

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
JOEL I. KLEIN, Chancellor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**CHANCELLOR KLEIN, DEPUTY MAYOR WALCOTT, AND CHIEF FAMILY
ENGAGEMENT OFFICER GUERRIER ANNOUNCE
MEASURES TO HELP PARENTS ENGAGE IN THEIR CHILDREN'S
EDUCATION**

*Department of Education Enhances Outreach to Parents, Responsiveness to Parent
Concerns*

Support for School Leadership Teams and Community Education Councils

Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein, Deputy Mayor Dennis M. Walcott, and Chief Family Engagement Officer Martine Guerrier today announced measures implemented by the Department of Education (DOE) this year to help public school parents become better informed about, and have greater influence over, their children's education. The announcement at PS 11, an elementary school in the Clinton Hill section of Brooklyn that enjoys active parent and community support. The Chancellor, Deputy Mayor, and Chief Parent Engagement Officer were joined by Borough President Marty Markowitz, Principal Alonta Wrighton, and community and family advocates.

Building on earlier improvements, including creating 1,400 parent coordinator positions in schools, the DOE restructured its outreach to parents during the past six months to provide more responsive and far-reaching support. Examples of enhanced services for parents in the 2007-08 school year include:

- Access to dedicated Family Advocates in each of the City's 32 community school districts. These professionals are trained to address issues involving enrollment, special education, English language education, safety, and other matters of concern to parents.
- The Office of Family Engagement's (OFEA) year-long, Citywide public information campaign, with town halls, presentations, and public forums in each borough—including forums for immigrant families in their native languages. Additionally, beginning this past summer OFEA is mobilizing "subway and bus teams" to

School District based organization to ensure greater access and responsiveness to parent concerns.

The DOE has also implemented new measures to enhance parent leadership. Principals will be evaluated in part based on the effectiveness of their School Leadership Teams, half of which is comprised of parents. The Chancellor's regulation governing School Leadership Teams is being revised to articulate more extensively the roles and authority of parent members.

At a district level, the Community Education Councils, nine of whose eleven members are parents, will be asked to serve a more consultative role regarding the siting of new charter schools. Council members will also be asked to consult with internal Department of Education workgroups on issues like student achievement, school budgeting, facilities, and English Language Learner and Special Education services.

"The voices of parent leaders in New York City public schools are vital and irreplaceable," Chief Family Engagement Officer Guerrier said. "We cannot have great schools without the participation of parents who are deeply committed to the success of schools. We are fortunate to have many diverse and passionate parent-advocates in every part of the City."

Families will also have access to a rich vein of school and student performance data through accountability measurements first announced by the Mayor last fall and implemented across the system beginning this school year. These will all be available publicly and include:

- Progress Reports that give each school a grade of A, B, C, D, or F based on student achievement and progress and assessments of the school's learning environment. Parents will have a direct impact on a school's grade based on their responses to a survey about the school's performance. Teachers and students will also complete surveys.
- More frequent and highly detailed assessments of each student's progress in literacy and math.
- Quality Reviews performed by experienced educators that ascertain how well a school is designed to raise student achievement.

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THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
JOEL I. KLEIN, *Chancellor*

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**Testimony of Martine Guerrier
Chief Family Engagement Officer**

Family Engagement
Committee on Education
September 20, 2007

Thank you Chairman Jackson and members of the City Council Committee on Education for this opportunity to talk with you about the Department of Education's effort to open new lines of communication with parents and to create new opportunities for families to become active participants in the school community.

On February 28th I was appointed to the position of Chief Family Engagement Officer in the now former Office of Parent Engagement. I started work on March 12th.

Since then I have had the opportunity to interact with more than 1,500 New York City public school parents and community leaders. Parents have asked me many things – from how to decide where to send their children to school to how to know if their children's schools were "good" schools. They asked for information about how to get involved – or how they could make their schools' School Leadership Teams more effective. They also made many suggestions about how the Department of Education could better serve them and serve the children of this City.

I have met with parents and community organizations – conferred with family advocates – met with a few members of the New York City Council and other public officials. I chaired a mayoral task force on parent engagement – attended Community Education Council meetings, Presidents Council meetings, and even Community Board meetings. I heard a lot of questions, numerous suggestions, and learned a great deal.

As I traveled the City and listened and talked with families and advocates, the Department also conducted the first annual Learning Environment Survey, which asked City public school parents, teachers, and 6th-12th graders to assess whether their schools were setting high expectations, communicating well with stakeholders, keeping students and educators safe, and creating effective environments for learning. We heard from over 200,000 parents and almost 340,000 students. We asked some tough questions about ourselves – and we got answers.

Parents, students and teachers were generally satisfied with the quality of their schools, but results also pointed to areas needing improvement, including the need for more effective communication and better ways of motivating students. Results clearly underscored our belief that our schools have gotten much better over the past five years but we still have a lot more to do.

What I heard convinced me that we needed to shift our perspective on parent engagement and so now I am the head the New York City Department of Education's newly established Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy – OFEA. Parent leaders and families talked and I listened. What I heard falls into five main categories: unification, advocacy, information, support, and expectations.

Unification

I heard a lot about respect. Certainly any one of us can point to instances of dissonance between parents, parent leadership and the school administration. But families said both parents and school leaders needed to have more respect for one another's opinions. Families and parent

leaders said loud and clear that respect equals a seat at the decision-making table. We agree. Having that seat would foster a unified effort on behalf of New York's public school children.

Advocacy

Families and parent leaders showed great enthusiasm for becoming more involved in and developing relationships that would enrich student's learning environments. Whether it was supporting district-wide programs or partnering with local businesses to provide resources to schools, families and parent leaders were all at the ready to roll up their sleeves, and indeed most had rolled up their sleeves long before I arrived and only wanted to know that there would be someone there to support them, as they advocated for their children. This was not new to us in the Department and indeed there are many instances where this is occurring – but now there is a new opportunity to push the envelope in defining parents as partners in the advocacy for New York City public school children.

Information

Families and parent leaders want to learn more about the supports and services their children are eligible to receive during and after school. Simply put they just want to know what is going on that would benefit their children academically and socially. OFEA is making information even more easily accessible and easier to understand. We are moving quickly from having families picking up "hearsay" to being there and "hearing it being said." This is particularly important with conversations on student outcomes and contributions to the improvement of the local community.

Support

Families and parent leaders said they wanted to receive additional support and access to people who can help them solve problems and answer questions. Certainly it is in this area that parents would say they feel the most frustration. There is a short answer to this issue and a long one – the short answer being there is a new Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy. The longer answer I will get to in a bit.

Expectations

Families and parent leaders want the Department to be more forthcoming with information about policy decisions that impact school communities. They want the Department to provide clearer guidelines for holding leaders and students accountable. They want to be able to review policies related to safety, discipline and have shared decision-making. They also want more clarity around the roles and responsibilities of school officials, so they know who to go to when there is a problem.

I heard all of this and so much more, and as Chief Family Engagement Officer I shall continue to listen. To be clear, I have done more than just listen and talk with families, communities, and leaders – I have also worked hard to understand how the system actually serves parents – in order to make the system better. And OFEA is doing just that. We are implementing reforms

that address families' concerns about access, information, policies and procedures. We are also opening new lines of communication with families and parent leaders and creating opportunities for meaningful participation in decision-making.

The new structures that are in place this fall build on what the Mayor and Chancellor created – so we, as a City, are better equipped to support and engage the mothers, fathers, grandparents, and other family members of New York City public school children.

So that there is no confusion on this – I am a parent of a New York City Public School student who has had the some good and bad experiences dealing with school administrators. When I was asked to become the Brooklyn Borough President's representative to the Panel for Educational Policy I took on the job with zeal just so I could have my ear at the door, and maybe sometimes kick it open for families and parent leaders. I considered myself a parent advocate. And I know that at the end of the day what parents want most is for their children to attain an excellent education. I would be remiss if I did not mention that winning the Broad Prize proves that we are moving closer and closer to achieving that goal.

When I was approached to take my current post I was at first concerned that I would be giving up my role as an advocate. Nothing could be further from the truth. I came to know rather quickly that there was sincerity, on the part of this Administration to change the tone and level of conversation with parents. I would still be an advocate for children, parents and families. I would be able to effect change.

I am happy to report that change is right here – right now – and I am happy, no proud, to be the facilitator of that change.

In the past, families felt like they were dealing with a fractured parent support structure. The Office for Parent Engagement was within the Division of Teaching and Learning. Programmatic and administrative support for Community Education Councils was provided by the Office for Public and Community Affairs. Families complained that there was no coordinated outreach effort across regions and between district offices by administrators and parent support officers to make sure all parents received important and timely information.

Now, we have built on the promising structure of our parent coordinators. Our 32 community school district office will have at least two "District Family Advocates," who are trained to provide elementary and middle school families with specific content information about schools and school policies. Borough Directors located within the five boroughs will serve high school families. The District Family Advocates and Borough Directors are also equipped to support and assist families – so they can find answers to their questions, resolve complaints and learn how to navigate through the system. They also work with Parent Coordinators and others to create workshops, conferences, and events.

In the past, families did not always receive important information in a timely manner, and complained often that when information was forthcoming it was not explained clearly.

This past summer we launched a year-long, citywide public information campaign. It features town hall meetings, presentations, and public forums in each borough. It includes forums for immigrant families in their native languages. Plus, we have mobilized "subway and bus teams" to distribute key materials to parents as they commute to and from work.

The Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy will also host district-wide family events to facilitate sharing of information. DFAs and Parent Coordinators will also plan "District Family Days," which are designed to build communities, give families a sense of belonging, and advise families about important policies and educational opportunities. We will also set up local forums, trainings, and mini-conferences to support local parent leadership organizations.

In the past, parents who could not resolve issues at their schools had to travel to distant regional offices for more help.

Now, District Family Advocates will work with families to resolve issues related to the Parents Bill of Rights and the Students Bill of Rights, as well as advocate for the "dignity rights" of parents and students by triaging complaints, explaining DOE policies and process information. This will ensure that families understand how to negotiate the system.

In recognition of the fact that families have many other pressures in their lives, the Department of Education has recommitted itself to parent engagement by recognizing a broader definition of parent involvement. This goes far beyond just hiring and training Parent Coordinators. This year all District Family Advocates will partner with Parent Coordinators in a school-by-school outreach campaign, in accordance with a centralized effort, to work closely with the leadership of District Presidents Councils and Community Education Councils.

There will be a series of "Parents Nights" throughout the year where families who have never before participated in any public leadership activities will be offered the chance to host discussions about education in their homes or lead discussions in tenant association community rooms. These events will be part of the work my office initiates to increase the number of families active in shaping the context of the education their children will receive.

In the past, families that did not speak English would often not get the interpretation services they needed to advocate effectively for their children.

Now, all Parent Coordinators, District Family Advocates, and Borough Directors carry interpretation services contact information in their cell phones and blackberrys. This will help to ensure that families that do not speak English receive all the interpretation services every family needs.

