my first committee member... first meeting as a member of this committee. I am happy to be joining it. And... so envious of your leadership and how great a job you're doing. Just good to be here. I wanted to just ask a question. I've... I've had the opportunity actually with Council Member Dromm's support, chair of this committee, to meet with almost every single principal in my district. I have 18 schools, I met with 16 of them. Two are still holding out and I'll get to them eventually. But a lot of the principals with the change reached out to me and they said

1  
2 that with the networks they had competition. So if  
3 the network wasn't working for them they would join  
4 another and then amongst the principals they  
5 actually all ended up using the network but there  
6 wasn't a feeling of being stuck. What... what should  
7 I be saying to them and how can you address those  
8 concerns about the... whether or not there will still  
9 be that competition and what to do when they're no  
10 longer getting the support they need?

11 JOSH WALLACK: I think the idea of the...  
12 the... the sort of idea behind this system is that  
13 we're... we're all held accountable for improving  
14 results. And we're collaborate... and... and we want to  
15 encourage schools to collaborate with one another.  
16 And... and to... to share best practices with one  
17 another. And so that's really the ethos that sort  
18 of animates it. And the idea is that over time all  
19 schools can improve. And we've designed a system  
20 that we believe will help with that... help give the  
21 support that we need to make that happen.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: So for a  
23 principal who is at a school that needs additional  
24 support because it is not achieving the way it  
25 should be and they're not getting the support how

1  
2 does that principal get the support that they need  
3 in this accountability system where obviously there  
4 will likely end up be a situation where they might  
5 be pointing a finger at the superintendent and the  
6 borough while they will be in turn the  
7 administration would be pointing their finger at  
8 the principal and the faculty?

9 JOSH WALLACK: I think here it's... the...  
10 the one of the virtues of this new structure is  
11 that... is that those sorts of lines of  
12 accountability are clearer. The principal would go  
13 to their superintendent to ask for that help. The  
14 superintendent may be able to offer that support  
15 herself. If not... or with her team. If not the  
16 superintendent calls on the borough field support  
17 center which has a real array of... of expertise to  
18 bring to bear. And... and ultimately the  
19 superintendent and in borough field support centers  
20 are responsible for giving those principals the  
21 support they need to improve. So... all... all the  
22 parts of the system from the chancellor's office to  
23 the borough centers to the superintendents' offices  
24 to the principals' are accountable. It's not... it's  
25 not... you know so... so... [cross-talk]

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: So... [cross-talk]

JOSH WALLACK: ...we all sort of respond to that.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: In terms of accountability one of the problems is when you hold somebody accountable often what suffers is the relationship. So the other concern that's been brought to me is if a principal is not getting the support services they need from their superintendent or their borough services they can no longer switch. They have to hold that person accountable which means either going over their head or getting them in trouble with one of the people such as here which means that that person is no longer to be as disposed as the adage goes you get more with honey than vinegar but at the end of the day they're concerned what happens once they've devastated that relationship because now they're holding their service provider accountable and then that person doesn't want to provide services.

DOCTOR GIBSON: We're all held... to be held accountable for this right. And... and... and I think what we stress very... in the very beginning that when we made the switch from networks to

borough field support centers is supportive  
superintendents is that you have to be there to  
support principals. That's very clear everywhere.  
And that's the work that everybody has to do. If a  
principal... before a principal even says that I need  
the support the... the superintendent should know  
that they need support because they should have  
that kind of a relationship. They need to have the  
relationship where they... they... the superintendents  
in there often enough that they can see that  
there's a problem. You may... you may be speaking of  
principals who have been empowered and have been  
principals for a very long time and they're worried  
about harming relationships. But it's not really  
about the relationships. It's about children...  
support that principals are asking for are... is  
support for their families and the students in  
their building. And I think superintendents as they  
go into schools they need to say to them what is it  
that you need, how else can I help you. And that's  
the relationship that you need to form. Because  
there's lots of resources out there for... for  
district offices, for borough field support

centers, for central offices to make sure that principals are getting all their answers met.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: And so the next question is in terms of as a council member, all of us, there's 51 of us, each of us have constituencies, and it seems like we have a smaller constituency in terms of public schools than many superintendents. And so for me I'm usually in a public school multiple times a week with a principal comes to me and says I'm concerned that the new system isn't working, I'm concerned that the superintendent or the borough services aren't working who should we be contacting in order to fix that situation and make sure that my schools are treated fairly despite the fact that they're with a... have a member who's willing to hold everyone and anyone accountable.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: You should definitely let... I mean Mike Dehunko [phonetic] or Iniah [phonetic] and let them know if there is an issue that you're hearing we're... we are 100 percent open to hearing feedback. Because it's obviously... we're continually improving right. This... we launched this in September. We're... we're getting feedback.

We're making adjustments. We know that... that...  
we're... we're constantly learning.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: And there are  
rules in place to protect principals and faculty  
from retaliation from... [cross-talk]

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS:  
...superintendents?

URSULINA RAMIREZ: And I... and I mean the  
chancellor gets a lot of feedback directly and she  
responds to it and is really... really good about  
protecting the principal and making sure that she's  
able to have conversations with the superintendent  
and the BFSCs about the feedback that she's  
hearing.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: If the  
chancellor were here based on my previous meetings  
she would actually tell me which principals told me  
what concerns. She is amazing like that... [cross-  
talk]

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: ...lucky to have  
an educator in... in this role. So thank you. And



1  
2 thank you Chair for allowing me this line of  
3 questioning. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Council  
5 Member Kallos. And I have a few more follow-up  
6 before I let you go if you don't mind. So how are  
7 families going to receive information about the new  
8 structure? How is that going to work? And are you  
9 going to be giving out name, phone number, etcetera  
10 of the family's four coordinators and the  
11 superintendents responsible for each school?

12 DOCTOR GIBSON: Yes. The answer is yes,  
13 yes, yes and yes and yes. Yes, there's been a  
14 webinar that we're doing for parents so they can be  
15 participating in that. Yolanda Torres is working  
16 very closely with parents and what the parent  
17 coordinators should know. Each of the schools would  
18 be designed... Josh's team has designed a website he  
19 can talk to you about that talks about every single  
20 team member who's participating who's supporting  
21 that school which is a new online tool which is  
22 amazing so that anyone in the... in a school... the  
23 parent coordinator can go on and say if I need  
24 support in this area who do I call. So they will  
25 have all that information. And the information's

1  
2 out there. As the Chancellor has been going around  
3 and talking to parents and CECs and... and CPACs and  
4 you know all the parent groups. She talks about  
5 what the structure looks like. Deputy Chancellor  
6 Wallack has also been on those tours with her to  
7 talk about that. So it... there are meetings that are  
8 there, going to PTA meetings and CEC meetings. And  
9 because we work closely with the borough field  
10 support centers and the superintendents and had a  
11 webinar for the principals who are expecting that  
12 that information will continue to trickle down to  
13 the families as well.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And what about on  
15 the websites too for each school? Because some of  
16 that information does need to be updated actually.

17 JOSH WALLACK: It is available on... on  
18 the website. We can get you the information about  
19 that. We would like to work with you and with other  
20 council members' offices as well to use you know...  
21 to... so we would like to work with your teams and  
22 make sure that they know all the details about the  
23 new system because we know you do... you interact  
24 with a lot of families and we'd love it... to partner  
25

with you on that so that you can be source of information for those families as well.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So can you describe a little bit for me about how the new structure will also support students with disabilities, special education students, etcetera?

JOSH WALLACK: Sure... so I think one of the, again one of the strong features, one of the... one of the... the... a central part of the vision that the chancellor had for the system was that we would have in the borough centers enough scale to put real experts together to work together on schools and to allow them to facilitate the sort of sharing of best practices between schools that we need. And so where... where in the past that expertise has been spread throughout on... on number of networks now each borough has those... that expertise. So again similarly to the way we thought about the way the borough center served schools working with English language learners here we have the expertise in the centers to ensure that we're sharing those best practices and to help citywide initiatives move forward to ensure that every school is providing quality services to support achievement of students

1 with... with special needs and to implement the  
2 shared path framework our... our... our special  
3 education reforms and to provide that access to  
4 families and students as well. And we... again we... we  
5 varied the staffing and focused more resources on  
6 areas of the city where... that had more schools with  
7 more students with more needs. And so we're hopeful  
8 that that sort of tailored approach is going to be  
9 more effective over time.  
10

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Who should parents  
12 go to if they have trouble getting services that  
13 are mandated in a student's IEP?

