



Joel I. Klein  
Chancellor

52 Chambers Street  
New York, NY 10007

Testimony of Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger, Senior Advisor

City Council Education Committee and Public Housing  
Subcommittee

Educational Outcomes of Students Living in NYCHA

February 25, 2009

Good morning Chairman Jackson, Chairwoman Mendez, and members of the committees. My name is Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger, Senior Advisor to the Chancellor. I am pleased to be here to discuss the Department of Education's accomplishments in closing the achievement gap and our ongoing efforts to raise student achievement for all of our students. I am joined today by Recy Dunn, the DOE's executive director of early childhood education, and Tom Gold, the director of external research.

Our approach since 2002 has been aimed at improving educational outcomes for all of our students. Our Children First reforms are rooted in the belief that every child can be successful, and that the way to lift student achievement is through three core strategies: cultivating strong **leadership**; **empowering** principals to make decisions about what's best for their schools; and then holding them **accountable** for helping students learn. Prior to 2002, generations of students left school without the skills necessary to go on to college or enter the job market after graduating. Far too often, a student's home address, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status have determined the quality of his or her educational opportunities. As the Chancellor tells me and other members of his team all the time, this is not acceptable. All children need and deserve a high-quality education. It's our job to be the voice of the voiceless, giving the children who never before had advocates or educational opportunity what they need to succeed in school and beyond.

We have made standards clear—and we've created the tools that schools and parents need to know how well educators and students are meeting our expectations. These tools also help educators make better instructional decisions and they can help parents decide where to send their children to school. For example, we've created Progress Reports that give schools letter grades based on the academic achievement and progress of students and the results of detailed parent, student, and teacher surveys. Schools earn extra credit for helping the lowest performing students make gains. And throughout the school year, students are assessed in reading and math to provide teachers and parents with timely and detailed information on students' strengths and weaknesses as well as their progress over time. These no-stakes tests allow schools and families to target instruction to students' needs. And educators and parents can now get detailed information about student performance and progress to educators and parents. It helps teachers, principals, and families identify students' individual strengths and weaknesses and devise individualized solutions. It also allows educators to share information with each other about strategies that work for students.

We have also worked hard to train strong principals who are able to lead schools and are committed to ensuring that their students receive a quality education. And we've focused on improving the quality and effectiveness of our teachers so that all students have the great teachers they need to succeed. To do this, we've worked with the United Federation of Teachers to increase teacher salaries by

43%. We've also created incentives to motivate great teaching and we created Lead Teacher positions, which allow us to pay a \$10,000 salary differential to recruit teachers to work in high-needs schools.

We have opened new schools that have helped students succeed—and we've closed down schools that have a record of failure. Our goal is to create a mix of successful schools that provide options to our students and families. A student shouldn't have to live in the right zip code to attend a high-quality school. Since 2002, we've opened 354 new schools across our City and we've closed or started phasing out about 95 failing schools.

In addition to these system-wide changes, we've also created a number of opportunities and programs focused on helping our students who are struggling the most in school. The Department currently offers a wide range of services to ensure that students are fully supported, in and out of the classroom. We also offer a variety of activities that take place outside of school hours, giving students various opportunities to develop new skills and engage positively in their communities.

Our Multiple Pathways programs, for example, are focused on the students who are most at risk of dropping out of high school. So far, we've helped 7,000 students graduate through our Learning to Work programs. Every school has at least one Inquiry Team, comprised of teachers and other school staff. These teams assess the needs of students and devise strategies to help them succeed. Further, we

provide Academic Intervention Services to all students who score at the lowest proficiency levels on State tests. Through this program, teachers in every school create instructional plans targeted to students' individual needs. Other elementary school initiatives which support our most at-risk students are Reading First and a new pilot of the Core Knowledge Reading program. Reading First provides an intensive early childhood literacy instructional program in over 100 public and non-public schools throughout NYC. The schools were carefully selected based on their students' economic and academic needs. Also, the department is currently piloting an innovative early literacy program, Core Knowledge Reading, in 10 high need schools. The program aims to bridge the language and comprehension gap by providing students with exposure to rich historical and cultural content to build strong literacy skills.

Finally, through our middle school success initiative, we have worked with members of the City Council and others to focus on our middle schools, to ensure that these students are well served and ready to excel in high school. The goals of the Campaign for Middle School Success are that all New York City middle schools will accelerate student learning, create a culture of success, engage students through rigorous and relevant instruction, support the development of the whole adolescent, and value parents, caregivers and families as partners.

As I have noted, the DOE aims to serve all students in need. But, we do also have a few programs that specifically target the needs of students living in public housing. Partners in Reading, which operates in more than 80 sites throughout the City, is a partnership with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and is a program through which teachers address literacy development of young children living in public housing facilities. Through New York City Early Literacy Learning (NYCELL), we provide early literacy and oral language development services to families who reside in or near the City's housing developments. In our efforts to expand Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) access citywide, we continuously examine neighborhood need and impact in the placement of both public school and contracted community based organization UPK classrooms. In fact, citywide, we have at least 62 CBOs that offer UPK and are physically located at NYCHA sites citywide. These sites currently serve nearly 1,500 children in UPK.

We back up this focus on instruction with dollars. Since 2002, we have cut over \$350 million out of the bureaucracy and redirected that funding to schools and classrooms. In addition, we established Fair Student Funding, so that schools are receiving funding more equitably, and now the dollars follow students. Students receive additional funding based on need, for instance if they are an English Language Learner or have special needs, or for our youngest students, those below 4<sup>th</sup> grade, if they also qualify for free lunch or receive public assistance.

As a result of our reforms and various initiatives, we are helping all students make academic progress. More students are meeting and exceeding standards in math and reading. And far more students are graduating ready for college or the workforce. We're also making strides in narrowing the achievement gap.

To begin, New York City's Black and Hispanic students are making faster progress than their Asian and white counterparts, closing the racial achievement gap in both math and English Language Arts. We are seeing this gap closing on both the NAEP tests and the New York State exams.