In the past, we didn't consult with parent leaders before making some key decisions.

Now, we're asking Community Education Councils to serve a more consultative role regarding the placement of new charter schools. We are also asking council members – nine of eleven of whom in each district are definitely parents – to serve as participants in DOE working groups on

issues such as student achievement, school budgeting, facilities, and English Language Learner and Special Education services.

And of course the Department is continuing the citywide family information campaign that includes – five “Ask Martine and Friends” town halls, and will roll out multiple district level, issue-based colloquia, and several borough wide forums—including public forums for immigrant families to be hosted in their native languages.

In the past, there was no single “owner” of parent support and engagement functions at the DOE.

Now, they’ve all been consolidated in my office, the Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy.

OFEA is responsible for training and overseeing the 1,300-plus parent coordinators who serve New York City public schools.

OFEA is responsible for coordinating and engaging with the 32 Community Education Councils.

OFEA is responsible for managing the translation and interpretation unit.

OFEA is responsible for leading a major initiative to ensure that every school has a functioning Senior Leadership Team. Starting this year, principals will be evaluated, in part, on whether their School Leadership Teams, half of which are composed of parents, are effective. The Chancellor’s regulation governing School Leadership Teams has also been revised to articulate more extensively the roles and authority of parent members.

And, as I said before, we are providing parents greater access through a new community school district-centered structure.

Families across the city have articulated very loudly and clearly, over the last six months to me, the need to find realistic and effective ways to improve education and increase student achievement through parent involvement. The initiatives described for you are a small part of the agenda for family engagement and parent empowerment that is focused on forging a tighter connection between schools and the families of students, whereby each can genuinely feel welcomed, respected, and supported in our schools. Surely you would agree that the relationship between schools and families is a key determinant in whether or not children benefit from the many resources and opportunities available to enhance the learning experience.

The ability of families to effectively participate in the education of their children begins not just at the PA/PTA meeting, but in the communication of each child’s academic progress by the schools to parents. Many parents are underwhelmed by the limited amount of time they can spend meeting with teachers during Parent-Teacher conferences and have asked for more information about their children’s progress in learning key subject area skills. Some families only learn about their children’s progress (which is a separate and important distinction from grades) if the child is listed as “promotion in doubt” or during disciplinary conferences when all

of the "empty notebooks" get piled up on the desk by the school principal to drive home a message about how bad a child is in school.

If parents are to become true partners in education then it is as important to support the provision of child specific educational progress information as it is to support involvement in education policy decisions. To that end my office is partnering with the Office of Accountability to provide all families with student progress information and will spearhead the family outreach effort to ensure all families understand the context of the new information.

We've made a lot of progress already and I look forward to working with you to make more progress in the days, weeks, and months ahead. The school year has only just begun. I understand that we haven't yet seen and lived in the new system yet, but I am confident that it is better – and I know it will get better still as we work together this school year. Because at the end of the day we all need to do what we must to support the overall mission of helping students achieve academic success.

Again I thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Department's renewed commitment to family engagement and I welcome your questions, your thoughts and your partnership.

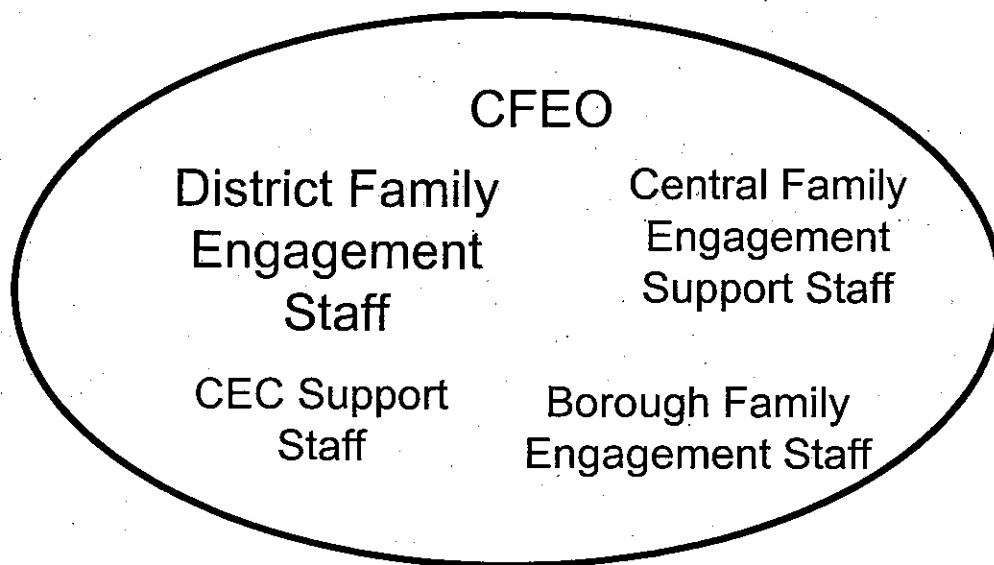
**September 20, 2007
City Council Presentation
The Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy
NYC Department of Education**

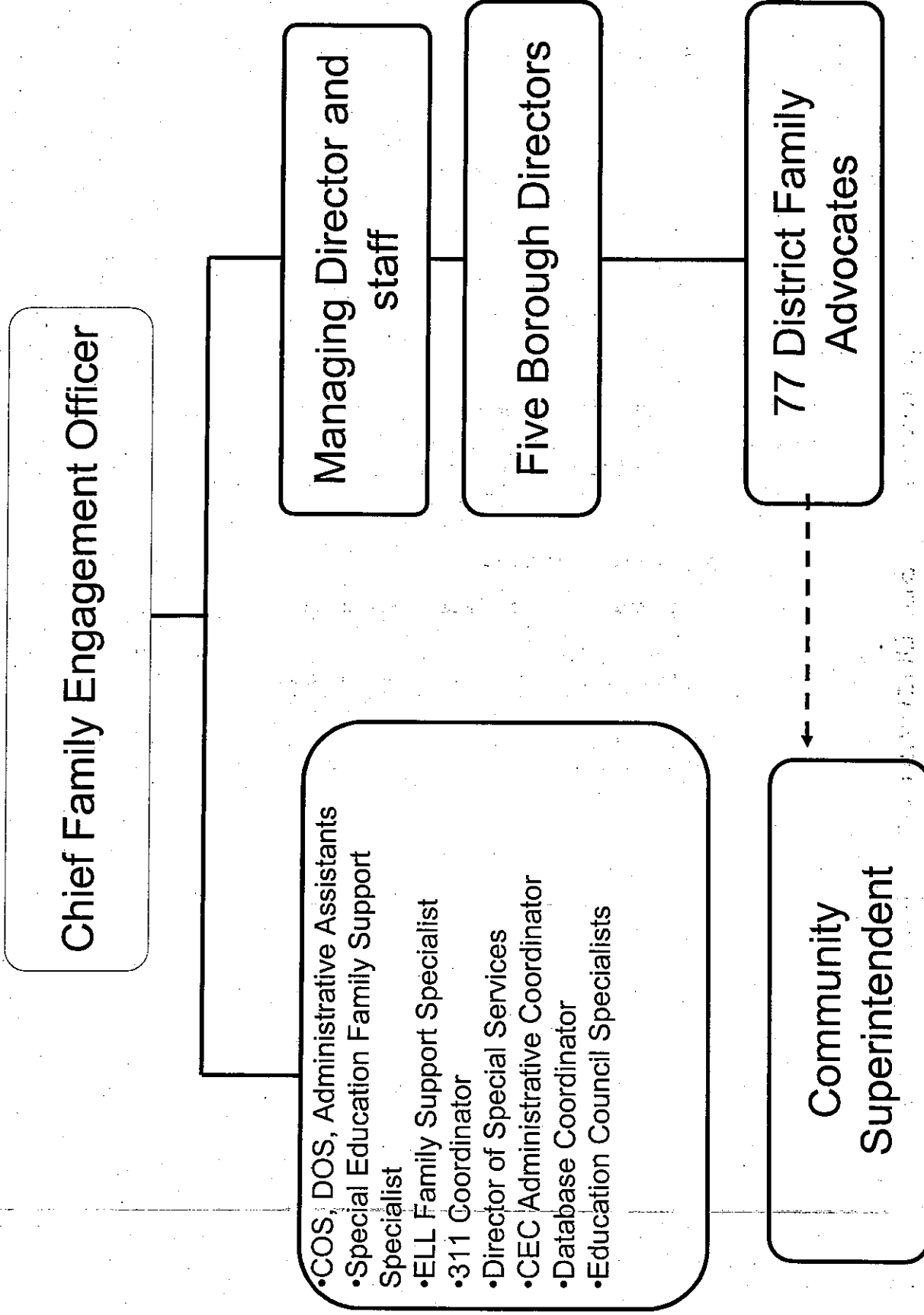
Presented By: Martine Guerrier, CFEO

Explain:

- **Structure of the Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy**
- **Role of the Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy**
- **Services Provided to Support Family Engagement Efforts**
- **Services Provided to Support Families and Parent Leadership**
- **Q & A**

Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy





Orange box represents non OFEA domain

Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy (OFEA)

OFEA – Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy is the division charged with improving the way in which the Department of Education communicates with parent leadership and supports families to increase student achievement.

CFEO – Chief Family Engagement Officer is the member of the Chancellor's Senior Leadership Team designated to provide internal council and support for family and parent leadership engagement efforts.

BD – Borough Directors for OFEA are the five citywide directors who are primarily responsible for responding to concerns and issues escalated to the borough office for the high school superintendent from families and parent leadership. Each is responsible for overseeing the work of District Family Advocates.

DFA – District Family Advocates are the district office staff who are primarily responsible for responding to concerns escalated to the community school district office from families and parent leadership. There are at least two assigned to every district office.

What does the Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy do?

HOW WE DEFINE OUR WORK

Create "Big Tent" to ensure local decisions are made with meaningful family input

- Identify new opportunities to strengthen family involvement in school and district level decision-making.

FUNCTION A

Build Coalitions with Family and Community Organizations

- Ensure parent leadership organizations citywide have the necessary information to provide meaningful input into local and citywide decisions.

Provide Critical Information to Families

- Assist families by using a proactive district and borough level family engagement support model

Resolve Family Complaints

- Assist families in resolving complaints and/or disputes related to the Parents Bill of Rights and the Students Bill of Rights, as well as Chancellor's Regulations for School Leadership Teams and PA/PTA issues.