14 DOCTOR GIBSON: They should go directly  
15 to the superintendent's office first. And the  
16 superintendent will work very closely with the  
17 borough field support center and the special deputy  
18 will be on top of that and make sure that that  
19 happens in that specific school.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And I... there's  
21 a case I need to talk with you about that...

22 DOCTOR GIBSON: Okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...has been working  
24 with me on and I want to follow-up with you on that  
25 as... as well.

JOSH WALLACK: I think an important... just an important point to make is that for families the... the... after they've been to the school and work with the principal the next point of contact in all cases is really the superintendent's office. And there is a person there whose sole job is to make sure that any issues that a family raises are... are... are managed and dealt with and to stick with that family until that issue is resolved. And that again is a new feature of this system that we hope families will take advantage of. That person will stay with the family. There are a lot of other people that will work on that specific issue in the borough field support center, in the superintendent's offices, and elsewhere. But that family will have a... a single point of contact. And that... that is a really critical piece.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay I did have a group of special education supervisors that came in to see me, some of them feeling that the new structure has gotten a little bit too top heavy with directors and managers of special education in the borough field support centers. What's the purpose and function of the director and manager

positions? And what do these positions fulfil? And how does the manager position different for... differ from the supervisor position? These supervisors were complaining to me. I mean the... the... some of the supervisors were complaining to me that there's not enough supervisors and that they're needed to sign off on IEPs and that's part of the reason why sometimes there is a slow response to changing the IEPs.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: I... I mean I would like to get back to you on that because I would love more specifics. I want to make sure that I'm... I'm adequately addressing your question. But...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So we have the managers and the supervisors.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Yep, mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Seem to me to be very similar. And I wanted to know what the differences are there and... and what the... perhaps what the numbers are there actually as well. Okay.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: We'll get back to you on the numbers.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Alright. So I think Council Member Barron alluded to the fact

that there... there are not yet family support coordinators in District 23, 26, and 75. Do you know when those will be coming in?

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Can you repeat that question?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Sure.

[cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: There are not family support coordinators in districts 23, 26, and in district 75. When do you anticipate hiring or you know announcing those positions have been filled.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Well we are in the process of... I mean we're in the hiring process now for all of those. So we're looking for great candidates. I'll make sure... if you... if you know any candidates we'll make sure that we pass them along. But we're really trying to make sure that we have the best qual... and the most qualified people in those positions.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. And is there a system of tracking problems that parents bring to the family support service coordinators?

DOCTOR GIBSON: We... we still have the 311 system and we still open and close those cases

1  
2 and we continue to track them. An important feature  
3 that... that Deputy Chancellor talked about was the  
4 family support person was really going to make sure  
5 that any case that's open is actually closed and...  
6 and we'll follow up with a parent to make sure  
7 there's satisfaction.

8           URSULINA RAMIREZ: And I... I want to note  
9 that in our... in our process of... of kind of  
10 reinventing FACE we did a long... a hard look at the  
11 way families were engaging with the system and how  
12 we're engaging families. And we notice that there  
13 were a lot of we called pain points for parents  
14 where they would call the school and not get an  
15 answer. Sometimes they'd call the superintendent.  
16 Sometimes they would call central offices. And so  
17 by streamlining it through one person through the...  
18 the district office we're able to... to really see  
19 holistically where there are issues that are more  
20 systemic and not just district based. So Yolanda's  
21 really going to be working closely with the  
22 superintendent's office to identify areas that are  
23 coming up as trends for parents. And that's been  
24 really really helpful in the start of the school  
25 year.



CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. So what training have family support coordinators received in the areas of special education and for English language learners?

DOCTOR GIBSON: So... so they... the... the superintendents have received training and the principals have received training and we're going to start working with the principals' and the... the... the superintendents' teams so they can get the training as we move forward. Yolanda Torres is putting that in place as we speak. So those things will start happening very soon.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And family support coordinators?

DOCTOR GIBSON: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. There's some concern about the superintendents in district offices not being accessible. They're distant from some of the districts. Have you looked at that at all?

DOCTOR GIBSON: We've been working with facilities to make sure that they are... and that they are accessible... handicap accessibility but

we're making sure that it's in a central spot as well so that all parents can reach it.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And then on affinity groups... how do you determine which external partners you want to work with?

JOSH WALLACK: So in that case there are... essentially what we did is we looked outside to the... to groups that had been working with the Department of Education before and also with those that were interested in... in beginning work with us. We asked them to submit proposals for what they wanted to do with... Again this is just with secondary and high schools. We evaluated those proposals very carefully and much of our leadership had input into those. And we selected those providers that we thought could add value to the entire system by... again by sharing best practices, new approaches, innovative approaches that ultimately we hope all of our schools can learn from. So we based the selection on those... on those factors and we wound up picking sort of three groups that are beginning work with us and three that worked previously.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Who are they?

JOSH WALLACK: So the... the ones that we have been working with are New Visions, Urban Assembly, and CUNY. And then the new ones are a group that... of international schools, Expeditionary Learning, and a group of schools that uses performance portfolio assessment.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I did not know about CUNY. Can you just describe that a little bit for me. You're working with them in the past?

JOSH WALLACK: CUNY was a... what we call the partnership support organization, in the past and they work with... they work with a number of schools and we think do really valuable work in our secondary and high schools helping to prepare students.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And that's CUNY system or CUNY graduate center or CUNY...

JOSH WALLACK: It's... it's the CUNY system as a whole.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: CUNY system as a whole. Do schools that are in affinity groups report to the local district superintendents?

JOSH WALLACK: So no we... again we have the flexibility because these are secondary... for

1 the most part these were... for the most part these  
2 were schools that were in high school  
3 superintendencies before. So they weren't part of  
4 the community superintendencies. And so that gave  
5 us the flexibility to be innovative here.  
6 Essentially what we did is we put each of the  
7 schools that are working with a particular outside  
8 provider under the same superintendent. So they  
9 have one superintendent that they're working with.  
10 Again we felt that that would provide clear lines  
11 of accountability both for the schools and for that  
12 outside provider. And so we have four  
13 superintendents I believe that are working with  
14 affinity groups, the ones that I just mentioned.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So how are they held  
17 accountable? Because one of the problems in the  
18 past with the networks was that they were not being  
19 held accountable. And that was one of the major  
20 reasons for getting rid of them.

21 JOSH WALLACK: Yeah. So a few different  
22 ways. I mean first of all we... we have a dedicated  
23 field support center to work with affinity groups  
24 that is taking... is... is providing support to those  
25 schools but also working closely with those

1 affinity groups we... we put them into three year  
2 agreements so that with the same set of schools so  
3 we could track their progress over time. And  
4 essentially what we're doing is we're looking at  
5 the goals that we set for each school which are  
6 published annually in our school quality guides.  
7 It's another new way I think that this  
8 administration's trying to increase accountability  
9 and... and give families and school leaders more  
10 information. We set these annual targets. And we  
11 will be as I said providing support but also  
12 watching closely to see whether the schools in a  
13 particular affinity group are meeting those  
14 targets, exceeding them or falling short. And that  
15 will be the way that we evaluate the... the... the... the  
16 success or failure of those groups and whether we  
17 want to replicate them and do more or over the time  
18 phase those out.

19  
20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So I think in the  
21 past with the networks one of the problems was that  
22 if I'm not mistaken there was no opportunity for  
23 principals to have input into those evaluations. Is  
24 that something that you've considered for these  
25

1  
2 affinity groups, for the external groups that are  
3 working with the affinity groups?

4 JOSH WALLACK: I think there's a  
5 constant, there will be a constant conversation  
6 between principals and superintendents and the  
7 leader of that field support center to evaluate the  
8 progress. And then in addition to that we... we will...  
9 we'll be looking for how those schools perform both  
10 on the framework measures and on measures of  
11 student achievement to help us make those  
12 determinations.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay and then I'm  
14 almost done here. But I want to just talk a little  
15 about the... the funding in the budget for this. Has  
16 the budget for the new support structure increased,  
17 decreased, or not changed from the prior network  
18 structure?