For our fourth graders, we have reduced the achievement gap in half in math since 2002 and we've reduced it by about 20% in English language arts. Progress in the eighth grade has been less substantial, but it is still in the right direction. On the national tests, NAEP, it's important to understand that the City's African-American fourth-graders are leading the nation. On the NAEP exams, New York City's African-American fourth graders are outperforming their peers in the nation (compared to all Trial Urban District Assessment cities) in reading (with 51% at or above basic). In math, they are #2 among TUDA cities (with 72% at or above basic).

Overall, our students have made sustained progress in math and reading on state tests since 2002. The percentage of students meeting or exceeding State standards is up almost 30 points in fourth

and eighth grade math. In ELA, the percentage is up almost 15 points in fourth grade and 14 points in eighth grade.

In every area, New York City's students' gains have outpaced gains in the rest of the State, where students are taking the same tests and have not been making the same progress.

In the most recent State exam results, in both math and ELA and at every grade level (3 through 8), New York City students made progress between 2007 and 2008. New York City's one-year grade-by-grade gains were bigger than the rest of the State's gains in math and ELA at every grade level except one (grade 6 ELA).

Many more students are graduating from high school. The City methodology, which was in effect long before 2002, shows that we have increased the four-year graduation rate by more than 2 points on average per year after a decade of stagnation that preceded us. Under the State's new methodology, in existence for the past three years, we've gone up almost 3 points per year from 2005 to 2007. Whether you look at the City or State's methodology, the graduation rates of our students have steadily improved.

These are accomplishments for which we should all be proud. In fact, in 2007 we earned the country's most prestigious education award—the Broad Prize for Urban Education—because of our steady



progress in improving student achievement and reducing achievement gaps plaguing poor and minority students.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to take just a moment to comment on the Furman Center study which attempted to examine the academic achievement of students living in NYCHA housing. As presented, the study states that students living in NYCHA housing had lower academic achievement than their peers. This policy brief is limited in its conclusions because it examines only one year of data, 2002-03, and does not take into account achievement gains over time or other student factors which impact achievement.

In conclusion, it is the Department's responsibility to serve every child who attends our schools in New York City—no matter where that student lives or what special needs he or she may have. We focus every day on helping our struggling students to meet and exceed standards, regardless of the type of housing they live in or the neighborhood in which they reside.

Since we started this work, we have made substantial progress, and our students are performing better. But, it's undeniable that we still have much more work to do.

Thank you for your time today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

TESTIMONY BY NYCHA BOARD MEMBER MARGARITA LÓPEZ  
CITY COUNCIL HEARING ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS LIVING IN  
NYCHA HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND  
SUB-COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2009, 10:00 AM  
250 BROADWAY – 14<sup>th</sup> FL. HEARING ROOM

GOOD MORNING, CHAIRPERSONS JACKSON AND MENDEZ AND MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE AND PUBLIC HOUSING SUB-COMMITTEE. I AM MARGARITA LÓPEZ, BOARD MEMBER OF THE NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY (NYCHA). THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO YOU TODAY IN RESPONSE TO THE FURMAN CENTER'S STUDY ON STUDENTS LIVING IN PUBLIC HOUSING. I AM PLEASED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS NYCHA'S COMMITMENT TO THE EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS OF THE CHILDREN WHO LIVE IN OUR BUILDINGS, AS THE CITY ITSELF, UNDER MAYOR BLOOMBERG'S LEADERSHIP, HAS PRIORITIZED THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF ALL NEW YORK CITY STUDENTS.

BEFORE I SPEAK ABOUT SOME OF NYCHA'S EFFORTS TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR CHILDREN, I WOULD FIRST LIKE TO EXPRESS NYCHA'S CONCERN ABOUT THE MESSAGE SEEMINGLY IMPLICIT IN THE FURMAN CENTER'S STUDY: THAT BECAUSE YOU LIVE IN PUBLIC HOUSING YOU ARE LESS ABLE TO SUCCEED.

WE ARE ALARMED THAT THESE TYPES OF MISLEADING REPORTS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE STIGMATIZATION OF NYCHA RESIDENTS, EXACERBATING THE NEGATIVE IMAGES THAT MANY OF US HAVE FOUGHT FOR DECADES. THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS THAT I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY TODAY AND TO BE JOINED BY OUR PARTNERS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

**NYCHA'S MISSION**

AS THE NATION'S LARGEST HOUSING AUTHORITY, NYCHA PROVIDES HOUSING TO ONE IN 13 LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME NEW YORKERS (APPROXIMATELY 633,000 PEOPLE).

NYCHA MANAGES 177,976 APARTMENTS IN 340 PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS ACROSS THE CITY AND ALSO ADMINISTERS APPROXIMATELY 93,000 SECTION 8 VOUCHERS CITYWIDE.

WITHIN THIS CORE MISSION TO PROVIDE HOUSING, WE ALSO OFFER A MYRIAD OF EDUCATIONAL, RECREATIONAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS FOR RESIDENTS, INCLUDING YOUNG PEOPLE. NYCHA HAS A LONGSTANDING HISTORY OF COLLABORATIONS WITH MANY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY, CUNY AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. I WELCOME THIS OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS SOME OF OUR PROGRAMS IN A MOMENT.

### THE FURMAN STUDY

THE FURMAN STUDY SETS OUT TO EXAMINE THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF YOUTH LIVING IN PUBLIC HOUSING. WE FOUND THAT THE STUDY WAS BASED ON INFORMATION THAT WAS OUTDATED, LIMITED AND INCOMPLETE. I WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT JUST A COUPLE OF ITS MORE OBVIOUS DEFECTS.

THE STUDY NARROWLY FOCUSED ON OLD DATA FROM 2002-03, NEARLY SIX YEARS AGO, AND IT ONLY FOCUSED ON THE PERFORMANCE OF FIFTH GRADERS. SINCE 2002, THERE HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THOSE CHANGES HAVE PRODUCED SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR ALL STUDENTS ACROSS THE CITY.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT UNDER THIS ADMINISTRATION, THE CITY DOES NOT AND WILL NOT SEGMENT OUT NYCHA YOUTH AS A SEPARATE COHORT. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE SEGREGATED BASED SOLELY ON THEIR ADDRESS. WE ARE ONE CITY AND THE MAYOR HAS WORKED DILIGENTLY TO ENSURE THAT NYCHA AND ITS RESIDENTS ARE FULLY INTEGRATED WITHIN THE BROADER COMMUNITY. THIS INCLUDES EDUCATION, WHERE THE DOE HAS LABORED TO IMPROVE ALL SCHOOLS AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS, REGARDLESS OF WHERE THEY LIVE.