Services Provided to Support Family Engagement Efforts

- **Staff**
 - Troubleshoot problems and various escalated issues from parents
 - Coordinate responses to requests for information with other offices
- **Trainings**
 - Collaborate with various central offices to build organizational capacity to respond to issues and concerns
 - Develop curriculum and materials to increase parent leadership and field staff knowledge of services and policy related procedures
- **Outreach**
 - Plan and deliver events which increase understanding of DOE policies and program offerings
 - Connect with school community and parent-community leaders via email and print publications
 - Proactively respond to family concerns about school issues (leadership change concerns, school siting, notification of policy changes, etc)

Services Provided to Support Families and Parent Leadership

- Staff
 - Assignment of District Family Advocates and Borough Directors to respond directly to families and parent leadership concerns escalated beyond “schoolhouse”
 - Coordinate responses to requests for intervention by families and others in the school community to resolve organizational conflicts of parent leadership
- Trainings
 - Collaborate with parent leadership to identify specific informational needs
 - Identify service partners, develop curriculum and materials to increase parent leadership awareness of governance policies and procedures (and
- Outreach
 - Plan and coordinate meetings which increase opportunities for parent leaders of Presidents Councils and Community Education Councils to participate in internal workgroups with DOE officials
 - Connect with school community via email and print publications to increase interest in parent leadership organization events and structures
 - Plan and coordinate events that provide student achievement information to parent-community leaders (“Ask Martine and Friends” series, information campaigns, etc)



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

**TESTIMONY OF DENNIS M. WALCOTT, DEPUTY MAYOR
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION COMMITTEE
PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

SEPTEMBER 20, 2007

Good morning, Chair Jackson and members of the Education Committee. I am Dennis Walcott, Deputy Mayor and a father of four, and it is a pleasure to be here with you again today to speak with you about parent involvement. I am joined by Martine Guerrier, the Department of Education's first-ever Chief Family Engagement Officer, whom the Mayor appointed this past February.

Helping parents participate in their children's education has been a core priority of Mayor Bloomberg's reforms. We recognize and believe that parents – and in many cases, grandparents or other guardians – can have a major influence on their children's achievement, particularly by establishing high expectations for achievement, supporting learning at home, and ensuring that out-of-school activities are positive and constructive.

We have tremendous respect for parents and for the magnitude of the challenge involved in raising a child and ensuring that each child succeeds. We also recognize that parents in our City often have significant job and family demands, and many are new to the English language or struggle with literacy themselves. We owe it to them and to their children to be as innovative as possible when trying to engage and support them in helping their children succeed.

The Mayor believes deeply in providing many points of access for parents. As you and many of your fellow council members can attest to, the Mayor's doors at City Hall are and always have been open to parents. We've always made ourselves available to meet with parents in City Hall or in their communities, whether about construction of new school buildings in the Bronx or Queens, creation of new gifted and talented programs in Manhattan, the opening of new small schools in Brooklyn, [a search for a new home for a popular school in Washington Heights], or special education in Staten Island. I am delighted that so many parents, from every corner of our City, have taken advantage of our willingness to listen and respond to their children's needs.

The Mayor's creation of 311, with services in more than 170 languages, has also played an essential role in increasing parents' access to schools and information and has facilitated their ability to voice concerns and demands. In addition, the establishment within the Department of Education of an office of Translation and Interpretation Services further ensures that non-English speaking parents have the information they need to help their children.

Because of the Mayor's conviction that parent views are fundamental to our reforms, he advocated for parent-dominated bodies to replace the old Community School Boards. The resulting Community Education Councils, comprised of a parent majority, provide an important voice in the improvement of our schools. The Panel for Educational Policy, which also holds monthly meetings, replaced the former Board and also has a parent majority.

It is in the schools themselves, and in our children's homes, that the most vital kinds of parent involvement take place. The Mayor and Chancellor's commitment to placing a Parent Coordinator in each of the City's schools has been critical to making sure that parents feel welcome in our schools and are supported in their efforts to help their children learn. We have invested over \$50 million a year in this initiative, including more than 1,350 Parent Coordinators and their professional development and support.

The establishment of Parent Coordinators was rooted in an understanding that we must reach parents at the school level in ways that had not been happening throughout our schools before. Our Parent Coordinators are a crucial link for parents at each school, addressing parent concerns and holding workshops on nutrition or math skills. They deserve the wide acclaim that is given to them.

Especially in a City like ours, there are inevitably many different views about how to provide the education our children deserve. Yet in my many meetings and conversations with parents – at City Hall, on the streets, in schools, at community and parent forums – it is always abundantly clear that every parent wants the best for their children, and we remain committed to working with parents to ensure they are able to give their children the support they need.

We've made real progress but more work remained. The creation of a senior-level post – the Chief Family Engagement Officer – will ensure that parents and families are enlisted as partners in our efforts to improve our schools and give our students better chances for success.

I look forward to continuing a dialogue with you and with parents on this very important issue. I will now turn the floor over to Martine Guerrier, our "Chief Mom," who will speak in greater detail about our newest, more concerted efforts to engage parents and families in their children's education.



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Testimony

1 message

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Thu, Sep 20, 2007 at 9:01 AM

To: cberengu@gmail.com

Eunice Paul

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Good Morning All:

Today I am here as an Elected Official of the New York City Community Education Council. I have been elected into office by the Executive Board Members of our districts Parents' Associations (PA) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTA). I have been an active parent volunteer for the past 3 years that my daughter has been in Bronx Little School, the elementary school in a High School.

We have become aware in a short time that modifications in the revised A-655 **violates** State Educational Law, CR100.11 (Shared Decision Making) and current Regulations B-801 (School Based Budgeting) and A-655 (School Leadership Teams) which all require shared decision making in the development of the CEP and budget.

Not only do we not support this change but we are appalled at the measures by principals and other forces to keep parents in the dark about their rights and obligation to assist the schools in overcoming barriers that will allow one child to fail, not be at level 4 and does not promote their overall academic as well as social development.

It is one thing to promote the compliance to make sure that all are following through with regulations and laws but to avoid it or change it to exclude parent's power is outrageous. We agree wholeheartedly with our Parent Advocate, James Calantjis, when he says:

"This proposed A-655 Regulation **disengages** and **disempowers** parents and teachers on School Leadership Teams by trying to modify SLT budget responsibilities from shared decision making through consensus to "input" only." **"Status of DOE's Parent Engagement Initiatives."**

In addition, even the P.A.'s and P.T.A.'s are being manipulated and excluded from many of the courtesies and mandates that we are supposed to be involved in. This includes the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) and Title One spending. I can go on for days about the injustices being done to our children and their parents. Therefore I invite for you to work with our CEC and Community Board 9 to further our missions in District 12 as well as our neighboring Districts to get all of our children to be at Level 4 and beyond.

Thank you and have a Blessed Day!

Testimony
of
Joan McKeever Thomas,
United Federation of Teachers
Parent Liaison for Staten Island

to the

City Council Education Committee
Hearing on the DOE's changes to the Chancellor's Regulations
governing school and district leadership teams

Sept. 20, 2007

Thank you, Chairman Jackson and members of the City Council Education Committee. My name is Joan McKeever Thomas. I am a former member of the Panel for Educational Policy. I am speaking this morning as the United Federation of Teachers' parent liaison for Staten Island. On behalf of UFT President Randi Weingarten, I will delineate some of our concerns with regard to the DOE's changes to the Chancellor's Regulations governing school and district leadership teams.

In the brief time I have to testify, I won't elaborate on what we already know:

- That the initial "Green Book" vision for school leadership teams was inspired and inspirational;
- That it gave parents and staff real collaborative input into school governance, curriculum and budgeting; and
- That its evolution into Chancellor's Regulation (CR) A655 made it even better.

What I do want to stress is that the DOE's latest review and changes to CR A655 are a misguided and unwelcome departure from the earlier collaborative, team approach.

In brief, if the DOE's current proposed changes are institutionalized, many SLTs—which show and continue to offer so much promise—would become rubber stamps for the principals. SLTs under the proposed changes will be redundant organizations, talk shops with no direction or larger purpose. From a transparent, collaborative, active system that works, the new recommendations will create an opaque, one-directional, passive system that adds no value to school organization.

Let me list a number of specific objections. The proposed changes:

- shift the understanding of SLT responsibilities. At present these responsibilities include "develop(ing) and review(ing) the schools Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) and "consulting with the principal in developing a school-based budget and staffing plan aligned with the CEP." That is as it should be. The proposed changes, however, shift the SLTs' role to the far lesser one of receiving "a report from the DOE Galaxy budgeting system" and offering input on the proposed school-based expenditure "prior to submission to the school superintendent." So, from being an active, collaborative body, as required by state law, the SLTs are downgraded to at best bodies advising the principals.
- They fly in the face of the Chancellor's Regulation B801, which explicitly requires each principal to review with the SLT "the form and content of the school-based budget request" early in the process and provide the SLT not just with a recommended budget but "with all appropriate and relevant information, memoranda and documents on the budget request process....(to) develop and prepare the school budget request."

- While allowing parent turnover, the proposed new regs are silent on the need for school staffs—the other half of the team—to be rotated and staggered, meaning that experienced members may overstay their tenure or rarely serve as mentors alongside newer staff representatives.
- The proposed regs wisely include resolving SLT election grievances brought by parents, but they are silent on grievance mechanisms for any other problems that may arise within the team. Beyond stating a good sentiment, the regs do not stipulate either how to reach consensus or what to do if consensus cannot be reached.
- The new regs don't offer clear protections that parents, teachers or any other SLT member won't be bullied or shamed into donating their \$300 stipend back to the school. In my experience as a member of district leadership teams, I've seen this pressure applied routinely.
- The proposals mistakenly place SLT teams under the Office of Family Engagement and Advocacy (OFEA). Precisely because SLTs deal with more than parental involvement, but with staff and community involvement, too, and because the Comprehensive Educational Plan deals with budgeting, as well as teaching and learning, which are outside the purview of the more narrowly defined OFEA, SLTs should be part of a more all-encompassing Department of Education body.
- The changes continue to correctly require a team secretary but don't mandate help for the secretary.
- The changes link the School Support Organizations with the SLTs, but only in the weakest and vaguest ways. Saying airily that "SSOs are expected to make every effort to accommodate" SLT requests won't make it so.
- They don't stipulate that SLTs have the flexibility to discuss and advocate for new strategies in dealing with schoolwide problems peculiar to a particular school. While the Parent Engagement Task Force under Martine Guerrier does speak about the need for flexibility, the proposed regs do not.
- The changes are silent on the SLTs responsibility in formulating the school's uniform policy, something that has the potential for being contentious and that could use handling from a collaborative SLT.
- Finally, the changes don't underline the fact that CEP is a living document that needs attention, updating and modifying throughout the year. Too often, finished CEPs are just put on a shelf and never looked at until the next year.

Just as a general observation: the proposed changes address only the parent side of the SLTs. They omit addressing any initiatives that could help staff to be better team members.

In conclusion, the UFT views the new regs as a serious step backward. The Green Book offered a model where every member of the SLT was a leader, who took responsibility and exercised good judgment. The current changes throw cold water on that effort to get every SLT member operating maximally and collegially in the interest of students.