19 JOSH WALLACK: Essentially we believe  
20 that over time we'll achieve some modest savings  
21 but the overall purpose here... we didn't set out  
22 with the purpose of... of saving money. We set out  
23 with the purpose of trying to provide more  
24 effective and equitable support to schools. That's  
25 our main goal. And we believe that we're... we're on

track to succeed in that. And we'll be looking at the results over time.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So I think in the past each school got about 50,000 dollars if I'm not mistaken?

JOSH WALLACK: Well so we've ended that. The... the particular practice that occurred before as... as I understand it, I wasn't here, was that essentially we did an allocation to schools and then those schools in turn reallocated that back to the central structure in order to provide support. In any event... what we did is... in my view we simplified that a bit. And essentially we're just funding the supports that schools need centrally instead of going through that sort of transfer and retransfer back.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And...

JOSH WALLACK: And that also allows... I mean in a sense what we do then is we're able to provide that targeted support to schools through the borough field support centers. So again based on the particular challenges that a school has we're able to provide that targeted and tailored support.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So the approximately 50,000 dollars per school that was used in the past, it's my understanding now that 34,000 dollars will be used to fund staff and services? Is that the money that will be coming directly from central to fund those services... will they go directly to those services?

JOSH WALLACK: So I think what... so I think what you're... I think the 34,000 dollars that's coming to central is being used to support the field support structure; the superintendents, the new expanded superintendents' offices, and the borough field support centers. So essentially all that money is going for school support.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And then I... I understand that there's an extra... additional 16,000 dollars that's going to go to the schools themselves?

JOSH WALLACK: That's right.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: To use.

JOSH WALLACK: So 16,000 does go to the schools and they use that to support this work and to do school based work to help improve achievement there.



CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And can that be used for per... I mean for precession costs for things like teacher groups and...

JOSH WALLACK: Yes, exactly. So it can be used for... for... for per diem precession work, for any activity that supports the overall improvement along the framework of student achievement that's consistent with the vision that the chancellor set out.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay and the... the only follow-up on that that I have is that 16,000 dollars is equal across the board regardless of the size of the school? Is that correct?

JOSH WALLACK: I believe that's... I believe that's correct, yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think that's a little limiting and wish there was another way that we could look at that and maybe consider that moving forward because if you have a larger school I think you're going to need larger bucks especially if you're going use that 16,000 dollars for precession assignments... You know one thing that I did enjoy was always having the study groups with other teachers to come up and write curriculum and

sharing what worked in our classrooms with each other. And 16,000 dollars if you're a large school is really not that much money.

JOSH WALLACK: Okay. Thanks for the tip. I think... I think the idea for us is just to keep in mind... take the point is that the... again the borough field support centers are providing varying levels of support. So for bigger schools they're providing more attention and more resources. But... Go ahead... but Doctor Gibson...

DOCTOR GIBSON: And I... I just want to add to that. That's not all the funding that they... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right.

DOCTOR GIBSON: ...get for precession. That's just extra. But... but principals at the beginning of the year actually when they submit their budgets have an outline of how they want to spend precession or... money so that's there... and how they want to continue to do grant write... you know grant writing, curriculum writing, as well as precession.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate your time in coming in and

spending this time with us. And we look forward to speaking with you again once we see how well the structure is working.

URSULINA RAMIREZ: Thank you so much for having us.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

JOSH WALLACK: Thanks.

DOCTOR GIBSON: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright. And our next panel is Jim Devose... Devore I'm sorry representing himself, Alicia Flynn a Title 1 D-Pack 27 Chair, Mathew Redenski himself and... and former students at PS34 in District 17, and Denise Gordon Power... Parent Empowerment Services.

[background comments]

JIM DEVORE: Thank you Chairman...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just hold on one minute because just want to be sure who we've got on the panel. Jim? Okay. Alicia? Okay. Mathew? Oh okay. And Denise? Very good. Alright everybody's then. I'm going to ask you to raise your right hand. And do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the

truth and to answer council member questions  
honestly?

[combined affirmations]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay and Jim you  
want to start?

JIM DEVORE: Okay. My name is Jim  
Devore, past president of Community Education  
Council for District 15. And I'm here to speak on a  
very narrow issue with... concerning family support  
coordinators. My understanding of a family support  
coordinator position is it serves as kind of an  
ombudsman for the district or fixers or somebody  
who understands how the system operates and is able  
to work that through... work parents through that  
process to get good outcomes. You would think you'd  
might want somebody who is knowledgeable about the  
district to rep... to be in that position. However,  
an anomaly in state law says it goes where the most  
qualified are prohibited from being... in doing that  
job. I'm referring to a three-year rule that says  
if you cannot work in the same district if you were  
in community education council of that district.  
That affected me personally. I was offered a  
position and that offer was withdrawn. It seems to

me that this is a relic of the days when community dis... when district school boards could hire principals and superintendents that had an enormous amount of power and that upon leaving that one could then create a sinecure for oneself within that district. As was noted by Councilman Maisel Community District Educations Councils have far less power than that. I mean the anomaly here is that Joel Klein gets a one-year disqualification, I get a three-year disqualification. Now I know Joel Klein is a man of great talents and unique talents, I certainly could lose a half a billion dollars in my next job like he did. But it seems to me that... that this council should... should endeavor to petition either an exemption or a waiver process for people like me and other people. It's not just me. There's other people who had the same problem in other districts or to petition or let the state legislators know that this has to be changed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So Jim the idea behind that disqualification... do you know the reasonings why they put that in... conflict of interest or...

JIM DEVORE: Well I think they... I think it's... it's one of the... it's from the days before 96 when community education council... you know when community district... excuse me when district school boards had a great deal of power and therefore what could happen is you then leave the school board and in... in the meantime working out a deal with the superintendent to create your own sinecure. I really think that was the concern or that was the fear. I think that that is unnecess... inappropriate or unnecessary given the tremendous lack of power that community education councils have. And... and the unlikelihood that the kind of corruption that were the concerns of past days.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And it's state law.

JIM DEVORE: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you.

Next please.

ALICIA FLYNN: Good afternoon.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good afternoon.

ALICIA FLYNN: Thank you everyone for being here. The first thing I want to start off is the mission statement. My name is Alicia Flynn. I'm the Title 1 D... Chair for District 27. That is the

1 federal piece that works with the local parent  
2 advisory councils in the schools who receive  
3 federal funded money. And that is you know I go  
4 into schools and I help support elections. I go  
5 into schools and help support just different  
6 events, principals' annuals, conversations around  
7 budget and how to properly spend the school's one  
8 percent specifically for parents and building  
9 capacity. I wanted to start off with reading the  
10 chancellor's four pillars. The mission statement.  
11 The New York City Department of Education is  
12 committed to working collaboratively with parents,  
13 educators, school communities, and external  
14 stakeholders to improve student achievement and  
15 ensure that every child graduates from high school  
16 prepared for college, a career, and a future as a  
17 productive critically thinking citizen. Now the  
18 reason why I read this is because District 27 is  
19 one of the biggest supporters when it comes to the  
20 capacity framework for great... for the city to... the  
21 criteria and also the chancellor's four pillars. We  
22 have monthly meetings where we actually sit down  
23 with parents pushing because this is talking about  
24 collaboration and partnerships with is... which is  
25