NOW I WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE PROGRAMS THAT NYCHA HAS IN PLACE TO ENHANCE THE EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS OF OUR YOUNG RESIDENTS.

**NYCHA EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

UNDER THIS ADMINISTRATION, NYCHA HAS COLLABORATED WITH SEVERAL CITY AGENCIES, UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS, TO OFFER AN EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE 111,465 CHILDREN AGED FIVE TO 18 WHO LIVE IN OUR BUILDINGS. LET ME DESCRIBE JUST A FEW.

PARTNERS IN READING IS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN NYCHA, THE MAYOR'S OFFICE, AND DOE. THE GOAL OF THE PROGRAM IS TO IMPROVE THE LITERACY SKILLS OF FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD GRADERS AGES SIX THROUGH EIGHT THROUGH A COMBINATION OF CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION, INDIVIDUAL TUTORING, USE OF INTERACTIVE PROJECTS, AND OUTREACH TO PARENTS. P-I-R CURRENTLY SERVES 2,500 CHILDREN.

DURING THE 2005-2006 PROGRAM YEAR, DOE EXPLORED HOW WELL P-I-R PARTICIPANTS MASTERED GRADE-APPROPRIATE LITERACY SKILLS. WHEN COMPARED TO STUDENTS CITYWIDE, P-I-R STUDENTS DID AS WELL AS AND IN SOME CASES SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN THEIR CITYWIDE GRADE LEVEL PEERS.

IN JANUARY 2005 THE MAYOR'S OFFICE, DOE AND NYCHA LAUNCHED ANOTHER INITIATIVE CALLED THE NEW YORK EARLY LITERACY LEARNERS PROGRAM. ITS GOAL IS TO STRENGTHEN LANGUAGE AND PRE-READING SKILLS OF CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF ONE TO JUST UNDER FOUR YEARS OLD SO THAT THEY ENTER SCHOOL READY TO LEARN AND SUCCEED. THE PROGRAM IS OFFERED AT FOUR NYCHA DEVELOPMENTS AND SERVES OVER 150 NYCHA FAMILIES EACH YEAR.

AS WE BECOME AN INCREASINGLY TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN SOCIETY, COMPUTER LITERACY FOR NYCHA RESIDENTS HAS BECOME ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT. OUR TECHNOLOGY GATEWAY CENTERS PROVIDE COMPUTER

TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS FOR TEENS, ADULTS AND SENIORS. THE PROGRAM'S GOAL IS TO CLOSE THE "TECHNOLOGY GAP" AND ALLOW RESIDENTS TO DEVELOP THE SKILLS NECESSARY TO PURSUE ENHANCED EDUCATION AND/OR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

NYCHA IS ALSO PARTNERING WITH THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK TO IMPLEMENT COMPUTER TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AT SOME OF OUR COMMUNITY CENTERS. THIS PROGRAM PROVIDES ACCESS TO COMPUTERS AND TECHNOLOGY-BASED EDUCATIONAL AND JOB PREPARATION ACTIVITIES TO NYCHA RESIDENTS 13 YEARS AND OLDER.

FOR THE LAST 12 SUMMERS, OVER 10,000 NYCHA RESIDENTS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE AFTER SCHOOL ALL STARS PROGRAM AT ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY. IT PROVIDES FOUR WEEKS OF ON-SITE PROGRAMS GEARED TOWARD EDUCATION, ATHLETICS, AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH BETWEEN THE AGES OF SEVEN AND 13. THE CURRICULUM INCLUDES MULTI-MEDIA COMPUTER INSTRUCTION, READING, WRITING, SCIENCE AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES. ALL PARTICIPANTS ARE PRE- AND POST-TESTED AND RESULTS REVEALED INCREASED PERFORMANCE IN READING AND WRITING AFTER ATTENDING THIS SUMMER PROGRAM.

NYCHA IS THE RARE LANDLORD THAT HAS TAKEN SUCH EXTRAORDINARY STEPS TO BOLSTER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ITS RESIDENTS. WE ARE VERY PROUD OF THIS APPROACH AND REGRET THE FACT THE FURMAN STUDY DID NOT TAKE PROGRAMS LIKE THESE INTO CONSIDERATION.

#### CONCLUSION

PUBLIC HOUSING IN NEW YORK IS A NATIONAL SUCCESS STORY. IT PLAYS A VITAL ROLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND IS AN ECONOMIC ENGINE FOR THE CITY OVERALL.

IN OUR 75 YEAR HISTORY THERE HAVE BEEN MANY RESIDENTS WHO WENT ON TO PLAY IMPORTANT ROLES IN THE LIVES OF THIS CITY AND THIS COUNTRY. THEY HAVE MADE THEIR MARK IN EVERY FIELD: POLITICS, BUSINESS, EDUCATION, AND

ENTERTAINMENT. INDIVIDUALS LIKE WHOOP! GOLDBERG, CONGRESSMAN ELLIOTT ENGEL, GOLDMAN SACHS CEO LLOYD BLANKFEIN AND SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR JOEL KLEIN.

WE APPLAUD THEIR SUCCESS, AND THE DETERMINATION OF COUNTLESS CURRENT AND FORMER RESIDENTS, LIKE YOURSELF CHAIRPERSON MENDEZ, WHO ARE DEDICATED TO RAISING AND EDUCATING CHILDREN IN PUBLIC HOUSING TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL. AT NYCHA, WE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SUPPORT THOSE GOALS AND ARE PROUD OF THE STRIDES WE HAVE MADE IN PARTNERING WITH THE SCHOOL SYSTEM TO ADVANCE EDUCATION.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME. I WILL CONCLUDE MY REMARKS HERE BUT LOOK FORWARD TO ANSWERING ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.