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The Council of The City of New York
9/20/07 Education Committee Hearing
Status of DOE's Parent Engagement Initiatives

Written Testimony of James Calantjis
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School Leadership Teams were created by State Educational Law, Article 52A (2590h-15, 2590r) and empowered through shared decision making (CR 100.11) to carry out two core responsibilities:

- 1) "The creation of the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP), including annual goals and objectives"
- 2) "The development of a school-based budget and staffing plan aligned with the CEP"

(Reference: The Chancellor's Plan for School Leadership Teams)

School Leadership Teams consist of three Core members, the Principal, UFT Chapter Leader and PA/PTA President. Parents must compose 50% of team members by law. The law also requires training for all SLT members concerning their CEP and budget responsibilities.

In addition, the law required two Chancellor's Regulations to carry out its mandates. The first, The Chancellor's Plan for School Leadership Teams (Green Book), was translated in 2004 into **Chancellor's Regulation A-655**. The second, **Chancellor's Regulation B-801** was created in 1999 to institute shared decision making in School Based Budgeting through School Leadership Teams and is still in force. The primary means of SLT decision making is by consensus of team members (A-655).

The problem is that the NYCDOE has never implemented Chancellor's Regulation B-801. **The result is that parents and teachers on SLT's have been disempowered from their legal right to participate to determine how school funds are spent.** In addition, the DOE has weakened parent and teacher roles on SLT's by the discontinuing of SLT budgets in 2003 (that were primarily used for team training) and by denying teams access to the school's Galaxy Budgeting System. In effect, the Principal, in most cases, has taken over the duties of developing the CEP and school budget.

Now, the NYCDOE in its revised A-655 Regulation is attempting to legitimize its weakening of SLT's by modifying their budget responsibilities from shared decision making to providing "input" after the Principal has developed the budget. This change violates State Education Law, CR100.11 and current Chancellor's

Regulations B-801 and A-655. It should be noted that the revised regulation continues shared decision making language in the development of the CEP.

Please see the attached letters to Chancellor Klein in support of the lawful rights of SLT's to collaboratively develop school budgets from:

- **former Chairman of the Assembly Education Committee Steve Sanders (who also sponsored the School Governance Legislation) and Assemblyman Peralta (Aug. 12, 2005)**
- **Chairman of Council Education Committee Robert Jackson and NYC Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum (September 15, 2006)**

In addition, the United Federation of Teachers expressed its concern that school based budgeting through school leadership teams had not been implemented by the DOE in a letter dated May 3, 2006 to Councilman Jackson. UFT representatives had previously given testimony that the NYCDOE was violating State Law concerning SLT budget responsibilities at the City Council Hearing on School Budgets on November 30th 2004. For the record, I also testified as an invited speaker concerning the exclusion of SLT's from the budget process at the November 30, 2004 hearing.

Finally, in a joint follow-up letter to the DOE by Councilman Jackson and the Public Advocate (April 10, 2007), they write; "it appears there is a discrepancy between what the DOE believes is sufficient SLT participation in the school based budgeting process and the original mission of SLT's." The "two core responsibilities were to be carried out in a collaborative manner by SLT's which were to include the principal, teachers, and other school staff, parents, and in some cases students and community representatives, all making decisions by consensus." **"The original model seems more in accord with Chancellor Klein's goals of granting greater autonomy to schools and increasing parent and community engagement. We believe that the original intent of the historic change in governance establishing SLT's should be fully reflected in the revised regulations."**

In conclusion, SLT's are the vehicles for real parent engagement and provide for the collaboration of all major stakeholders in the governance of schools. We must ensure that the NYCDOE respects the school governance system that is in place under the law and enforces its complete implementation in the schools.

"Why are school leadership teams—teams of parents, teachers, administrators, other school staff, and often students—such an important part of our reform efforts? When these constituencies come together and work constructively to set the direction for a school, the entire school community comes to share a focused educational vision that guides the entire functioning of the school"

Rudy Crew, Chancellor, 1998

"The Chancellor's Plan for School Leadership Teams"



THE ASSEMBLY
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CHAIRMAN
Committee on Education

COMMITTEES
Cities
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August 12, 2005

Joel I. Klein
Chancellor
Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room #320, B4
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chancellor Klein:

In December 1996, the state legislature enacted the New York City Governance Legislation as a primary focus for school reform. It called for "the involvement and appropriate input of all members of the school community...including parents, teachers and other school personnel" in a shared decision making process that complied with Section 100.11 of the Commissioner's Regulations. The law called for the implementation of what became known as school leadership teams and mandated that they have authority to collaborate for the educational planning of schools and the development of school based budgets. Section 2590-r of the law (School Based Budgeting and Expenditure Reporting) calls for a collaborative process that includes "appropriate technical support and training to school personnel, parents and other participants in school based budgeting". It also required a Chancellor's Regulation (B-801) to detail the "comprehensive process of school based budgeting and expenditure reporting".

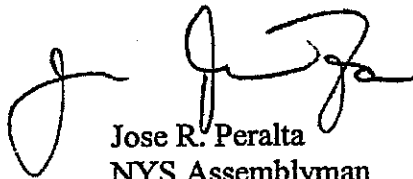
Subsequently, a booklet, "The Chancellor's Plan for School Leadership Teams" gave focus to the mission of teams which was, "the creation of the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP), including annual goals and objectives, and the development of a school-based budget and staffing plan aligned with the CEP" (p.14, 15). It called for school-based budgeting to be in place by spring of 2001 (p.16). Chancellor's Regulation B-801 was put into effect with the intent of "articulating the requirement for school leadership teams to be engaged in the formulation of school budgets". In Feb. 2004, Chancellor's Regulation A-655 was put into effect giving further support to the mandate of school leadership teams.

However, the problem is that the NYC Department of Education has not implemented school-based budgeting as intended by law and Chancellor's Regulation as it has shut out school leadership teams from the process. In effect, this means that parents and teachers throughout the city are being denied input into how school money is being spent through their representatives on school leadership teams. This lack of school leadership team involvement has been verified through an investigation conducted by the office of Council Member Moskowitz which culminated in her School-Based Budgeting Education Committee hearing on Nov.30, 2004. United Federation of Teachers representatives also testified that teams are being denied their role in the development of school budgets throughout the city violating the law and Chancellor's Regulation B-801.

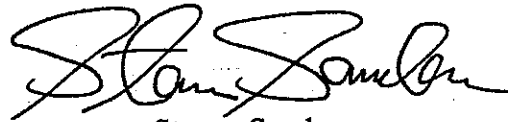
We, the members of the New York State Assembly, call upon the Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education to resolve this matter of non-compliance with the state law and Chancellor's Regulations regarding the shared decision making role of school leadership teams in the development of school budgets. We believe a clear process must be communicated to the regions and principals for the involvement of teams in the budget process and include a monitoring component. In addition, all team members must be trained as required by law in order to fulfill their budget duties.

We would appreciate a timely written response detailing a solution to this important school reform issue affecting parents and teachers throughout the city.

Sincerely,



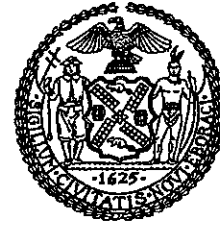
Jose R. Peralta
NYS Assemblyman
District 39, Queens



Steven Sanders
Chairman, Assembly
Education Committee



HON. BETSY GOTBAUM
NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC ADVOCATE



HON. ROBERT JACKSON
COUNCILMEMBER, 7TH DISTRICT

September 15, 2006

Mr. Joel Klein
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chancellor Klein:

We are writing to express our continued concern over the matter of school leadership teams (SLTs) being left out of the school-based budgeting process. In November of 2004 the City Council held a hearing on the issue of school-based budgeting. During that hearing, several witnesses testified that there is widespread non-compliance with provisions of State law concerning SLTs and school-based budgeting. Unfortunately, two years later, we continue to hear complaints from SLT members that they are being shut out of the school-based budgeting process.

As you know, sections 2590-h(15) and 2590-r of State Education Law require that school-based budgets be developed in consultation with school-based management teams (now known as school leadership teams). Section 2590-r also requires the Chancellor to provide "appropriate technical support and training to school personnel, parents and other participants in school based budgeting" and to develop "a collaborative school-based planning process involving parents, teachers, other school personnel and, where appropriate, students" and "a comprehensive planning and monitoring process to promote the implementation of school-based budgeting." Furthermore, Commissioner's Regulation 100.11 requires superintendents to develop a plan for school-based planning and shared decision-making that specifies, among other things, "the manner in which all State and Federal requirements for the involvement of parents in planning and decision-making will be coordinated with and met."

As the above-referenced laws and Commissioner's Regulation make clear, school-based budgets must be developed with meaningful and active input from SLTs.

To date, this issue has not been resolved, and we would like to meet with you and your staff to discuss strategies for ensuring compliance with State law and regulation and with your own regulations (B-801 and A-655) relating to school-based budgeting and SLTs. Our respective staff will be in touch with your office to follow-up on this letter. Thank you in advance for your attention and assistance. We look forward to working collaboratively with you to resolve this matter.

Sincerely,



Besty Gotbaum



Robert Jackson

cc: Erin Stevens
Jahmeliah Nathan

TESTIMONY OF

ERNEST LOGAN

PRESIDENT

THE COUNCIL OF
SCHOOL SUPERVISORS
AND ADMINISTRATORS

TO THE CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 20, 2007

Good morning Chairman Jackson, distinguished members of the committee and respected colleagues. My name is Dr. Randi Herman, and I am the First Vice President of the *Council of School Supervisors and Administrators* (CSA). Beside me is Ada Dolch, the Director of ELI, our highly successful Executive Leadership Institute, which the Council has graciously supported.

I want to thank each of you for your continued advocacy and support for public education. I also appreciate this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of CSA President Ernest Logan and our members, New York City school leaders. CSA represents over 5,600 Principals, Assistant Principals, Supervisors and Education Administrators who work for the Department of Education. We proudly count 8,000 retirees among our members. CSA also represents more than 400 Directors and Assistant Directors of city-funded Day Care centers.

A hearing on parental involvement and engagement is the perfect choice to begin a school year where we are seeing powerful new partnerships between the DoE, CSA, UFT, as well as advocacy organizations and business and community groups. Parents should be in the forefront of these new efforts.

As recently as yesterday, we saw the commitment of Deputy Mayor Walcott, Chancellor Klein and Chief Family Engagement Officer Guerrier, when they announced additional parent outreach programs, at a forum at PS 11 in Brooklyn. "Most notably, the DOE has now consolidated under her leadership all of the parent support and engagement functions that previously had been distributed throughout the organization, including: 1) training and oversight of the 1,300 parent coordinators serving New York City public schools; 2) coordination of engagement efforts with the 32 Community Education Councils; 3) management of the translation unit; 4) leadership of a major initiative to ensure that every school has a well functioning Senior Leadership Team, 5) coordination with other city agencies to improve responsiveness to parent inquiries; and 6) replacing the regional

parent support structure with a Community School District based organization to ensure greater access and responsiveness to parent concerns.”