1 something that's not new to district 27. According  
2 to your chancellor we're... we are the model for the  
3 district across the board. So I am here to share my  
4 experience right with my... my district, District 27,  
5 Ms. Mary Barton who is also... and my experience with  
6 our borough field support centers. I went into my  
7 office and asked for bylaws. And I was told... and  
8 I'm talking about the district leadership team  
9 bylaws... that they were currently being edited. So I  
10 stated aren't we supposed to be reviewing and  
11 editing bylaws together? No one can find these  
12 bylaws. So I went on to notice that there were some  
13 new faces in my office. So I... I began to ask  
14 questions. Who are you, hi how are you doing... I  
15 introduced myself. I felt unwelcome. I felt  
16 disrespected. I found out that our... okay she was  
17 the borough... she was the DFA now she... now she is  
18 our family leadership support. Her name is Martha  
19 Velez. She actually has a reputation of going into  
20 the schools and causing confusion. And now she's  
21 our leadership. Nadine she is our support  
22 coordinator. She... I don't even know this woman and  
23 she looked at me like I shouldn't have been asking  
24 her any questions. She treated me as if I did not  
25



mean anything. I was also told by my superintendent that we will be sitting down right to discuss and introduce ourselves because they took these positions as of July 1<sup>st</sup>. To this day October 1<sup>st</sup> there has not been any outreach. Marlene Wilks, I was able to sit down with her. She said she was going to email me and send me all the detailed information about the roles and responsibilities who's here. Never did I receive a email, a outreach, or anything. I am disappointed because I feel like the... the conversation is about families and bringing them in. But what about your effective elected parent leaders on the district level who are actually supposed to be partners? We're not in the conversation so how do I properly help support my parents and tell them where to go to get guidance? These new people are coming in... Marlene Wilks is from the CFN. So now we're back to it all over again... and I don't want to use the words but it sounds... it doesn't... it's a waste of money. Sorry, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next please.

MATHEW REDENSKI: Thank you Chairman. My name is Mathew Redenski. I have worked for the Department of Education from 2008 until December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014. I was discontinued by my superintendent Daniella Phillips. And while I'm not here to... to grind my axe because the union has supported me and my dismissal I am here because I went online last night and saw you were having this hearing today. And I was... I was struck by the... the comment about trust. And I... I profess I'm the person that clapped and I do apologize for my lack of decorum. But having worked six and a half years for PS34 and alphabet city for decent principals unfortunately there is a culture of intimidation in the Department of Education. And I think that if I put on social media that quote from that assistant chancellor I think most teachers would respond there... there is not trust. But... but my... my... my reason for speaking today really is this. When the new system was announced and frankly when I was fired I wanted to find out more about the superintendent. And I couldn't find anything out online about it. So I called the... the Department of Education and identified myself as a citizen

1 blogger. And I said now with this new arrangement  
2 for the administration of our schools I'd like to  
3 know more about the individual superintendents and  
4 I can't find much online. And I was directed by  
5 this I guess PR officer to go to the... the DOE press  
6 release of the time. Which I did. And called back  
7 and I said there was really nothing there about the  
8 biographies of the people that are serving. I found  
9 out about your biography last night just looking  
10 online. You're an elected official. Well the  
11 superintendent certainly is a public employee as  
12 was I. And I... I find it strange that these people  
13 are in great positions of power but we really don't  
14 know who they are. So there's been a lot of talk  
15 today about structure but not too much about  
16 people. And excuse me for giving the... the bottom up  
17 perspective. I'm a teacher. I still am. So my  
18 questions are these. And these are directed to the  
19 DOE and I'm hoping that your committee can carry  
20 this forward in light of this... this desire to  
21 inform the public. Firstly, a solid biography of  
22 the superintendents. How are they evaluated and how  
23 often? And then finally there was nothing about  
24 tenure in the handout regarding the  
25

responsibilities of the superintendents. My... my principal wanted to keep me but was overridden [phonetic] by the superintendent. Who really runs the schools? The superintendent or the principals? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next please.

DENISE GORDON: Good afternoon. I am Denise Gordon. I am the founder of an organization called Parent Empowerment Services and our intent is to do exactly that. I'm a bit disappointed in a sense. 17 years ago I was the Executive Director for an organization called United Parents Associations of New York City where I must say we had a most dynamic president and vice president and one of the most informative human beings that I knew Mrs. Jan Atwell. It was customary that we would come to 99 percent of the meetings at city... city hall. We came. Education we were there. But I must say had Jan not be here I would probably just say good afternoon I'm Denise Gordon from whatever. I came to speak with the council members on education council. And since Mr. Dromm you're the only one I thank you and I would walk out. That's

1  
2 what I would say. I think it's disrespectful quite  
3 frankly that a meeting of such a nature will be sat  
4 and yet the members are not here. But my point is  
5 simply this...

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just to explain to  
7 you sometimes members have other... [cross-talk]

8 DENISE GORDON: May have other  
9 commitments.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...hearings held at  
11 the same time.

12 DENISE GORDON: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And they have to go  
14 to those as well so they come and go in and out.  
15 But usually what members will do is review it.

16 DENISE GORDON: Okay.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And then as a  
18 committee we'll meet and we'll talk about what  
19 happened during the hearing as well. So it's not  
20 falling on deaf ears.

21 DENISE GORDON: Okay thank you. Parent  
22 engagement... I consider myself to be a parent  
23 engagement specialist. I believe that parents are  
24 the children's first educators. I believe that  
25 parent engagement is a process and not a policy.

1 You cannot say... and I... and I also believe that the  
2 parents are the children's first educators. You  
3 cannot have a school building or a system that says  
4 we do not want parents and yet at the same time  
5 feel those children are going to be educated. We can  
6 talk a good talk. I look at... I listen to the  
7 Department of Education, an organization that I  
8 worked for... for 17 years until I was terminated  
9 last August. Which was okay. What it did was it  
10 birth something of my own parent involvement  
11 services. Someone said today the Department of  
12 Education is a system that is all dressed up  
13 inside... outside... a system that is all dressed up  
14 outside but is messed up inside. The... when we had  
15 the network leaders that was terrible. When we had  
16 part of that we had Dennis Walcott. That was worse.  
17 Because everyone was vetted except him. Then we had  
18 part of that we had Joel Klein come from the Obama  
19 administration. Now we have someone else and a new  
20 system that's only been in for three weeks. And  
21 we're saying how good it is. It has not been  
22 proven. It has not been tried. I dare say to you if  
23 we had 30 school... school districts, 32 offices of  
24 parent engagement, and parents felt left out how  
25

can we now say that since there are seven groups of parent centers... how can we say if when we had 32 they were not welcome how can we now say after one month now there is seven and they'll be involved? We must re... revisit parent engagement. It must not be lip service. It must be something where we say we won't commu... even though we do not agree with everything you have to say. But I beg you do not allow us just to create another system to camouflage what has not been done. The Department of Education, the chancellor, present chancellor, the mayor of the city of New York they have failed. They have failed us. We elected you guys. Please don't just tell them how nice it is. Look into what's really going on. Talk to your parents. Get your parents to tell you. Or you call the... the chancellor's office and you find out three months later you'll never get back... they'll never get back to you. I was a district family advocate. I knew how I did my job. I knew what it was when children were being sexually assaulted and confronted it and see what happen. I'm just saying to you. And I'm going to stop right now because there's a wonderful

policy if you want to be invited be very short.

Something is wrong with our system. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So thank you. Part of the purpose of the hearing today was to elicit from the Department of Education what their plans are moving forward because it is a new administration. And... and we do want to give them the opportunity to implement their plans. But I do believe that myself included spent a good deal of time, I would think almost a majority of time in my part at least in asking questions about how parents would be involved in the system. I asked about that in special education. I asked about it in ELLs. I asked about the... the coordinators. I asked about the structure of who they report to etcetera, so forth, and so on. So we're going to give them that opportunity. We're going to come back and we're going to look at them again once we see that they've had some time to implement the system and ask them again. But definitely the concerns of parents, especially from the... the way the parents were treated in the past is a priority for this committee. I just wanted to assure you of that as well. So yes?



DENISE GORDON: Can I just say one thing... Sir Deputy Chancellors... they sat here and they said that all the superintendent met requirements, met the qualifications. There are two superintendents in that list that were grandfathered in. The criterias came out in Jan... July 7<sup>th</sup>.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think there were more. I think that they kept many of them. They only got a few new ones.

DENISE GORDON: Only two of them... I'm just saying two of them were not qualified. The qualifications were you must be...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well...

DENISE GORDON: ...you must have been first... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I can't...

DENISE GORDON: ...a principal. I know for sure. I'm... I'm on... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But I don't... I don't have the power or the... [cross-talk]

DENISE GORDON: Okay I'm...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...authority to...