## **School Performance of Children Living in NYCHA Housing**

Testimony of Amy Ellen Schwartz  
Professor of Public Policy, Education and Economics,  
NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and Steinhardt School of Culture,  
Education and Human Development  
Director, NYU's Institute for Education and Social Policy

Before  
**New York City Council**  
**Committee on Education and**  
**Subcommittee on Public Housing**

Robert Jackson, Chair  
Rosie Mendez, Chair  
February 25, 2009

Chairman Jackson, Chairwoman Mendez and all the members of the Committees, I am honored to be here today to share with you some of our research on the educational outcomes of youth living in NYCHA housing. My name is Amy Ellen Schwartz, and I am a Professor of Public Policy, Education and Economics at NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development and Director of the Institute for Education and Social Policy. The Institute for Education and Social Policy is a joint research center of NYU's Wagner and Steinhardt Schools. Founded in 1995, IESP brings the talents of a diverse group of NYU faculty, graduate students and research scientists to bear on questions of education and social policy. We are one of the nation's leading academic research centers addressing urban education issues and a substantial amount of our work focuses on New York City public schools and students. This project represents a unique collaboration

with NYU's Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, a national leader in research related to the public policy aspects of land use, real estate development and housing.

In New York City, there are 180,000 units of public housing—more than any other city in the United States. These developments house an estimated 130,000 children, or about one out of every nine students in City's public schools. Despite making up a sizable portion of the City's school population, there has never been an examination of how those children do in school. For the past several years, we have been engaged in research aimed at understanding how housing and schooling are joined. Most recently we undertook a study to better understand how children living in NYCHA housing perform in school. To do so, we focused on three primary questions. First, are NYCHA students concentrated in a few schools? If so, do the characteristics of the schools that children living in public housing attend differ from those of other schools? Secondly, do students living in public housing perform at the same level as students of similar background who do not live in NYCHA housing? And finally, does the performance of students living in NYCHA housing vary depending on the neighborhood where the public housing is located?

To address these questions, we brought together two large data sets. The first, from the Department of Education, compiles data on the City's public school students and their schools, including information on student demographics, test scores and attendance rates, as well as the teacher characteristics, the pupil-teacher ratio and the characteristics of other students at their schools during the 2002-2003 school year. The second, from the New York City Housing Authority, describes the location of all 343 public housing developments in the City. By marrying these two data sets, we were able to match a student with his/her school performance and the characteristics of the school he or she attends.



What we found was troubling. Even controlling for differences in race, gender, nativity status, and school characteristics, 5th grade students living in public housing perform worse on standardized tests than those living elsewhere.

I'm going to go through our results for each of the above questions in a little more detail. First of all, before considering student performance, we looked at the distribution of public housing students across the school system and we found that public school students living in NYCHA housing are concentrated in a handful of schools. As an example, we found that 25% of all elementary school students living in NYCHA housing attend just 4% of the City's public elementary schools, and half attend just 10% of the City's elementary schools. This pattern of concentration holds at the high school level as well. We also found that the schools attended by students living in NYCHA housing tended to look somewhat different than other schools. NYCHA students attend schools in which their peers are more likely to be poor and more likely to be racial and ethnic minorities. The students in the average schools NYCHA students attend perform worse on standardized tests. Specifically, only 38% of students in the average school attended by NYCHA students passed their reading exams, and just 41% passed their math exams. In the average school attended by non-NYCHA students, almost 50% passed their reading exams, while nearly 52% passed their math exams. Unfortunately, research suggests that these differences in classmates will be important because student academic performance is shaped in part by the performance of his or her peers.

Note, however, that differences in peers are not matched by comparable differences in school resources. Instead, we find only small differences in teacher experience and education in the average school attended by NYCHA students compared to the average school attended by non-

NYCHA students, and the pupil-to-teacher ratio at the typical school attended by NYCHA students is (a little) lower than the typical school attended by non-NYCHA students.

Next, in considering academic performance, we look at students' scores on standardized reading and math exams. Specifically, we examine how 5th graders living in public housing fared compared to their counterparts who were not living in public housing. Even controlling for differences in race, gender, nativity status, and the characteristics of the school he/she attends, we find that 5th grade students living in public housing perform significantly worse on math and reading tests than those living elsewhere. At the high school level, we find that the gap persists but is a little less pronounced: public housing students are slightly less likely to take the Math Regents exams than other students and, among those who take the tests, they are less likely to pass. Specifically, 53% of NYCHA students taking the Math Regents pass the exam, compared to 60% of other students. Similarly, about 70% of NYCHA students taking the English Regents pass, while slightly over 75% of other students pass. Finally, only 55% of NYCHA students graduate from high school in four years, compared with 61% of their non-NYCHA peers.

For our final research question, we wanted to look at whether the neighborhood context matters. As you all know NYCHA housing is located throughout the City, and in many cases this means that it is located in middle or upper income neighborhoods or in neighborhoods in transition. A growing body of research suggests that neighborhoods may be important to shaping student academic success -- so that students living in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty may be particularly disadvantaged. And, in fact, we found that NYCHA students living in high-poverty neighborhoods score lower on standardized tests than NYCHA students living in lower poverty neighborhoods.

I must stress that our study was not designed to disentangle the causes of this performance gap. That said, it seems clear that it is worthy of attention. In an era when research and policy debates on public housing tend to be focused on moving residents *out* of public housing, rather than on the well-being of residents living *in* public housing, we think these findings should prompt us to once again focus on the experience of the people living in the City's 180,000 units of public housing and those living in the nation's 1.2 million units. At the same time, as we look for ways to close the gap in performance between students from different backgrounds, we become increasingly aware that the answers and solutions may lie outside the school house doors.

The education community and the housing community need to come together to better understand the causes of the disparities in performance. Before turning to remedies, however, it behooves us to more carefully diagnose the problem. More research is necessary to fully unpack these findings and better understand the factors that contribute to this troubling gap. The study I've described uses data that is, by now, a several years old. What that means is that we can look again at these students and ask whether these disparities persist, have widened, or disappeared. We can bring to bear more sophisticated techniques and longitudinal data to disentangle the causes of poor performance and identify ways to improve. These sorts of studies are possible and, I would argue, critical.