Despite the mayor’s stated good intentions to promote genuine parent input and participation, our experience has been that unless there exists a clear statutory basis and role for parents in our school system and the matrix of decision-making, it is too easily ignored.

A meaningful role for parents and the community cannot be left merely to the discretion of this mayor or any successive mayor. It must be part of the law and as such put into practice. Even then, vigilant oversight is needed by this legislative body to ensure that the spirit as well as the letter of the law is being carried out.

Although the current state law establishing a mayoral dominated system of governance does provide for parental and community participation through the mechanisms of the 32 local community school districts and their education councils, they have nonetheless been minimized and rendered virtually impotent.

The City Council can and must ensure the viability of the avenues of participation for parents and communities, which are currently provided for in law. It is our hope that these opportunities for local participation will be strengthened as the current law is reviewed by both this City Council and the State Legislature.

The benefits of engaging parents are obvious and measurable. Across the board, we witness higher grades, better attendance, increased motivation and better self-esteem when parents are actively involved in their children’s education. The benefits for schools are equally as tangible. Decreased alcohol and drug use and fewer instances of disruptive or violent behavior go along with higher staff morale and better community relations.

Strong connections between schools, parents and the community can mean the difference between the success and failure of a school. In today's climate of increasing expectations and accountability, schools that tap into the strengths, enthusiasm and resources of parents are going to establish a strong foundation from which to achieve educational success.

Strengthening parental engagement is on the minds of Principals across the city. Someone once said that "knowledge is power." A knowledgeable parent will feel good about themselves and that feeling will be emulated by their children. We at CSA take this statement very seriously. One member sums this up by saying:

"We have to begin by making them know that they are part of the solutions for not only their individual child, but for all of the children in the school. They must be involved from the opening of school until the closing of school, and some of their suggestions must be tried."

Every school incorporates different strategies to engage parents, some of them incredibly creative and insightful. One member, an elementary Principal explains:

"We have weekly workshops during the day for parents that consist of Literacy, Math, Science, Homework, Health, Culture, and financial investment, to name a few. We also have Saturday ESL and computer workshops."

Another Principal says:

"Our parents receive information in their native languages and are made to feel welcome at all times. We celebrate a wide variety of multicultural events and holidays to attain maximum Parent and Community involvement."

Of course, we are here today because we do not live in a perfect world. Ever since the Children First reforms were first implemented, parents across the city have strongly criticized their lack of access and input into the school reform effort. We share concerns voiced very recently by Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum that the Committee on Special Education (CSE), which was set up by the DOE, remains inaccessible and unresponsive to many parents of special-needs students.” Her survey, conducted the week before school started, found that half of the calls made to CSE went unanswered or resulted in unreturned messages. Our most vulnerable students and their parents deserve an engaging DOE that is proactive and responsive to parents’ concerns.

Strong PTAs and effective School Leadership Teams are critical components to a school’s success, but as we all know, SLTs have not always been a priority of the DoE. Again, it’s worth noting that with the DoE, CSA, UFT and others all working closely together this year, we have an opportunity to change that. We applaud Chancellor Klein for appointing Martine Guerrier as Chief Family Engagement Officer to advocate for parents. We know that Martine’s office is making strides to ensure that each of our schools has a viable Parents Association/Parent-Teachers Association. We hope that all parents in New York City will read the “NYC Family Guide, 2007-2008,” so they can be better prepared to navigate through the current system. We are delighted to read that the Chancellor and Mayor acknowledge that “We have hired a Chief Family Engagement Officer, Martine Guerrier, whose responsibility is listening to you, giving you information, and helping you get involved...we’ve created District Family Advocates and borough directors who are located in district offices throughout the City, so you can get answers to your questions more easily.” Page 10 of this Family Guide lists “Parents’ Rights and Responsibilities.” It is crucial that we get past the reams of paper and hold workshops throughout the city to make certain that parents are aware of some of the novel and transparent changes

We must take advantage of this opportunity to go beyond the words and to create a city-wide environment that respects and supports the vital role of parents. For the past several months CSA has worked collaboratively with the Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy in re-visiting the Chancellor's Regulations dealing with School Leadership Teams.

For its part, CSA's Executive Leadership Institute is launching a series of workshops for Principals on how to build an effective School Leadership Team.

It is our hope that the Chancellor will reconvene the meaningful and productive forum that existed early in his tenure called the Chancellor's School Leadership Team Advisory Council. At these high-level meetings, parents were truly appreciated as partners for their input in city-wide school improvement endeavors.

On the district level, we have seen multiple rounds of major changes. In 2003, CSA and a host of other plaintiffs began using the courts to challenge efforts by the DoE to eliminate community school districts, considered by many a crucial localized access point for parents. As part of a settlement agreed to several months ago, community school districts play an active role in submitting recommendations to the Chancellor about a district's annual capacity plan, based on data provided by the Chancellor on enrollment/utilization for each school within the district.

The role of Community Superintendents requires that they have regular communications with all parent associations in their district and meet at least quarterly with elected officers of the PTA and provide information about student achievement, annual reading scores, comparison of achievement of pupils in comparable grades and schools. The Community Superintendent also attends monthly meetings of the Community District Education Council to discuss the current state of the schools in the district and progress

being made toward the implementation of the district's comprehensive education plan. Another important statutory role of the Community Superintendent is to prepare semi-annual and end of year reports, including an accounting of all funds received and expended by the Community District Education Council. This report is shared with the Chancellor and the public.

At the school level, our members believe that parents, teachers and administrators must work together to help students succeed. In reviewing the recent DoE surveys, we hope that the data can be improved by attracting more parent responders. This can only be done through continual dialog with our parents. Our schools need to extend a warm and welcoming invitation to parents (in their native language) **throughout the year**, not just during the first few days of school or during Open School Week. It is important that we convey to parents the most efficient and effective channel of communication that they should use in a given situation, be it to contact a teacher, a guidance counselor, or the parent coordinator, who should be able to direct a parent in need to the proper resource.

Our field services professionals are in schools every day, working not only with Principals, but also Assistant Principals, Supervisors and Administrators. When it comes to advising our members on how to build community and parental involvement, some of the basic tenets include:

- Raise parental awareness through a steady stream of outreach efforts;
- Identify Parent Participants, their strengths and their unique skills;
- Train Staff and Parents on how to interact and help each other;
- Build Commitment with regular meetings and develop a shared vision & common goals;
- Institute Incentives & Recognize/Appreciate Contributions;

One of our elementary school principals honors students of the month to encourage greater parent participation at PTA meetings. For various reasons, this involvement drops

off during middle school and high school. This is a challenge that we must address. One of our high school principals has recognized the need to be creative and flexible, so they offer parent workshops on Saturdays. They also hold a cultural festival, replete with foods from around the world to draw parents into the school and the education of their child. While most CSA members are committed to parental engagement, there may be some school leaders who have not established a working School Leadership Team. If you come across this situation, I urge you to contact me so that we can assist the individual school in improving their SLTs or parental involvement in general. I can be reached at 718-852-3000, or at randi@csa-nyc.org.

Let me close by saying that we at CSA are optimistic about this school year. High achievement can only be reached through the collaboration and cooperation of all of the stake holders in our educational system. Now is the time to put our talk into action by establishing policies and procedures that engage parents at every level of their child's education. Now is the time to ensure that this moment of openness and collaboration is not fleeting, but is embedded as a cultural norm in our school system for years to come.

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN

SCOTT M. STRINGER
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Oversight Hearing on the Status of DOE's Parent Engagement Initiatives
Thursday, September 20, 2007

Good morning Chairman Jackson and members of the Committee on Education. My name is Patrick Sullivan and I am the Manhattan Representative on the Panel for Educational Policy. On behalf of Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer, I thank you for the opportunity to testify on the status of the Department of Education's parent engagement initiatives.

I would like to begin my testimony by sharing with you my motivation for serving on the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP) because I think it is germane to the discussion here today. As a New York City public school parent, I have been greatly disappointed by what is generally a lack of sincere effort on the part of the Department of Education (DOE) to engage parents in a meaningful way as partners in their children's education. Whether we assess DOE's efforts to engage parents system-wide, at the level of the school district, or within the individual school, the results are the same: DOE policies and practices have marginalized parents. It is my hope that by serving on the Panel I will be able to serve as a voice for the countless parents who find themselves disenfranchised in their own children's education.

DOE has recently proposed changes to Chancellor's Regulation A-655 which will further erode parents' ability to partner with principals and teachers in defining school-level goals. Chancellor's Regulation A-655 sets forth how School Leadership Teams (SLTs) are to function. Under the existing regulation, the SLT, which is composed of parents, teachers, and principals, serves as a body through which these parties work collaboratively to first develop a Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) and then create a school budget in accordance with the goals of the CEP. DOE's proposed changes to A-655 reverse this process: budgets would first be created by the principal and then a CEP would be developed ostensibly to fit within the confines of an already established allocation of resources. Additionally, under DOE's proposed changes, principals will have sole authority over both the final budget decisions and the CEP, thereby diminishing the roles of both parents and teachers. These proposed changes appear to be in conflict not only with the spirit of the state education law which established SLTs but also with the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act which outlines clear requirements for parental participation in Title I schools.

As it stands now, Regulation A-655 fosters greater cooperation between parents, teachers, and principals. The changes DOE is proposing will result in parents being more reluctant to participate since decisions about how to allocate their school's budget will be made before they

are engaged by school administrators in the development of the CEP. Ultimately, the proposed changes to A-655 threaten to weaken rather than strengthen SLTs.

It does not appear that parents who seek involvement in education matters at the district level are fairing any better than those who wish to be involved at the school level. Education Councils, which replaced community school boards when the State Legislature authorized mayoral control in 2002, were established to ensure the existence of parental and community input at the school district level. A June 2006 report by Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, however, found that Education Councils are not performing the legally mandated functions for which they were created. More specifically, 61% of surveyed Education Council members reported that their council was not enabled to fulfill one or more of its responsibilities mandated by New York State Education Law. The report also indicated that, as a result of DOE's disinvestment in Education Councils, parental and public participation are suffering. Surveyed Education Council members reported that their councils were plagued by high turnover, an inability to make quorum, and low attendance by the public at their monthly meetings. The findings of this report, which is entitled *Parents Dismissed*, provide overwhelming evidence that the lack of support DOE has provided to Education Councils has thwarted their ability to serve as an effective apparatus for parent involvement at the district level.

I would like to say a few words about my experience on the Panel for Educational Policy. In theory, the PEP should be another mechanism for parental input but even on this body parents are marginalized by the manner in which the PEP public meetings are structured: all public comment is relegated to the end of the session after all voting has concluded. The relegation of the public comment to the end of PEP meetings makes it painfully obvious that parental input is not being taken into consideration on the most important issues facing our school system.