1 DENISE GORDON: ...unequivocally certain.

2 But what I'm saying you may not...

3 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright.

4 DENISE GORDON: ...have that...

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

6 DENISE GORDON: ...but at the same time  
7 they sat... [cross-talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright.

9 DENISE GORDON: ...here and said something  
10 that was not correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright thank you.

12 DENISE GORDON: That's all I'm saying.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I'm going  
14 to dismiss the panel now. Thank you very much.

15 Alright Max Ahmed New York Immigration Coalition,

16 RueZalia Watkins Mental Health Association, Randi

17 Levine Advocates for Children, and Maggie Maroff...

18 Moroff Arise Coalition. Okay I need to swear you

19 all in. Would you raise your right hand please? Do

20 you solemnly swear to tell the truth... solemnly

21 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,

22 and nothing but the truth and to answer council

23 member questions honestly? Thank you. Okay Max you

24 want to start?

MAX AHMED: Good afternoon. Thank you Council Member Dromm. I will keep my remarks brief and submit the written record for your... for your review. I'd like to... my name is Max Amid. I'm the Senior Education Advocacy Associate at the New York Immigration Coalition. We are an umbrella policy, an advocacy organization with nearly 200 members across the state. And as part of this work we convene an education collaborative of about 20 grassroots groups and policy and legal experts and practitioners and we fight to increase English language learners and immigrant students access to a quality education and to expand opportunity for parents to be engaged. Today was a busy day both for the council and for our collaborative. We held a press conference to... to announce our recommendations ahead of the newly... ahead of the hearing on... on the newly restructured school support system. The NYC appreciates the transition and interpretation units new parent brochure that was recently distributed to schools. That brochure has helped immigrant parents understand the language services available at schools and how to leave feedback on services received. And we also

1 appreciate the translation and interpretation units  
2 real concern for the barriers immigrant parents  
3 face and the opportunity to work with them to  
4 address these issues. We're here today because the  
5 DOE has for the first time in over a decade  
6 restructured the way that schools are supported.  
7 And we recognize that transition and interpretation  
8 supports for schools are yet to be included. We  
9 applaud the chancellor for her welcome and wise  
10 focus on parent engagement but recognize that more  
11 needs to be done to support schools on translation  
12 and interpretation. The education collaboratives  
13 campaign has worked hard to ensure that parents  
14 have access to these services and that parents are  
15 meaningfully engaged. We have nearly... nearly half  
16 of all public school students... that's almost half a  
17 million families speak a language other than  
18 English. And right now there are only two people to  
19 support 17 hundred schools. As we've shared with  
20 you in the past we would love for there to be a  
21 person in the borough support centers to at a  
22 minimum oversee what schools are doing and support  
23 and monitor them in four key areas to ensure that  
24 schools are... to ensure that the schools are

1 distinguished we... which schools... we'd like to know  
2 which schools need support and then have the  
3 borough person, the language access coordinator  
4 identify what supports they need. Success and  
5 challenges; what are they doing well on, what do  
6 they need to improve on. And then support schools  
7 in a meaningful way to ensure that there's access  
8 and to ensure that schools are providing adequate  
9 services. And then finally have borough language  
10 access coordinator position should have a direct  
11 line to parents so that if parents feel they need  
12 the additional support they can troubleshoot  
13 directly with the borough person. The DOE needs to  
14 act now to bridge the gaps in the system because  
15 schools need support and translation and  
16 interpretations and immigrant parents need the  
17 change. Thank you.

18  
19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Max you said they  
20 have two people to support parents?

21 MAX AHMED: That's correct. Right now  
22 there are...

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Who... who... who has...  
24 where... what level is that at?  
25

MAX AHMED: That's at the central office within the translation and interpretation unit directly. And they're project director and project management positions.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Randy.

RANDI LEVINE: Good afternoon. And thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Randi Levine and I'm the policy coordinator at Advocates for Children of New York. For more than 40 years Advocates for Children has worked to promote access to the best education New York can provide for all students; especially students of color and students from low income backgrounds. AFC leads the Arise Coalition and is a member of the New York Immigration Coalition's Education Collaborative and supports the testimony of both groups today. By linking the supervision of schools with the support of schools and by providing clear lines of accountability the new DOE structure has the potential to serve as a conduit to help deliver high quality classroom instruction, hold schools accountable for upholding the rights of students, and provide families with assistance in resolving problems. We're also pleased that each borough

field support center has a deputy director responsible for special education and a deputy director for English language learners, two populations that are in need of specialized supports and services. While the jury is out on whether the new structure will result in improved schools we would like to speak today about our experiences so far with the family support component of the new structure. Through our education help line funded by the city council Advocates for Children speaks with thousands of parents every year who are trying to navigate the education bureaucracy. And we know how difficult this can be. So we are very pleased that the DOE structure includes this new position of family support coordinator in each superintendent's office who's responsible for addressing families' concerns. But in order for these family support coordinators to be effective we have several recommendations. First, family support coordinators can only help if families know how to reach them. While we understand that the DOE asked schools to send home a back to school fact sheet with information about family support coordinators we've

heard from families who have not received this information. In addition, this fact sheet contained generic information, not the specific contact information for that school's family support coordinator. We recommend that the DOE ensure that schools send information to families explaining the new structure and how to get help along with the name, phone number, email address, and office address for the specific superintendent and family support coordinator associated with the school and to change the contact information on each individual school's website to include this information. Second family support coordinators can only help if families, if they can give families accurate information and work to resolve issues effectively in a timely manner. The DOE needs to ensure that the staff members get adequate training as quickly as possible and know the process for getting help if an issue arises or they're not familiar how to address it. While families and AFC staff have reported some positive experiences working with family support coordinators they've also reported receiving incorrect information about some issues such as the placement process for



1 students with disabilities. We don't expect family  
2 support coordinators to be experts in every area of  
3 education during their first month in the job but  
4 we do expect them to be able to get the support  
5 they need to provide accurate information to  
6 parents. Finally given that more than 40 percent of  
7 New York City public school students speak a  
8 language other than English at home the DOE must do  
9 more to ensure that families have access to high  
10 quality interpretation and translation services so  
11 that they can play a meaningful role in their  
12 children's education. And so we support the call of  
13 the New York Immigration Coalition's Education  
14 Collaborative for full time language access  
15 coordinators in each borough field support center.  
16 Thanks for the opportunity to speak with you and  
17 I'm happy to answer any questions.

18  
19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. So did  
20 you say that they sent home a flyer to parents or  
21 not... that they have not? Or is that your  
22 suggestion?

23 RANDI LEVINE: There... there is a... there  
24 is a flyer that the DOE asked all schools to send  
25 home. However, the Arise Coalition and Advocates

1  
2 for Children just informally and asking various  
3 parents heard from a number of parents who had not  
4 received this information. So A, we think that more  
5 needs to be done to ensure through this new  
6 structure and lines of accountability that the  
7 information is going home and getting into the  
8 hands of families. And then also it was just  
9 generic information and did not contain the  
10 specific contact information for the family support  
11 coordinator associated with that school which is  
12 important for families to have.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So... which is  
14 interesting because I think when I asked the  
15 question about how they were going to inform  
16 parents of the new structure they told me the  
17 chancellor was going to CEC meetings and speaking  
18 about it but did not mention the flyer at all. Am I  
19 right about that? Yeah okay. So that means that...  
20 [cross-talk]

21 RANDI LEVINE: The deputy chancellor  
22 mentioned...

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...they may not have  
24 they themselves been aware of this flyer.  
25

RANDI LEVINE: The deputy chancellor did mention a number of different...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry?

RANDI LEVINE: The deputy chancellor did mention a number of different strategies and did mention that there were supports available online. This flyer is also available online.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: She did say that? Okay. Wasn't really highlighted but I do think that that is really one of the best ways to get it into parents' hands. We'll follow-up on that. Okay. Maggie.