When we began our research looking at the interaction between housing and education, we could hardly have imagined it would attract the attention that it has. Clearly, it is important to move out of the "silos" in order to understand why some students succeed while others don't and to identify and implement policies that close those gaps. We are very grateful to Marilyn

Gelber and the Independence Community Foundation for funding the study I've presented here today.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions you have.

My name is Lisa Donlan and I am the President of the Community Education Council in District One . I would like to thank both the Housing and Education Committees and especially Chairs Mendez and Jackson for the opportunity to speak to you today about the unique admissions policies in place in District One schools.

Based on parent choice, they strive to increase economic and social diversity in the public schools of the Lower East Side and East Village communities.

The District One Community School Board removed catchments in 1991 to create a controlled choice program designed to increase opportunities for equity and decrease racial isolation in our community schools in order to improve the academic outcomes of all of the children in our district.

Intended to impede the city's prevalent residential segregation pattern from replicating in our community schools, the policy grants all students in District One access to all district schools, while controlling for diversity. A controlled choice program increases equity and diversity as part of the overall pedagogical goals, so that our community schools better serve and reflect the whole neighborhood, creating an environment that builds the kind of tolerance over time that learning, working and living together can bring about

In various iterations, in 1991, 1993/4 and again 2001, 2002 and 2003 the policy was modified and refined but the basic premise has remained the same, codifying the following community values:

**Parent choice:** since 1991 our district schools of choice policy continues unaltered allowing all families in the district to choose any one school for their child;

**Educational continuity:** Given that all district schools offer full day Pre-K, both Pre- K and Kindergarten are admissions entry points ;

**Family continuity:** siblings are given priority at every level of admissions preference;

**Diversity:** academic, racial, ethnic and economic diversity is a pedagogical value and goal in our schools.

As a school of choice district with no attendance zones, District One admissions operate unlike any other district in NYC. The recent citywide centralized Kindergarten admissions policy explicitly makes District One an exception by centralizing the Kindergarten admissions policy in District One, whereas across the city Kindergarten admissions are being managed by individual principals and schools.

Gratified that the DoE recognizes the uniqueness of District One and our admissions policy history, we as a community, continue to offer proposals to DoE to make accommodations to the citywide policy that would preserve and protect the values and practices previously developed by the District One school board and carried out formerly by the district administration that was dissolved under Mayoral control.

### Creating a new school choice policy that supports economic and social diversity

The recent DoE policy preserves the choice aspect of the District One program but has removed the controls. Choice alone will not help us meet our goal of diversity (1) in an increasingly segregating climate.

A recent report by the Civil Rights Project at UCLA, based on Federal data from 2006-2007 indicates a surge in minority student enrollment with increases in racial segregation of African American and Latino students, and a disproportionately large number of students living in poverty.(2)

The race neutral, blind lotteries that the DoE will use to assign seats in our schools will more than likely give rise to greater segregation in our schools, taking us further from our aim of diversity as a pedagogical value (3)

Both the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the Civil Rights Project at UCLA have argued that using race as a factor among others for admissions decisions may still be allowable under the Meredith Court ruling(4). However, we are willing to cooperate with the DoEs Office of Student Enrollment to develop a controlled choice program that is based on other socioeconomic markers, such as geography or poverty.

We have been joined by a number of our elected officials ranging from Speaker Silver, Assembly Members Kavanaugh and Glick, to Senator Squadron, Manhattan Borough President Stringer and Council Members Gerson and your own Chair Mendez in urging the NYC DoE to work with us to reinstate a controlled choice program in District One.

The Community Education Council and District Presidents Council in District One and a number of concerned parents in Districts One and Three, along with several elected representatives are proposing application of a choice model that controls for poverty, based on the Title One Free and Reduced Lunch status. Currently more than 40 school districts across the US (5) including the Cambridge Public Schools in Massachusetts(6) are using socioeconomic integration to improve the outcomes for children across this nation. With your support, such a program could serve as a model for schools across the city as a way to combat the destructive effects of high concentrations of poverty that replicate in our schools, condemning children to a destiny determined by address and a future of hopelessness.

## **Additional resources**

### **DoE General Counsel Michael Best email**

Subject: RE: Friendly reminder RE: DoE GC letter on CEC diversity policy  
Date: Tue, 9 Dec 2008 18:05:03 -0500  
From: MBest@schools.nyc.gov  
To: lisabdonlan@hotmail.com  
CC: arteisenberg@nyclu.org; sally@teachersunite.net; jerleah@aol.com;  
elmhogar@hotmail.com; reicher@uhab.org; hepstein@urbanjustice.org;  
rkorus@sukinlaw.com; patrickj.sullivan@yahoo.com; bordenm@assembly.state.ny.us;  
mary@danielsquadron.com; gkirschenbaum@manhattanbp.org;  
patrick.j.sullivan@hotmail.com; guardim@assembly.state.ny.us

Lisa,

I do not recall sending any written correspondence regarding this topic, but we spoke about it last year, at a meeting you and other representatives of CEC 1 attended. During the meeting, I informed you that the DOE's policy was that race could not be considered for school admissions, the only exception being schools that had court-ordered desegregation plans. I advised you that District One could not have an admissions policy inconsistent with DOE policy. I also pointed out that consideration of race in admissions raised serious legal issues that were probably prohibitive.

Since our meeting, the United States Supreme Court has ruled that race may not be considered in school admissions. In *Parents Involved in Cmty. Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, 127 S.Ct. 2738, 2768 (2007), the Supreme Court struck down admissions plans in two school districts that used race as a factor in school admissions determinations. The Court's decision made clear that consideration of the race of individual students in school admissions is unconstitutional. Therefore, in the absence of a court order, the New York City Department of Education may not consider a student's race in any of its school admissions processes.

I hope this information is helpful to you.

Mike

### **The need for voluntary school integration plans**

The NAACP LDF manual on methods for voluntary school integration  
[http://www.naacpldf.org/content/pdf/voluntary/Still\\_Looking\\_to\\_the\\_Future\\_Voluntary\\_K-12\\_School\\_Integration;\\_A\\_Manual\\_for\\_Parents,\\_Educators\\_and\\_Advocates.pdf](http://www.naacpldf.org/content/pdf/voluntary/Still_Looking_to_the_Future_Voluntary_K-12_School_Integration;_A_Manual_for_Parents,_Educators_and_Advocates.pdf)

### **Socioeconomic Integration**

This e-journal, produced by the Civil Rights Project is a lucid, well documented resource for among other issues, socioeconomic school integration.

