

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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November 23, 2015

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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: DANIEL DROMM
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Vincent J. Gentile
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Mark Levine
Alan N. Maisel
Antonio Reynoso
Mark Treyger

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

Carmen Farina, Chancellor
NYC Department of Education, DOE

Dr. Juanita Rodriguez, Director
School Renewal for District 11, Bronx
NYC Department of Education, DOE

Edgar Lin, Principal
Junior High School 22, Bronx, District 9
NYC Department of Education, DOE

Amy Horowitz, Executive Director
Renewal Schools
NYC Department of Education, DOE

Chris Caruso, CBO
Community Schools Model
NYC Department of Education, DOE

Alante Wright
Executive Principal for the K-8 Model
NYC Department of Education, DOE

Sean Licata, Principal
School of Diplomacy

Rich Mantell Vice President
United Federation of Teachers, UFT

Michelle Barrow, Teacher - 6th to 8th
United Federation of Teachers, UFT

Joe Cusack, 7th & 8th Grade Social Studies Teacher
I.S. 311, East New York, Brooklyn

Mark Cannizzaro
Council of Supervisors and Administrators

Alexis Henry, Policy Associate
Early Childhood Education and Education
Citizens Committee for Children, CCC

Diane McNeil
Alliance for Quality Education, AQE

Felicia Alexander
Coalition for Education and Justice, CEJ

Natasha Capers, Coordinator, Parent Leader
Coalition for Education and Justice, CEJ

Lani Haines (sic)

Grace Bonilla, President
Committee for Hispanic Children and Families

Sua Kwok (sp?) and I'm an Education Advocacy fellow
at the New York Immigration Coalition

Sua Kwok, Education Advocacy Fellow
New York Immigration Coalition

Susan Crawford
Right to Read Project

Ruben Trait (sp?)
Environmental Concerns as a Teacher and Advocate

Jim O'Neal
Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation

Deanne McNeil (sp?)
Vice President of the PTA
Otis Mount (sic) High School

Andrea Bowen
United Neighborhood Houses, New York's Federation of
Settlement Houses and Community Centers

Robin Veenstra Vanderweele, Chief Strategy Officer
Partnership with Children

Ayisha Irfan Appearing for Gale Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good afternoon and welcome to the Education Committee's Oversight Hearing on the DOE's Efforts to Help Struggling Schools. My name is Council Member Daniel Dromm, and I'm Chair of the Education Committee. New York City is not by any means the only district with low-performing schools. According to the United States Department of Education, there are approximately 5,000 chronically underperforming schools across the nation, and half are located in big cities. The fundamental question of how to help struggling schools has long been a challenge for school districts across the nation. New York City has tried a variety of approaches for struggling schools over the years. In the 1990s under Mayor Giuliani then Chancellor Rudy Crew created a citywide Chancellor's District for some of the city's lowest performing schools, and provided them with intensive supports such as reduced class size, extended school day and year, additional staff developers and other resources. The Chancellor's District was successful in improving school performance, but was dismantled when the Legislature granted mayoral control to Mayor Bloomberg. The primary strategy under the Bloomberg

Administration was to close or phase out underperforming schools, and replace them with new districts or charter schools, a policy that often generated controversy and community opposition from parents, teachers, students and other stakeholders who felt their voices were excluded from the decision-making. In November, 2014, the de Blasio Administration announced its own plan to help low-performing schools called the School Renewal Program. The plan offers a new strategy of providing additional support and engaging the whole school community and transforming struggling schools. The DOE identified an initial cohort of 94 Renewal Schools, each of which to develop a school renewal plan last spring tailored to meet that school's needs in collaboration with its school leadership team, and the school community. Each Renewal School is transforming into a community school in partnership with the community-based organization to enable them to offer new services that support children and families such as mental health services and after school programs. In addition, Renewal Schools must provide an extra hour of instructional time each day. Renewal Schools are also supposed to receive supports

to strengthen school leadership and face increased oversight and accountability. I am also pleased to see that this year's Contracts for Excellence Plan states that the DOE will focus class size reduction planning and efforts on the Renewal Schools. As a teacher for 25 years in a school with a large immigrant population, I know how important smaller classes are so that teachers can individualize their instruction. Reduced class size is particularly critical for schools that have many high need students like all of the Renewal Schools. Months after the city unveiled its Schools Renewal Program, the Governor and Legislature enacted a new requirement pertaining to low-performing schools as part of the adopted 2015 Budget Bill. The State will now require schools that have performed poorly for a number of years to be placed under the oversight of outside receivers if they do not make adequate progress over one or two years. The law divides the state's lowest performing schools into struggling schools that have been in the bottom 5% for three years and persistently struggling schools, which have been underperforming since 2006 to 7. Initially, the Superintendent or the Chancellor in New York City

serves as the receiver. But, if these schools don't make demonstrable improvement in one year for persistently struggling schools, or two years for struggling schools, then the district has to appoint an independent receiver to run those schools.

Independent receivers can be an individual or a non-profit or another school district, and must be approved by the State Education Commissioner. I have to say that I am opposed to the new state receivership requirement. I truly don't under--know of any instances where the receivership model has been truly effective. It's also extremely difficult to make substantial improvement in chronically underperforming schools in just one or two years. All of these low-performing schools in New York City also have high concentrations of the media students such as low-income students, English Language Learners, students with disabilities and homeless students. Frankly, I question the whole premise of evaluating schools, teachers and students on the basis of test scores. A test score is just a snapshot on a single day of no way of knowing whether a student was anxious or sick or performing at his or her best. Many teachers teach grades or subjects

that are not tested, and are evaluated on the basis of scores of students in other classes, which makes no sense at all. Rather than just looking at and trying to boost test scores, we have to address the needs of the whole child, and work on the whole school environment. That's essentially what the Renewal Schools model is attempting to do. It's more than a little ironic that the new state law requires receivers to develop school intervention plans to convert schools placed in receivership into community schools. I guess New York City must be doing something right. I strongly believe that the City should retain control of these struggling schools, and have the opportunity to fully implement these reforms to try to turn these schools around. The Mayor has stated that schools do not--that schools that do not show improvement from these interventions are subject to closure. That's the way it should be. Closure should be--always be a last option, and not a first strategy. I should mention that in addition to the School Renewal Program, the DOE has instituted other reforms focused on school improvement such as the new district based support structure that we heard about at our October 1st hearing. Today's

hearing will provide an opportunity to learn more about the DOE's School Renewal Program, and other efforts to help struggling schools improve. The committee also looks forward to hearing the concerns and recommendations of parents, students, educators, advocates, CEC members and other stakeholders on struggling schools. Now, I'd like to remind everyone who wishes to testify today that you must fill out a witness slip, which is located in the desk of the sergeant-at-arms near the front of the room. And to allow as many people as possible to testify, testimony will be limited to three minutes per person, and I will swear in all witnesses before we proceed. So I want to welcome the Chancellor and other members of the DOE here, as well as I believe there are a couple of principals joining us today, if I'm not mistaken. So welcome to the City Council, and I'm going to ask if you would all just raise your right hand, please, and do you solemnly swear to answer council member questions honestly, and to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Thank you very much. Chancellor. Let me just say, Chancellor before you start we've been joined by my colleagues Council Member Antonio Reynoso from

Brooklyn and Queens; the Chair of the Non-Public School Subcommittee, Chaim Deutsch; Council Member Mark Treyger from Brooklyn; Council Member Andy King from the Bronx, and that's it. Thank you Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Thank you. Good afternoon, Chair Dromm and members of the Education Committee here today. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on New York City's work to turn around our struggling schools. To the left of me are the people who make this work possible. Juanita Rodriguez is one of our DSR, District School Renewal--Director of School Renewal, which is really one of the most important positions in the renewal process. And Principal Edgar Lin, Junior High School 22 has already shown remarkable progress in a school that was consistently in the bottom quartile of all of our middle-schools in New York City. Before I begin officially I want to be very clear that the word 'renewal' was chosen very consciously for this movement. There is one thing I've learned a lot about lately, and it's about the difference between helplessness and hopefulness in our schools. Closing a school as a first reaction is a sense of hopelessness. People come to work everyday knowing

they're not going to have a job ultimately. It sucks the energy out of a building. Renewal means there's hopefulness that everybody who comes is part of the bigger endeavor. Everyone who's coming to work sees themselves as one of the power players in making things work, and hopefully our testimony today will show you that we are full of hope, and this something that can be a game changer in New York City and beyond.

This administration's top priority is to ensure that all students have access to a high quality education that ensures their success as productive adults. Over the last two years we have been working to transform the school system. Under mayoral control we have been able to quickly implement a number of reforms to improve instruction, streamline school support and accountability, and provide students with the academic and non-academic supports required to help them succeed. A year ago this month as part of this commitment, Mayor Bill de Blasio and I launched the Renewal Program, which includes \$150 million investment in targeted resources to turn around 94 of our most challenged schools. We went way beyond what the state required.

Schools were selected to participate in the Renewal Program by using quantitative and qualitative indicators. We selected schools that had been identified by the State as priority of focus schools, and had demonstrated low academic achievement. For each of the past three years have ranked in the bottom 25% of city schools on state math and ELA exam scores or graduation rate. And showed limited capacity for improvement with a rating on their most recent quality review of proficient or below. We employed a broad set of select--of selection criteria expanding participating schools beyond the 62% that's struggling by the State. Among the 94 schools, 43 are in the Bronx, 27 in Brooklyn, 12 in Manhattan and 12 in Queens. Renewal Schools are implementing interventions to accelerate student performance and address achievement gaps. These interventions include increased professional development for school leaders, teachers and other school by staff through coaches and partnerships with institutions such as Teachers College. An additional five hours of expanded time each week in each Renewal School is now a community school offering wrap--wraparound services in partnership with community-based organizations to

our students and their families. One of the most important differences between this endeavor and the ones that have come before is a school-by-school improvement plan. It is now one size fits all. We recognize the Renewal Schools enroll a greater percentage of English Language Learners, special education students, and students in temporary housing. We are providing teachers and school staff with targeted professional development to address the unique needs of these populations. The educational reforms we're implementing in the Renewal School Program have a record of driving improvement. First, strong effective leadership is critical for any effective school. It is critical to initiate and sustain turnaround efforts and in struggling schools. Since the launch of the School Renewal Program we have dispatched teams of experienced principals and assistant principals to strengthen leadership, and to provide the expertise. These schools need to change direction. Where it is needed, we have and will continue to appoint new school leadership to help transform the school, and boost student achievement. Applying an example of this endeavor was P.S. 149 Sojourner Truth School in District 3. The new

Principal Claudia Aguirre formerly someone who worked at the DOE, head of English Language Learners, has done some dramatic progress in improving the physical environment and establishing structures for professional development. And she has scheduled job embedded coaching and PD to classroom practice.

Second, high quality professional development provides teachers and principals with targeted support. We are investing in teachers, and especially in teachers who are working with our English Language Learners, and special needs students. Third, expanded learning time extends the school day by one hour each day giving school--struggling schools more time for core subject instruction; tailored academic support for student's unique needs; and enrichment activities in collaboration with community partners. Having arts in the after school programs in the Renewal Schools says we don't think you're all about math and reading. You are about a whole child. The goal is to create a seamless school day that reinforces core subject material while providing students with helpful strategies and services that provide active learning. We also want them to come to school

everyday. So school has to be fun as well as learning. At M.S. 301 in District 8, a fifth great ELA teacher has supported students in increasing stamina and writing, to self-assess and speak about their own goals. Last week during ELT, which is what we call Extended Learning Time, students stayed past 4 o'clock working on their narratives with intense focus and determination. Fourth, all elementary Renewal Schools will administer the Gates-Mac Ginitie Assessment to all kindergarteners to second graders. They have just completed doing that. To determine a student's level of reading achievement, a diagnostic assessment that focuses on overall reading ability, and specifically on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension. The assessment will identify areas of strength as well as all areas of need that require intervention. This allows for differentiating in every classroom. Academic intervention professional development for Renewal Schools are detailed through the Gates Diagnostic Finding and AIS Specialist Dr. Arlene Mercola and DOE AIS Department Dr. Esther Friedman will provide this professional development.

Finally, the Community School Model, which incorporates academic and social services into the school environment also provides services to students and community beyond classroom needs with the goal of keeping students focused to stay on task during the school day. All Renewal Schools in the city have been matched with the lead community-based organization, and have hired a community school director, a new leader in the school whose primary responsibility is to coordinate partnerships and interventions. Through these partnerships we are providing more time for learning, academic support, enrichment activities, health services and more. For example, some schools may have a food pantry so hunger does not distract from learning. Other schools may have a physician's office on site to keep kids healthy so they so they do not miss school. Still others may offer English classes for families so parents can help children with their homework. It is very crucial that we also have the community schools embedded in the school day. They do not come as after school providers. They are there all day long, and visit academic classrooms as well as other places. A model of this is Community School 463.

AmeriCorps members support attendance teams in making home visits to families of chronically absent students. The AmeriCorps members also--and the CBOs doing great work to engage families and bring families to schools in many different ways. This school has made tremendous strides in attendance. Every Renewal School as been a partner with the Director of School Renewal dedicated to supporting it. DSRs are crucial. I wouldn't even say crucial. They are almost the most important people that we have in the field doing this work. They are the primary point of contact for all things relating to Renewal Schools, and they're instrumental in supporting schools with implementation of their renewal plans, expanded learning time and community school strategies. DSRs engage with schools in need assessments, root cause analysis, instructional focus development, goal setting and action planning. Furthermore, they are the community location (sic) links to the superintendents and the Central Renewal Team. Each month the DSRs participate in collaborative think tank sessions where principals, superintendents and central office staff all convene to identify and share most effective practices. I

have many things on my calendar, but I will say that all the DSR meetings are the one thing that nobody can touch, and I attend every single one of them because I feel that I need to know what's going on, but they also need to know what I'm thinking.

Ninety-four Renewal Schools must meet clear benchmarks. Last year each Renewal School was required to perform a needs assessment across all six elements of the framework for great schools: Rigorous instruction, collaborative teachers, supportive environment, effective school leadership, strong family and community ties, and trust to identify key areas for additional resources and develop a plan. This year, each school must meet the concrete milestones defined in the respective renewal plan, as well as progress on targeted elements. Each school must also demonstrate measurable improvement for student attendance and retention of the effective teachers. To ensure that all students in Renewal Schools have access to a rich array of program and strong instructional support. In certain circumstances we may consolidate a greatly under-enrolled Renewal School with another nearby or co-located school often under-enrolled to create one

redesigned school to serve needs of both schools. A consolidated school can provide students with core offerings in arts or language, academic achievement opportunities. A very small school is able to due to limited resources. Very clearly, a merger and consolidation is about the kids. It's about more resources. It's not about saving money. Schools with 57 children or 80 children in a high school cannot provide the services necessary to the students in those buildings. An example of this is Junior High School 145 in District 9. All three schools in that building have combined their Budgetary and Human Resources. They share the same CBO as well as the same art teacher, music teacher and librarian. They also share SAGA, which provides select students with one mathematic student tutor to every pair of students. That's collaboration. We are closely tracking indicating that schools are moving in the right direction. After the first year of the initiative chronic absenteeism meaning a student is absent more than 20 days is down by three percentage points. One of the things that was brought out at the last PEP meeting, one of our schools has seen parent engagement go from 32% last year to 52% this

year in student-led conferences. Students are bringing the parents to school, not the other way around. In schools around the city there's a renewal taking place. Renewal Schools are attracting new teachers. At a recent visit to M.S. 370, School of Diplomacy whose principal is here in the audience, I met an ELA teacher who had previously worked at a gifted and talented school, and came to the school because of the renewal program. Her explanation shared with me is that she wanted to demonstrate to herself that she could teach in a different kind of setting and still have high expectations.

We have seen increased collaboration among teachers and school teach--and school leaders, improvement in student writing particularly involving the depth; a Renaissance Arts Middle School and community school in District 4 in Manhattan. Attendance is up five percentage points with 95% attendance this year, higher than the citywide average. Math proficiency rates are up three percentage points, and the ELA proficiency points are up five. As a community school, Principal Bradley works with Partnership with Children to offer full-day programming. Students are in school from 8:00 in

the morning to 6:00 in the evening. During their expanded learning time, students can take classes like coding and brain science. This is not about dumbing down the curriculum, or skill intro. It's about think analysis. At Urban Scholars Community District 12 in the Bronx, Principal Deborah Jones has made family engagement a cornerstone for efforts to raise student achievement. She hosts monthly breakfasts with parents giving them the chance to learn about student expectations and voice concern. Medals are given to students given on levels 3s and 4s received in content areas. Teacher teams meet every Friday to review student work. They're seeing their ELA and math scores increase by ten percentage points. Ensuring families are actively engaged in this work is critical. Our families are key partners in achieving academic excellence for their children, and family engagement will continue to be a key element in all our efforts.

Renewal Schools are making schools more welcoming to families, providing families with tools and adult education classes based on what the students--parents want. For too long we've told parents what we think they need. Interestingly

enough, parents are asking for things like Zumba classes, Yoga classes, meditation classes. If parents want it within our reach, we will offer it. At M.S. 53 in Far Rockaway, student-led parent conferences have increased 20% since last year. While we are proud of these accomplishments, we know we have a lot more to do. In order for these initiatives to succeed, they must be adequately funded. This year City budget commits an additional investment of \$57 million and \$78 million and every year thereafter to bring resources to support renewal in persistently struggling schools. We are grateful to the City Council for its support.

To further increase educational opportunities for all city students, Mayor de Blasio recently announced new reforms to achieve equity and excellence. This bold plan includes advanced placements for all; college access for all; universal second grade literacy; and a single shepherd counseling program for District 7 and 23. Additionally, these new initiatives will ensure that our elementary, middle and high schoolers across every neighborhood have access to rigorous academic courses, and we will ensure that our educators have

proper training and resources to move our students through these new reforms. I thank you for this opportunity to testify, and once again, I want to reinforce that we are extremely hopeful about what's happening in New York City, and as a Chancellor I would not be doing my job if I gave up and became hopeless. And it's only because of the people liked Edgar Lin and Juanita Rodriguez that I feel hopeful-- more hopeful every single day, and I would just appreciate it if they could share a little bit of the work the work they're doing with you. Edgar.

[applause]

EDGAR LIN: [off mic] Good afternoon.

[on mic] Good afternoon, Chairman Dromm and the members of the Education Committee here today. My name is Edgar Lin and I am the Principal of Junior High School 22 in the Bronx, District 9. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the School Renewal Program and the progress we are seeing at our school. Since September, two members of our school's community, our Parent Coordinator, Juanita Rodriguez and one of our 6th Grade teachers, Alaska (sic) McGann have been visiting homes of our students on Saturday for the Renewal Program. As Ms. McGann

says, the goal of the visits isn't to focus on the disenfranchisement, systemic poverty, or all the roadblocks they encounter. Home visits are strength based. Our families have beautiful systems and gifts. They have a unique understanding of the child, and usually, they know what works. We're there to learn from them. To me, that is what the School Renewal Program is all about: strength-based focus that empowers our entire learning community, students, teachers and caregivers to work together to ensure high level learning for all of our students. In schools and classrooms that were written off there are now endless possibilities for success. I mentioned Ms. Rodriguez and Ms. McGann by name because the work of ensuring high-level student learning is accomplished by working as a team. Being a Renewal Schools is also about how much farther we can get when we're working as a team with our Superintendent Leticia Rosario, and our Directors of School Renewal, and with our families and community members by becoming a community school. When I became principal Junior High School 22 in 2013, our team began building up school pride. We wore orange to celebrate our mascot the tiger, and organized our

teachers into teams that collaborate and learn from each other. With a new investment and sense of empowerment, we now have during this year as a Renewal School feels different in a good way. Every student has an extra hour--hour of instruction everyday. Working with our Directors of School Renewal and our Superintendent, we fine tuned our teacher teams and are bringing high impact interventions to every student: 150 minutes of strategic reading intervention and 120 minutes of academic intervention services each week. We've hired additional faculty to work with Ls and students with disabilities. Professional development and supporting writing across content areas, and giving the power to students voice through writing. Our community school's partner Sheltering Arms is coordinating mental health supports, and transforming our building into a full service community hub. And you have to remember it's not just that these proper resources make differences for our school. The renewal investment demonstrates to our community that the City believes in us, and believe we can be successful, and we must be because support and resources requires responsibility and results.