MAGGIE MOROFF: Good afternoon. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today. So I work as the Special Education Policy Coordinator at Advocates for Children as Randi just referenced. I also coordinate the Arise Coalition and I'm here today on behalf of the Arise Coalition. Arise is a group of parents, educators, advocates, and academics who work together to push for systemic changes to improve the day to day experiences and long term outcomes of students with disabilities here in the city. When the DOE first announced their plans to reorganize the school

support structure Arise members wrote to the chancellor with several suggestions. We were really pleased at that time that the DOE was moving away from the network structure which has been especially confusing for parents and students with disabilities. We offered a number of suggestions to make sure that the new structure would provide support and oversight for schools and improve experiences and outcomes for students with disabilities. And we've seen a few of those recommendations come to fruition which is exciting. So briefly, although described in much more detail in my written testimony, we're encouraged by the creation of the Family Support Coordinators you heard about earlier today whose job it is to serve as a dedicated contact for parents. But as you also heard earlier some of those positions remain unopen important to us. One of those positions that's... staff still is that for District 75 the citywide district for some of the students with the most profound disabilities. So that's a problem. We're also encouraged by the staffing at the borough field support centers with a deputy director dedicated to special education in each of those

centers and staff below them focusing on some issues that are really key to students with disabilities. That said there were a number of recommendations that we made that weren't adopted and we continue to feel that they're areas that are really critical. There are two in particular that I want to talk with you about right now. So first, and some of this will sound really familiar after Randi's testimony, the new support structure and the corresponding contact information needs to be disseminated to families right away. Thank you for asking your question earlier about this. I thought it was really helpful. But the family support coordinators they may be there to help the families but if the families don't know how to get to them then they're not going to be able to help the families and that's a problem. We did as Randi said poll Arise Coalition Members and I sent something out to... to AFC staff and really very... very few of us who are public school parents have received anything in the mail. So we know about that Achieve New York City guide. We know about the Back to School guide. We know about the website. We know it because that's our job but we don't think that the

families have it. So we recommend that the DOE move really quickly to distribute that information to parents something they should have done months ago because questions that families had over the summer and this fall already have gone unanswered because families don't know where to go. We recommend... I won't be long. We recommend that they distribute it several ways. So backpacking those guides and fact sheets home, posting the information in schools, and sharing information via public service announcement. The second issue that I want to address really quickly is around accountability. It has been... and we've discussed this before. It's been our experience that while some principals welcome support from above not all do. Through this reorganization Arise members hope to see the DOE exercising considerably more authority over schools. Those that have proved resistant to providing appropriate supports for students with disabilities as demonstrated by data and by request for assistance from parents and advocates. So we were really excited last spring when the council passed a bill requiring data sharing from the DOE with regard to special education. And thank you

again for that. We really hope to see that the DOE uses this new infrastructure to ensure that the problems with service provision that are revealed by that data that you are now requiring will be addressed. I'll stop there. Everything else is in my written testimony. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay thank you. And your recommendations duly noted. Thank you. Ms. Watkins.

RUEZALIA WATKINS: Good afternoon. My name is RueZalia Watkins and I'm the Education Services Specialist for the Mental Health Association. I support staff that work out of five family resource centers, four adolescent skills programs, and one prevention program all there... contracted by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to support families whose children have serious mental health issues, behavioral issues, attention issues, all those children of distinction. And I'm glad to be before you today. I submitted testimony in writing that I hope will be very helpful. But in the interest of time I'd like to just highlight a few points. Obviously training for this rollout which we are very grateful for

1 even though it doesn't take away a lot of the  
2 access issues that we might have. We still see it  
3 as a... as a possibility of enlightenment. Anyway the  
4 training that we know will be necessary but  
5 training's also going to be necessary across the  
6 city. This reform... this restructuring is not just  
7 for schools per say. It's for our whole city.  
8 Therefore, it's important to not only train 3-1-1  
9 operators and other auxiliary staff but also for  
10 example library staff so that libraries in our  
11 communities can offer workshops for families on the  
12 structure and assist families that... who need you  
13 know to know where to go for help. The libraries  
14 can also help particularly because they already  
15 have children there. Parents are familiar with the  
16 library. So it's really important for the school  
17 system to not just train itself but to look around  
18 the city. There needs to be notifications, flyers  
19 in the WIC office, in the HRA offices, all over the  
20 city not just in the school which is really helpful  
21 for people who are just coming to New York City.  
22 Secondly even though Maggie and Randi alluded to my  
23 colleagues on the Arise Coalition to all the needs  
24 for families with special ed. children it's really



important for somebody to start looking at the students who are homeless that requires special ed. services. So there are many students eligible for homeless consideration and services under the McKinney Vento law that have IEPs. But very often it's difficult for their services to remain intact because they're being moved from shelter to shelter and school to school. Even though the law provides transportation to keep them in their existing school they're often encouraged to move and then they end up being in a receiving school that may or may not have the services they need. This requires specific consideration under the restructuring so that not only are the staff in the shelter system educated and trained properly but there needs to be a path created to support these students. Secondly there needs to be a path created and we need to know where do students go who've been hospitalized in New York state facilities or residential treatment programs. That is not detailed in the restructuring. Third... and I'm almost finished. For students with disruptive behavior I need to know whether the suspension offices will remain in isolation or are they going to fit into this new

1 structure and if so how. And are they going to  
2 interact with anyone? How? About what? And when?  
3 And finally, I really need to know why the Bronx, a  
4 borough with a large number of renewal schools if  
5 not the largest of all the boroughs, I think they  
6 have 38, they also have a history of the most 9-1-1  
7 calls for disruptive behaviors which resulted in  
8 that lawsuit, and they also have identification as  
9 high needs borough for children with mental health  
10 needs, why do they only have one borough field  
11 support office? I have other recommendations here  
12 that I hope you will read and welcome at a later  
13 date. Thank you for your time.

14  
15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mm-hmm. Very good.  
16 And... and a good question. It's good things to think  
17 about. The other day I... I heard that they remain... I  
18 mean I kind of probably knew this a little bit too  
19 but since we have the experts here on the panel  
20 about accessing IEPs even though they're  
21 computerized how does one get access? I don't... I  
22 don't know because I... I... I think when I left the  
23 system I was still signing off on paper IEPs.

24 RUEZALIA WATKINS: First of all, parents  
25 do not have access to... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right.

RUEZALIA WATKINS: ...first of all.

MAGGIE MOROFF: And are... are you asking about how parents access... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Like a teacher. So like with homeless kids let's say...

MAGGIE MOROFF: Right.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...was brought up. You know and the shifting and the moving around and the transitional period they go through, etcetera.

MAGGIE MOROFF: Right.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I think... I think it was actually in... in relation to that as well that it's still difficult for teachers to access their IEPs.

RUEZALIA WATKINS: So the way SESIS works is that you cannot access the IEP of a student unless a student is enrolled in the school. So for students that are homeless... and very often they're being encouraged to move from one shelter or the other because the people who run the shelter and the nature of the shelter doesn't promote for example a parent leaving at 6:00 in the morning to take his child to the same school that they used to

1 go to. So they are encouraged very often to pick a  
2 neighborhood school. So they had access to SESIS in  
3 this school. Now when they go to this school it  
4 takes a couple of day for them to have... there has  
5 to be... there are certain attendance requirements...  
6 so you cannot access an IEP unless the child is in  
7 that particular school. And that's part of the  
8 problem.  
9

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Does the... does the  
11 regular classroom teacher have access to the...  
12 [cross-talk]

13 RUEZALIA WATKINS: The regular...

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...SEISIS?

15 RUEZALIA WATKINS: Well not all... in some  
16 schools that I've been in only the psych... psych...  
17 psychologist or the AP for students with special  
18 needs will have access. I've been in IEP meetings  
19 where the teacher will say to the AP oh can you get  
20 a copy for me out of SESIS because the computer  
21 that... it could be a matter of the computer is in  
22 somebody's office. It could be a matter of... but  
23 everybody does not have access to the IEP, as they  
24 should, including special ed. providers and also  
25 teachers.