## Footnotes/Bibliography

### **1. school choice alone, without control, increases segregation**

<http://www.urban.org/publications/1001151.html>

Public School Choice and Integration Evidence from Durham, North Carolina

Robert Bifulco, Helen Ladd, Stephen L. Ross

February 01, 2008

*The nonpartisan Urban Institute publishes studies, reports, and books on timely topics worthy of public consideration. This paper uses evidence from Durham, North Carolina to examine the impact of school choice on racial and class-based segregation across schools. The findings suggest that school choice increases segregation. Furthermore, the effects of choice on segregation by class are larger than the effects on segregation by race. These results are consistent with the theoretical argument—developed in sociology and economics literature—that the segregating choices of students from advantaged backgrounds are likely to outweigh any integrating choices by disadvantaged students.*

### **2. evidence of increasing economic and racial segregation across the US**

This recent report from the Civil Rights Project (at UCLA) documents the state of school segregation in the US and presents findings that support local actions to integrate schools.

[http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/deseg/reviving the goal mlk 2009.pdf](http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/deseg/reviving_the_goal_mlk_2009.pdf)

### **3. NAACP LDF Race neutral alternatives fact sheet**

Summary of results of school districts that switched to race neutral admissions mechanism that have resulted in increasing segregation.

[http://www.naacpldf.org/content/pdf/voluntary/Race-Neutral Alternatives fact sheet.pdf](http://www.naacpldf.org/content/pdf/voluntary/Race-Neutral_Alternatives_fact_sheet.pdf)

### **4. NAACP LDF on law allowing school to take race into account to promote diversity**

<http://www.naacpldf.org/content.aspx?article=1317>

*Specifically, schools and communities may take account of race in using the following student assignment methods to promote diversity: "strategic site selection of new schools; drawing attendance zones in general recognition of the demographics of neighborhoods; allocating resources for special programs; recruiting students and faculty in a targeted fashion; and tracking enrollments, performance, and other statistics by race." Parents Involved, 127 S.Ct. at 2792. The Court also clarified what school districts cannot do: individual students cannot be assigned to school solely on the basis of their race. Instead, school districts should consider race along with other demographic factors when implementing specific student assignment methods. Parents Involved, 127 S.Ct. at 2797*

### **5. Forty communities using SES for integration soon joined by others**

Richard Kahlenberg "Rescuing Brown v. Board of Education: Profiles of Twelve School Districts Pursuing Socioeconomic School Integration

Copyright 2008 The Century Foundation. p.41.

### **6. Cambridge Public Schools**

<http://www.cpsd.us/>



The issue below is the first of a 4 part series that looks at socioeconomic integration  
<http://theintegrationreport.wordpress.com/2008/03/10/issue-05/>

### **The Century Foundation report**

Report on socioeconomic economic integration in the US from the Century Foundation looks at the efforts of 12 school systems that use a variety of plans to replace race based voluntary plans with socioeconomic.

<http://www.tcf.org/list.asp?type=IN&pubid=%7B39331EC3-F2B9-4BB0-813D-9455DFD428B7%7D>

### **One in-depth case study Cambridge Public schools- a best fit**

The case study that is a best fit with District One is the Cambridge Public Schools.

### **The CPS Controlled Choice Policy**

<http://www.cpsd.us/Web/PubInfo/ControlledChoice.pdf>

### **The Kindergarten lottery outcomes for the past several years.**

In essence the plan assigns a small number of children ( 8-16%) and the lion's share of applicants ( 84 - 92%) is granted a first second or third choice option.

<http://www.cpsd.us/web/FRC/LotteryResultsSY0809.pdf>

### **The Berkley Schools model- another excellent option**

The Berkley model divides the city into geographic units, assigns them a diversity rating (based on 3 socioeconomic markers- poverty, race, and parent education) and then controls for assignment to balance 3 large neighborhood sectors.

To learn more about Berkley's controlled choice plan, please see the links below.

From the school district's website

<http://www.berkeley.net/index.php?page=student-assignment-plan>

News article from the opposing perspective

<http://californiapatriot.org/magazine/issue/8/8/berkeley-schools-complex-diversity-scheme>

One pager on the community forums to help develop the program

[http://ferntiger.com/pdf/Berkeley\\_Unified\\_School\\_District.pdf](http://ferntiger.com/pdf/Berkeley_Unified_School_District.pdf)

**ROSIE MENDEZ**  
COUNCIL MEMBER, 2<sup>ND</sup> DISTRICT

DISTRICT OFFICE  
237 FIRST AVENUE, #504  
NEW YORK, NY 10003  
(212) 677-1977  
FAX: (212) 677 1990

CITY HALL OFFICE  
250 BROADWAY, ROOM 1734  
NEW YORK, NY 10007  
(212) 788-7366  
FAX: (212) 442-2728

rosie.mendez@council.nyc.ny.us



THE COUNCIL  
OF  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

CHAIR - SUB COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC HOUSING

COMMITTEES  
HEALTH  
HOUSING & BUILDINGS  
LAND USE  
LOWER MANHATTAN REDEVELOPMENT

SUB COMMITTEE  
LANDMARKS, PUBLIC SITING &  
MARITIME ISSUES

January 17, 2009

Joel Klein  
Chancellor Department of Education  
52 Chamber Street  
New York, New York 10007

Dear Chancellor Klein:

I am dismayed that DOE is not supporting the longstanding policies of School District 1, which are based on parent choice, economic and social diversity, and pre-k as a point of entry. District 1's controlled choice program is designed to promote educational equity and decrease racial isolation and economic segregation. This innovative policy has been in effect since 1991 and has contributed significantly to the academic progress made in this district since its implementation.

Presently, the only criterion DOE recognizes for admission to school is geographic zones and relies on a blind lottery for oversubscribed schools. I share the belief with most experienced educators and concerned parents in District 1, that this methodology, compounded by DOE's insufficient outreach efforts, will exacerbate the disparity between some relatively privileged and other poor-performing schools.