Together, the new resources and sense of empowerment are making a difference. We've raised student attendance from 85% to over 92% so far this year. We've math and ELA targets for our special education enhancements. (sic) And, of course, we've got a lot more work ahead of us, but we have the resources, and we have a program where our students and teachers believe they can succeed. I look forward to working with the City Council and all our partners as we make junior high school the best school that it can be. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Now, it's also my pleasure to introduce Juanita Rodriguez who actually just led our New York State Commissioner Maryellen Elia on a tour of one of her buildings, and she's in one of the schools that actually has four co-located schools who are learning to work together and share resources. Juanita.

DR. JUANITA RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon, Chairman Dromm and members of the Education Committee here today. My name is Dr. Juanita Rodriguez, and the Director of School Renewal for District 11 in the Bronx. I work with four schools, three of them are co-located middle schools located at the Richard R.

Green Community Campus including the School of Diplomacy, the Young Scholars Academy of the Bronx and the Globe School for Environment Research, and one elementary school, P.S. 112, the Bronxwood School. We have had visits from our officials in our communities this year as Chancellor Carmen Farina just mentioned. We welcome and appreciate all of the support we have received so far, and look forward to our continued progress on our path toward renewal. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the work that we are doing in District 11 as part of the School Renewal Program and the strides that we have made so far. As the Director of School Renewal, I have worked closely with my four schools to develop their Renewal School Education Plans in order to--in order to strengthen instruction and to utilize extended learning time and new resources. And to monitor each school's progress in implementing its plan and meeting its goals. The support that DSRs and the Renewal Team are providing to schools is constant and proactive. I am in my schools almost everyday to determine what we need to focus on, what's working and what's not, and we are always adjusting to ensure our schools are meeting students'

needs. It is a truly a collaborative approach, and I'm glad that one of our principals, Principal Sean Licata from the School of Diplomacy is able to join us here today.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FRANCO: Sean, stand up. You deserve--[applause].

DR. JUANITA RODRIGUEZ: Principal Licata has been a true leader of his students, staff and community. He has become the lead principal of the Richard R. Green Campus and is a driving force in the movement to improve these schools. In addition to the instructional planning, what's exciting to me is that there is a true spirit of renewal at these schools. I am working side by side with my principals to change the image and culture of these long struggling schools, and we are seeing real progress. At the co-located middle schools, more parents and families are coming into the building by having more family nights and open houses throughout the year. We also worked all spring and summer with the building staff, our CBO, and community members to create a more welcoming environment, and school culture for all our students. We repainted the inside and outside of the school, designed and

created banners with the school logos to showcase inside and outside of the school. Have school leaders greeting students in the morning with music playing for the kids, and have been integrating campus wide activities and competitions to build school spirit. And we even developed model classrooms to be used for professional learning and collaboration with the support of our CBO. And we are getting the word out about the great things happening as we transition in to a community school campus. It truly makes all the difference when students and families walk into the building, and you see a sense of belief and ownership that wasn't there before. My role is to identify challenges and create solutions, whether it's--it's helping schools to either refine or adjust their middle school plans ensuring the CBO has a seamless partnership with the school staff or assisting with making sure the school leaders and teachers are getting the curriculum, training, professional development and resources they need. We have a partnership where we can achieve this and make real progress happen for our students. We will continue rebuilding together in and out of the classroom. DOE and DSRs, principals and

teachers, families and CBOs, and I'm very excited to see continued progress on our journey towards renewal. I thank the City Council for its time and for its continued support. Thank you. [background comments]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you very much and let me also just start off by saying [laughter] thank you especially to our principals, the Director of the Renewal Schools for coming in today. It's really always so good to hear from the practitioners as it is from teachers as well who have that on-the-ground experience to bring to the Council. So I am much appreciative of the fact that you're here with us today. And I also want to thank the Chancellor for turning the discussion around from one of failing schools to struggling schools because I don't believe our schools are failing, nor do I believe that our students are failures either. And so I want to thank you for the use of that language, and I think that's very important as well that our students know that.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Chancellor, under the State Law and School--

2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Excuse
3 me, Danny, can I just introduce--

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes, I'm sorry.

5 CHANCELLOR FARINA: That's okay.

6 Standing--sitting here with me are Amy Horowitz, our
7 Executive Director for Renewal Schools; Chris Caruso,
8 who is also now the head--the CBO of the Community
9 Schools Model; and Alante (sic) Wright, the Executive
10 Principal for the K-8 Model. Amy is focusing on the
11 high schools in the overall plan, and it's really a
12 pleasure because between the three--between the four
13 of us, we have most of your answers, if not all. So
14 it takes a team to make change.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, now let me
16 swear them in also.

17 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Sure.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Because I have to do
19 that formally. So, can you please raise your right
20 hand? Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the
21 whole truth and nothing but the truth, and to answer
22 council member questions honestly?

23 PANEL MEMBERS: I do

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Good and let
25 me do some introductions now, Chancellor. Also,

we've been joined by Council Member Inez Barron from Brooklyn; Council Member Ben Kallos from Manhattan, Council Member Levin from Brooklyn, Council Member Margaret Chin from Manhattan, Council Member Alan Maisel from Brooklyn as well. I believe I've got everybody here. Okay. Under the new State Law in School receiverships, struggling schools have two years and persistently struggling schools have just one year to show "demonstrable" quote, unquote improvement to avoid having an independent receiver appointed. What are the measures that are used to determine whether the demonstrable improvement has been made. I know you made reference to some benchmarks in your testimony. I think one of them was rigorous instruction, et cetera, but what are the other benchmarks that you've had?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, first and foremost improved attendance. You can't learn if you're not there. So that's one of the reasons why we go knocking on doors. We visit families on Friday, and our biggest emphasis with parents you have to get your child to school. The second thing is how actively engaged are families? And this is not about coming to PTA meetings, but for example, in

our Student Led Conference Initiative this year did you come to school to hear about your child's progress? Are you coming to workshops that tell you how you might help your child at home? Do you make sure your child comes to school when we offer extra classes? That's one of the other things. Every school has benchmarks in their renewal plan, but they have to meet individually. So it's not across the system, but everyone is expected to make some progress both in the ELA scores and interim tests as well as their math scores, and that's certainly part of the progress that we're checking. And that's what this team does and what the Renewal Directors do specifically. We also visit these schools a lot more with a lot more help, and also with different kinds of lenses so to ensure that the work they're doing is going to get them to where they need to be. And we have also actively started looking, and we certainly started this last year to ensure that they're the right leaders in the right schools, and the right teachers for those types of students that we have. So it's an awful lot of things, but the renewal meetings that take place once a month review all the plans on a regular basis. We're not going to wait

until the tests. That's not going to be the way we're vary. It will be part of the evaluation, but not the whole evaluation.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's good news to hear, and a large part of the testimony that I've heard this morning or this afternoon I should say, has focused on parental involvement. Why is that so vitally important to improving these schools?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, first of all, given the fact that many of our students are English Language Learners, and let's do one at a time. English Language Learners--a lot of these parents in the past may have been disenfranchised in the school. They don't speak English necessarily or there's--our schools are not necessarily the type of educational facilities that they're used to. So having them come to school feeling welcomed, feeling part of the process and understanding what they need to do to help their students I think is very, very important. The other thing you--it takes the village, it takes the whole family, and what we're finding is more and more families want supports for the results. We've found they want more ESL classes, GED classes. They want more education for themselves, and to a large

degree we have a Superintendent of Adult Education who is helping us perform and put these programs in many of the renewal schools. So I think family engagement is crucial. Also, when you're offering all this extra, many of these schools are going to offer Saturday academies. We have them now, but we'll also have them in the fall and spring. Parents need to make sure their kids get out of the house and get there. Getting the elementary school we're pretty sure that the parents bring them, but middle school and high school unless their parents know that they got there--and we actually have some apps that we're working on to make sure that if a child is not in school, right, Amy, in high school, the parents get an immediate phone call. Where was your child today? So I think families are crucial for all the other reasons I've said. If you have a special needs child, making that you come to an IEP meeting that your IEPs are being honored. It's a crucial part of success for those children. So families to me you can't do it without them, and by the way, more and more families nowadays are grandparents. And one of the things that we're doing in this coming semester we're going to be doing citywide workshops for

grandparents who are now caregivers to their children under the new Head of Family Engagement Yolanda Torres. Because as you go out, you see more of the reasons why things are not working, and rather than beat our heads against the wall and say so now what do we do to help with this situation? [background comments]

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Okay.

AMY HOROWITZ: I think just equipping parents--

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: If you can speak into the mic.

AMY HOROWITZ: Equipping parents with the information that they need to have a conversation with their child about what their child is learning school is just such an important first step in helping parents understand the questions that they need to answer. That they need to ask if their child is struggling is just a very important step in parent engagement that many of the parents in renewal schools really need that support to feel comfortable to be able to do that. And so, we're building parent leadership to support parents in being able to

support their children, and being able to ask the right questions.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: I also want to add for our high school parents doing some research when I first came into this job, I was astounded by how many opportunities that many of our L Students did not take advantage of, non-English speaking students in terms of college. So we want to make sure that parents know now what financial aid is about. What scholarships are all about, what it means to get credit, and be sure that you have the credits you need to apply to college. So a lot of the work with the high school parents is also around the issues. And we're going to have a week in January totally devoted to parent education for high school students on what you need to help your child succeed in life. Not just get from one grade to the other.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do any of your plans include going to do home visits?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Oh, yeah, a lot of them do and anyone who is involved with MSQI, which the City Council was very generous to provide, has that. But now, many of the--I was in a school today where the principal is now asking--this is not a

middle school. It's an elementary school where it actually hires new teachers, one of the things she asks them is would you be willing to make home visits on Saturdays? So I do think--and it's part of the community schools, isn't it also?

AMY HOROWITZ: As Edgar talked about his parent coordinator and one of his teachers are actively going out and making home visits, more to see about what they can learn from families, right. And for families that might not feel welcome in your school. When they have that connection with one person, it's so much easier for them to come to the school, and Chris can also talk about the extraordinary work that our community schools are doing in increasing parent engagement and making home visits.

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Yeah, I think recognizing families as true assets in their children's education is really core to this work. We're trying to change the mindset here, and we need parents' support at home in order to make that happen. In addition to home visits, we're also looking at some innovative new parent-teacher conference model, academic parent-teacher teams where

we're working with parents specifically on what their child--children are learning in school, what their individual benchmarks are. And then what are the strategies that parents can take and use at home to monitor and help support their children.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think it is very important to ensure that we have parent engagement and empowerment in our schools. I think empowerment is also a very important component of it because I think when we--when parents can take ownership of what's happening in the school as well, it creates an enthusiasm for them to want to come into the building to be part of what's going on.

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: One--one of the things we did this summer as schools were going through the renewal process was actually do a door knocking campaign, right. So, to meet parents on their home turf, and let them know what was happening in their school, what they could expect. And then also ask parents what they'd commit to, how they can help support their school's renewal effort.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I love the--

CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Sorry, and including parents in decision making not just in

everything. Like the City Council--Inez Barron knows one of the parents in your district--District 23, she attends everything. And--and then she comes back and tells me how to do my job, which is perfectly okay because she's a very active--but she goes to the principal's conferences. She's not just there as a parent. She's there as a parent liaison to get the word out, and I think that's really, really important.

AMY HOROWITZ: And we think that parent engagement is so important that we've worked with Karen Knapp from Harvard to provide teams of schools with training to engage parents. And so, that involves the principal. It involves the parent coordinator. It involves parent leaders, and a whole team from schools so that they can go back and then empower other parents to become actively engaged in their students' educations.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How is parent engagement involvement recognized within the DOE specifically in the Renewal Schools and the community schools?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: I'm sorry.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How is that recognized, is there any particular--

CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Well, first of all, we have a new Head of Parent Engagement, Yolanda Torres, and anything that has to do with parent engagement she's now attending. If there are districts who want support she's been going district to district. She comes out of being Superintendent of District 7. So she's very knowledgeable about that, and I think also any parent group in any particular Renewal Schools that needs extra support--we just got a request for someone to come and talk to the parents in their districts specifically about what those schools are all about. So we're really ready to do it on any given basis including going to the all the CECs to talk about this issue. But, also we help parent engagement boards. We have the District SLT teams as well as the school's specific SLT teams, and all these discussions go through these teams to ensure that everybody is knowledgeable about what's happening.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is there a way for parents to get some type of credit or acknowledgement for their coursework?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I think what they've been asking for, which is a little bit interesting. An honorary member of the City Council King also brought this up, is there a letter that parents could get that says I've been working X number of hours per month in my school so that more businesses would give them time off. And we're looking to see if there's a way that we can pilot it in one or two places. I understand several of the city agencies do this already, but it has been brought up more in terms of, you know, you have New York Cares and there are--some of our banks give their employees time off to work with New York Cares. So this is partially--but we've also partnered this year with Learning Leaders in a much more specific way, and they're doing a lot more training of parents in terms of how parents can help in the classrooms .

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm just exploring there may be a possibility of getting parents some way to get some life credit experiences in--perhaps in our community schools, or community college or something like that. I think it's something we should examine a little bit further. But anyway, I want to go back to the demonstrable improvements. Do

the goals vary for each school with, or I mean with the 94 schools?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, the goals vary in that everyone is at a different starting point. Everyone has to improve. Some schools are going from 20 to 30. Other schools may be going from 30 to 40, but they all have to demonstrate success. And I guess that success has many parameters, and some schools have brand new principals. Some of them have principals that have been there three or four years. So that will certainly skew a little bit of the expectation, but our goal is that all schools will show improvement in some way or another. Otherwise, as you said in the very beginning, we will never close schools as a first option, but we will never say we won't close them.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So the seven persistently struggling schools, which have only one year to show improvement, are they making progress toward the goals that you set for them?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Amy, do you want to take that one.

AMY HOROWITZ: So, those are currently are out-of-time schools, and they are progressing in

attendance and family engagement. They also have decreased incidents, and as--

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] By incidents you mean the SSAs?

AMY HOROWITZ: Safe and suspension so a decrease in--in the number of less severe incidents and violent incidents and a decrease overall in incidents. So increased safety, increased attendance, which means students feel more engaged, and as you know, the--the progress--academic progress is incremental. So we are constantly monitoring--progress monitoring at those schools, but the leading indicators do show that those schools are making progress.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And are you seeing an increase in parental involvement in those schools?

AMY HOROWITZ: Yes, we're seeing an increase in parental involvement across almost all of our Renewal Schools at this point.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: As I said in my opening statement and also I believe that reducing class size is critical for improving struggling schools. Although this year's Contracts for Excellence Plans states that the DOE will focus class

size reduction planning and efforts on the Renewal Schools and analysis by class size in Renewal Schools by the advocacy group Class Size Matters, found that Renewal Schools have not reduced or capped class sizes. In 56 out of 94 schools with 60% had some classes with 30 or more students. What would the DOE be doing to reduce class size in those Renewal Schools?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, obviously that's something we're going to keep looking at. In many cases, we are also putting more adults in those rooms. I just came from the school today that has four adults in a classroom. So it's about--what is the ratio of students to adults, and that's another way of solving it. If there isn't a place to reduce class size in terms of physical space having more adults in the classroom does make a difference. But this is obviously something we're going to be looking at over time, and hoping to reduce. That certainly is our goal, and I think it's more problematic probably in our middle schools right now than it is in our elementary schools.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: The issue is large in the middle schools?

2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yes. From my
3 observation yes, I would say.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Now, okay, now the
5 middle schools are required to have one hour of
6 expanded learning. Is that time spent on academic
7 subjects or does it include other areas as well?

8 CHANCELLOR FARINA: The--the one hour is
9 academic and then there's an additional tour hours on
10 other issues. Chris, do you want to explain a little
11 bit?

12 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Sure. So every
13 student is required to get five additional hours per
14 week. That's an academic focus, but really focuses on
15 opportunities to do hands-on and experiential
16 learning. It's done by a number of teachers, and in
17 some cases the community-based organizations help
18 support that. In addition to that, many of our
19 community schools offer additional expanded learning
20 opportunities for--not necessarily the whole school,
21 at some schools it's the whole school, but in that--
22 in those times they're doing arts, and they're doing
23 athletics and physical education and a whole range of
24 opportunities to support their social and emotional
25 growth.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So the people who are involved in the extended learning time, are they the same teachers who are teaching during the day, or is there--are there different teachers, or is there coordination?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: I think it varies. I mean I know it varies from school to school. Let me give you an example. One of the principals I mentioned in my testimony decided that he really wanted to get two different CBOs in his building. One of them, which Citizen Corp?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Citizen Schools.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Citizen Schools only comes on--in and does the academic subjects in the extending learning time as well as during the day. And the other one is Partnership with Children, which focuses on their social and emotional needs. So we've allowed schools to make certain decisions. In some schools it's only the teachers in that building. In other schools it's for CBO and the teachers. In some schools teachers from other nearby schools are coming in to do the extended learning time. So it's a different combination of people depending on the school, and the capacity of that school keeping in

mind that most of the extended learning time was in reading and math. So we want to make sure we had the best people to do those subjects.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and I'm just going to turn it over to my colleagues in a minute here to ask some questions. But I wanted to mention to Mr. Lin I'm so happy to see that you're using orange to celebrate your mascot the tiger, because the color orange has been used in many negative ways in some of our charter schools. And I'm glad to see that you're using it to celebrate you schools, and your students' achievements. And then, finally also I believe that in Dr. Rodriguez's testimony she mentioned that we repainted the inside and outside of the school designating creative banners with the school logos to showcase the inside and outside of the school. Why is that so important to creating--to helping Renewal Schools?

DR. JUANITA RODRIGUEZ: I think it's also a matter, again, hopefulness. When you go into a building it's dingy and it's the same old, the same old, you haven't changed anything except the name or--so to me, having the different colors and the right colors. You go into some of these schools, you need

1 sunglasses, and also in many of the schools the kids
2 chose the colors or were involved with public color
3 in painting the schools themselves. The other thing
4 is especially in co-located buildings having
5 different colors on different floors for the school
6 spirit, I think is really, really important. So
7 there's lots of different reasons. I went into a
8 school the other day, chartreuse was the color of
9 choice and what we have. But I think it's part of
10 that hopefulness. One of the first things after a
11 disaster is you paint. It's simple enough, but it
12 really does say--and it also says we're here for the
13 next level. We're not--you know, if you don't clean
14 something up, or it's dingy it's like okay because it
15 doesn't really matter because next year you're not
16 going to be here. So I think there's a lot of reason
17 for it.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you.

20 Okay, I'm going to now turn it over to Council
21 Antonio Reynoso followed by Council Members, Treyger,
22 Barron, King and Maisel.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Good afternoon,
24 Chancellor. How are you. So this is great. I have
25 two schools in my district that are going through the

renewal process, and then I think I have two different experiences for each one. I kind of want to go through it with you because what we're seeing here is kind of an overview of what the--the public education is doing. But I want to make sure that what's happening at the top is also being translated at the bottom, and that might not necessarily be happening. In Junior High School 50, we have a new principal, we have a community-based organization that's working in that school, and just walking into that school is whole different experience than it was let's say year or the year before. The kids are extremely excited. They're--the support each other whenever questions are being asked. Oh, it's M.S. 50, by the way. I went to that--

CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] I know. I was wondering. I know exactly which one you're talking about.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Okay, I went to Junior High School 50.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: They changed it to M.S. 50.