I applaud the City Council for examining and holding a hearing on parent engagement, especially as it considers the question of reauthorization of mayoral control. This week DOE was recognized by the Broad Foundation, an organization that actively promotes the adoption of a corporatist model for education. It is worth noting, that in my twenty years in the corporate world I have learned that no complex process can be changed without the full involvement of all the stakeholders. There is no process more complex than the education of a child and parents are simply too important to be shut out of that process. It is past time for the Mayor and Chancellor to provide a real voice for parents in our school system but the proposed changes to A-655 are a step in the wrong direction. Parents have always turned to their elected and appointed representatives to represent their interests in public schools, and I stand with you now to make sure that their voices are no longer silenced.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.



ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

Helping children succeed in school

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Matthew Lenaghan

**Testimony to be delivered to the
New York City Council Education Committee
Re: Status of the DOE's Parent Engagement Initiative
By Kim Sweet, Advocates for Children of New York
September 20, 2007**

Good morning. My name is Kim Sweet, and I am the Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York. I thank you for this opportunity to discuss the status of the Department of Education's Parent Engagement Initiative.

For more than 35 years, Advocates for Children has been helping parents in New York City to navigate a public school system that many find confusing and unresponsive. Year after year, we receive thousands of calls from parents and guardians who are desperately trying to get help for their children, but hitting brick walls everywhere that they turn.


We were therefore pleased to see the DOE dedicate resources to improving how parents experience the New York City public schools. The new Chief Family Engagement Officer, Martine Guerrier, appears to be listening earnestly to the parents she meets and making a sincere effort to understand the diverse viewpoints and agendas in the parent community. To the extent that the Parent Engagement Initiative is developing programs that make it easier for parents to be involved in the education of their children and the improvement of their schools, we at Advocates for Children remain supportive and willing to help.



However, today I wanted to focus on an aspect of the Parent Engagement Initiative that we at Advocates for Children find extremely troubling – that is, the DOE's apparent use of the Parent Engagement Initiative to channel parents who have problems away from the people who have the authority to solve them.

In this second phase of the Children First reforms, which are taking effect this fall, we have asked numerous DOE officials where a parent should go for help if he or she is having a problem with a principal. We have been told that the parent should go to the new District Family Advocates, who are hired and supervised by the Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy. Indeed, the DOE's new Parent Guide, released this week, confirms that instruction. The problem is, however, that these District Family Advocates and their supervisors have no authority whatsoever over the principals; they are not even in the same chain of command. If a principal will not listen to the pleas of a District Family Advocate, there is really nowhere else in the new structure for the parent to go.

We have no objection to District Family Advocates, to the extent that they may help parents work their way through the often impenetrable bureaucracy. Our objection is that parents with complaints are being funneled to the District Family Advocates, rather than to DOE officials who have the authority to respond to their concerns. This structure does not promote parent engagement; it promotes parent disenfranchisement. Instead of giving parents access to the school power structure, it creates a separate bureaucracy just for them, thereby insulating principals and other decision-makers from having to deal with parents who need help.



Isolating parent engagement to a separate bureaucracy also allows the DOE to compartmentalize its efforts on behalf of parents, instead of seeing parent engagement as a key part of every component of the system. The impact of this approach can be seen in other areas of the system where parents feel that their point of view is not being heard. One example is the absence of a mechanism for parent and community input into the planning and geographic placement of new, small schools. Another example is the lack of effective communication with parents about how to navigate the high school choice process for students with special needs and English Language Learners. Parent engagement needs to be integrated with the rest of the DOE, not separated into its own realm.

We ask the City Council, in your oversight role, to protect against this misuse of the parent engagement structure, which actually isolates parents from access to authority. We urge the DOE to establish instead a system that brings real power to bear on resolving parents' concerns.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



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New York City Council Committee on Education
Oversight Hearing on the Status of DOE's Parent Engagement Initiatives

Thursday, September 20th, 2007

Good morning. My name is Shana Marks-Odinga. I am an organizer with the Alliance for Quality Education and a parent of two middle school children in the New York City public school system.

I am here primarily to discuss DOE's Parent Engagement Initiatives specifically as they relate to the Contracts for Excellence, the new accountability system passed into law this year in Albany as part of the school finance reform legislation and Campaign for Fiscal Equity settlement. The Contract for Excellence is New York City's plan for investing the new education aid to improve educational achievement of the highest-needs students. Beginning in 2008-09, New York City is required to consult with parents and the public in developing the Contract.

2007 Public Engagement: We were gratified that DOE held public hearings in 2007 on the Contract proposal in the five boroughs. However, the proposed plan was released at the close of business on Thursday, July 5, for hearings running July 9-12, with public comments due on July 14 and the City's Contracts to be submitted to the State Education Department on July 15, 2007.

In addition, the proposal released on July 5 was vague and lacked any details that would have enabled parents to understand how these funds were going to make a difference in their particular schools. Without sufficient details, parents and other stakeholders at the school-based level were unable to participate in the planning process in a substantive, meaningful way. In this first year, we were operating under a short timeframe, but this process did not allow for real deliberation on issues of great import and complexity.

2008 Consultation with Parents & the Public: Beginning in 2008-09, districts are required to consult with parents and the public in developing their contracts. Foundation aid projections for every district for each of the next four years are available now. The purpose of consulting with parents and the public is to incorporate their input before plans are developed. Public engagement around the 2008-09 *Contract for Excellence* should begin in October 2007 in order to ensure a meaningful process.

2008 Public Hearings: Districts are required to hold public hearings after *Contracts* are developed but before they are submitted to the state. DOE needs to ensure that maximum participation is enabled by: holding hearings during evening hours; giving at least 30 day notice of hearings; establishing public notice procedures (publish on web sites, send notices home with students, publish in newspapers, mailings to district voters, etc.); accepting testimony in multiple languages and providing for the language translation needs of any substantial population of non-English speaking parents; etc. Further, all Community Education Councils must solicit public comment on community school district *Contracts for Excellence*.

Parent Complaint Process: DOE must establish a parent complaint process; parents are the best watchdogs over local schools. There should be a standardized form for such complaints that is available on the DOE web site.

September 20th, 2007

**Testimony by Miguel Melendez
Before the NYC Council Sub-Committee on Education.**

**Good Morning Chairman Robert Jackson, and Honorable Members of the NYC Council
Sub-Committee on Education.**

It was good to meet you and Council member John Liu yesterday at the press conference requesting the reinstatement of Debbie Almonstaer. I will speak about her later.

My name is Miguel Ernesto Melendez, I have been an activist for Latino rights in NYC for over forty years.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak before you and share with you some of my observations concerning the continuous and never ending "reform" of the Department of Education (DOE).

I was terminated by the DOE on June 29th, 2007, after seven years of providing services, support and building capacity for the parents and families for our public school students.

This testimony, as you will hear, is not from a disgruntled employee but rather from someone who is genuinely concerned about the message that is being sent to our young students. I am happy to announce that within a month after my termination I was offered a position in the health care field and I will begin my new position on October 1st, 2007.

Having been forced by State statute to revert back to Districts, the Office of Parent Engagement has changed its name to the Office of Family Engagement and Advocacy and went to a borough model retaining five of the previous 10 Regional Directors, of the Parent Support Office., The Borough of the Bronx has the largest Latino population (710,000, with an 8% increase in Latinos birth between 2005 and 2006). The DOE was quoted (El Diario Editorial Disappearing Latino Leaders June 20th, 2007 attached) as having assigned a Latina as Bronx Borough Director to represent and advocate for the interest of this vulnerable and underpowered community. This Latina is actually from Curacao, and the last time I looked, it is a possession of the Dutch-Netherlands. Upon raising this fact to them, the DOE quickly conceded and are now stating that she speaks Spanish. To date, no one has been held accountable for lying to the press and to the citizens of New York. More importantly the largest population in the Bronx has no representation that can identify with them culturally. Apparently those in government are not held to the same standards of integrity and honesty that we ordinary citizens are expected to adhere to.

If a non-African person speaks Swahili can they actually represent that community???? I suspect that the response of that community would be a resounding NO! Allow me to use another example. This is the equivalent of an Arab who speaks Yiddish representing Jewish people. According to the Bloomberg/Klein Administration the logic is if you speak the language of a people you can represent them????

The 70 Family Advocates assigned to Districts were formally known as Regional and District Parent Support Officers. These are the front line employees represented by DC37, which have provided information and support to parents long before Children First in 2003. Given yesterday's announcement they would have you believe that Family Advocates is a new and improved level of support for parents. This new administration has quickly learned the value of "spinning" the truth "a la" DOE. Statistically, the parent surveys can not be considered a representative sample given the low numbers of returns and obtained after repeated extensions to deadlines.

It is deplorable to witness people (especially of color) making themselves available and becoming instruments in creating an environment where communities and colleagues are pitted against each other. This is not about individuals but rather a policy of discrimination and exclusion in a place where we can least afford it, in the institutions that are mandated to academically prepare the next generation for a diverse world.

It is not enough to wear a "Guayabera" (traditional Caribbean men's shirt) three times a year and go to the Puerto Rican, Dominican and Cuban Day Parades. This is profoundly hypocritical. What has been done to incorporate these Latino groups into the city government and reflect the diversity of New York ???.

On four separate occasions (May 24th, 30th, July 2nd, and August 2nd, 2007) the National Institute for Latino Policy has requested Equal Employment Opportunity data only to be denied each and every time.

In June 2007, DOE in announcing the appointment of Evelyn Castro to the position of Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood, their press release began, "the Puerto Rican Evelyn Castro....". Never in the history of announcing appointments has the DOE made reference to a person's national or religious origin. This is a clear indication of their culpability.

Latinos make up 35% of the NYC population and 40% NYCDOE enrollment. What is disconcerting to the Latino community is that the Latino Civil Rights Movement of the late 60's and 70's was for parity, and justice, and justice demands equality. We were at the forefront in bilingual education with the ASPIRA Consent Decree. As first generation Latinos, born and educated in the US, we were encouraged to attend college with the promise that it would level the playing field in the

market place of employment. So we opened up the Universities and fought for open and equal admissions and we attended SUNY and CUNY and we went to Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Howard University, NYU, received our degrees and today we are Doctors, Lawyers, Educators, Public Administrators, Architects, Journalist and Urban Planners; we have even made it to the US Congress. One of our own is running for President of the US. We are prepared and yet we are still denied.

In 2005 51.6% of Latinos did not graduate from High School in four years, only 31.4% of Bi-lingual students graduated on time with a 24.8% drop out rate. As educators and administrators we are aware of the challenges within our community.

This complete disregard towards the Latino community sends the wrong message to our youth. The message is clearly that "in this great and diverse city there are no qualified Latinos to do the job of representing parents and families even if 40% of the student body is Latino". This anti-Latino posture feeds into the xenophobia that so many communities are experiencing.

The DOE has demonstrated, not just in the Latino community, that it is well below standard in Cultural Competency. After forcing out the Founder and Principal Debbie Almontaser of the Kahil Gibran International Academy, the DOE named a non-Arabic speaking principal to replace Almontsaer. I met Debbie Alontsaer as a Revson Fellow on the Future of the City of New York at Columbia University and I can tell you that she is a well respected educator, a woman of peace and integrity. The Latino community supports the reinstatement of Debbie Almontsaer This is as bewildering and absurd as the elimination of all Latinos in management in the Office of Family Advocacy.