DOE's city-wide policy of increasingly centralized early childhood admissions does not recognize pre-k as an entry point to a school, but requires all students to reapply for kindergarten seats. In the oversubscribed schools, students needlessly undergo two lotteries and are often disrupted after they become acclimated to their earliest educational setting. I, and the vast majority of educators in District 1, believe that pre-k should continue to be the entry point for admission to elementary school.

I am greatly concerned that the current DOE's early childhood admission process will damage the great strides and academic progress achieved in this district over the past 15 years. I urge you to recognize the uniqueness of District 1 and make accommodations to continue the progressive policies which have been developed in this community.

Sincerely,

Rosie Mendez  
City Councilwoman



Assemblyman  
SHELDON SILVER  
64<sup>th</sup> Assembly District

## THE ASSEMBLY STATE OF NEW YORK

250 Broadway  
Suite 2307  
New York, New York 10007  
(212) 312-1420  
FAX (212) 312-1425

February 11, 2009

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

Dear Chancellor Klein:

As you know, the Department of Education is planning some Citywide changes in its admissions policies for children entering kindergarten. These changes are primarily aimed towards centralizing and bringing more uniformity to the manner that children are admitted to schools. As the Assemblyman representing Chinatown and the Lower East Side, I seek your assistance and cooperation in resolving two issues concerning how these new admissions policies will impact District 1.

District 1 fortunately is able to offer full-day pre-K classes in all the elementary schools serving the community. It is my understanding that the proposed new admissions policy would require that children already attending a pre-K program in a local school reapply to that school to continue attending as a Kindergarten student. I wish to join local parents and the CEC in registering my opposition to this policy. I believe that such pre-K children should be allowed to continue to matriculate into Kindergarten and beyond in the schools that they currently attend. Approximately 500 families attend such pre-K programs in District 1 and it would be unfair and unwise to remove these families and their young children from their friends and school environment and force them to attend a new school elsewhere in the district. While I understand the interest in giving everyone an equal chance to get into certain highly desirable schools, I do not believe achieving this goal should come at the expense of disrupting the lives of so many families whose children already attend the pre-K programs in a local District 1 school.

Another issue of concern to many local parents is maintaining the existing District 1 system of assigning children to their local schools. Again, I believe that DOE is seeking to develop a Citywide system to guide admissions and thereby eliminate mechanisms employed in individual districts that have been in place for many years. This abrupt change in policy is understandably troubling to many parents and should be revisited. I would urge DOE to engage in more discussion with the local district CECs and parent organizations to see if an equitable system could be identified that maintains certain district preferences and policies in the new Citywide Kindergarten admissions proposal.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sheldon Silver".

SHELDON SILVER  
Assemblyman



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

SCOTT M. STRINGER  
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

February 12, 2009

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

Dear Chancellor Klein:

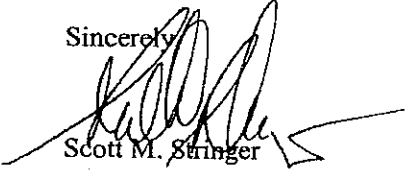
As you know, District 1 is unique due to the existence of the open choice program that allows parents to choose the elementary school their child will attend. This is a valuable asset to the Lower East Side community presenting the opportunity to create more equitable access to schools while also empowering parents. However, it appears there are two policies which are preventing the goal of equity in District 1 from being realized. These are, not recognizing pre-Kindergarten as the entry point into the public schools and not engaging parents in a substantial manner in the policy changes around parent choice in District 1.

Currently children who attend pre-Kindergarten in District 1 are not given any preference during the Kindergarten admissions process. As a result, children and parents are faced with the worry and stress that they may need to adjust to a different school for Kindergarten. This must be re-evaluated. Children who attend pre-Kindergarten at a school should receive preference over those without siblings in the schools. This will not only eliminate the stress parents have that their young child must become acclimated to a new school it will also create a more stable environment for the children in their most formative years.

In addition, I understand the Department of Education has tried to disseminate accurate information about the admissions process to District 1 parents, however, at a recent Kindergarten admissions fair, less than 100 parents attended. This illustrates the lack of knowledge parents have of their choice. The Department of Education must do a better job educating and reaching out to *all* parents in the community. The elected representatives and the community-based organizations that serve children and families in District 1 could be of assistance in this effort.

I look forward to working with you to preserve the unique character of District 1 and encourage greater parent involvement in this important discussion.

Sincerely,



Scott M. Stringer  
Manhattan Borough President

cc: Community Education Council 1

MUNICIPAL BUILDING • 1 CENTRE STREET, 19TH FLOOR • NEW YORK, NY 10007

PHONE (212) 669-8300 FAX (212) 669-4306

WWW.MBPO.ORG



# Community Education Council For District One

Corleair's Complex, MS 56  
220 Henry Street New York, NY 10002

Telephone: 212-587-4094 ♦ Email: [CEC1@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:CEC1@schools.nyc.gov) – [www.district1cec.typepad.com](http://www.district1cec.typepad.com)

*Lisa Donlan, President*  
*Andrew Reicher, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President*  
*Jeremy Cash, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President*

*Sally Lee, Secretary*  
*Ellen Hogarty, Treasurer*

January 28, 2009

Dear Chancellor Klein,

We are writing to you to solicit your support on a matter of increased equity and parent choice, goals we know you share from your role as Co-Chair of the Education Equity Project and the Chancellor of the NYC Public schools under the Mayor's Children First Initiative.

District One is entreating you to intervene as the increasingly centralized OSE citywide early childhood admissions policies and processes threatens 15 or more years of policy work that brought about academic progress in our schools. District One admissions policies are based on parent choice, increased economic and social diversity, and pre-k as the point of entry for District One schools.

The District One Community School Board removed catchments in 1991 to create a controlled choice program designed to increase opportunities for equity and decrease racial isolation in our community schools in order to improve the academic outcomes of all of the children in our district.

Designed to combat the city's prevalent residential segregation pattern from replicating in our community schools, the policy grants all students in District One access to all district schools, while controlling for diversity. A controlled choice program increases equity and diversity – worthy pedagogical goals. With controlled choice, our community schools better reflect the richness of the whole neighborhood and this creates a learning environment that builds the kind of tolerance that reinforces working and living harmoniously – and learning, too, of course.