1 COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION 52

2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yeah, yeah, that's
3 okay.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: My elementary
5 school that I went to was shut down, but Junior High
6 School or M.S. 50 I'm hoping we can keep open, and--
7 and I'm willing to help you guys in those
8 investments. But while that experience seems to be
9 going well, the students are energized, they are
10 working very hard. Then we go to District 32 and
11 I.S. 349 where the--the principal that we had, left.
12 The coordinator, not the DSR, but the person
13 coordinating the--the--

14 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: [off mic] That's
15 the director.

16 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [off mic] Yeah.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: --Renewal School
18 program within the school--

19 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Right.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: --also leaves.
21 There's a co-location of a charter school in that
22 building this year as well.

23 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Uh-huh.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: It--it seems
25 like there's this madness in that--in that

environment--that environment for those kids cannot be positive. A new principal that leaves halfway through the process of a Renewal School I think they had a plan already and they took the plan and ditched it and did it over. They lose their Coordinator. They have a co-location. Everything happened at the exact same time. What--and I can only imagine that the experience that's happening in Junior High School 50 is not the one that's happening in I.S. 349. And I want to know if in these meetings that you're having monthly with DSRs, is 349 brought up, and what actions have been taken by the Department of Education to try to assist in this transition given that it seems to be very dysfunctional at the moment?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Okay, well, first of all, let me tell you that at M.S. 50 in District 14, they've already increased their enrollment, and other thing, when you asked me before how do I--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: [interposing]
Can I just--not only have they increased the enrollment, next year the parents are--the Arbor (sic) School have already made a commitment to send their kids to Junior High School 50 because of the impression that they have of this new principal.

2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Right.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: It's remarkable
4 what's happening.

5 CHANCELLOR FARINA: And that's what I
6 wanted to get to when you say what is some of the
7 characteristics of whether we know the School Renewal
8 Program is working. That is definitely one of them.
9 I have to tell you that right now that 349 had
10 several issues, back stories here, and this one is
11 not really truly on top of, but one of the things I
12 offer any of you who really want to come and visit
13 schools with me, I'm happy to go to that school with
14 you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Please.

16 CHANCELLOR FARINA: I'll get back to you
17 on that. I--I just can't--with that one I don't
18 have--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: [interposing]
20 And--and I'm more--more than happy to have that
21 happen. I was going to host a forum, a community
22 forum because parents also don't know what's going on
23 necessarily because of--

24 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] I'm
25 happy to follow up if we could do that subsequent--

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: [interposing]

These are very--these are very important issues here, very.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: I'll--by next week you'll have more information.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Thank you and then the last thing--the next thing I want to talk about is there the ESL and over-the-counter students and students that traditionally have a harder time transitioning into the public education system here in the United States of American. I was an ESL student. These Renewal Schools and what the State considers--whatever the state considers them, persistently struggling schools or struggling schools tend to have high levels of ESLs and IEPs, which has more to do with the testing than it does with anything else. While these ESL students are learning at a high rate or a fast rate the English language moving forward, in an exam after one year it's very hard to track their success. They then become ones. Instead of showing that they went from absolutely no grasp with no understanding of the English language to being--have conversational capacity and so forth, and none of that is being tracked. I'm putting a resolution

to ask for a suspension or a moratorium to having them take test after one year. I'm hoping that after the third year or the second year even--I prefer the third, but they take they test thereafter. I think that's Federal Guidelines in the No Child Left Behind that don't allow that to happen, but I would love for the Department of Education to join me in requesting a waiver, and allowing for these students to get at least two years of instruction in English before they're considered--before they're tested. And then you would also see that the same ESL students did much better in math that has less English related items or a comprehension of the language and more comprehension of numbers. You'll see them do much better in math than they do in the ELA. So I would just love for--

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, let me just give you a little bit of other information here. Our former Commissioner John King had actually put that forth before he left, and now that he's in Washington, I would like him to re-read what he said when he was here as a Commissioner because you're absolutely right. Asking kids to take a test after one year in this country is really tough. The other

thing that I find perplexing is that the NYSED (sic) test is actually harder than our standardized test. I went to a high school recently where the students were actually passing Regents and Advanced Placement and not passing the NYSED test. So we have to really look at assessments in terms of what's reasonable, and what's not reasonable, but certainly happy to have a further discussion with you on this. Because this one has been on my mind for a long, long time even prior to getting this job.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Just who should I reach out to, or who is going to be reaching out to me regarding a possible visit?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: It will be directly right there. Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council Member Treyger.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you--thank you Chair Dromm and welcome Chancellor, and also welcome to Ms. Horowitz, who was my history teacher at Murrow High School, a strong teacher with high expectations. So welcome. Chancellor, I--I really appreciate your comments about the language that we--

we use particularly those people in power--positions of power. I think that before people point fingers they need to sometimes look in the mirror about historical policies that have led to some of these-- some of these schools to--to have challenges. So having said that, my concern with what the State and--and our responses that these schools who are labeled Renewal or struggling in the State's eyes didn't take a year for them to get into these positions. It took a while for them to get into these positions. There was a systemic inadequacy. There was a systemic breakdown that led to schools ending up as labeled as needing improvement, and now we're calling them Renewal Schools. Do you believe that these State imposed mandates of one year or two years is this something that runs--numbers might look good, but are we looking and tracking real student learning because making sure that we're not seeing. Parents might react. For example, I--I appreciate your message, but a parent might say this school is now a Renewal School. What does that mean? Is my school bad? Should I take my kid out of the school? So how do we make sure that we are monitoring and ensuring the stability of these schools first and foremost?

2 Because at the end of the day, we have to ensure that
3 kids can read and write, can do basic math, can
4 become productive residents of our city. So, what
5 efforts are being done just to monitor the day-to-day
6 at these schools?

7 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I think first
8 and foremost looking a new enrollment is crucial--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: [interposing]
10 Yes.

11 CHANCELLOR FARINA: --and looking at
12 parents who are asking for variances or waivers to
13 get the students out. I think we have pretty much
14 stopped that. If anything we've seen more movement
15 into these schools than out of these schools. I
16 think the other piece of this is that we have to
17 really be able to have more open houses. I mean one
18 of the things I've been saying to all of the
19 superintendents you can't have open house once or
20 twice a year. One is in the fall and one is in the
21 spring. You've got to have open houses on a regular
22 monthly basis. Once a month to me is maximum, and it
23 should be because parents should be able to see for
24 themselves what's actually happening in the school.
25 I went to a school today where she's thinking of

going, having the once a week. I think once a week is a bit too much, but I do think visiting and seeing for yourself I think is important. I think the other thing is this new Commissioner that we have really gets it. She understands education, and she's coming from a place where she's done a lot of this work herself. I know from her work in Hillsborough, Florida, and one of the things she's said over and over again is it takes more than a year to make real change, and she has said it publicly. She has said it to the State Legislature, and also we should never be giving up on kids. One of the things about the-- when it was the Chancellor's district, and I've heard Rudy Cruz say that if he had to do it all over again he wouldn't do that because we--everyone was treated the same. It was an input/output system, and then what happened when you--they got saved, and then they couldn't sustain the work. So this is about not what are you only doing now, but what will you be doing for a long time to come.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: And I think that is really, and that's where I think the community school model really works because we're treating the whole

family. We're not just working. I mean went to one community school where the parents with students under the age of 4 are there in the school all day long with their children. So there's just so much. I mean at one point 1.1 million students. There is a lot of work to be done, but it's not just about helping these schools, but making sure other schools don't fall into this list.

COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: And--and I would just add to say that, you know, to me context is very important. Like when I was a teacher, you know, why does this matter? Why is this significant? The big picture, right? So to me we're seeing new State, you know, mandates without looking at the past here as well. I mean educators and school leaders and parents and kids have had to go--go through a series of changes with the evaluation system. Before I left the system, we were still implementing like the Danielson and implementing Common Core, and now the State has imposed now a new metric system that I think is still in the works while we're still figuring out the old metric system. And now, these schools have to now meet new standards with--with the renewal program. So I'm very much concerned about

making sure that as everyone is scrambling to be compliant, let's make sure that kids are engaged in learning everyday. And I just want to just quickly add--and my time is running out--is that Chancellor, I would just also just add this that as we're doing everything we can to differentiate instruction and--and to [bell] meet, you know, the various learning styles of our kids. I would really like for us at the local level to begin pushing for differentiating assessments because that is something that I think is--is a big-big missing piece in our system right now. That we could find different ways using, you know, reading, art and music to find ways to teach kids, but they're still tied to a--an assessment that is not differentiated, that's not tapping into their skills and talents and abilities. I'd really like for that conversation to take shape at the ground level, travel to Albany and to Washington. Thank you very much.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: I think we need a course called What's Common Sense About Public Education, and if it's not, how do we get it there? So I'm happy to have that conversation.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council
3 Member Barron.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you, Mr.
5 Chair and thank you Madam Chancellor and your staff
6 for being here to help enlighten us as to where we
7 are in this process. I just have a couple of
8 questions. We know the Renewal Schools that there
9 are seven that have to demonstrate have a benchmarks,
10 and I heard that they're moving towards that. But
11 what happens if--even with all of the movement
12 towards their--towards their targets they don't, in
13 fact, meet those benchmarks this year, those seven
14 schools?

15 AMY HOROWITZ: So the State's benchmark--
16 the State has a scoring system, and the schools have
17 to score within a range to be considered having met
18 that--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: [interposing] Oh,
20 it's within a range. Okay.

21 AMY HOROWITZ: --benchmark. But if they
22 don't score within that range then the Commissioner
23 of the State Education Department has the authority
24 to give them another year based on the improvement
25 that they're already making. And many of those State

benchmarks are totally aligned to what we're doing with Renewal Schools including have extended learning time, and being a community school.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, great. In terms of the fi--the funding for the program, the Mayor initially announced a \$150 million investment, and do you see that dollar amount as being adequate for what we need to do or do you expect that it will need to be increased going forward?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: I think it has been increased going forward particularly in terms of the extra positions that we've put in schools, and certainly the community CBOs have added. But I see this as an investment. I don't see this money as adding on, but as an investment to these students being in a better place so that they will actually go to college and get jobs. And I want to say one thing that I don't think I had a chance to say before that as hard as this work is, because it is hard work, we're way ahead of the rest of the state and the nation because people are calling us from all over. What are your plans? What have you done? When the Commissioner came down here, we gave her loads of materials every--all our plans, everything we're

doing. So we're way ahead of the game in terms what we're trying to do as a preventive as well as a--a piece at the end.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And in terms of those funds, how were they allocated? Were they given on an equal basis to each of the 94 schools, or was more given to the seven persistently struggling schools so that they could have what they might need, or was it used for--was it based on student populations in schools or special needs of students within schools such as a large homeless population or ELL? How was the money designated?

AMY HOROWITZ: All of the above. So, um, as you know, we increased fair student funding so that all Renewal Schools will be brought to 100% of--for fair student funding, but it's based on enrollment. It's based on the needs of the students that you're serving. So are you serving students with disabilities because you get a certain amount of funding for those students? Are you serving English Language Learners or students that are in shelters or have interrupted formal education. And so all of that is taken into consideration in determining how a school is funded.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And there are
3 four schools in my district that have been designated
4 as a Renewal Schools, and I'm glad to see that we're
5 moving towards the concept of community schools.
6 This past weekend there was a tribute to Regent Dr.
7 Adelaide Sanford. She celebrated her 90th birthday.
8 She's doing great.

9 AMY HOROWITZ: Right.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: And she, as you
11 well know, was a principal of a school in a very
12 economically deprived area, the Brevoort Projects
13 was--

14 AMY HOROWITZ: [interposing] Right.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: --the population
16 that fed into her school, but she operated a
17 community school. She did all those things that
18 we're talking about, made home visits and reached
19 out. And the most important thing that sticks with
20 me as I think about what she did over her--the years
21 was that she had high expectations.

22 AMY HOROWITZ: Right.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: She wasn't
24 accepting the run of the mill just keep them quiet.
25 Just keep them in their seats. She had high

expectations, and she was a leader who demonstrated for her staff what it was that they could do and, in fact, I think there were five earned doctorates who came through the staffing of her school and others who went on to other professions. So it's so important that we get the proper leadership in the schools and that the staff be engaged and buy into the fact that it's not just the time that's on the clock, so to speak, that needs to be done, but it's the time outside, and I did say--

CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] And I did want to say something about her because I visited her school when she was a principal. She took no nonsense.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: That's right.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: You came there to work [bell] and she had the expectation that if that's not what you were there for then you'd better find another place to go, and we're kind of using some of that philosophy.

COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes, very much so, and just finally, as we talk about improving and increasing access, we do hope that you'll consider the plans for having the opportunity for children

upon entry into schools to be tested for gifted and talented so that we can have those programs in the districts that would target those children that can benefit, and that would have teachers trained to be able to bring the best in those students. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much, and, you know, just before we turn it over to Council Member King to ask questions, something hits me, which is that, you know, you say that if the Renewal Schools Program doesn't work, it's going to be turned over to receivership to the State. Has that ever worked? I mean I'm thinking, you know, of Roosevelt in Long Island for example, and it doesn't seem to me that State receivership is the answer.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: I am not even looking toward that day because I don't expect it to happen. That's what they call that rigorous instruction. In my mind we're going to make it work. We're going to be the model for the State and the country and, therefore, it isn't going to happen.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It just doesn't seem to me that receivership works. If that's an ultimate

threat, it really isn't an answer in the long run.

Thank you. Council Member King.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you, Mr.

Chair. Oh, yeah, PMA (sic) definitely. That's even

I think something that's going to be successful,

right. I'm with you on that one. What I want to say

to you is always delightful to hear your testimony.

Chancellor I think today with the Rodriguez, Lin and

Licata here, I think you hit a grand slam with your

testimony today. So thank you, and I do have to give

a--

CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] And

that's because they're from your area.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Well, I'm going to

give a shout out Sean Licata because he's done a

marvelous job with Rodriguez in making sure that

School of Diplomacy and the Richard Green Campus is a

successful campus. That's also the middle school

that I graduated from. So I have a vested interest

in making sure that that school stands strong again.

So thank you for all that you're doing to make sure

those students learn. I also want to give a shout

out to the young men that aimed high from Monroe

College who are here today also to learn more about

education and came down from the Bronx to be a part of this political process here. I have four question for you, though. The first one if a teacher in--in one of our Renewal Schools is having challenges in adapting, adjusting and just--I won't say conforming, but moving the--the process along, what--what's the time frame before there are any adjustments with that--with that teacher?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well--

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Sec--Okay.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Okay. Well, I would say just like at any other school they can voluntarily choose to go. We can give them extra support, or just not the right fit. They might do better in another school. You know, not everybody is ready to be in the same place, which is why we have them--the superintendents overlooking these, and we've had some switching around already from school to school.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, excellent.

As far as your reports, where do you see the most improvements in the Renewal Schools? Is it high school or junior high schools? Which schools are

improving at a faster pace or you're finding more success with this model?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: I think it's a little bit in all. It's a little bit in all. I think our challenge right is to look at the schools that have made the biggest jumps and figure out what was it in those schools regardless of which type they were that that was possible. And I can tell you that I just got this morning great news on one of our high schools, Martin Van Buren. So everyday there's a new success story, but we've got to not just see what the success--how did it happen? What happened in that school that made this happen so we can then get that principal to talk to other principals who may be having the same challenge.

AMY HOROWITZ: And how do we keep it consistent, right. How do we maintain it and like move onward and upwards? How do we go from--from what's good now, or what's seen as good and great and sustain it. So building that capacity and that's our work.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: And although you didn't ask it this way, I'd say one of the challenges is that one of the populations that tends to be more

consistent are the kids from shelters. So as they move from place to place, how do we consistently make sure that they're successful no matter where they go. They're always entitled to stay within their school, but it is a bigger challenge that we're looking at as a bigger issue above and beyond the renewal process.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. In regards to parental outreach interaction, what would you say what is your number one program that you think that you're operating right now that has been successful in engaging parents in more interaction in the school?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I think the student led conferences were a very big deal, and the parents who thought that going to sit with the teacher with their child at the table was going to take away from their time were totally wrong. The students drove--literally forced their parents to go to school with them. The students were very well trained to how they were going to talk about their work. So it's not a parent going home, and saying the teacher said to me. The child was there. I sat in on several of them. The child said I need to do this, this and this. And she said well how can your

parents help you? And the child said at home you need to. In one case I actually butted into the conference, and I said you need to turn off the TV, you know, because I asked how long do you watch TV? He said six hours everyday.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Wow.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: So, um, so I think a conference between a parent and a child and the student--also, most of our student led conferences were by appointment. So respecting parents and having all the parent-teacher conferences where parents knew they were coming in, and one parent said to me I had 15 minutes. I've never had that time before. And we made that part of the mandate in terms of the Renewal Schools, but certainly citywide. So I'd--I'd say that's one thing. The community schools I think have really brought parents in. One of the things we've been encouraged and introduced we have dinners where they actually simulate what dinner conversation looks like, and invite people in for food. Do you want to add something close to the parent piece.

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: I would just say that every community school has a community school team, which has parent representing, and so really

respecting parents as leaders, and assets to the school community has been a way to engage them. It's not too often. Unfortunately, not parents have always been asked what they can give to their school, right. And so I think that's been a shift to really encourage engagement.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: And we said that the Tuesdays, the 40 minutes on Tuesdays should not be about phone calls home. They should be about celebrating kids. They should be what do parents want more of? And then one of the schools I went to last week parents are encouraged on Tuesdays to go back to their teacher--to their children's classroom for at least 20 minutes and they sit in the classroom and see what their students are doing. So I think bringing the parents into the school building to see what's going on is crucial.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, and as I wrap up, the seven schools that were just doing horribly for a while do you believe that one year is enough time to turn the school around, or should there be more years because if the school took a while to fall apart, it might take a little bit more time because we--say for example a school like Columbus High

School that, you know, even though it fell apart but as it started improving the school was so far behind, the improvements that were made were still at a failing rate. But still the school did improve. So do you think a one-year turnaround is fair and just to those adults who made a commitment to help students turn their--turn their academics around?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: I think one year is crucial to see if we have the right leadership and the right teachers in the building. That's year one.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Year two is now that we have the right people in the building what else needs to happen? But the Chancellor part of me also says I can't afford to have a child be more than one or two years in the building where they're not going to get what they need. So it's how you balance all this, but I do feel that over time-- You know, even schools that are successful can change midstream. So what do you keep in there that's going to keep the energy going? I think the one thing that I can actually say that's consistent in all our Renewal Schools at this moment is a sense of energy. And if I walk into any one of them and I don't see that,

then that's not a school that I feel invested in keeping open.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay. Well, I thank you again. Thank you for time, and thank you for keeping on painting--painting those bright colors on those schools. They remind me of Schoolhouse Rock on Saturday morning [laughs] the schools are awful colorful. So thank you.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Got it.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: All right.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just to follow up on Council Member King's questions, there are 11 schools that are on the State's list of struggling schools that are not part of the Renewal Program. What are we doing with those schools.

AMY HOROWITZ: So those schools like our Renewal Schools are getting the new life supports. They participate in our professional development offerings in addition, although the DSRs work predominantly with Renewal Schools in the districts where those schools lie. Those DSRs are charged also with supporting those schools. So they're--they're pretty much getting all of the supports that our Renewal Schools are getting.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Are those schools--
3 where are those schools located?

4 AMY HOROWITZ: The eleven. [background
5 comments]

6 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I don't--we'll
7 get back to you on that, Danny.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Hopefully, you
9 can get that before we end here.