In relation to School Leadership Teams and the proposed modifications to the Chancellor's Regulations, given my experience, it is my opinion that there is a clear attempt here to operationlize what is the reality. In the field, in most of the schools, parents are not equal partners. The one percent of a school's Title 1 budget that is earmarked for parent involvement are better kept secrets than the plans on how to succeed in Iraq. Although people in my position (Regional Directors of Parent Support Office) were given the responsibility to ensure compliance, we were never given the authority to hold Principals accountable with clear consequences. I don't believe that was the intent of the law, but here they are again with the DOE "spin".

I would at this time like to echo the Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum comments on NYCDOE receiving the Broad Award for Excellence in Urban Education in the US "the rest of the country is in trouble if this is the standard to be measured by".

I would also like to support Bronx State Senator Rev. Ruben Diaz Sr's. opinion that the "legacy of this administration will not be the Mayor of Education Reform but the Mayor of the Educational Mess".

As elected officials, you were elected to be the stewards of our Civil, Democratic, and Human rights; to be a beacon of hope and come to our defense when we are unjustly attacked or discriminated against. I ask each of you to question everything I have stated before you today. Please investigate my observations and allegations

I urge you to go to the people, go to the parents, consider having Borough meetings at appropriate times not in the middle of the summer on a Friday at 6 p.m. where less than 15 parents show up for a Borough wide meeting to "Ask Martine" as those meetings were billed.

I will certainly make myself available to you.

I would like to leave you with a quote by George Orwell author of Animal Farm, and 1984, "In times of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act".

On behalf of the Latino, for this one moment in time, become conduits to the truth on behalf of the children of this great city expose the lies and bring a speedy remedy to our community.

I truly hope that my testimony today was received with open hearts and receptive ears.

Thank you.

Miguel Melendez is the author of "We took the Streets...fighting for Latino Rights" (St. Martin's Press/Rutgers University Press). He is also the recipient of the Charles Revson Fellow on the Future of the City of New York at Columbia University *

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Disappearing Latino leaders

It seems that the Department of Education (DOE) is suffering from a case of CAU-itis. Side effects include the exclusion of Latinos as leaders and decision-makers.

Last week, Mayor Mike Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein announced the resignation of Deputy Chancellor Andres Alonso. Until then, Alonso, a Latino, was the city's top instructional leader. And in the changes to the Office of Parent Engagement, three Latino regional directors were dropped. There are now five borough directors, with one Hispanic, according to Parent Engagement Chief Martine Guerrier.

It's certainly not a given that a non-Hispanic will be ineffective with the needs of Latino communities. But in a public school system that is 40 percent Hispanic, an absence, or lack of, Latino leaders in the DOE's upper echelons, or any agency for that matter, is troublesome.

Recent reports demonstrate the growing need for Latinos in the highest ranks

of city agencies. Between 2000 to 2005, there was an 8 percent increase in births to Mexican women in New York City. This has implications for our school system, where cultural competency, language accessibility and immigration concerns will have to weigh more heavily in all aspects of planning. The expertise of Latinos with community credibility is invaluable in shaping policy and outreach.

That was a point the Community Assistance Unit (CAU) missed. The Unit liaises with community boards and is critical in emergency situations. Yet, as reported by **EL DIARIO/LA PRENSA** columnist Gerson Borrero, the unit has no Hispanic directors.

The Mayor has tossed out his lame line about his focus on merit, insulting Latinos. And instead of the administration suggesting that it would try to do better, it dug in its heels.

It's time now for Latino leaders and organizations to dig in their heels and demand better.

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TESTIMONY OF JAMES W. DEVOR before the Committee on Education at its Hearing on the "*Status of DOE's Parent Engagement Initiatives*" held on September 20, 2007

Thank you for inviting me to appear before you this morning. It's an honor to speak before this Committee and especially its Chairman who I and my family (including my ten year old) have admired for many years.

I'm a public school parent and have been an officer of the Community Education Council for District 15 in Brooklyn since its inception. In addition, I also presently serve as the acting President for the Association of New York Community Education Councils.

Most importantly I participated in the "Parent Engagement Task Force" being discussed this morning. As such, I confess to having some limited input in the proposed revision of Chancellor's Regulation A-655. Based on that experience, I think the new initiatives deserve some cheers and some jeers.

First, the good news. I think the Department has taken some meaningful steps in the right direction. The Office of Family Engagement has demonstrated a real commitment to listening to parents. Aside from the Ask Martine tour, this is perhaps best demonstrated by the availability of a 30 day public comment period before the implementation of A-655 – something that until very recently, Tweed adamantly refused to afford the general public when other Chancellor's Regulations were revised.

More seriously, the new revision reflects a sincere commitment to keeping the limited promises made in the Regulation. Thus, the new section entitled "*Support for School and District Leadership Teams*", for the first time, formally commits the Department to some kind of "professional development and technical support" for parent SLT members. Furthermore, in creating specific oversight and reporting obligations on District Family Advocates and Borough Directors, the revision begins to set up a genuine accountability framework which, in the past, was sorely lacking. Likewise, the creation of a rudimentary *Grievance* procedure (while far too limited and inadequate) further reflects a more candid recognition that parents are entitled to some kind of due process in the operation of their SLT's.

Having said all that, it is not my intention to now go through a line by line dissertation on what's wrong with the new Regulation. Suffice it to say that I largely agree with many of the substantive criticisms you will hear from other parents today. I am also attaching to this Statement a copy of the "Final Document" prepared by the Task Force membership as it pertained to School Leadership Teams. As you peruse it, you will see that what the Task Force wanted and what the Department delivered were not entirely in harmony.

I will, however, take this opportunity to address what I think are the two most serious problems raised by the new Regulation. First, the commitment to training - while laudable - is fundamentally flawed. Second, the role and authority of SLT's is being excessively and unacceptably reduced under the new revision.

Although the subject areas for training enumerated in the new version of A-655 are OK, the mechanism for implementing that training is far too insular. For example, many of us in the Task Force noted the severe disconnect frequently encountered between parents' (and teachers') expectations of what SLT's could and should do and what school principals believed. To remedy that cognitive dissonance, the Task Force was insistent that in addition to "budgeting", **mandatory** training also be had on "what a CEP is and how it is to be carried out" as well as on "the breadth of issues open to discussion within the SLT". Moreover, we were all adamant that training in those latter two subjects be done with *all SLT members present at the same sessions*. Unfortunately, that critical suggestion did not make it into the proposed revision.

The Task Force also emphasized that much of the training should be done, by and large, through outside entities with the full involvement of core stake holders such as parents, teachers and school administrators via a variety mechanisms including DVD's, online training and (possibly) tuition reimbursement. Alas, that suggestion too got lost on the cutting room floor.

My most serious objection, though, relates to the proposed changes in Section II of A-655. Under the "old" version, "[t]he responsibilities of the SLT are to develop and review the school's ... CEP . . . and to consult with the principal in developing a school based budget . . . aligned with the CEP."

Thus, under the "old" Regulation, the SLT's were responsible for the collaborative creation of the CEP out of which the school budget was supposed to be developed.

Under the revision, though, "[t]he SLT is responsible for developing a ... CEP that is aligned with the school based budget." Further (contrary to the Chancellor's own Regulation B-801), the school-based expenditures budget is exclusively prepared by the Principal (albeit with full disclosure and some kind of solicitation of SLT "input"). Consequently, the CEP is only created after the budget and must be "consistent" with it. As such, most of the major decisions regarding school policy will have already been made (without meaningful input by parents) **before the CEP process even begins.** A copy of the two versions of the relevant section of Regulation A-655 is attached to this Statement for this Committee's convenience.

This policy is even more anomalous once it is understood that currently, the CEP is supposed to be written by July 1st while the budget is often not ready until September. Accordingly, in an effort to restore Principals' prerogatives and to keep parents out of the decision making process, Tweed has figuratively put the cart before the horse!

Chancellor Klein and his minions will undoubtedly attempt to justify this policy screw-up by asserting that the vast majority of SLT members lack the skills to usefully participate in the budget process. It may surprise those present here that I completely agree. The solution, however, is **not** to "candidly acknowledge" that deficiency and thereby openly exclude parents and staffs from meaningful participation in school decision making.. Rather, the task of "Family Engagement" is to create the conditions for useful and substantial parent input by way of adequate training to permit parents and staff to fulfill their roles under currently existing State Law and Regulations.

I, for one, have every confidence that if SLT members are given those resources, they will live up to their obligations outstandingly. So too, I believe, does everyone to whom this statement is addressed. Thank you.

P.S. I am also attaching a copy of a statement regarding the "Role of Parent Coordinators" for the Committee's consideration.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS FINAL DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to try to solve the following historic problems in the functioning and operating of School Leadership Teams in the city of New York:

- The premium placed on collaboration and its role in setting a common course for a school.
- A clearer understanding of the responsibilities of the SLT
- A clearer understanding of DOE's responsibility in ensuring that this work happens
- The role that all the parties involved need to have in setting up district SLT's.

It is the consensus of the committee that a collaborative decision making process will guarantee a clearer vision for the functioning of the school which should automatically translate into better performance:

Not noted in other sections, but all materials will be translated appropriately for the population being served by the school and meetings will be translated as well.

SELECTION AND COMPOSITION OF THE TEAM

- The SLT shall be set up in the Spring following the appropriate PA/PTA and UFT chapter meetings during which officers are elected. At these meetings each constituent group will select its members for the SLT.
- The Principal or someone he or she designates for just this function shall be responsible for ensuring that this happens...and that the elections are held with the maximum amount of participation and outreach.
- Core Members of the Team (Principal, UFT chapter leader, and PA president/co president) must be at all meetings barring emergencies..
- There should be a goal of two year staggered terms for participants.
- The chair and co-chair should be selected by consensus and should not be any of the core members.

STAFF SUPPORT

- The Principal or SLT will designate a person to handle all communications, note taking, preparations, of documents, meeting notices, minutes, agendas, etc.
- The District SLT will be supported by the District Parent officer

- The Office of Parent engagement at DOE will be responsible for collecting all data discussed in this document...including the twice a year reports on the functioning of the SLT.
- The Office of Parent Engagement will work with the major partners to rejuvenate the dormant citywide SLT.

CORE FUNCTIONING OF THE SLT

- The SLT's will develop the CEP and the budget strategies necessary to implement that CEP. Throughout the year the SLT will review the CEP and update and modify it to address changing needs and circumstances. Determining how money is spent consistent with the CEP is an essential function here.
- ***Over the course of the year, the SSO will provide written reports to the SLT charting the progress of the school on its major priorities and the priorities and special focus of the SSO itself.***
- The SLT should have the flexibility to discuss and advocate for new strategies in dealing with school wide problems that are specific to that school...***school wide climate and strategies to avoid discipline problems***, teacher morale, teaching innovations, etc.
- ***The SLT will set procedures for relating to other school committees such as the c-30 committee to ensure that decisions made by those committees are in keeping with the goals and priorities envisioned by the CEP***
- In buildings that house multiple schools, those school leadership teams should meet in common a minimum of twice a year.