1  
2 MAGGIE MOROFF: And if I can just add  
3 one thing to that. So again one of the other  
4 problems around that is that the information on  
5 SESIS is only as good as the information that's  
6 been put into SESIS. And so if a student moves from  
7 one school to another and the staff at the new  
8 school doesn't know the child yet and is trying to  
9 figure things out if the other school was  
10 delinquent in being able to fill out forms or if  
11 they didn't have the bandwidth in order to be able  
12 to do that then the student moves on and a lot of  
13 that information hasn't yet been recorded.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So it's still the  
15 case where general education teacher who has  
16 special education students mainstreamed into the  
17 classroom would not necessarily know that the  
18 student has an IEP until a supervisor tells them?

19 MAGGIE MOROFF: Right. They're... they...  
20 they're not... sort of as the student comes in the  
21 teachers aren't doing sort of a scan to see whether  
22 or not there's an IEP in existence.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry the  
24 teachers what?

1  
2 MAGGIE MOROFF: The... the teachers aren't  
3 doing a scan on their own to see if there's an IEP  
4 in existence. Families sometimes bring the IEPs.  
5 They tell the school when they enroll. But there's  
6 definitely a lag time often.

7 RUEZALIA WATKINS: And I think that is  
8 especially true the older the student gets also.  
9 But the idea that people are supposed to provide  
10 specialized instruction without the information  
11 that they need is still to prevalent in our system.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, absolutely.  
13 Alright well thank you everybody. I appreciate you  
14 coming in and... and waiting this one out. We have  
15 one... one more panel I think.

16 MAGGIE MOROFF: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Nancy Northrop  
18 Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council, Gregory  
19 Distefano... Desteph... Distefano okay New Action from  
20 UFT, and Jenny Dassens... did I say it right... Dossens  
21 [phonetic] okay. Thank you. Okay I'm going to ask  
22 you all to raise your right hand. Do you solemnly  
23 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,  
24 and nothing but the truth and to answer council  
25 member questions honestly?

[combined affirmations]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay good would you like to start? Yep. Okay we need the mic. Just put that mic on.

NANCY NORTHROP: Does that work, yeah. Good afternoon. My name is Nancy Northrop. I am the co-chair of the Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council, CPAC which represents all the president's councils and through them all the PAs, PTAs, and parents in New York City. Part of the restructuring of the school support system involved a complete reorganization of a high school superintendents. Although this change was made quietly without input from parents, teachers, or school principals and was not really touched upon today. The new organization is so complicated that the DOE has yet to post a complete structure on the website. Although if you'd like I could try to explain it. But basically nearly every high school superintendent now covers... sorry... now covers high schools in multiple boroughs likely spending more time driving than in schools. Most parents, teachers, and principals who wish to meet with their high school superintendent will need to

travel to a different borough to do so. Queens is then hardest hit. It no longer has a dedicated high school superintendent. Instead it has 12 high school superintendents, most of whom cover schools in other boroughs as well. Little wonder that parents across New York City through CPAC and I included our letter to the Chancellor Queens High School President's Council, others, and the UFT have both come out... come out against this reorganization. Why does CPAC oppose the reorganization? One, we believe the DOE needs to come up with a plan to fix high schools first and then develop an oversight structure. Two, the new structure is exactly the same as the discredited network system which we... which will undermine efforts to improve high schools. Schools need to work together to find solutions to the myriad of problems they face. And this is difficult when four high schools sharing a building could have four different superintendents and any single district or borough could have up to a dozen high school superintendents. Three, there is no expectation that high school superintendents will attend district leadership team or president's council



meetings which means that meaningful discussion on local high school issues by all stakeholders will no longer take place. At one recent district leadership team meeting a high school principal attended in hopes of discussing enrollment issues with his superintendent but of course there was no one there. Fourth, it will become nearly impossible to hold everyone accountable for high school performance. Who will you call about performance in your district or in your borough? Will you call 12 different superintendents. I will leave you with the lament of one high school principal who noted that he had had six different superintendents in eight years. Like most of us he believes this latest structure will not last. But he... what... but what he wanted was a superintendent who could get to know him and his school and provide real assistance. So please join parents and the UFT and encourage the DOE to develop a sensible high school superintendent organization. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So Nancy I know that there was concern about the superintendent who was there and moved... [cross-talk]

NANCY NORTHROP: Juan Mendez... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...Queens. Right.

NANCY NORTHROP: ...yes. Because he... he was... he was just so instrumental in working to try to improve high schools in Queens. But yes that was an issue. He's still District 28 superintendent over high schools and New Visions High Schools in Queens and the Bronx.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And when you talk about 12 different high school superintendents is that because... is that... are you referring to the affinity groups?

NANCY NORTHROP: There... there are two things that happened. They created the affinity groups so those were superintendent structures that go all over New York City. So that was problematic. And parents came out against that right away because they can't have access. But as a consequence of that what the DOE did was basically carve up Queens so that one section of Queens got put in with the Bronx.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: The Bronx.

NANCY NORTHROP: So the Bronx now covers... one superintendent there covers schools of both the Bronx and... and... and Queens. Then once... another part of Queens got sucked into one part of Brooklyn so that superintendent has to go across Brooklyn and... and... and Queens. And then a different part of Queens was sucked into another section... part of Brooklyn. So basically every high school superintendent now be it affinity group or what was the old sort of geographic center now they all are travelling all over... all over New York City.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That... [cross-talk]

NANCY NORTHROP: Then you have this... [cross-talk]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...that was the point I was trying to get at before with them. I guess I didn't question it as thoroughly as I might have considering now hearing your testimony. But you know I did ask them about travelling.

NANCY NORTHROP: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right. And then they... they said not within the community support center but that that would happen in some occasions with the affinity groups.

2 NANCY NORTHROP: I... I don't know. I just  
3 know these guys are all... I mean if you're... if  
4 you're a Queen... if you're a... if you're the Brooklyn  
5 superintendent and you need to see your school in  
6 Queens you got to drive to Queens. And...

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Plus, there's a...  
8 plus, there's a toll.

9 NANCY NORTHROP: Right. No I mean...

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: To go to the Bronx...  
11 [cross-talk]

12 NANCY NORTHROP: ...these guys are going  
13 to...

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right.

15 NANCY NORTHROP: ...spend all their time...

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mm-hmm.

17 NANCY NORTHROP: ...in the car. But... but  
18 again it's like will this system last. No it  
19 doesn't... it doesn't really make sense. So we'll  
20 have another reorganization. I don't know whether  
21 it's under these guys or under a new... new  
22 Chancellor down the road. And again like I think...  
23 not only does this not make sense but it is very  
24 frustrating because this constant reorganization at  
25 the high school. Every single year there's a new

1 structure makes it really impossible to improve our  
2 high schools. The superintendents don't get to know  
3 their... their... their high schools under them. It  
4 changes every year. They don't know the principals.  
5 They don't... they don't know the school cultures  
6 and... and... and I think it's a key reason we're not  
7 making more progress at the high school level at...  
8 at improving the college and career readiness of  
9 all of our students. We've made progress on  
10 graduation rates but not on college and career  
11 readiness.  
12

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay thank you. Next  
14 please.

15 GREGORY DISTEFANO: Hi. My name is  
16 Gregory Distefano. Thank you for allowing me to  
17 speak today Chairman Dromm and city council  
18 members. I was a teacher in New York City system  
19 for 33 years. I come here today to protest the  
20 firing of about 2,000 probationary teachers many of  
21 whom were fired unjustly. Many of these teachers  
22 were in schools with incompetent and in some cases  
23 corrupt principals. Some of these principals were  
24 eventually fired. These principals hired friends or  
25 friends of family members. Many of the fired

1 teachers were first year teachers who after  
2 spending much and working very hard to get their  
3 education are currently out of work and incurring  
4 much financial hardship. These teachers deserve a  
5 second chance. New York state law states that  
6 discontinued teachers have the right to work in  
7 another New York City district or work under  
8 another license they may have. The last  
9 administration prevented this from happening on  
10 purpose. The prison administration of the DOE has  
11 had some discussion with the UFT but hasn't  
12 corrected the problem. Many of us voted for the  
13 present administration to have a progressive  
14 agenda. How can we have a progressive agenda when  
15 this injustice continues? I'm calling on this  
16 esteemed body to investigate the violations of  
17 state law and also to investigate the current  
18 hiring practices of the DOE in regards to  
19 administrators and teachers. Principals should not  
20 be hired on nepotism or political affiliation.  
21 Teachers should have a fair chance to secure jobs.  
22 There is a strong need to return to some sort of  
23 civil service in this city. Thank you very much.  
24  
25

And if you have any questions I... I certainly would like to shed more light on the subject.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So just regarding the first year teachers as you know when they... they're not tenured.