10 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right, let's go
12 to Council Member Maisel.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Good afternoon
14 Chancellor and colleagues. I appreciate your being
15 here. I've spent some time in the public schools
16 myself, and one of the things that it's easy realize
17 after being in the school system is a consistent key
18 to success is order in the school. And, when there
19 is no order, there is no education, and every
20 teacher, of course, has more or less ability to keep
21 order in the classroom. I've never been a big
22 believer in suspensions because suspensions never
23 work. The child gets suspended. They come back and
24 there is generally no improvement. In-house
25 suspensions didn't work very much either. But the

one thing we never did try was extensive guidance and assistant to the student to try to get to the root of the problems. So first of all, have you found that to be true, and what are you doing in the Renewal Schools because I'm sure that discipline is a problem in many of the class--classrooms that are not succeeding or even the schools that are not succeeding. So what is being done about that?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, first of all, that's part of the community school work, extra social workers, extra guidance counselors. Discipline Codes, Behavior Positive Discipline Codes we have put in all of the Renewal Schools but beyond the Renewal Schools personal behavioral conduct is always stressed then in a positive way. But I think the most important thing for safety and order is good instruction. Students who are actively engaged in learning do not get in trouble. And I've said it over and over again. We have sometimes in struggling schools dumbed down the curriculum thinking that that's the way to do it where as the reverse is true. One of the reasons we brought in writing, a writing program to all our Renewal Schools is that the students can express themselves through writing and

then also read books that they're specifically interested in, they're much more likely to be engaged. Too many of our schools were drowning in ditto sheets, memorization and other things that kind of said you're not smart enough to think for yourself. So I do believe that having order in the classroom is crucial, but I think how you get it is most important. And you get it by good teachers who know how to teach, and also differentiate. Nothing will turn a student more off particularly in middle school if they feel they know the work, and they're not being challenged. So we've been doing a lot of our workshops on differentiation of instruction. How do you work with small groups within a bigger setting, and a lot of our renewal work is focusing on that, but the extra social workers and guidance counselors in all these schools is also helpful.

COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Well, you know, I want to just point out that guidance counselors are-- I don't know if you believe in guidance counselors-- unfortunately because of the bureaucracy that they have to adhere to a lot of the guidance counselors they just really don't have time to be guidance counselors. They're mostly doing paperwork. For

example, in the eight grade, the eighth grade guidance counselor doing high school applications, they don't have time to really sit down with the kids. You need more than just guidance counselors doing this.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: [off mic] Do you want to take that?

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Yeah, so each of their Renewal Schools and all community schools are being given an investment in mental health services. Look, we know that students in these schools are suffering the effects of chronic poverty, right, and they're coming to school with stress. They're coming to school battling a number of different challenges, and so investing the social and emotional learning health of our students by providing therapy, by providing counseling in addition, and beyond what the guidance counselors are able to do given their caseloads is a strategy that we think will be successful. That and making the day more engaging as the Chancellor said. So not only the school day instruction, but making sure that we have really meaningful expanded learning opportunities and

opportunities for children to find their passion and their interests.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: And you also need to know that we have increased the arts programs. Many of our arts programs are now in all schools. Many of the Renewal Schools did not have access to some of the programs. We are coming out soon with a list of even more schools that are going to have more arts programs, and we were very careful to include in many cases renewal schools as well. There is no way of saying, you know, you're so far behind we're only going to give you academics 24/7. There's got to be the whole joy of learning across the board. So that's part of it, but also again more parent engagement because in the school has to be consistent at home. I know some of our more successful workshops for parents have been how to talk to your teenagers. I mean any of you who have had a seventh grader it's almost impossible, but you have at least some ways that you can start this conversation how to deal with stress in terms of applying to middle school or applying to high school. So a lot more workshops to parents as well is how to deal with

their students in way that will have positive outcomes. [bell]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you very much. Council Member Chin followed by Council Member Williams who has joined us, and we've also been joined by Council Member Mark Levine.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon Chancellor. It's really wonderful to hear from a Chancellor who's an educator who really talks about the excitement about kids learning and visiting the schools. And I think that's really what New York City needs to hear more of about, all the positive things that's happening in our schools. We have some wonderful schools, and even the schools that are struggling, they can be better. And I think some of the examples that you've--you have given has really given us hope that these kids will have an opportunity. I was really happy to hear that when you talked about parent engagement that you also are involving grandparents. So my question is relating to parents and grandparents of else, you know, the parents that don't speak English, how are they getting the attention and the involvement let's say when you would do the home visit or you do the

workshop? Because I have a Renewal School in my district, and I'm just really concerned that--I want to make sure that these parents, you know, get the full resources that they need to deal with their kids, and make sure that the students are not the ones that's providing the translation for their parents.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Oh, no, I was my translator for my parents. I was a very good student every time I was translating. [laughter] So I--I get that one. I think first of all once again, we have a new head of Family Engagement. She certainly sees this as one of the issues. We are doing more and more workshops for parents in other languages. The grandparents issues very simply came around. I am a grandmother very invested in my grandchildren's education, but what I'm seeing more and more is many grandparents are now the guardians of their grandchildren, and many grandparents-- Oh.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quite down please.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: And what came up, I was asked to do a presentation in the Bronx, but it could have been any district in the city where once I looked at the audience I said gee, it must be very

interesting because the parents must have sent their parents. And when I asked how many people in the audience were actually caregivers, the major caregivers, it was 75% of the audience. And that really struck me in a way, and it happens also in certain districts where there are other family issues. So we are going to be hosting something actually I think in the next month, December. I'll send you invitations, at Bank Street Bookstore to talk with people from around the city, mostly parent coordinators and parent leaders about what is it that they want to know more of. For example, they want more issues of their own health because one grandparent--and that's why this all started--came to me and said, I have a--I think he had a three-year-old or a five-year-old and a seven-year-old. He said at my age I'm not going to be here for the rest of their lives. How do I have these conversations with my grandchildren? Also, I need to take care of myself. Is there work you can give us? So, you could say there's a chance and not my job, but it is my job because whatever is going to make it easier for the kids then it's part of it. So we're going to have a very extensive approach to grandparenting of

people who are the major caregivers because the questions they have also: How can they be involved in the school if they're not guardians--full guardians. There's a lot of issues. There's legal issues, medical issues, educational. One grandparent said to me when my kids were younger I took them to the playground. At my age I'm not taking my grandchildren to the playground. What do I need to know as a grandparent. So the need has become a new issue. Yolanda Torres, thank God, is a grandmother also, and she flew with it. So I'll keep you abreast of how we're doing it. We'll certainly do it in all the languages.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, because in my district we have a lot of cases where the parents are working out of state, and the grandmother--and the grandparents are the ones that are taking care of the kids. And often times some of them, you know, will speak a dialect that is not the most --

CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Common.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: --used, you know. So that it's really special attention, and also maybe some of it is also getting information, you know, through the local media or local organizations. So

people are beginning to get, you know, more aware of what they can do to help their grandchildren, and also be part of, you know, the--the learning. And also if they can also take advantage and get some programs for themselves. So I think it's really important to really get that information out there that DOE understands that it is a situation, and then they're aware of and you are offering the help to them.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: I think first of all having the CBOs, many of them have people already on staff who speak the other language including other dialects. The other thing is also that we have covered every language, every major language. So that if we know that there's a need in a certain place, we will go with those translators. And the other thing we're looking at is how much technology can help us. I've actually put out a problem to many of our technology companies to figure out how they might use technology to do some translations. [bell] You know, but as a grandmother myself, I've really-- this is a cause for me. So I'm certainly hoping that this will be something that we will make major strides in just in the next three months.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I look forward to
3 hearing that. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council
5 Member Williams.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr.
7 Chair and thank you Chancellor and staff for being
8 here. I appreciate it and thank you for the energy
9 and the work that you've been bringing to the system.
10 I think it's good. Obviously, a lot of work still
11 needs to be done. I always say I'm a--I'm a Brooklyn
12 Public School baby from pre-school in Manassas
13 proudly educated in the Brooklyn Public School
14 system. Sometimes I'm afraid. I don't know the way
15 it is now if I would have made it through. I had my
16 share of issues, but my mother was a lot more
17 involved than I think some parents are allowed to be
18 now, and my teachers some of them in particular. I
19 always try to shout out to Ms. Ned and Ms. Jeannie
20 Merrick (sic) from fifth grade was allowed to be more
21 creative with me to keep me in the right way. I
22 don't know that teachers have that creativity when
23 they identify quote, unquoted troubled young people.
24 So that does concern me. I only have one question.
25 Before I get there my state is really because I

really hear a lot of discussion about Common Core. I haven't really decided one way or the other, but in the schools that I know that are troubling, they kind of look like the same folks from way back in Brownsville. They look like they're in the same neighborhoods that were struggling, and Common Core is not the reason that they're struggling. And do, we're spending a lot of time on that, and I don't--I want to know from--from your side if you feel if we solve this Common Core problem we have solved the issue. For me it seems to be more about resources, and more about ways to get the kids educated. I mean I don't know really. I think we know what the answers are, and I don't know if it's--if it's money is the problem. I know we--we deserve some extra money, and we should get it. I do know we spend a lot of money per people even though we're owed money. Is it that we need to, you know, work with the unions to get some more creativity. Is there the right teachers on there. I just--I kind of feel like we know what the answers are, and what's preventing us from putting something things into play?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I have to tell you that I think one of the major concerns is

expectations. We go into the school with certain expectations based on the--the neighborhoods, the parents and other kinds of--and we have to stop that. All us--of us have to go into every single school with the same kind of expectations. Our kids can make it. Our kids can succeed. I want to a conference not too long ago, and the conversation around the table started with complaints. You know, in my district all my children are in poverty. Well, yes, but so what? It's not the starting point for conversation. That's an obstacle that has to be overcome. We have to say all kids can succeed. All kids deserve the best teachers. All schools deserve the best principals. There was a time--I've been in education long enough that I can tell you that honestly there were certain schools that we sent all our less than good people. Because it was okay to put one school out there sort as a--as long as the other--the other schools stayed good. We can't do that. All schools have to be good schools, and I will tell you that I--I feel particularly lucky that we do work cooperatively with both the UFT and the CSA, and they have been working with us to make sure that all the people that come into the schools come

in with those high expectations. But I don't want to underestimate what people think when they walk into a building. I started teaching in what they call the Chapter 1 School, which today would be called the Title 1 School, and my principal said every child in your classroom no matter where, what part of the neighborhood they come from is going to college. You have to go in there with that image. The kid can decide later on whether they want to go or not, but your expectation is they're going. So I do think it's about expectations. Money is always helpful, and I think to some degree how do we reward teachers and principals who are working in particular--not necessarily Renewal Schools, but schools that have certain kinds of challenges. Certainly, schools with kids who are formerly incarcerated. That's a population we have to look at very seriously as a city, but there are no easy answers, but expectations to me is one of the keys to success in a lot of schools.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: All right.

Well thank you. I mean I--I'm thankful that we always kind of have the hearings, and we have to keep pushing. We kind of ask some of the questions and

generally get similar responses about what we need to do, and I just want to see how we can get it into-- into play. I think class size a lot more to do with it than Common Core does, and so my argument is raging on. I think there's other things that are really affecting these schools that we have to harp on more than the Common Core. Whatever you're learning, some people are learning it, and--and some people aren't. I do have some things that our--our schools specifically that I want to follow up offline. Because I haven't brought them up before, I don't want to bring them up now, but hopefully we can respond to that. One thing, though, um, there's an issue with community use of space that seems to differ from school to school [bell] and so I'd really like to know if there is some kind of policy on that. Is it being enforced equally because I want to get-- It depends where I am trying to get that access.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Just send me a question. I'll speak to one of my members.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Sure.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Alante is dying to say something.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you.

ALANTE WRIGHT: You asked the question about the Common Core and that's like the \$20 million question. We find that the Common Core has established a set of standards that all children across the nation are exposed to. So never--no longer will you see in schools--remember the old days when you asked questions like, "When was the War of 1812?" "What color was Ann's red dress?" You're not having that any more. It's all about the cognitive and intellectual development of students, and it's pushing students and teachers and leaders, our professional development that we have put together at the City and for the School Renewal Program to ensure that children receive the curriculum and the teaching and learning that happens in classrooms everyday. Pushes children to think, reason, problem solve, conjecture, debate. Any programs that are coming into schools, if they don't do just that, we don't need them in our schools. Or, we either Tweet them to make sure that it pushes children to do the type of work that the Common Core is asking for. So I believe that--

CHANCELLOR FARINA: [off mic] In all neighborhoods.

ALANTE WRIGHT: In all neighborhoods.

It's just it's not one of those situations any more with that--only certain populations of children would receive that level and that type of instruction. It is a mandate, and the beautiful thing about the Renewal Program, that's what our work is, the work with the DSRs working with principals to revise curriculum to make sure that children are thinking, reasoning, problem solving across the curricula areas, ELA and mathematics. So with that, Common Core gets a check.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Well, thank you. My--my only thing again I don't--I haven't fallen each--every way yet. I just know that there are some schools that don't get the proper education now, and if we don't take certain things when we bring the Common Core, they won't get it after. So I just feel like sometimes the Common Core is thrown out there, and I'm sure that's the--the main argument we should be having, but thank you very much for that explanation. I really appreciate it, and thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you, Council Member Williams. It's interesting that you bring

that question up because just about a week and a half or so ago, I held a Town Hall with the Chancellor, and with the Mayor, and we were there for 2-1/2 hours, and we answered every single question with every person who came and stood in line for those full 2-1/2 hours. And not one single question was brought up about Common Core. The questions were about CFE funding, about class size, about teaching to the test, and about parental involvement, and to me those are the real issues that our parents face. And those are the things the parents wanted to know about from this Administration. So, I'm really glad that you--that you have already got it. Thank you. We questions now from Council Member Mark Levine.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Hello Madam Chancellor. It's always great to see you. Among the wonderful decisions you've made during your tenure was the decision to hire Chris Casuso through our community schools. I've had the pleasure of working with him and other contacts. Really happy to have him lead in that role. Could you remind us what the criteria were for a school to be designated Renewal and whether you're continuing to apply that criteria to other schools that might

fall on hard times and need to be brought into the program?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: [off mic] Amy, do you want to take that?

AMY HOROWITZ: So, um, Renewal Schools were--so we used, as the Chancellor said in her opening remarks, we used multiple criteria. So there were schools that were designated either priority or focus by the State. There schools that were in the bottom 25% of progress in the city for ELA and Math, or graduation rate for high schools. They received a score of proficient or below on their most recent quality review. So it was multiple criteria, and then the Chancellor had discretion and added an additional four schools to--to the 90 based on looking at multiple criteria. Because like you, we don't believe that one test should be the--the mark of whether a school is, um, considered a Renewal School or in need of assistance, and we look at this as a opportunity for our schools to solve a problem rather than it being foisted on them as a problem.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Of course, of course, and we--we applaud that for sure. In the year and a half since the first designation have--are

you monitoring to see whether any schools might now meet those criteria, and what would you do in that case?

AMY HOROWITZ: So we talked about the, um, additional 11 schools, which I have for you now that are receiving renewal life support. So those are schools that are persistently struggling or struggling as designated by the State. So they are Young Leaders Elementary School in the Bronx--

CHANCELLOR FARINA: Emergency rooms into--
- [off mic] We have the list. We'll just give it to him.

AMY HOROWITZ: Okay, so we have the--we have the whole list for you, but so those schools are, um, getting renewal life support. So they participate in our professional development in addition to the professional development that's offered by the Borough Field Support Centers, and the DSRs are also supporting those schools.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Will they now be on the same three-year clock essentially starting-- starting from a later date I presume?

AMY HOROWITZ: So they are not actually considered Renewal Schools

2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Right.

3 AMY HOROWITZ: ==but we are supporting
4 them with the same kinds of supports and structures,
5 but the Renewal Schools are limited to that--the
6 Citywide Renewal Schools are those 94.

7 CHANCELLOR FARINA: These are also
8 schools that are benefitting by the extra support.
9 So for example some of them have even--that were on
10 the renewal list, could have come off this year. But
11 holding them harmless and giving them extra support
12 has--is really going to have a--you need to be
13 strengthened. You don't gain lessons in just one
14 year. You need those muscles to be in constant
15 training. So I think this is part of what we're
16 hoping to see for all our schools.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Right, but those
18 schools don't face the threat, if that's the right
19 word--

20 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Right.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: --of closure or
22 some other radical action--

23 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] No.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: --at the end of--
25 of a period. So, um, are there circumstances where

you could see one of the 94 things are just going from bad to worse, and rather than waiting for three years, you want to take more--more dramatic action before the end of the--the initial plan three-year period?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: We're evaluating month-by-month. There's no way that we're going to wait three years in the schools that need more interventions or based on what we see, are just not going to make it. So I anticipate being in front of you on a regular basis, and letting you know what we're going to do. So certainly, Mayor Join Consolidation Plan is part of that. The Mayor has been very clear that he never said that he wouldn't close a school that there will be times, and with whatever the reason will be very clear when we make that decision as to why it's being made. The most important thing to me is that all students should be in schools where they have hopes of graduating. Where they have hopes of getting a diploma with that school's name on their diploma, and where they will be ready to onto the next level. So every elementary school student should be ready to middle school and participate in middle school. Every middle school

should be ready to go to high school and high school to college. So that's the premise. You know, aside from the State is asking, we have added our own layer of what we expect.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: So we obviously hope and expect and look forward to the vast majority of the schools turning around with the kind of support they're receiving. But in cases where that doesn't happen, you'll probably have to start planning for the transition before the end of year three, right? At what point do you have to say folks we've got to prepare to get these kids another option?

CHANCELLOR FARINA: I would say we're in the middle of considering all of that stuff right now. So stayed tuned.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: So it could be that that--that leave them potentially less than three years because--

CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] It depends on the situation. It's--Okay, we said very clearly that Renewal Schools are a case-by-case situation, not cookie cutter, not one size fits all.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Okay, thank you
3 very much.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and just a few
5 last follow-up questions. I think in your testimony
6 you said that the Renewal Schools were allocated
7 about \$150 million in expense funding. I've seen an
8 IBO report that says that it's closer to about \$300
9 million. Can you just tell us where the funding is
10 coming from for the Renewal Schools?

11 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [off mic] Do you know
12 where it's coming from?

13 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: So it's a--it is a
14 combination of City and State funds. Um, the--since
15 the initial allocation or the announcement of the
16 \$150 million, after that is when we adjusted a Fair
17 Student Funding Formula, which why--which is why the
18 investment was greater, and we can get you the
19 details on the specific sources of funding that are
20 supporting schools.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Have you allocated
22 any capital funding for Renewal Schools?

23 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yes. [laughs]

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And can you get us
25 that figure?

2 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Yeah, sure and we
3 have more information for you on the other things you
4 asked.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you know what
6 modernization or what needs they may have in terms of
7 capital needs?

8 CHANCELLOR FARINA: Well, I--I would
9 say, you know, certainly in places where we--you need
10 more science labs or where schools do not have
11 certain facilities that they need in order for the
12 instruction that was a priority. But it's--again,
13 it's a school-by-school decision basis, but we'll get
14 that to you. Oh, yeah, the clinics.

15 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: [off mic] Yeah, it
16 was the--

17 CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Yeah,
18 the CBO clinics.

19 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Yeah, we have health
20 clinics being established in the schools. One other
21 thing just on beautification--

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Can you
23 scoot over more to the mic?

24 CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: Sure. Sorry about
25 that. Also, many of the schools have gotten health

clinics, and mental health clinics. So there's been a capital investment on that fund as well.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And will some of these capital needs be reflected in the upcoming five-year plan?

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: We can get all-- we'll get you the financial information on the plan. I don't have that.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Because we would like to know that, you know, going into this next budget--

CHRISTOPHER CARUSO: [interposing] Sure.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --round. All right. I think that's it then, and--

CHANCELLOR FARINA: [interposing] Well, thank you very much--

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Any time.