TRAINING

- There shall be mandatory training of all SLT participants and verified completion of some minimum amount of training shall be an absolute prerequisite for receipt of stipends by SLT members. This mandatory training shall include the following:
 - 1) ***Understanding of what a CEP is***
 - 2) ***Understanding school budgeting and its relationship to implementing the vision of the CEP.***
 - 3) ***The breadth of issues open to discussion within the SLT***

Additional training (including - but not limited to - subjects such as data assessment, consensus and/or team building, etc.) must also be made available through a variety of mechanisms such as District and/or Borough meetings, DVD's , online training and (perhaps) tuition reimbursement.

Said additional training should be done, by and large, through outside entities

selected through an RFP process with the full involvement of the core stakeholders in the system.

To the extent feasible, differentiated learning opportunities permitting more advanced training of experienced SLT members should be provided for.

Training should begin over the summer so as to facilitate a quick start for the SLT.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- The Principal will be accountable for the successful functioning of the SLT.
- The Office of Family Engagement will collect all data twice a year and will send that data to the District superintendent.
- ***When the District Superintendent evaluates*** the Principal, the functioning of the SLT and how it functions will be considered.
- There will be regular evaluation of all participants involved in implementing the SLT in order to ensure the best performance possible.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

While all efforts will be made to establish and operate the SLT consistent with the values and goals suggested in the rest of this document, the committee recognizes that things don't always work as they should: to that end, the committee sees two general scenarios where disputes might need to be resolved: the first being a constituent group that has felt disempowered by the selection process when the SLT was set up, and the other is regarding the CEP and whether or not significant disagreement exists over the final document by groups within the SLT. To that end the group is recommending the following process once a grievance is filed:

- The Office of Parent engagement will refer the grievance to the District Superintendent...
- The district superintendent will attempt to mediate the grievance.
- If that process fails, then the ***District Leadership Team*** will attempt to mediate the grievance.
- If that process fails, then the Chancellor's office will intervene and ultimately make a ruling.
- That ruling, if it goes to the core of 100.11 can then be appealed to the SED...



class size matters

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Testimony of Leonie Haimson, Class Size Matters

before the New York City Council Education Committee on parental involvement

September 20, 2007

The Chancellor's proposed revision of A 655, the regulations governing School leadership teams, would take away the authority of these bodies to determine school budgets, as the regulations now currently state. If adopted, in future principals would only have to "consult" with SLTs before determining school budget unilaterally. Then the school's comprehensive education plan would be written afterwards, in alignment with the budget as already decided.

Also, rather than having consensus decision-making on other matters, as currently exists, in future SLTs could choose to decide issues by majority vote. This also strengthens principal's hand to detriment of parents.

Similarly, the power of the District Leadership Team would be considerably diminished. In the future, the role of the DLT would be to develop and review the District Comprehensive Educational Plan (DCEP), including annual goals and objectives which must be aligned with the District's and Chancellor's goals – rather than deciding on those goals themselves.

All of these proposals would continue to erode the ability of parents to have real and substantive decisionmaking power when it comes to their children's education. This is the continuation of a long-standing trend under this administration, to stifle the parent voice and ignore their views when it comes to their children's education.

Another recent example of this is the DOE parent survey, which was hailed by the administration as a good-faith effort to take parent views into account in the grading of their children's schools. Yet first of all, the results of the parent survey will only count for 3-5% of a school's grade, which is pitifully small. 85% of the grade will depend on test scores alone.

Moreover, in their statements in recent days the administration has made it clear that they are not even ready to listen to the results of their own parent surveys. In the press conference and press release, they lumped together the responses of four different questions, to make it look like smaller classes was not the top priority of parents, when it clearly was. Nearly one of every four respondents, or 24%, named smaller classes as their top choice from a list of ten choices. Then twice, at the press conference and later on his radio show, the Mayor claimed that "more or better enrichment programs" outranked class size by a "two to one margin", whereas enrichment came in second, at 19%.

I was one of the participants in the parent focus groups that were organized by DOE and KPMG to help develop the survey. Our focus group as well as every other said that large classes, as well as an overemphasis on testing, were top concerns of parents and should receive their own questions on the survey. Yet when we were given a draft of the survey, it didn't have a single question that mentioned

class size or testing on it. We protested vociferously, and DOE offered a compromise— that they would include class size and test prep as one of a list of ten possible priorities in a catch-all question at the end of the survey.

We didn't think this was sufficient – since it seemed purposely designed to minimize these problems and ensure that these issues would get as low a preference as possible. Still, I never would have guessed that when despite the flawed design of the survey, when class size reduction still came out as number one, the administration would continue to deny the results that were staring them in the face.

Yesterday, NYC received the Broad award – unjustly so, as I and many parents truly believe that the statistics on which this award was purportedly based were highly flawed. But in any case, the \$500,000 that the award brings is a pittance, compared to the \$250 million in state funds that DOE is now putting at risk because of their stubborn refusal to submit a real class size reduction plan to the state.

This refusal is the ultimate sign of their utter contempt for the views of parents, teachers, and even the State Legislature, which passed a law requiring that such a plan be part of the city's Contract for Excellence last spring.

I include a letter with my testimony, signed by Randi Weingarten as well as the heads of several advocacy groups citywide, as well as you, Robert Jackson, the chair of the City Council education committee. We hope that you and the other members of the City Council will continue to act as our champions, and stand up for parents, when the administration is so eager to stifle our voice. Thanks for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Results of the DOE parent survey --Question 13: Which of the following improvements would you most like your school to make?

Smaller class size: 24%

More or better enrichment programs: 19%

More hands-on learning: 13%

Better communication w/ parents: 10%

More preparation for state tests: 10%

More challenging courses: 8%

More teacher training: 6%

More of better arts programs 5%

More effective school leadership: 5%

Less preparation for state tests: 1%

Hon. Michael Bloomberg
Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York 10007

September 11, 2007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

The newly released DOE parent survey clearly showed that smaller class sizes is the number one improvement that parents would most like in their schools. Nearly one of every four respondents, or 24%, named smaller classes as their top choice from a list of ten choices. Given this response, we have been surprised at your statements about the desire for class size reduction versus "more or better enrichment programs" which came in second, at 19%.

Twice in recent days, first at a September 6th press conference and then again on September 7th on your radio show, you said that parents by a "two to one margin" preferred "enriching programs" to smaller classes.

Understandably, enrichment is an important issue to parents – especially as many schools are lacking greatly in this area, due to the emphasis on preparing students for the state tests, with double periods of ELA and math. This is a trend that will probably worsen as school grades will depend 85% on test scores in these two subjects.

We wish to continue to work with you in a cooperative fashion to ensure that NYC children receive the quality education they deserve. To do that, it is important to acknowledge the actual desires of parents and state them accurately. In this spirit, we respectfully ask that you state clearly that smaller classes were the top priority of parents who responded to your survey.

Sincerely yours,

Randi Weingarten, President, United Federation of Teachers

Leonie Haimson, Executive Director, Class Size Matters

Lillian Rodriguez Lopez, President, Hispanic Federation

Robert Jackson, Chair, City Council Education Committee

The Rev. Emma Jordan-Simpson, Executive Director, Children's Defense Fund

"Old" Regulation A-655

I. INTRODUCTION

* * *

SLTs play a significant role in creating a structure for school-based decision making and shaping the path to a collaborative school culture. Teams are *the primary vehicles* for developing school-based educational policies and ensuring that resources are aligned to implement those policies. Functioning in a collaborative manner, SLTs assist in the evaluation and assessment of a school's educational programs and their effect on student achievement.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the SLT are to develop and review the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP), including annual goals and objectives, and to consult with the principal in developing a school-based budget and staffing plan aligned with the CEP. The SLT is not responsible for hiring or firing school staff.

"New" Regulation A-655

I. INTRODUCTION

* * *

SLTs play a significant role in creating a structure for school-based decision making and shaping the path to a collaborative school culture. SLTs are *a vehicle* for developing school-based educational policies and ensuring that resources are aligned to implement those policies. Functioning in a collaborative manner, SLTs assist in the evaluation and assessment of a school's educational programs and their effect on student achievement.

II. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The SLT is responsible for developing an annual school comprehensive educational plan (CEP) *that is aligned with the school-based budget*. The SLT is not responsible for the hiring or firing of school staff.

To ensure alignment of the CEP with the school-based budget, the principal shall provide the SLT with a report from the DOE Galaxy budgeting system within a reasonable period of time after the school receives it. The school-based budget provides the fiscal parameters within which the SLT will develop the goals and objectives to meet the needs of students and the school's educational program. The principal shall present the proposed school-based expenditure budget to the SLT to solicit input prior to submission to the community superintendent. However, *the principal makes the final determination on the CEP and the budget allocation.*

* * *

Role of Parent Coordinators

The present system in which Parent Coordinators are effectively recruited, screened, selected and evaluated solely by the Principals is inimical to the mission of true parent involvement in the operation of our schools.

- **Selection** The SLTs should screen candidates (consistent with DOE job specifications) and recommend a final and exclusive pool of pre-qualified candidates from whom the Principal may make a final selection.
- **Accountability**
 - Parent Coordinators must not merely serve as Executive Assistants to Principals.
 - Evaluation of Parent Coordinators ("PC's") by Parents (*e.g.*, tabulation of widely distributed intra-school parent satisfaction surveys), must be an essential part of PC assessment.
 - Parents (through their SLT's) should be expressly allowed to raise concerns/complaints as to whether a PC is satisfactorily fulfilling the responsibilities of her/his job.
 - Where a Principal has received complaints (from parents) that the PC is not fulfilling the responsibilities of the position, the initial conversation (with or without Union representation as appropriate) should take place privately between the Principal and the PC. In cases where the SLT has raised the issue, the Principal should report the fact (but – except as provided below - not the substance) of such discussion and its expected resolution to the SLT for purposes of providing closure.
 - Situations may arise where members of the SLT believe the PC's failure to perform may be a direct result of perceived diversion of the PC to other duties that negatively impact on the PC's ability to discharge the responsibilities of the position. In that event, the same procedures (*i.e.* private conversation between the Principal and the PC - with or without Union representation) should initially be followed. The outcome of said conversation, however (including the modification of a PC's duties, if any), should be reported, in writing, to the SLT which may discuss the report. The school community is encouraged to resolve such issues at the school level. Nevertheless, after a good faith effort to solve the problem is tried, any SLT member who remains dissatisfied with said resolution shall be authorized to seek the intervention of the District SLT or Community Superintendent.
 - Nothing herein should be deemed to supersede any rights granted under the governing Collective Bargaining Agreements.