GREGORY DISTEFANO: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: They can be fired basically at will.

GREGORY DISTEFANO: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Even with protections.

GREGORY DISTEFANO: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But you're... you're stating here that New York state law says that they have the right to work in another New York City school district?

GREGORY DISTEFANO: Yes, within... within the city or any other district in the state. So if I was a discontinued teacher in Staten Island in district 31 I would have the right to work in Brooklyn or the Bronx. Now the... the high schools are considered one district. So those teachers who were discontinued in the high schools would have to look for employment in the junior high. But some of

1 these cases were very... very severe cases. You know  
2 we... we talk about teacher evaluations. I have a  
3 case where a... a first year teacher received all  
4 satisfactory ratings. Suddenly the second year all  
5 those ratings turn to unsatisfactory. And you know  
6 the scuttlebutt is that the principal hired her...  
7 her friend's daughter in the school. You know this  
8 is corruption. Corruption is not only when money  
9 changes hands. This is a form of corruption and...  
10 and really giving principals the right to hire  
11 their staffs totally has really put this school  
12 system in... in very dire shapes.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay thank you. Next  
15 please.

16 JENNIFER: My name is Jenny Dosue [sp?]  
17 and I was one of those teachers who got  
18 discontinued. I was hired in December 2012 and I  
19 started working in January of 2013. I was assigned  
20 to work in a CTT classroom. And... and I was working  
21 with a 30-year veteran teacher. It was challenging  
22 but I survived. And from that time frame, from  
23 January to June I received a satisfactory. The  
24 following school year I had... I was assigned to an  
25 inclusive classroom. I did... I did the work but I



was still feeling that I needed more help, more support. A mentor was signed to me but it... it wasn't sufficient. I tried to... well I did speak to the union leader and union delegate. They did suggest for me to send an email to the superintendent which I follow through. And after that a meeting took place with myself, the administrators, and the mentor that was assigned to me. I was a little... a little uncomfortable with the situation because according to my union leader she said I had the right for ask for another mentor. So when the meeting take place in my head I... I... I was like why is this meeting taking place if I have a right to ask for a different mentor. So in the meeting several questions were ask. I answer them. Then I was suddenly told to basically stay with the original mentor that was given to me. And I said okay. But after that... after that meeting the entire school year I had a very difficult time. I... again I tried to ask for help but unfortunately I just kept receiving disciplinary letters up to the very end of June and then I finally got discontinued. Overall I just needed a little support and now I'm

discontinued and there on after it was difficult  
for me to find work.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How long were you in  
the system?

JENNA: Not long.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: A year?

JENNA: A year and a half.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I mean I think look  
I was a UFT chapter leader as well and I  
represented teachers at U... rating hearings and I  
think what sometimes the public doesn't understand  
is that you know one if you get a U rating you're  
stuck to that school until you get out of a U  
rating right. And then that's... this is tenured  
teachers. And a year and half teacher has no  
rights. They can be fired at will... or very little  
rights I should say. But even for tenured people  
you know get a U rating you're stuck in that  
school. You get three U ratings generally that was  
the rule and then you were fired you know from the  
system. But I think that the point being made  
between both of you is that you know once you get  
fired, discontinued you can't really teach anywhere  
else in New York City because nobody's going to

pick you up or hire you once that's happened to you. So and... if you've been in the system a long time in New York City try going to another place like Long Island or upstate and then trying to explain 10 or 15 years in a system and then not having an ability to be able to explain where you were working or where your employment was. So these are very serious things that happened to teachers that don't necessarily happen in other professions. And considering the qualifications that teachers need to be a teacher, you know a master's degree within five years etcetera so forth and so on I hear what you're saying and take your... your issues very very seriously. Just unfortunately I don't have investigatory powers to go in and investigate these types of issues. I have oversight which is a little bit different than investigation. But the issue of how teachers are let go etcetera so forth and so on despite what some newspapers might say is an issue of importance to me and so I appreciate both of you coming in today to share your stories and to fill me in again on what's going on in the school system. So thank you very very much.

JENNA: Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Thank you

3 Nancy. And I guess with that... no more hearings? One

4 more? Okay who's coming? Yep? Let... let her fill out

5 a slip first I guess. Why don't you come to the...

6 the witness stand over here. Yep. Give your

7 testimony right over there. Right there. Right by

8 one of those seats. No over there. Yep, mm-hmm.

9 QUEEN MIKKADA: Good evening. Thank you

10 very much for...

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just one moment.

12 QUEEN MIKKADA: Oh.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And just your name

14 is Queen Mcayl... Micacle?

15 QUEEN MIKKADA: No, my name is Queen

16 Makkada.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mikaela?

18 QUEEN MIKKADA: Mikkada. Do you see it...

19 [cross-talk]

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mikkada.

21 QUEEN MIKKADA: M A K K...

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Alright.

23 QUEEN MIKKADA: ...A D A.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And...

25 QUEEN MIKKADA: ...A D A part right?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry?

QUEEN MIKKADA: ...like the A D A part.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh okay. And I do swear in all the witnesses so I just need you to raise your right hand. Okay. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth and to answer council member questions honestly?

QUEEN MIKKADA: Most definitely.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Alright would you like to begin please.

QUEEN MIKKADA: Yes. First I would like to thank the council members and all of the participants that... who could have left... all of you waited because you knew there was another person that wanted to speak. My name is Queen Mikkada. I'm 57 years old. I've been engaged in the DOE structure for the last 37 years. So I was around when there were school boards. I was around when DOE's budget was 1.2 billion dollars and there was an effective and efficient parent structure at 52 Chamber Street that elected parent leaders and parents and professionals could come and get training for free throughout the entire year. This

1 was at 1.2 to 3.2 billion. Before the infamous  
2 childrens first network was rolled out and DOE over  
3 a period of 12 years went from 3.2 billion to 24  
4 billion dollars. And as the money increased and the  
5 structures kept coming every time we were  
6 comfortable with something it was ripped up and  
7 something new was rolled out and it was ripped up  
8 and something new was rolled out. And  
9 accountability... and this is why I passed out to you  
10 so no one thinks I am emotionally sitting here I  
11 passed out the chancellor's own words that prior  
12 administrations had shut the parents out. And the  
13 council know these times. They were tremulous times  
14 when... under... and to look at this room and to see... I  
15 don't even know who's a parent leader here but to  
16 see what I'm seeing I'm to believe that in one and  
17 half to two years going on the 30 that this  
18 administration has effectively settled the question  
19 of parent support and how to support parents and  
20 parent elected leaders? I don't think so. Never in  
21 New York's history did the state step in to take  
22 over 62 schools at one time. Over 180 billion  
23 dollars has been thrown into the DOE. I praise my  
24 councilman members of this con... council that they  
25

1 want to find out what indeed is going on in the  
2 DOE. So I'm Queen Mikkada. People come to me;  
3 elected officials, teachers, principals, all  
4 manners to receive counsel on parent support.  
5 That's my three minutes. The new structure is not  
6 supporting the elected parent leaders. We were not  
7 engaged. Nobody asked us anything. We were told...  
8 and all of these people at these top levels none of  
9 them have reached out to one district elected  
10 parent leader to have a meet and greet or to  
11 understand their role. Because at the end of the  
12 day the elected parent leaders just as the council  
13 members are the legal voice of parents in New York  
14 City.  
15

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Well thank  
17 you. I take your concerns very seriously. And we're  
18 going to continue to look at the role of parents in  
19 the new structure because as you say and as its  
20 former teacher I do believe that any time parents  
21 are meaningfully involved or engaged in education  
22 the children improve. So we're going to take that  
23 very very seriously. Thank you very much. Thank you  
24 for coming down and we're glad you got here even at  
25 the last moment. And with that I guess this meeting

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is adjourned and it is now 4:20... oh 4:18 p.m. Thank  
you.

[gavel]



C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date October 4, 2015