CHANCELLOR FARINA: --and we have all the information, and anything else you need, we're happy to supply. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

[background comments, pause] Okay, the next panel will be Rich Mantell from the United Federation of Teachers, Vice President; Joe Cusack from the UFT,

7th and 8th grade social studies teacher. Michelle Barrow, 6th to 8th grade, UFT, and Mark Castillo from the Council of Supervisors and Administrators.

MICHELLE BARROW: [off mic] Cannizzaro.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Cannizzaro. I'm sorry. [background comments, pause] Okay. I'm going to swear you all in. I'm going to ask you to raise your right hand, please. Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and to answer council member questions honestly? Okay, Rich, do you want to start.

RICH MANTELL: Yeah. [pause]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just put that mic on. Yeah.

RICH MANTELL: Good afternoon, Councilman Dromm. Thanks for having us here today. I submitted a copy of my testimony. I'm not going to read from it. I'd like to just speak about the schools. Have been to dozens of the middle schools since the school year started, and, in fact, our staff has visited these schools over 500 times since the first day of school. We're working collaboratively with the DOE to support these schools. Our teachers come in early, they stay late, and they want to see these

schools do well, and they want to see their students succeed. We understand there are many challenges in these schools, but we understand what's at stake, but we want to do this work and we are invested in seeing it through. These schools have many challenges including large numbers of ELL students, large numbers of special needs students, and also a disproportionate number of students that live in temporary housing. But we now have an administration that's willing to address these issues, and support these students in their schools. We believe that with the proper resources these students in these schools will succeed. The ELT time, the Extended Learning Time that helps instruction for high school students it can be credit bearing courses. The CBO involvement whether it's with counseling or helping with attendance issues at the school, community learning schools that take a holistic approach to the child. PD for teachers, parent engagement, and actually you raised something earlier about home visits. So there is a program some of the schools are involved with where at the beginning of the school year teachers visit the homes of the students entering the school to show them that, you know,

they're invested in their child that they--they want to make that connection between the school and the student. Too often a parent gets a phone call only when something is wrong, and the idea behind this is to change that mindset and to, you know, build a relationship so the parents can be contacted when things go well. So all of the things I mentioned are helping these schools improve, and we believe that as long as we have things like this in place, and the proper resources these schools will indeed improve. The schools are moving forward. We know there's more work to be done. However, these schools are making real progress. They're making real progress. I want to emphasize that, and with continued support, the schools will only get better. Now, I visited the schools, but I brought with me two teachers who are on the ground, as you referred to it. Michelle Barrow from Junior High School 22 whose principal spoke earlier, and Joseph Cusack from I.S. 311. Michelle.

MICHELLE BARROW: So, good afternoon. My name is Michelle Barrow, and I've been a teacher for about 26 years now so [laughs] I've seen many changes throughout and in the last two years because of this

renewal there has been energy and hope. With regards to the extended learning time, ELT, our students are getting extra help in mathematics, in science, in reading, writing. It's not just academia as well, but we've also started a softball team for the girls. There's many things that are going on that has been very positive. We--as my principal had mentioned before, Ms. McGann is the 6th grade teachers, but other teachers are doing these home visits on Saturday on their own time. Not to--not to give bad reports, but to find out what can we do as a community to make your child be successful, and that's what our goal is. A lot of our teachers are giving up many of their times and their days in order to ensure that we have what we call, "What I need time," which is designated to those students who are not doing well in a particular area, and want a two or one-to-one tutoring. They're able to get that now. Okay. we've done beautification around the school. We let the parents know that we care about the school. We've planted trees. We've planted flowers around the neighborhood just to let them know that we're there. Our parent involvement has dramatically increased. Middle school parents

usually don't come in. They don't visit. If it's report night, sure, you might get that 30 or 40 of them coming in, but lately they're around. They're talking about us inside the supermarket. You go to Junior High School 22, I heard such good things. They never used to have talk in the community about us. It was like oh, you go to that--you teach in that school. It no longer happens. Students at risk we have a checking system where the student that is at risk will check in with their teacher, one teacher that they have made a connection with in the morning. They say hey I'm here. That teacher has a conversation with them, how was your morning, and is it going to be a good day? Is it going to be a bad day. If it's going to be a bad day, let me know now so that we can make or ensure that somehow it turns it around. Leave what happened outside. Let's get learning going inside, and it happens twice a day during--in the morning and during midday right about lunch time just to see hey I am having a good day. It's better than what I thought it was going to be. So the communication is there between student and teacher. Parent involvement is very, very important. Once the parent shows that they're interested in the

school with their child, the child then becomes I would say better in class behavior wise, academically wise. They know that their parent is going to say hey, what did you do today? Usually, in middle school from my experience it doesn't happen that way. So, being a Renewal School is not that bad. It's a lot of hard work. We know that. Our teachers are willing to give up a lot of time. Paid, unpaid, it doesn't matter. We know what we need to do, and we're reaching out not only to our students, but to their parents so that their parents know that we care. We offer GED classes for the parents, ESL classes. We have a workshop going on tonight in science for parent and family to gather in. We've had breakfasts for parents so in the beginning of the school year what can you do throughout the school year to help your child be successful. We did a Power Point presentation for them, provided them with breakfast per grade, and they came in in droves. In the beginning of the school year the week before especially for 6th grade we had one week of just having the parents come in to know what their child is going to be like in the classrooms, our expectations. Just as the Administration has high

expectations of us and held accountable, we hold our parents accountable for their child. So, that's all I need to say.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you

MICHELLE BARROW: You're welcome.

JOE CUSACK: Good afternoon, Councilman Dromm and the Ed Committee. [coughs] My name is Joe Cusack. I'm a social studies teacher, 7th and 8th grade at I.S. 311 in East New York Brooklyn. I have ten years on the job. The renewal process has provide I.S. 311 with many opportunities to help us succeed. I'd like to talk a minute about the extended learning time. Students are getting an hour and 15 minutes Tuesday through Friday of additional instruction. On Tuesdays they have a book club. The other days provide extra instructional time with classes such as STEM and drama, which would not be possible during the traditional class schedule. Our community-based organization provides additional services. The CBOs is Good Shepherd and they provide two additional social workers, and I think we touched on that before in addition to the school's one, and they take children and have private sessions with them. The CBO is also working with the staff right

now to provide a con--conflict resolution--resolution session--excuse me--at lunch for students who would otherwise have been assigned to straight detention centers. The renewal process has also given us the ability to hire additional staff. I.S. 311 was able to hire additional teachers including a master teacher in English language arts. Beside her classroom expertise, Kate Vitali has worked in another struggling school in the same district, Fredrick Douglas 7, which is in District 19. And over the course of a few years she was able to help turn that school around. Her expertise in school improvement is an immense support. In addition to additional teaching staff, we also have additional leadership. An administrator from the exact same school, Ms. Yolanda Martin, works with the master teacher as well as with the model teachers in the building. Their jobs are to provide the staff with additional help. She is also there to help the principal and support the school leadership team. She's there to help share and implement the strategies that worked in her school to help turn around hours. The teachers in the building hope to continue this work. It is important to all of us to

save our school, and give it the prestige that it once had. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to share what's going on in East New York, Brooklyn. Than you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Mark.

MARK CANNIZZARO: Good afternoon, Councilman Dromm, distinguished members of the City Council. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to day. You have my testimony, and--and I also will not read it. I also would like to thank before I begin, Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Farina for this visionary initiative, for putting faith in our children, and in our educators. For understanding that real school improvement will only happen when we have community partnerships, when we have the additional resources that our children need, and when we have the proper professional development for staff. It is so great to hear so many positive things that are happening in the Renewal Schools, and--and just the sense of hope and enthusiasm that I hear at this table. We've been partnering not only with the Department of Education, but the UFT on this initiative, and we've worked very closely together. With that said, I can only hope and believe that

great things are going to happen. The however is there are some things we think that have some great potential, but needs some cross-correction also. The Department of Education, and we have been discussing some of these things, and we are confident that they are going to move them in the right direction so that even further growth than you--than you hear about is--that's happening currently that further growth can occur. So the first thing we need to--to make sure is that our principals and our school leadership teams have an opportunity, and--and the understanding that it is their job to evaluate the community-based organizations that are working with the schools. And to make sure that the overwhelming majority of them who are doing a great job continue to do so, and the few that need some improvements are--are given some critical feedback about making improvements in--in helping our--in helping our schools grow. We have agreed with the Department of Education that Ambassadors assistant principals will be going into the Renewal Schools. Unfortunately, at this point some--some red tape and--and paperwork hold-up--and some things are at--have--have led to at this point no Ambassador Assistant Principals actually being

assigned. We are told that should happen soon. We are looking forward to that, but we feel that these positions are critical as Ambassador Assistant Principals are experienced folks with some--some real knowledge of--of helping struggling schools. And people who go into the building and give principals an extra hand and free them up from some of the--from some of the compliances tasks that--that they're dealing with, so that they can go in and make sure that instruction is actually being improved. We have also agreed with the Department of Education that schools and principals that want leadership coaches can and will have them. In some cases they've been assigned. In other cases not yet. Again, it's almost in December. We think that this should have been done by the beginning of the school year. But, even more importantly than that, we find it critical that these leadership coaches are critical friends and supporters of the principal. There's a tremendous amount of oversight and accountability, and we need to make sure with the Department of Education that their roles are clear when they go in. That they are there to support the school administration and the school leadership teams in--in

implementing the vision of the school. Finally, and probably most importantly, accountability needs to be focused, laser focused and streamlined. Last spring, school leadership teams took the time to develop comprehensive educational plans, which spelled out not only the goals but also action plans as far as implementation. Since then there have been a plethora of other type of accountability measures that seem to be placed on school. There is this progress monitoring tool, which is a very broad tool, and we feel it should be--it needs to be focused on exactly what that comprehensive educational plan says because it is specific and unique to that school and talks about what that school needs. The comprehensive--the progress monitory tool is taking hours and hours to review and go over, and--and in some cases again it's looking at areas outside of the CEP. In addition, for some reason the department has chosen to administer quality reviews in these schools this year--these school this year. Only 25% of schools are getting quality reviews. We feel strongly that the Renewal Schools are already getting their oversight from the superintendent from the District School Renewal person, from the DSR. The

State is also coming in and looking at these schools and doing quality review type of--of visits. So we just feel that the--the quality review is another piece that should be taken off the plate of these schools. We certainly don't feel it's too late for this course direction. In fact, we do--we do want to stress that we feel that things are moving in the right direction, and that progress has been made. And we know that the department is taking our feedback seriously, and working with us to implement it. And--and we also really see that if, or we really believe that if they do take this feedback seriously and we are able to move, we will see even greater progress at the next City Council hearing. You know, I--I heard Mr. Treyger, Councilman Treyger speak a little while ago about people scrambling and--with--with some complaints, that they have issues, and that's exactly what I'm getting at when I talk about some of the things that could be moved off the plate. And really a laser focus on instruction and accountability from--from the--the--the spirit of what the CEP looks like. The, um, you know, I--I heard Carmen say she works cooperatively with both the unions, and she certainly does, and we certainly

1 appreciate that, and that's certainly refreshing
2 after the last several years. She also spoke about a
3 common sense approach, and sometimes we just need to
4 step back and--and take a look and--and sort of look
5 from the balcony and see--see what's happening down
6 below. So once again, I really thank you for your
7 time. I appreciate your time, and we look forward to
8 even greater results for our children.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much
11 and thanks for coming in. It certainly is refreshing
12 to hear all of the work that's being done to turn
13 around our struggling schools, and that is in
14 opposition to what we saw in the past where our
15 struggling schools were torn down, and pulled apart.
16 And teachers were blamed and administrators were
17 blamed for the faults of the system for which
18 basically many of them had nothing to do with. And
19 then to hear some of these--these I guess political
20 organizations basically like Students First and
21 Families for Excellent Schools put out million dollar
22 ads on television, and attack our teachers who really
23 have no solutions as to what should be done basically
24 because they have very few on-the-ground people in
25 our schools is really kind of distressing for me to

hear. But we'll leave the negative alone right now, and really focus on the positive, and just in terms of what you had said, Mark, about the quality review. You know having been a teacher for 25 years, although a teacher here today has me beat by one year with 26 years, you know, it seemed to me there was a lot of scrambling to get things done before that quality review. So you're finding State Oversight, the CEP plan and the quality review is overly burdensome?

MARK CANNIZZARO: Yeah. Well, look the--the State--the State Review Plan is--is a necessary evil. We don't have much--we don't have much to say about that, but the Quality Review--the CEP is actually what--I wouldn't say that's overly burdensome because that's the plan that the school created with their leadership team. Those are the goals we created. They were accepted at the district and city level, for any--any type of real progress to happen, we need to focus on those small sets of ambitious, but real--realistic goals, and--and watch the progress there. By adding the Quality Review to the mix, which is--which is at the discretion of the Department of Education, it--it does--it creates that feeling of a little bit of scrambling, and again

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2 brings in accountability measures that are outside of
3 the plan. When you have a school that is struggling
4 a little bit, and--and needs some direction, you need
5 to have a finite set of goals, and really be laser
6 focused so that you can accomplish those goals rather
7 than try a large set of goals and accomplish few if
8 any.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is--is the threat of
10 receivership the answer?

11 MARK CANNIZZARO: You're asking me?

12 [laughs]

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I am.

14 MARK CANNIZZARO: Actually, no threats
15 are ever the answer. That's first. I heard you
16 mention earlier that that some other places
17 receivership--receivership has been tried. One was
18 not very successful, but listen, you know, one of the
19 things that--that Carmen says a lot is the answer are
20 in the room, and that's the truth. Um, as long as--
21 as long as we can get out of each other's way, and
22 make sure that we stay focused on what we need to
23 stay focused on, we have tremendously talented
24 teachers, administrators and leaders in this system,
25 and the answers are in the room. Someone coming in

from the outside I think the learning curve would be too big and actually set the bar backwards.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: During the Bloomberg Administration it seemed that for 12 years they were tearing down the schools. They were-- You know, I'll give you the example of Newtown High School for example. One time it was a turnaround school. Then it became a closure. Then there was a lawsuit. Then they had to put the principal back into the school. Then they replaced the staff. Now, it's a school that I think is a B or maybe even better at this point. Despite all of what went on to shut that school down and really the only people--not the only people, but the people who suffered the most were the students in that school because they never knew whether they were coming or going or whether the school was going to be there or not. And I think that type of uncertainty is really troubling to the schools. So for our teachers and our teacher friends who are here as well, are you feeling support that you didn't get in the past? Are things different?

JOE MANTELL: Absolutely. Completely different. These schools would have been closed under the previous administration. There's no doubt

about it. Kids would have been shuffled. Communities would have been disrupted. I mean it would have had such a devastating effect, and now we finally have, you know, an administration that is support the community school. Putting the resources, the proper resources to those schools, and really each school is more about the CEP. There's a Renewal Schools CEP for each of these schools tailored exactly for what that school needs whether it's the CBO, how the ELT time is being implemented, whatever other services they need. So this is a tremendous difference and it's really beyond refreshing to say the least.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So to give another example of something that I saw when I went to visit Jamaica High School, and that school was just starved for resources, and I think that went on for about four years, if I'm not mistaken until they finally closed it down. So that effectively meant that every kid who was in that school from freshman year through senior year was starved for resources that they otherwise deserved and needed in order to have an adequate education. That's changed?

JOE MANTELL: It has. I mean--I mane in the 94 schools and I can speak specifically about

these, and actually overall it's changed. Councilman Reynoso earlier on M.S. 50 in his district. Right now there's great programs in that school. It's a Renewal Schools. There's a STEM program. I believe there's a hydroponics planting. There's some great things going on there that were never offered before. There's more art programs in these schools. There's outlets for the kids to have whether it's music, drawing, dance, whatever it may be and it's--it's so different than it was just a few short years ago.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And I'll ask the two teachers, too. I'm sorry, Mark, go ahead.

MARK CANNIZZARO: I--I was just going to say I agree 100%. That has definitely changed for the better. Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So for the two teachers, one of the issues that I saw when I left the system in 2009 was teacher morale had decreased to a levels that I had never seen before. It was difficult to come into work on a daily basis not because of the task before me, but because I just felt that the administration, the central Department of Education did not get what was really going on in the classrooms. Do you feel differently now? Did

you feel the way that I felt, and do--or do you feel differently?

MICHELLE BARROW: So I know and I understand exactly where you're coming from. It had to do with the Administration and not being transparent. Tell us exactly what's going on. Have those fruitful, truthful conversations so we can get past the politic part, and get our students where we need to get them. And when administration was not truthful with us or hid behind their doors, again then you will not see progress. But the minute we had these conversations about where we need our students to be, what needs to be done, and how can we get it, and was actually listening, the listening with the conversation, and moving forward steps and strategies not just by the administration, but by the staff brings together a whole different type of school than when the school administration says you need to do X, Y and Z. Remember, I'm 26 years in. I've had 15 different principals in my school, and each had their own curriculum and their own goals. So with this new principal that we do have because he's only 2-1/2 to 3 years in, and being a Renewal Schools and having those types of conversations-- I

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2 mean some of the conversations are very hard, but if
3 you don't have those hard conversations, you're not
4 going to have progress, and right now we have
5 progress.
6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's interesting
7 your remark about--did you say 15 principals?
8 MICHELLE BARROW: Yeah.
9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, I had--in my
10 tenure I had 12 chancellors--
11 MICHELLE BARROW: [interposing] Okay.
12 [laughter]
13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --and you were
14 probably there for most of them as well--
15 MICHELLE BARROW: [interposing] I was
16 there for most of them.
17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --and every
18 chancellor that came in had a different solution, and
19 sometimes they would take out what worked to only put
20 in what--
21 MICHELLE BARROW: [interposing] Didn't.
22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Exactly. It was a
23 disaster, and that was probably really true over the
24 last 12 years--
25 MICHELLE BARROW: [interposing] Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --as well. So I'm--
I'm glad to hear that it--it's turning around. Mr.
Cusack, did you want to say something?

JOE CUSACK: I would just like to add
that the first three years that I was a school
teacher starting 2006, I had a great deal of support.
We have three coaches that would come in and work
with all of the new teachers to help perfect their
craft. After those three years were up we started
facing serious budget cuts throughout--from Mr.
Bloomberg, and we didn't feel supported, and the
teachers weren't getting the support they need. And
now fast forwarding to my tenth year, we're looking
at the addition of a master teacher, additional
administrative support, model teachers in the
classrooms. And like I had mentioned before, the
additional support of the social workers from the
community-based organization. So, the feeling in the
building is that we are getting that support that we
were once used to when our school was one of the top
schools in the district.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So before I just turn
it over because I know Council Member Barron has a
question as well. One thing that always was

frustrating to me was class size I could get the kids and an individualize my instruction better. Even when they pushed other teachers into the classroom to make up for the lack of space in buildings, it's still not the same as having to reduce class size. Are the buildings that you are in overcrowded and how are your schools dealing with their class size?

JOE CUSACK: My building we actually have the privilege of having smaller classes. The school-

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] And what size is that?

JOE CUSACK: We have roughly 20 students in a class. The school has always had a low number of students in each class from it's, you know, beginnings about 15 years ago. And I think that that's--you know, it--it worked ten years ago when the school was where it was, and now with the additional support I think that, you know, we'll continue on the path to success.

MICHELLE BARROW: So we still have 30 in a classroom, and we do get additional support, but we have three schools in our building because Charter

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2 has one particular area--we have a charter school in
3 our building.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: A charter school in
5 your building?

6 MICHELLE BARROW: Yeah.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Because you--because
8 you had so much space to give them.

9 MICHELLE BARROW: So much space.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh.

11 MICHELLE BARROW: Okay, so there is--
12 [coughing] there is overcrowding because we also have
13 to accept every child that are coming in from the
14 shelters, and we have a high population of shelter
15 children.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: You mean you don't
17 have that to go with?

18 MICHELLE BARROW: No, I don't have that.
19 [laughs] But, we do have counselors and guidance
20 counselors that are working with them socially and
21 emotionally. I mean not just with those--that core
22 group with--with other students that do live in that
23 neighborhood because our neighborhood is one of the
24 very poor areas. In District 9 South Bronx everyone
25 knows it is what it is, but the children and the

parents make it there every single day. Okay, so yeah, we have a lot of problems that are outside, but once they're inside, we make it. We make it. We have to make it, and the kids know they have to make it because they don't want to be stuck in that neighborhood for the rest of their lives.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: It's--it's--it should be noted also that there were many times when I was at UFT delegate assemblies where pay was--of course, was important to teachers, but the number two issue almost right up there with pay was the fact that teachers wanted a lower class size.

MICHELLE BARROW: And we do.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah.

MICHELLE BARROW: It's jus that it's not possible because we have to accept everyone. Public school is for everybody. It's not for the few pick and choose and refuse. We can't refuse you, but we can deal with you. We can learn what your problems are, and then move forward with strategies that would hope--hopefully make you feel that this is a safe haven for you, and then you can--learning can go on. That's the only way to do it.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Council Member Barron.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Mr. Chair and I want to thank the panel, and in terms of the Essence School 311, I've always been very concerned that the schools that are targeted through this-- through the state that they know what their benchmarks are. So my question to you is do you think that all of the staff in the building are familiar with the benchmarks that they have to reach so that they will be meeting the State's requirements in terms of attendance, ELA, math, family engagement, reduction of incidents. Does anybody know, and specifically do they know the ELA and math targets?

JOE CUSACK: I would say that most of our teachers are familiar with their benchmarks and targets. I would say that we could always use additional professional development to support that work. I--I think that it's always important to rehash and--and figure out where we are and where we need to go.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Do you think that you're on track now so that whatever that target is

for the end of the school year, you will meet that target?

JOE CUSACK: I do believe that we are on target, yes, that we are heading towards that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, and in terms of Mr. Cannizaro, Cannizzaro.

MARK CANNIZZARO: Yes, Cannizzaro.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Is that right?

MARK CANNIZZARO: Cannizzaro.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Cannizzaro. You-- you talked about the ambassador, assistant principal program and the leadership coach. What's the difference between the two positions, and does any of your schools get one or both or do they get to pick and choose? What has the DOE said has been the problem in getting it accomplished, and what timeline have they given you to expect to have them in place?

MARK CANNIZZARO: So--so the difference is that the leaderships coaches are generally retired experienced principals and/or superintendents who are coming in up to three days a week--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Okay.

MARK CANNIZZARO: --as thought partners and critical friends with the principal to take a

look at what is happening and what the goals are.
How they're--where they're headed and to again sort
of be that--that critical friend that steps back, and
say okay while you're in the mix everyday, I can look
from above and--and try to help you out with your
thinking.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-huh.

MARK CANNIZZARO: The Ambassador
Assistant Principals are experienced working
assistant principals who volunteer to leave their
schools where they have some successful programs
going on to spend one year in the Renewal Schools to
try to help out with some programs and-and implement
some of the things that have been successful in--in
the previous school. And to give the principal and
the other assistant principals in the building some--
some time to be able to tend to the instructional
tasks that they need to tend to. The--the hold-up
in--in--is different in both cases. The hold-up with
the leadership coaches in some cases are conflict of
interest waivers that they need to get after they've-
-or if they haven't been out of the system for more
than a year and a day. We tried to get the most
recent successful people we could because they're the

people that are familiar with the system, but they require a conflict of interest waiver. There's been some issues on--with that, and then there's been some time where the--once they have been targeted, they are to meet with the superintendent to sort of get the lay of the land and what's needed and that's-- there's been some hold-ups doing that also. I believe that every school, every Renewal Schools that has requested one is supposed to get one. It's not quite there yet, and with the Ambassador Assistant Principals there's a screening and vetting process where they had to apply for the program. They had to be accepted by the Department of Education, and then once they were accepted, their names had to go to principals for them to interview and hire. It's my understanding that they have screened several of them. They have accepted some of them, but the names have not yet gotten to the principals for the interviews and hiring, which we're hoping will happen soon. We've also asked the department to open up that screening process again so more people could apply.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So these are presently assistant principals in they're home based

school, and they're willing and going to commit one year in a renewal school. So if they haven't yet started is that one year--how does that one year work out?

MARK CANNIZZARO: We--we haven't really discussed that yet. We--we hope it's more than six months.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Thank you very much.

MARK CANNIZZARO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you all for coming in, and thank you for having the courage to face their questions, and let us know what the real life is like in our public school system. Thank you very, very much.

MARK CANNIZZARO: Thank you for your time.

MICHELLE BARROW: Thank you.

JOE CUSACK: Thank you.

RICH MANTELL: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, our next panel Alexis Henry from the Citizens Committee for

Children; Diane McNeil, Alliance for Quality

Education; Felicia Alexander, CEJ; and Natasha

Capers, CEJ. [background noise, pause] Okay, we're--

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2 [pause] Alexis. [pause] All right. Yeah, okay.

3 So then, let me ask Lani Haines(sic) to also join

4 this panel. [pause] Okay, if you could all just

5 raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the

6 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth and

7 to answer Council Member questions honestly?

8 PANEL MEMBER: I do.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Very good. Who would

10 like to start? [pause]

11 NATASHA CAPERS: So good afternoon and

12 thank you the Education Committee for allowing me to

13 give testimony today. My name is Natasha Cappers.

14 I'm the Coordinator for the Coalition for Education

15 and Justice, the largest parent-led organizing

16 advocacy group in New York City. For nearly a decade

17 the parents of CEJ have worked tire--tirelessly to

18 receive the resources and the supports that their

19 children deserve, that their schools deserve, and

20 that that communities deserve. They wanted to see

21 wraparound services for students and family. They

22 wanted to see academic support such as extended

23 learning time. They wanted to see teachers receive

24 more professional development and classroom supports.

25 They wanted to see the parent and community

engagement become a cornerstone in their schools. In short, parents want the community schools. I don't know this because I work for the Coalition for Educational Justice. I know this because I'm a parent from District 23 and Brownsville, Brooklyn. I attended P.S. 298, a Renew School, as a child, and my children have attended P.S. 298 as well. So, yes, I witnessed 298 be starved for resources and four--and four years ago the school was on the closure list. It could have been another casualty of the Bloomberg Administration's campaign for closed schools and turned them into charter. The parents of Brownsville including myself spent years advocating and fighting for 298 and schools throughout District 23 to get the support resources that we knew were needed to turn community schools and our children around for success. Because of the Renewal School Program under Mayor de Blasio, 298 is finally getting those support, and has begun to turn around. Parents throughout New York City are experiencing the same feeling. However, we know that it's not going to be an easy road. School improvement is the hardest thing that a school district does, and a school improvement project of nearly 100 struggling schools

all at the same time is even harder. In order for an initiative this big to work, there must be strong and efficient infrastructure to support schools. A comprehensive instructional strategy that affects teaching and learning in every classroom, and a unified parent constituency that applies to their schools the same way, I fought for 298 for many years. We heard a lot about writing programs, but we also know that that writing program is on the line with the Common Core. That does not help students. Beautifully painted schools are great and appreciated, but students want to see--students and parents need to see strong instructional strategies in the classroom not just at ELT. Modeling how to have dinnertime conversation is great only if it's modeled in a language in which you speak. So to have things modeled for parents in languages other than their native languages does not help anyone. We know that there are core things that have to be shifted to turn schools around, not just for three years, but for a lifetime. One of those things are those core instructional strategies. Another is making sure that parents are full partners, and making sure that

parents have full opportunity to participate in the language in which they speak. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next, please.

ALEXIS HENRY: Good afternoon. My name is Alexis Henry, and I'm the Policy Associate for Early Education and Education at Citizens Committee for children. CCC is a 72-year-old independent child advocacy organization. I'd like to thank Chair Dromm as well as the members of the Education Committee for holding today's oversight hearing. Community schools help to engage parents, students and their communities--in their community, and to address the non-academic needs of children that ultimately help them to succeed in school. DOE and the CBOs are clearly working hard to make these Renewal Schools and the community school initiative succeed. It is important to note that while numerous benefits of community schools have been documented, they have not actually been tested as means to turn around children's schools. While we believe that the Renewal School model and community schools in general are important tools to helping children succeed in school and beyond, we do have a number or

recommendations to strengthen the initiative. Clear benchmarks of progress are needed. While individual schools and CBOs have created their own comprehensive implementation plans, DOE has not yet articulated the systemic benchmarks of success for the initiative. Specifically given that each school is at a different starting point, it would be helpful for each school to know what academic improvement will be needed to avert bad consequences such as receivership, closure, et cetera. In short, community school funding is sufficient and sustainable. While Renewal Schools have received additional funding, it is unclear whether the funding is sufficient to meet each school's needs, or how long the funding will last. CCC is particularly concerned about the funding for mental health services at the Renewal Schools. While the Renewal School model embraces the need to embed mental health services in schools, it provides the funding for a mental health staff person and not a clinic. It is, therefore, unclear whether the funding is sufficient in the short term nor whether this funding will remain earmarked and available for mental health services in the longer term. In addition, it's critical that the administration

allocates funds for community schools that this funding be new funding and not be the dollars currently used for another child-serving service, as almost occurred last year with some account funding. It is important to note that there are schools struggling beyond the 94 Renewal Schools including an additional 12 under State receivership that--and that even the Renewal Schools need additional academic supports to achieve its goals. The Mayor's Equity and Excellence Agenda addresses key areas for children's learning, literacy by second grade; Algebra by ninth grade; computer science and history (sic) classes for all, and a program aimed at helping students apply to college. While this all sounds good, it will be fully--it will not be fully implemented until 2026. We urge the Administration to ensure that the schools where students are struggling including the Renewal Schools get the benefits of this initiative first. In addition, we urge DOE to take these steps to help students, hire additional guidance counselors and make lunch free for all public school students; expand after school programs for elementary and high school students; hire more physical education teachers; and work to

bring stability to existing school-based mental health clinics; and expand the number of schools that benefit from these services. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. [pause]

FELICIA ALEXANDER: Good afternoon. My name is Felicia Alexander. Thank you for allowing me to testify before you. I am first and foremost a mother of four, and I am a parent leader with the Coalition for Educational Justice. We heard talk earlier from the DOE about a few parent engagement models that are aligned with academic success, and I would like to explain a few of them and why we need funding for these. Parent-teacher home visit model is being done in five throughout underneath the MSQI, the Middle School Quality Initiative. Its target is incoming sixth graders where teacher teams of two go out to do their home visits at their homes, to get to know their families and build a bond. They do these two visits one in the fall and one in the spring. We have the APTT, the Academic Parent-Teacher Team that's being done in ten schools, five through community schools, five through the MSQI, and this is a transformative way of doing parent-teacher

conferences with the full class. It meets three times a year together. They evaluate students data on a baseline scale like reading comprehension, and set goals and learn techniques to support the students at home to meet these goals. The we have PEEPS, are modeled no the successful parent mentor program based in Chicago, and PEEP stands for Parent Engagement and Empowerment Partners. It is designed strategically to build relationships between educators and community members, strengthening the trust that is essential to making schools successful. Parents receive in-depth training on instructional strategies so they can serve as assistant teaches in classrooms. This program is being piloted by the New Settlement Parent Action Committee at the P.S. 64 Campus. We also heard about the Care and Map (sic) model that they talking on parent engagement, and they talk a lot about parent engagement and building parent leaders, but they didn't talk about the model in full because it is a dual capacity framework. So where you are building up parent leaders, and building parent engagement, you're also building up teachers and staff to deal with parents, too. So you're building strong parents, and you're building

the teachers to engage with the strong parent so that you can move together collectively. What they discussed earlier is they're giving parents workshops and giving parents training, but they're not giving the teachers the same training and workshops. So when you build up parent leaders and don't build up the staff to interact with them, then there becomes a battle of wills. So these are the models that we would like to see funded [bell] through DOE and more attention--paid attention to.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Ms. Haines?
(sic) [pause]

LANI HAINES: Thank you for holding these hearings and thank you for your persistent questions about the class size. They were very appreciated. We have noted that in three times since last December this spring and the fall, the DOE has claimed on its website and in presentations that it is focusing its efforts through the Contracts for Excellences Program on reducing class size in Renewal Schools. And we have persistently and other parents have persistently asked the DOE questions about what funding was used--being used, what oversight was being employed, and what strategies were being used to make sure that

these schools actually reduce class sizes. And we have never gotten sufficient or an adequate response from any of the officials that we have asked. When class size data came out last week, we quickly tried to analyze what has happened in the 94 Renewal Schools, and we found that about 38% did not reduce class sizes at all. We found that the highest rate of non-compliance was Queens where 50% of the Renewal Schools have not reduced class size, and in the Bronx where 40% have not reduced class sizes. 35% of elementary schools did not; 37% of middle schools and 42% of high schools. We found also that the majority of the schools that is about 60% still have classes at 30 or more, and only 7% capped class sizes at the Contract for Excellence goals that we think are appropriate and which the City claimed to achieve citywide on average years ago or 20 students per class in K through 3; 23 per class in 4 through 8 and 25--25 in core high school classes. And when you question the teachers including the teacher from the Bronx they said they still have classes of 30 in her school even though they also have a very high number of kids from shelters. I think you can tell that no matter how many counselors they have, there's no way

that teachers are going to be able to give those kids what they really need in classes that large. And it also is very difficult to call parents and tell them how their kids are doing, and tell them when their kids are doing well, and just badly or visit the homes when you have a student load of 150 or more, which many teachers still do in New York City. Now, in the State's highest court found in 2003 that tens of thousands of students are placed in overcrowded classrooms, and the number of children in these straits is large enough to represent a systemic failure. And they said that kids in New York City were actually deprived of the constitutional right to a sound basic education because class sizes were so large. Yet, thousands of kids and really more than one-third of all kids in New York City schools are still in classes of 30 or more. We believe that all New York City kids deserve and need smaller classes but especially kids in the struggling schools, which have so many challenges in front of them because there's no other--other education reform, and none that is currently mentioned in the City's agenda and plans that has a strong and evidence behind it as class size reduction. So we really hope that you

keep on pressing the Administration on this issue. I wasn't particularly heartened by their responses, and I don't think that they have paid attention to this issue in the way they really need to make sure that these kids get the education they deserve, and that these schools make the progress that they deserve. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much, Lani, and thank you for nice words about me questioning them on class size. But, you know, I worked in an--in an extremely overcrowded school for all 25 years of my career. Almost every single year I had 34 kids in my class, and some years I have 38 kids in the class. And I jokingly said one day when they came in and they were cleaning out the maintenance closet taking out the pitchfork and the broom and the bags of said, that they were going to turn that into a classroom. And sure enough, they threw up a coat of paint and turned it into a speech classroom, you know. So it's not a joke, though. And I was surprised to hear, which is why I asked, one teacher said they had 20, which is kind of like close to ideal, and another one said that they had 30. But the--the thought that came to my mind was if

you take, you know, these high performing, high income districts, okay, generally, you're going to find out that many of them especially in the island and the suburbs surround New York City have lower class size. You know, you're talking 20 kids in a class where you can really begin to individualize instruction and it's just not like that's being spoke about. So that brings me to the--the, um, benchmarks as well that Ms. Capers and Ms. Henry spoke about. One of the things that I've been thinking about as the Chair of the Education Committee is how do we ensure rigorous instruction without getting to the point where we have letter grades, et cetera and so forth and so on in the past? I'm wondering if you have any thoughts or ideas on that. [pause]

NATASHA CAPERS: I mean not being a teacher, you know, I think that really what families want to see is that that there's a real shift in-- So there was conversation about oh, you won't hear that--that question about when was the year of 1812 or whatever year it was, right? And that's a great step, but families really need to be really brought into the process of understanding what is happening

1 instructionally, and that helps to reinforce it at
2 home. But it also--there also have to be real
3 conversations about how we message that. So if we
4 don't want to be messaging to a parent means that we
5 have to bring you into schools and now teach you how
6 to teach your kids, right. Because even me saying it
7 sounds insulting. We don't want to be saying like we
8 want to impart new skills into our--on families and
9 we want to do that in a way that is unintimidating
10 and in a way that really brings it in. Another thing
11 is that we really have to start looking at closely
12 relevant curriculums in New York City and really
13 trying to figure out--our children, our students
14 seeing themselves throughout the school day, right.
15 So if you have African-American students, do they
16 only see themselves when they--when they come to the
17 shores of South Carolina in shackles? Is that where
18 we start to talk about the Black experience? Our
19 families from--do we only talk about Mexico when we
20 talk about the America-Mexico War? Do we only talk
21 about them when we talk about immigration? Right, so
22 how will we messenger who our students are in a way
23 that's really holistic and healing versus how we do
24 it sometimes now?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So you're hitting on a really good point, which is that I think sometimes where I do find the teachers need assistance is with cultural understanding, and it's--it's--I saw it even in the immigrant communities that I taught where teachers were not equipped to know where certain holidays were like eat or, you know, the new Muslim communities coming in or Diwali or something like that, but I think that's an important part of understanding communities to get to the hear of what the communities want in terms of education for their children. That's kind of left out at the college level if it--it even goes beyond education. It's--it's--it's an empathy for and a support of communities as they exist, as they are without having an attitude of superiority, you know. And I think that you're right when you talk about that. So thank you. I know Council Member Barron has some questions, too.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to all of you for coming. You're always stalwart talking about the reality of what's going on in the schools and in the classrooms. I appreciate that. I think the points that you raise

about having a curriculum that's culturally reflective of the diversity of the people who live especially here in New York City is so important. And it addresses a question that my colleagues had raised earlier about the Common Core, and along with other critique about the Common Core is that very issue that it lacks the cultural sensitivity and expressions in the curriculum where children in New York City can see themselves in reflected in an accurate historical, positive way. And I do have a question about the--about class size. In your testimony on page 3 at the top it says, "We further found that 56 schools, about 60% had at least some classes of 30 or more and only seven schools, about 7%, capped class sizes at the C4E (sic) goals. Are you talking specifically about the Renewal Schools? Okay, and did you find that the--the higher the--the overcrowded classrooms were at a particular grade level? Were they more concentrated in the elementary or middle or high school? Did you--were you able to see a trend there?

LANI HAINES. The least compliant with the Contracts for Excellence bills are high schools, middle schools and elementary schools.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: High school, middle and elementary.

LANI HAINES: We also looked at which schools are overcrowded, and there were very few. There are a couple of Queens High Schools that are overcrowded. The other theoretically anyway have the room to reduce class sizes in the school. Though I did note that the one teacher said she's co-located with the charter school, which is a real burden because you can't really consolidate those schools. As the Chancellor said, she's trying to do, which I think is a good goal for a very small school when you have a charter school in a building. And one of the things that we had urged and pressed for with other-- lots of other advocacy groups and attorneys is that they not do any co-locations that would preclude them from reducing class sizes for the Contract for Excellence goals, and that was a letter that was signed by Michael Wrobel, who is the chief attorney in the chief attorney--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Yes.

LANI HAINES: --in a CFE case as well, and they completely ignored that letter. And they are still continuing to this day to co-locate charter

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2 schools in underutilized buildings. And so I find
3 that very, very troubling because it is going to be
4 make even more difficult the future goal of reducing
5 class sizes.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Mr.
7 Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you and I think
9 it was you who said that teachers have 150 students
10 they teach every week.

11 LANI HAINES: Uh-huh.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I had 450 because I
13 was--because I was--and that's not--a little thing
14 is, you know, a cluster teacher in an elementary
15 school, a cluster teacher moves around to a different
16 class every period and goes in and teaches a lesson.
17 I was a social studies teacher near the end of my
18 career, and I had--I saw 450 kids a week. So talk
19 about trying to individualize or instruction. It's
20 very difficult. Anyway, thank you all for coming in
21 and--

22 LANI HAINES: [interposing] Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --thank you all for
24 fighting. Okay, our next panel is Grace Bonilla
25 Committee of Hispanic Children and Families; Joseph

La Gavin (sp?), Environmental Concerns as a Teacher and Advocate; Rubin Trait, NYCEC; Sua Kwok (sp?), New York Immigration Coalition. Are they all here? [background comments, pause] Okay, I'm going to call Susan Crawford from the Right to Read Project. Is she here? Okay. [pause] Okay, I'm going to ask you all to raise your right hand please so I can swear you in. 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? Thank you. You can start.

GRACE BONILLA: Good afternoon. My name is Grace Bonilla. I am the President for the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, and I would like to take--thank the Education Committee for this hearing. I would like to take my time to--you have my testimony, but I'd like to take my time to take you on a journey of a Renewal School. We have been in the space of school partnerships since 1990. We know what works in a school. Our pride and joy is that we do it from a culturally competent perspective, but in this particular year we started a partnership with a school in the Bronx, and it's very simple. It's a school that is obviously struggling.

It's a Renewal Schools. It's 30% English Language Learners; 64% Hispanic; 100% free lunch; 25% special needs, but we also know that there's 75% daily attendance; only 45% of the students graduate in four years, and despite being a school with a high ELL number we have only the principal and parent coordinator who speaks Spanish. Add to that a school that has been deemed a Renewal School. They didn't choose to be in that category, and also struggling with a high percentage of overage and under credited youth who--which--who's staggering represents a huge hurdle for a CBO coming in. We also have to work with mediating high levels of violence in the school, and deal with an administration that hasn't completely bought into what we are there to do for the school. And to add insult to injury, we are on our third principal in three months. So what that means is that that wonderful plan that we had for that particular school hasn't been led by the last two principals. While we really commend the fact that at the highest level of the DOE, there's a recognition that schools are struggling, that partnerships of community groups like ours that are linguistically and culturally competent are necessary

that we have the tools to bring in additional resources to a school that is struggling has been recognized, and the level of transparency is truly admirable. The reality on the ground is very different. It is very difficult to walk into a school when you have plans for that school, and the first thing that hits you is we need you to translate for these parents because we don't have anyone who speaks Spanish in New York City. We need you to make sure that these over-aged and under-credited students are transferred out because they're holding the school back without a real plan for the students to be successful. Those were the first two months of our time in our Renewal Schools, and then our principal left. So now we're starting over with a new principal. We have the best of intentions to make this work for these students and these parents, but these hearings are necessary. [bell] So that our reality is recognized by the City Council and the DOE. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think Grace, I don't usually--I usually do the whole panel, but your story is pretty incredible. So is this the school

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2 that you mentioned in your--in your written
3 testimony?
4 GRACE BONILLA: Yes, that is the school.
5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is that a large
6 school, a large high school?
7 GRACE BONILLA: We are co-located on TAP
8 Campus. Our school is 375 students about.
9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How many teachers are
10 on that staff?
11 GRACE BONILLA: That's a good question.
12 I will have to get back to you.
13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So two out of how
14 many do you estimate are Spanish speaking?
15 GRACE BONILLA: 64% of those students are
16 Hispanic?
17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] No, the
18 teachers, not the students.
19 GRACE BONILLA: Oh, so no at the teacher
20 level--
21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] You
22 said only two Spanish speaking--
23 GRACE BONILLA: At the teacher level we
24 don't have a clear number of how many actually speak
25 Spanish. We're still trying to assess that. We know

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2 that at the administrative level the principal and
3 the parent coordinator speak Spanish.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is there an assistant
5 principal in that school?

6 GRACE BONILLA: There--there--I think
7 there are a number of assistant principals none of
8 which speak Spanish.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: A number of assistant
10 principals?

11 GRACE BONILLA: Uh-huh.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: For 392 kids?

13 GRACE BONILLA: That's correct.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Um, 'cause that's
15 also approximately--

16 GRACE BONILLA: [interposing] I think
17 there's two or three yep.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Because I thought
19 there was a requirement that there was one assistant
20 principal for about every--well, maybe high school
21 might be different. I'm not exactly sure.

22 GRACE BONILLA: We will absolutely get
23 you that information, Chairman. We know that we have
24 at least two or three principals--assistant
25 principals that we work with.

2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, and, um, can
3 you just--can you tell me any more about why there's
4 been three principals in three months?

5 GRACE BONILLA: A number of reasons.
6 We're not sure why the first one left. The second
7 one left for family related reasons. He wasn't from
8 the area, and the third one started about a month
9 ago. So we're hoping that she'll stick around and
10 stay, but it's a lot to catch up with before we can
11 really get the work of what a Renewal Schools should
12 look like.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's a really sad
14 situation. Fortunately, you're there, which is one
15 good piece of hope for that school, but let's talk a
16 little bit later about that, too--

17 GRACE BONILLA: [interposing] Absolutely

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --because that is a
19 really--really difficult situation.

20 GRACE BONILLA: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you.

22 SUA KWOK: Good afternoon. Thank you to
23 the members of the Council for convening this hearing
24 and to Chairman Dromm for his continued leadership
25 for immigrant communities. My name is Sua Kwok (sp?)

and I'm an Education Advocacy fellow at the New York Immigration Coalition. We an umbrella policy and advocacy organization with nearly 200 members from New York State. As part of this work we convene and education collaborative of grassroots immigrant organizations, policy and legal organizations and practitioners. Together, we fight to increase English Language Learners and immigrant students' access to quality education, and to expand opportunity for their parents to be engaged. Thank you for this opportunity to share our perspective on Renewal Schools. We applaud Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Farina for devoting resources to the city's most vulnerable schools. We stand her today as a member of the Coalition for Community School Excellence, and strongly support the recommendations of our partners. As Council knows, graduation rates and proficiency levels ELLs lag far behind their English speaking peers with only one in three ELLs graduating on times. English Language Learners face huge--face huge obstacles to academic success. About two-thirds of children who have not yet learned English are living in poverty compared with only one-third of English proficient children. Their parents

are also more likely to have limited schooling.

These students face the daunting challenge of learning English and adjusting to a new country all

while catching up to meet academic requirements in

science, math and other subjects. The DOE has been

taking important steps to improve outcomes from ELLs

such as addressing barriers immigrant parents face

accessing language services in NYC schools and

expanding dual language programs. But as Grace and

others have mentioned, there is still a long way to

go with that. [laughs] However, I'm here today

because more needs to be done for ELLs especially in

schools that are already struggling with achievement

and graduation rates. NYC is particularly invested

in the success for Renewal Schools as they have an

oversized share of English Language Learners. 20% of

students in Renewal Schools are ELLs compared with

14% in other DOE schools. If ELL educational

outcomes can be improved in Renewal Schools, there's

a great chance that Renewal Schools will see a boost

in achievement, the critical measure that will

determine whether these schools will fall into

receivership by the State. NYIC provides the

following solutions: Reverse the immigrant and ELL

dropout crisis by fostering school, family and community partnerships. The DOE must eliminate the language barriers that prevent family engagement in schools by ensure the full implementation of Chancellor's Regulation A-663. Moreover, Renewal Schools staff should have specialized trainings on how to improve language access services in their schools and meaningfully engage immigrant families. We urge the DOE to build up a partnership between schools and families that recognizes and fosters communities' histories, languages, cultural backgrounds and heritage. An influx of new teachers and administrators placed Renewal Schools need adequate supports and training to ensure they're qualified to work with ELLs and diverse communities. Moreover, ongoing training should monitor and evaluate whether schools are able to assess families' needs and provide culturally competent services. We also urge the DOE to foster meaningful school community partnerships. While the current structure does allow for some collaboration, the DOE should also identify a wider range of community-based [bell] organizations that are familiar with the challenges of immigrant parents and all students and know best

how to serve them. Small community organizations that work with immigrant families are often the first and most trusted resource for immigrant families and should be given a voice in the Renewal School structure. This is a critical time to ensure that Renewal Schools and its students have the tools they need to succeed with many schools having just one year left to turn around. Stakeholders have put everything on the line to strengthen these schools and the DOE needs to ensure that schools are getting the supports they need, and are doing their part to provide quality services to parents, community groups and all students including ours. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next, please.

[pause]

SUSAN CRAWFORD: Susan Crawford from the Right to Read Project, and last time I testified before you I noted that the DOE for the first time in all the years I've been testifying before these committees have used the word 'dyslexia' and unfortunately I didn't hear that word again today, and I also heard very little about what to do about the students who were just removed from her school. The over-aged, under-credited students, and they get

shifted to a transfer school, and then what happens?

And I'm sure many of the Renewal Schools, the students struggling who are not ELLs are probably students who cannot read. So this testimony accompanies the email I sent to the committee last week, which I hope everyone has all read. If not, I hope they will, those two articles. I'm attaching an additional one today, a piece of one that highlights what I believe to be the principal reason for the achievement gap between poor and wealthier schools and districts. Access to the appropriate help for struggling readers. While the current Department of Ed is instituting a program to helping readers at the K to 2 grade levels, no comprehensive plan appears to being put into place to help the hundreds of thousands of struggling readers in grades 3 to 12. The Renewal Schools Program is implementing an array of supports to help guide students through to graduation, but what exactly is being done to ensure that each student in those schools is reading and comprehending on grade level? Two persistent assumptions seem to inform the constant rotation of literacy programs that have cycled in and out of our schools over the past several decades. One is that

if students are not reading by end of third grade it is unlikely they ever will. The other assumption in stark contrast to the first is that if they have not learned to read from whatever program is being offered, they will pick it up along the way anyway. In either case, students who still struggle with reading are not being helped once they reach the upper grades. In today's testimony, I want to highlight one program that actually was successful with improving reading skills of struggling readers and struggling schools and Chancellor Farina actually mentioned it earlier. That was Chancellor's District implemented by Rudy Crew in the '90s. I'm attaching two pages of a report written for the AFT in 2002 about this district. It highlights the literacy and math programs that were put in place along with the smaller class sizes. I'm sorry Lani isn't here to hear that, and extensive focus that helped the program succeed. Oddly, Rudy Crew himself repudiated this program a year ago. Meanwhile, last Friday on *Inside City Hall*, Lani Weingarten extolled the program's effectiveness and said one of her biggest arguments with former Chancellor Klein was over his dismantling of the district. I urge the committee to

look long and hard at what is working, and what has worked in the past in reading instruction, [bell] and to make sure the taxpayer's dollars are focused on those programs. When appropriate reading instruction and interventions are focused on readers at all grade levels, and in whatever schools they are found in a sustained and committed fashion, we will finally see the achievement get close. As Regent Emeritus Adelaide Sanford has said, "We don't have an achievement gap. We have an access gap."

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next please.

Greetings, Council and Chairman Dromm. I'm please to be able to make this presentation after Susan's. There may be a connection. It is a pleasure to return to this committee after a long hiatus as an advocate for schooling and our air quality. One of the items mentioned for this hearing on struggling schools is the physical wellbeing of the students. Learning can be influenced by environmental factors affecting the health of the student particularly with damage to the nervous system by environmental toxins. The visual system is the most sensitive part of the human body controlled

by the nervous system, and such damage can affect the ability to read. Such visual convergence problems are rarely investigated or diagnosed, but these accommodated spasms lead to the labeling of Attention Deficit Disorder, and other reading difficulties. I have attached a copy of the conclusions and recommendations of the Western Report, which promoted the disengagement of the vapor extraction system at my former school P.S. 7, Elmhurst, Queens. This school was built on a severely contaminated site, and it became the victim of an out of sight, out of mind regulatory system. This may also apply to all schools that are within one block of a state certified spill site. Throughout the previous administration, numerous schools were built on such sites, and it is difficult to determine if there is any follow-up monitoring. One industrial hygienist with the New York Community of Occupational Safety and Health was stunned that there would be no future monitoring protocols at my school. In an attached email from the Claire Barnett of the Healthy Schools Network we learn of a Rube (sic) Goldberg's set of protocols to monitoring the engineering of a school with the obvious exclusion of actually monitoring the

air quality. In response to the work that I was doing as outlined in my attached letter published the later newspaper *The Chief* in the Labor Day Edition, in my termination as a teacher, former City Council Speaker Christine Quinn submitted my name under her recent Teacher Whistleblower Law. This investigation languished during the previous administration, but received new life from the current administration. After being unable to rebut any information from my 140-page report after a six-month investigation, the Department of Investigation would not investigate my claim under Speaker Quinn's law and indicated that it was untimely. This is the proverbial child seeking mercy as orphan after killing his parents. Recently, the Office of the New York State Controller submitted my whistleblower case to the City Controller's Office to Intergovernmental and Community Affairs Department in August where it is again languishing. If the committee is serious about soliciting testimony for some--at a great expense to protect our schools, my experience over the past ten years should not occur again. This may be the first and possibly the last teacher to appeal through your own legislation

designed to protect children and teachers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, thank you very much, and Susan, what's the differences between or what do you see as the difference between the Chancellor's district and the Renewal Programs.

SUSAN CRAWFORD: If you read the two pages, you know, later on it's very specific what they did, and they used a particular reading program called Success for All, which was designed by Robert Slavin (sp?) who then was on the Reading Panel that resulted in the report of the Reading Panel in the year 2000 on which all reading instruction should be based but still is not, and--

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] That's as opposed to balanced literacy?

SUSAN CRAWFORD: Yes, yes, absolutely. And, not that, you know, the children weren't also able to read books of their own choosing, but it's-- it's a very different approach to teaching reading so that phonemic awareness, phonics and all the, you know, pieces, the components of the coding--

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] But the Chancellor (sic) has that in her--even in her

2 testimony today if I'm not mistaken that she's
3 emphasizing phonetic awareness and stuff as well.

4 SUSAN CRAWFORD: She did. They are
5 implementing a program for K through 2.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: With phonetic
7 awareness.

8 SUSAN CRAWFORD: With more of that. I
9 believe the program is called Reading Recovery.
10 That's another program that's been around a long
11 time. So it's been vetted. The problem is those
12 children will be in the upper grades a decade from
13 now, and we still have the children who were not
14 taught to read under the previous administration. And
15 I urge you to make sure tax dollars go to those
16 children. Otherwise, it's theft of service for yet
17 another generation.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And--and your
19 suggestion in terms of reading programs for the kids
20 who are older?

21 SUSAN CRAWFORD: That are specific ones
22 that are better for older kids, you know, because it
23 will have materials that engage them more. But a
24 child who's--like the ones removed from her school
25 they were held back several times. One of the

things--the dynamics is that struggling readers sometimes can only get the help they need through special ed programs. And parents resist having their kids go into special ed because they see it as warehousing. Um, and this is something I'd be happy to talk to you in depth about it at another time because I personally would like to see us move beyond needing that come from special ed. We need the funding that special ed provides. But if it could be done without having to go through that evaluation, many more children would have access to it.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

SUSAN CRAWFORD: And--and there are many programs that could be used for older children and--and adults who are dyslexic and not reading still learn to read. So there's no--no doubt all of them can be helped.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So basically you're saying the difference is between the Chancellor's district and a renewal program is the approach to reading?

SUSAN CRAWFORD: Um, yes, I would say that, yeah. I--I haven't heard much of anything about reading--

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] It seems to me like the supports are there similar to what was there with the Chancellor--with the Chancellor's district, et cetera. That's why I was asking.

SUSAN CRAWFORD: Only for the lower grades, though, K through 2, and there's a lot of talk about social workers and guidance counselors and so on, but they aren't necessarily going to be the ones who find out that, you know, the kids who are always acting out in class oh, by the way, they also can't read. And many of them also end up in trouble with the law, and when you look at the Juvenile Justice system there's 70 and 80% of them are dyslexic.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh-huh. All right. Well thank you. I could go on and on, and maybe we should have that talk and we'll--

SUSAN CRAWFORD: [interposing] Yes, I'd be happy to.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --be talking. But we have a couple more panels yet so--

SUSAN CRAWFORD: [interposing] Okay.

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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: --it's getting late.

3 So thank you everybody.

4 SUSAN CRAWFORD: Yeah.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, Jim O'Neal from

6 Sports and Arts; Andrea Bowen from the United

7 Neighborhood Houses; Katrina Peru I believe. I'm

8 sorry if I'm pronouncing it, the Urban Arts

9 Partnership, and Pamela Stewart CCSE.

10 [background noise, pause]

11 JIM O'NEAL: First--first of all, I'd

12 like to thank--

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Oh,

14 first let me--I have to swear you in because I do

15 that with everybody here, but I think we're missing

16 one panelist. [background comments] So then, let's--

17 -let's add these folks to this panel. Robin Veenstra

18 Vanderweele. I'm sorry if I didn't say it right.

19 ROBIN VEENSTRA VANDERWEELE: That's okay.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I did all right?

21 ROBIN VEENSTRA VANDERWEELE: It was

22 great.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, thank you.

24 Ayisha--I'm sorry.

25

FEMALE SPEAKER: On behalf of Gale Brewer. Ayisha Irfan.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, on behalf of Gale Brewer.

AYISHA IRFAN: (off mic) Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh, okay. Ayisha Islam?

AYISHA IRFAN: Irfan.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Irfan and Deanne McNeal. Okay. All right and if you would all raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear or affirm-- 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?

PANEL MEMBERS: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Jim.

JAMES O'NEAL: First of all, I'd like to thank Chairman Dromm and the entire Education Committee for the opportunity to testify today. Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation fully supports the DOE's efforts to turn around struggling schools with its School Renewal Program, which transforms these schools into community schools. SASF is the lead in five community-based--as the community-based

partner in five community schools: M.S. 53 in Far Rockaway; New Explorers High School in South Bronx; Teaching and Professions High School also in the Bronx; and M.S. P.S. 188 in Lower Manhattan. These schools are only beginning the efforts as renewal community schools, but we have already implemented strong new programming to raise attendance and academic achievement. We're also in a number of other schools, not as the lead, including Flushing High School, Banana Kelly and Brooklyn Collegiate. I'd like to share some highlights that recently have been achieved this fall. At M.S. 53 in Far Rockaway, SASF has implemented a school wide subject based tutoring initiative. SASF tutors joint classroom teachers providing small group academic interventions of students and also teachers character education. At New Explorers High School SASF implemented a school wide expanded learning time initiative based upon our summer champions model. The academic enrichment activities includes such activities as computer science, community service, chorus, band and dance. The one highlight that I'd like to make is really very new. I just heard these numbers recently at Flushing High School, which Chairman Dromm, has

had six principals over the last four years. Sports and Arts is the only stable entity in the school here. There's been a very big jump in attendance at the high school. Actually, they had their largest freshman class in many years, which I think is the result of the beginning of the turnaround in the school. I'm--I'm very happy and proud to report that our September, October and November numbers show a very significant increase in attendance. Carmen Farina said her number one priority the first year was to raise attendance here. There were 161 students in our program after school, and they were showing a daily school attendance of 95% roughly 11.2 points higher than that of the whole school. This is an extraordinary achievement for a high school student. I would see--see the biggest challenge going forward is really funding, and I think all of us as CBOs have experienced some of the difficulties in the contracting process with the DOE. We wait months and months and months. We--we wait for our reimbursements to come back. They're very late. Sports and arts has to really use credit lines. We raise private money, but we also have to raise our credit lines to do it. So I urge you as the Chairman

and the entire City Council to keep your eye on this on this. The fund for the City of New York was actually broke last year. They didn't issue any loans, and we need that bridge loan until we can actually get to keep these programs going. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next please.

DEANNE MC NEIL: Good afternoon. My name is Deanne McNeil. I'm the Vice President of the PTA at Otis Martin High School, one of the Renewal Schools. We've gone through a lot of changes this year. We've received a new principal, which she's a lovely woman and she's really kept her word, and--and trying to keep everything aligned to all of the processes that you want us to accomplish within the next two years. She has got every--all the students on track to all, you know, with all the credits--all the credits that they need to have, and all where they need to be. And we've--our attendance rate has really gone up since last year from 61 to 81, and we've had this past Monday we did 137 perfect attendance activities to our students because they love coming to school, and they appreciate the

turnaround and what's going on in the school, but we still have some deficits. We, you know, we--we are very crowded, you know, because we have four school within our building. We have Otis Martin. We have New Voyagers. We have Pathways to College, and we have New Visions, and last year we had three lunch periods, but we have one lunch period for four grades in two lunchrooms. And we have no uniforms for our students for any--for--for the gym classes, or the after school sports. We don't have any place for them to change their clothes because other schools require the locker rooms. So our students can't change, but other than that, we--we are moving forward. We are--you know, our graduation rate is going to be a little higher this than we--we were told in, you know, in retrospect. We should have at least about 55% or a little higher than we, you know, had last year. Because last year we only had 33 graduates out of 100 and something students. And this year we should have at least twice as many, which, you know, I'm--we're very proud to have that number being this, and we just, you known, we just need a little help and a little push, but other than that things seem to be going pretty well. And, you

know, we, you know, we have every--we are trying with Association (sic) and the Title 1 to make sure that everything was--is coming along and it aligns through the Common Core, and we used--we used the new--your engaged system to try to make sure everybody is on point with what they need to, you know, to do. And I--my son is also a special ed student so I try to keep abreast with what's going on with special ed students also. [bell]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next, please.

ANDREA BOWEN: Good afternoon, Chair Dromm and members of the Committee on Education. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Andrea Bowen, and I am hereon behalf of the United Neighborhood Houses New York's Federation of Settlement Houses and Community Centers. UNH membership agencies work in partnership with government to provide a wide range of services for populations across the age space. And importantly for this hearing, six UNH member agencies, there's the CBO partner with 11 Renewal Schools. UNH member agencies that serve as CBO partners of Renewal Schools have identified the following implementation

challenges, and we look forward to working with DOE and other stakeholders to address them. First of all is messaging and impact on enrollment. One of the major fears of a struggling school is, of course, declining enrollment numbers. By labeling the school a Renewal Schools the City is at risk of signaling to parents and students that the school is failing, which could result in further declining enrollment. Thus, it is of the utmost importance that DOE and all other entities related to Renewal Schools send a strong message that being a Renewal Schools provides resources to address the school's challenges so that Renewal Schools are places where parents are excited to send their children.

Two has to do with morale issues. In one of the Renewal Schools listed as struggling by the State Education Department, one of our members voiced a serious morale problem insofar as there was an impression among schools staff that the school was imminently closing, which on the ground translated to a kind of apathy among school staff to make major changes in the school's functioning. Speaking to my earlier point, DOE must make the extra effort to send a message that there is hope for these schools. The

third point has to do with authority and the role of principals. CBO staff members have reported confusion about decision making authority, and their interaction with principals. Principals may attempt to exert--may attempt to exert more authority than they actually have to the detriment of the CBO's ability to make positive changes for the school. In one specific instance a principal expressed a desire to fire the community school director hired by the CBO within days of the director's hiring. DOE must do all it can to ensure smooth interaction between CBO staff and other school staff. My final point is around standards and expectations. People have spoken to this before. For CBO partners to successfully collaborate with schools they need a clear understanding of what benchmarks and standards DOE is utilizing. Accordingly, it's crucial that DOE continue refining and specifying the standards that Renewal Schools are held to. Thank you for your time, and for holding this hearing, and I'm happy to answer any questions that you have.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next, please.

ROBIN VEENSTRA VANDERWEELE: Good

afternoon. My name is Robin Veenstra Vanderweele, and I am the Chief Strategy Officer at Partnership with Children. For over 100 years Partnership with Children has been providing critical support and intervention programs in New York City Public Schools, and today we partner with 32 New York City public schools to provide a combin--a combination of comprehensive mental health, social and emotional learning, and community school leadership. Our partnerships cover the five boroughs and include elementary, middle and high school settings. Partnership with Children is the lead community-based organization in nine DOE Renewal Schools and an additional three schools, which have been identified through the AIDPD identification process as benefitting from the Community School Initiative as well. Our work represents 10% of the total Community School Initiative underway here in New York City. Our commitment to promoting children's mental health and improving school climate and culture to foster whole child development is rooted in over 30 years of experience in partnering with New York City Public Schools. Additionally, our organization is committed

to developing children and adolescents who are successful--successful in both school and in life beyond school. We have developed an expertise in address the trauma that children growing in poverty and in high poverty neighborhoods bring to school with them. This trauma often leads to high absenteeism, behavior and discipline problems, an inability to focus and interact in class and, therefore, low academic achievement. And schools that do not address these challenges often become crisis driven. Mental health programs, parent engagement programs, support services like those we provide effectively increase attendance, school climate metrics, and student achievement. These are critical to any school turnaround effort. Thus, we believe community schools are uniquely designed to achieve these goals and amplify our impact in each school that we're already working with. And while there are many studies that do support the efficacy of the community school model and the program to increase student attendance and the behavior and discipline in those schools, increase graduation rates and enhance the whole community functioning. For the purposes of today it might be more impactful

to share some early evidence and anecdotal stories about how we've already been able to make a difference. Building on some of what you heard earlier from our partners at the DOE, I'd like to mention that Renaissance Community School, the school that we heard about earlier, it's a middle school in East Harlem in partnership with Children's staff have been working diligently to ensure that every parent in that school gets a phone call or a home visit encouraging them to participate in the student led parent-teacher conferences this fall. Consistent welcoming messages about participating in your child's educational process into adolescence are a critical tool and intervention to decreasing school dropout. And I'm proud to report that parent-teacher conferences this fall at Renaissance were attended by 86% of all parents. This is the kind of critical investment in community building and parent engagement we know has an impact on student achievement. [bell] Coalition at social--the Coalition for Social Change the school safety officers reached out to Partnership with Children's social workers to address discipline issues. Our staff partnered with the principal to implement de-

escalation programs and restorative justice practice, which have improved discipline practices and simultaneously improved the school culture. In fact, our work there under the Renewal Schools Initiative was recently profiled in the Wall Street Journal. You hear about the wonderful things that are happening in the early implementation of this program, but I echo my colleague's statement that we urge you to look at how we can extend the funding that has been provided to us for this initial three-year implementation process to ensure that the good work we've begun can be sustained for the time going forward. High poverty schools have high poverty mobility numbers. New families and new students arrive every school year, and we will need ongoing support and finances in order to continue to build on what we've started. Thank you very much for your time and attention.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next, please.

AYISHA IRFAN: All right. So my name is Ayisha Irfan. I'm offering testimony on behalf of Manhattan Borough President. My name is Gale A. Brewer, and I'm the Manhattan Borough President.

Thank you Chair Dromm and the Committee on Education for holding this very important hearing and for the opportunity to testify. I am a big proponent of the Renewal Schools Model, and feel that we are finally asking the right questions about why students in schools are persistently struggling, and we have finally committed to giving these schools the tools to achieve success. That said, while the program is well intentioned, we have failed to ask deeper questions about what is needed to make sure that the Renewal School Program is not only implemented, but also implemented in a way that systemically improves the Renewal--the Renewal Schools. For this to happen, we need to address the Blue Book--the Blue Book and the inaccurate picture it paints of school utilization and school climate and its role in creating socio-emotionally safe spaces where students have the tools to succeed both academically and socially. I keep in contact with the Blue Book Working Group, and it is clear that at the very core of the success of the School Renewal Program is the question about space. While schools and especially schools that are part of the School Renewal Program need support services and partnerships, they also

need the necessary space inside their buildings for these services to take place. The DOE has been under fire for years about the inaccuracy of the Blue Book, and its space utilization formula and even with the DOE adopting many of the Blue Book--the Blue Book's working group's first set of recommendations this past summer, the City did not align class sizes in Blue Book with the goals set forth in the state mandated Contracts for Excellence Plan of 23 students per class in Grades 4 to 8 and 25 in high school. While in their response to the public comments of--on their 2014 to 2015 Contracts for Excellence Plan, the DOE wrote that the CFE class size reduction plan would focus on the 94 schools in the Renewal Program, according to the DOE's latest class size statistics as of October 31st, 2015, class sizes grew by .1 from 26.4 students per class in 2015. And there is no apparent systemic class size reduction plan for these Renewal Schools. Without the proper class size alignment, we have no way of know what services any school can reasonably accommodate without encroaching on classroom space. I also want to--to draw attention to the lack of conversation about creating an appropriate school disciplinary culture in the

City's Renewal Schools. Recently the Mayor and the DOE announced a Road Map to reduce punitive school discipline aiming to create safer schools while reducing student arrests and disciplinary punitive measures. I commend the Administration and the DOE for the formation of their leadership team. Yet, in my conversations with principals and guidance counselors, it appears that there is no systemic way of improving school culture. It is my hope the DOE not only works towards addressing school climate concerns in the middle schools by providing training and funding for restorative justice practices, but also in the long term engages in the conversation about the role of police in our schools. Um, let's jump through. The DOE currently has over 5,400 school safety agents throughout the public school system, and only 3,600 guidance counselors. If the DOE is serious about investing in young people's futures, the DOE must take a long hard look at this statistic and actively invest in education of our young people and work with that ratio. I comment Chair Dromm and the Committee on--the Committee on Education for holding this hearing today, and look

forward to working with you all to better implement the--the Renewal Schools Program. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much, and I very much agree with Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer on most of those issues, all of those issues actually. So, thank you for coming in and the revisions made to the Blue Book I think will help us get a little bit of a picture, a better picture of what's really happening in the schools. so just one thing I heard people talking about a little bit, too. The role of, you know, the word 'renewal' and the fact that they may be failing schools, et cetera. I'm really glad that the CBOs came out because I think that you also can play a very big role. But I think that the primary responsibility is on the DOE to, you know, make those schools attractive. But as CBOs I think you can help very much in that by the work that you do in the schools. So whether it be sports, whether it be counseling, or whatever it is, getting the word out to the community that there is no failing school or failing students that they might be struggling. But that reassuring parents that it's a good school and a place to send kids I think is vitally important. I just wanted to

hear a little bit more about the principal who threatened to fire the CBO.

ANDREA BOWEN: Yeah, that--that--he didn't threat to fire the CBO, he threatened to fire the community school director just very early onto the tenure. So there was a bit of a conflict between the--

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Get the Community School Director out from your organization?

ANDREA BOWEN: Not--not from my organization but from one of our member organizations.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I see.

ANDREA BOWEN: So, yeah, it was a--it was a member of our organization who had, you know, hired the community school director and yeah, apparently in the first few days of that hire the principal--they butted heads and the principal wanted to get rid of that person. And the CBO had to--from what the person explained to me, the CBO had to sort of be like you don't have the power to do that. This is our hire so--

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So, how is that relationship defined? Like who selects the CBO to work in the school? Jim.

JIM O'NEAL: Well, um, we--we recruit the directors, but our policies are that you usually-- it's a joint decision with the principal. So we bring the three finalists into the school. I sit there or some of our team sits there, and we--we interview the--the finalists, and then it's a joint decision. So I would not hire a director without the approval of the principal, and we would not work with principals who would not--

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Okay, and then what about the--the choice of the CBO in the school? How does is that made?

JAMES O'NEAL: We have to apply through an RFP. It's a very competitive process. Sports and Arts is--is really piloting this program. We're not doing a lot of these. We want to see if it really fits our mission, which we think it does, and the history has been that there's been always a lot of bumps working with some city agencies. And we're hoping that the very high expectations and the goals of this program will really be followed up with the

long-term support and the funding will be there, and we'll be able to work as partners. We really believe in the model. We believe in a very holistic approach to--to kids. The counseling piece is such a critical piece. I think this is a startling statistic that there are more security guards or more safety offices and--and this blew me away today--that there are 5,400 school safety officers and less than 3,200 guidance counselors. I think may be the most interesting thing I heard today.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well, that's something--something we've been working on here in the Council where it's a startling fact, and it does speak to where the priorities of the system are. And we've held a hearing on discipline, and specifically on school safety agents as well, and we just implemented actually some new reporting bills thanks to my Counsel here Ava Schaumberg (sp?) to specifically look at and examine that issue because it is an issue of major concern to us.

JAMES O'NEAL: That's good.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just--just to go back to the CBO. So the principal actually has to sign off, right, on the contract with the CBO.

JAMES O'NEAL: Yes, there's a memorandum of agreement that is entered into where every aspect of the program is spelled out in the memorandum. So the whole secret of the success of this is the very good working relationship between the CBO and the principal. But this model unlike some of the other models that we've been in, clearly the walls between after school and school day are broken down. And many--for the first time Sports and Arts is doing some programs during the school day such as Rockaway-Far Rockaway where we're actually bringing tutors in during the school day. So, all of this is new, and we're trying to see how it works, whether it's part of our model. We hope it works. We believe in the goals of the program, but this is a very complex model.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And--and the reason I'm--I'm questioning it so much is because I had a situation in one of the schools in my district where I worked very hard to get an after school program. It's an elementary school and it was a Renewal School, but I think the contracting process might have been very similar. So, when a new principal came in, she didn't want the old CBO any longer

because the old CBO I think was a little bit of a threat in the sense that they were empowering the parents and the school, and--and she got rid of it without even my knowledge. And I just felt that that really wasn't, you know, right to do because, you know, we fought so hard to get this one program in that school. So that's--that's why I was asking more questions about it actually.

ROBIN VEENSTRA VANDERWEELE: Chairman, if I may, I think you've struck on a really critical implementation challenge that's I think part and parcel to any kind of new and large scale initiative like this, but the--the matching process between a CBO and a particular school's needs is something that I think we didn't have as much time as would have liked to have had. So, each CBO brings its own particular theory of change, and it's own particular history and capacity for supporting a particular school's needs. And the time that which--the time that both partners had to assess what the school in particular was looking for, and what the CBO had the capacity to offer wasn't really where we needed it to be I think for this initial starting phase. That being said, the model is such a--the community school

model is a strong model, and there are a variety of ways that you can implement it, but I think it can result in success. So, going forward that's certainly an area where I think both sides of the partnership can do a better job with more clearly articulating this CBO brings this expertise and this experience. This particular school brings these-- these unique challenges. Is the match a good fit?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Uh-huh.

JAMES O'NEAL: There's another point that hasn't been made this afternoon is that often times schools will have gaps in their school day budget, and it's very important that these funds don't be used to supplement or to fill in those gaps where they really--the funds have to be used not to hire an extra parent in the school, or a school lunch person. They have to be used to expand services, and we're keeping an eye on this. And we're very concerned--to make sure whatever Sports and Arts is doing in the school is really adding activities and learning rather than filling budget gaps in the school.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But from your testimony, if I'm understanding correctly, you had

the problem accessing the funding? Does it--does it--
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JAMES O'NEAL: Well, it's--it's a finding
issue. I think the city this year because of the
Mayor's expansion of so many wonderful programs, the
contracting process in terms of having contracts
registered with the Comptroller's Office. I think
all of us have seen a task, for example, recently
only had a contract registered that was a year old.
DYCD has done a very good job of pumping the money,
and so we can survive. But there could be months and
months where we wait especially in the beginning of
the program where we have to have that extra money to
finance the program before it comes in, and there
could be late payments also going through--through.
This is a big program. The fund for the City of New
York has been a wonderful source of creating these
bridge loans, but for the first time, and I've been
doing this for many years, they ran out of money last
year. So they didn't issue any loans, and our wonder
City Council summer program we have a payroll that
comes in in August. We have huge programs where we
count on that loan. We won't get reimbursed for
maybe six or seven months after that. So that's--

that's the reality of all of this as we--we do these programs. We believe in the programs. We believe in the vision of the Mayor and the Chancellor, but it's really the practical implementations of these problems, which become very big problems.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, thank you. And just finally--I'm sorry. I forget your name from all this, Martin.

DEANNE MCNEIL: [off mic] Deanne McNeil.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So is there going to be another school that's going to be co-located into August Martin?

DEANNE MCNEIL: We hope not.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But was there supposed to be?

DEANNE MCNEIL: No, not--not that I know of.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: There are four there now?

DEANNE MCNEIL: Yes, well--

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: There's one or two other.

DEANNE MCNEIL: We had--last year we was fighting against having New Visions. The New Visions

came in September. So have New Visions, New Voyagers, Pathways to College. That's in the basement, and August Martin own--we have two floors. We have the main floor and--and the third floor. So that's what we have right now.

JAMES O'NEAL: And they all have football teams?

DEANNE MCNEIL: We have a football team. Well, we have the re--but why there's football team is because we didn't have a--that was the problem we didn't have football last year because we didn't have qualified players because we were having problems with our students doing book work, and you have to do the book work before you--that's a privilege to be on the football team. So that we had to make sure that they were qualified to be on the football team, too.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So--so you're--so you're the August Martin, the original August Martin in your building right?

DEANNE MCNEIL: Yes, we--

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: [interposing] Okay. So you have a PSAL football team?

DEANNE MCNEIL: Yeah. No, we have--we had--our football team is in-house. It's not from out. It's from inside?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So do the other schools in the building have any teams or after school sports?

DEANNE MCNEIL: Not that I know of, but we--the CBOs that are within our building they provide different things during the lunch period, different--we have different--different groups for the team. So like team--was it Team Rap or was it two different organizations that they could do different--we have one lunch period. So they try to alleviate that--the crowding in the lunchroom so we do things with the kids during their lunch period. So they have different activities going on during lunch period and after school. But not, you know, that is what, you know, we're working on, but don't--my question with the CBOs is I--'cause I work closely with the CBOs because CBOs and the PJ work closely together. My--my issue with the CBOs is I don't--I don't know the rules and regulations and how they're supposed to help with the school and with the PTA because there are issues. I ask for certain things.

Oh, I'm not allowed--There's this one incident where we want to provide food for one of the PTA--well, we don't have money. You have to come to us and give us two weeks in advance to provide, you know, money for whatever, you know, funds for the food. So I said okay. The night of the PTA--this was Family Night in September, it was a whole table full of food. Now, I've asked you this two nights ago. You said you didn't have no money, but you told me that I have to come to you two weeks in advance. So you said this and I--and I'm in the meeting with you. But then the night of you have a whole trays full of food, which you--I asked you and you said you had no money, but you know--So there's a lot of miscommunication.

That's my problem with the CBO Director because this is a CBO Director who's telling us she has no funds and I have to come to her two weeks in advance, and then when I--the day of oh, she pops up with money. She--she, you know, things get done, but she doesn't tell us. She doesn't tell the parent coordinator. She doesn't tell me. It's like Monday we had the perfect attendance. She was upset because she wanted recognition because she provided snacks, but she didn't tell me. She didn't tell the parent

coordinator, but she wanted recognition in the--in the program. But you have to tell us in a certain amount of time to be recognized. But when I ask you, you have no money, but you want to be recognized. So, that's--that's--that's, you know, my thing.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can I ask you, are you connected with the August Martin Alumni Association?

DEANNE MCNEIL: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay, so because they have a pretty strong group as well.

DEANNE MCNEIL: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right then.

DEANNE MCNEIL: I know--I know the President of the Alumni and I sit on the Advisory Board. I sit on the Communication Engagement Team, SLC. I'm very involved. I'm like an alumni parent, and a current--I have a--a son who graduated in 2012 who's--who's going to college a Monroe College. He's in his third year, and I have a third-grader right now.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: All right, thank you. I want to again thank the panel and I think that there is nobody else who is going to give testimony.

1	COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION	199
2	So this meeting is adjourned at 4:54--4:54. [gavel]	
3	[background comments]	
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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 December 2, 2015