In various iterations, in 1991, in 1993/4 and again in 2001, 2002 and 2003, the policy was modified and refined but the basic premise has remained the same, codifying the following community values:

- **Parent choice:** Since 1991 our district schools-of-choice policy continues unaltered, allowing all families in the district to choose any school for their child;
- **Educational continuity:** Given that all district schools offer full day pre-k, pre-k and K are both entry points.

- **Family continuity:** Siblings are given priority at every level of admissions preference.
- **Diversity:** Academic, racial, ethnic and economic diversity is a pedagogical value and goal in our schools.

As a school-of-choice district with no attendance zones, District One admissions operate unlike any other district in NYC. The recent citywide centralized Kindergarten admissions policy explicitly makes District One an exception by centralizing the Kindergarten admissions policy in District One, while across the city Kindergarten admissions will be managed by individual principals and schools.

We are gratified that the DOE recognizes the uniqueness of District One and our admissions policy history. On many occasions we have, as a community, expressed concerns about potential unintended consequences of the proposed new Kindergarten policy on our schools. In our ongoing discussions of the proposals, Liz Sciabarra, Marty Barr and the OSE team have agreed to consider accommodations to the citywide policy that would preserve and protect the values and practices previously developed by the District One school board and carried out by the district administration.

#### Pre-K should be a point of entry to a school as well as Kindergarten

We will work with the DoE to guarantee that each school provides enough seats in Kindergarten so that current pre-k students can move up into K and that new applicants for K seats are reasonably accommodated.

**OSE committed on Dec. 3, 2008 to present a proposal to the CEC by early January 2009 of the number of Kindergarten seats needed in each school for further discussion with principals and network leaders.** Schools may need to enlarge the number of K seats, or decrease the current number of pre-k seats to accommodate a number of set-aside seats for new applicants.

#### Creating a new school choice policy that supports economic and social diversity

Choice alone will not help us meet our goal of diversity. (1)

Blind lotteries will give rise to greater segregation in our schools, taking us further from our aim of diversity as a pedagogical value. (2)

Although groups such as the NAACP LDF have argued that using race as a factor among others for admissions decisions may still be allowable under the Meredith Court ruling (3), we are willing to cooperate with the OSE to develop a controlled choice program based on other socioeconomic markers.

We are urging the NYC DoE to work with the unique situation in District One to develop a controlled choice program using poverty, based on the Title I Free and

Reduced Price Lunch status as the control factors, as do currently more than 40 school districts across the US (4) including Cambridge Public Schools in Massachusetts. (5)

Sincerely,

District One Presidents Council

District One Community Education Council

Community District Education Council One President, Lisa B. Donlan

City Councilmember, Alan J. Gerson

Assemblymember, Deborah J. Glick

City Councilmember, Rosie Mendez

Rina Dorley-Amos, President Presidents Council, PTA President PS 15

Alord Allah, parent PS 63 PTA/SLT rep and DLT member

Claudine Anrather, parent Children's Workshop School

Cecille Stone, parent PS 19

Christine Torres, PTA President PS 19

Diane Alvarado, PTA President PS 140

Casey Fuetsch, PA Co President Earth School

Ting Yih parent Tompkins square PTA

Roberta Korus, parent PS 110 and Castle Middle School

Bernice Garcia, parent CASTLE Middle School

Harvey Epstein, parent, Neighborhood School

Sally Lee, Manhattan Borough President Appointee, CEC One

Corinna Lindenberg Earth School parent

Anthony Feliciano District Leader, 74th Assembly Part A

Mimi Man, Co-President PS184M

Susie Kong, Co-President PS184M

Yolanda Sealy-Ruiz, Earth School parent

Neighborhood School Parent/Teacher Association

Katy Stokes, PTA President NEST + M

Yvonne Walker PA Co-President PS 188M Island School

Nancy Negron PA Co President PS 188M Island School

Maria Casiano PA President PS 134

Judy Garner-Wortzel PTA President TASS

Joyce George PA Co President Children's Workshop

CC: Michael Best

January 15, 2009

Shuang Wen School  
Parent Teacher Association  
Ms. Susie Kong; PTA President  
327 Cherry Street; Room 114  
New York, New York 10002

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

Dear Chancellor Klein:

As parents of pre-K students currently enrolled in PS 184M Shuang Wen, we are urging your support in a matter of great concern to us. We recognize the policy that requires our children to apply to enter kindergarten at Shuang Wen despite having been enrolled in pre-K there. In the event that more District One children apply to Shuang Wen for kindergarten than there are seats available, which will almost certainly be the case, those applicants without siblings enrolled in higher grades will be compelled to enter a lottery to determine next year's enrollment. Because the DOE's District One policy fails to recognize pre-K as a point of entry, our young children, who so avidly invest their hearts and minds in the Shuang Wen community, risk becoming dispossessed of their teachers, friends and school. We ask you to follow past practice and to ensure our children's future at Shuang Wen.

Shuang Wen's program is one of a kind and pre-K children immerse themselves in the 2 ½ hour daily after-school program as rigorously as any other student in the school. At the end of their first year at school, they have had over 350 hours immersed in the study of Mandarin. They learn conversation, reading and writing, and are exposed to hundreds of Chinese characters in their first year. During the school day, the children are introduced to a variety of aspects of Chinese culture. And although many of the pre-K students enrolled are of Chinese heritage, the majority of the children are not entering pre-K speaking or reading Mandarin. Thus their introduction to the Mandarin language comes primarily from their attendance at Shuang Wen. Any child unable to continue into kindergarten from pre-K would have endeavored in vain because there is no comparable DOE sanctioned program offered for a 5-year old to continue to receive such specialized education.

Many arguments have been made, including those by the District One Community Education Council, as to why pre-K should be a point of entry for District One schools. Without reiterating these at length, we do support the Council's arguments and agree that the policy needs revision. We emphasize that it is a matter of fairness. Our children have already been subjected to a lottery to enter Shuang Wen and, like the Neighborhood School, a second lottery the very next year is unwarranted because an impartial selection



process has already been made. By instituting a second lottery, the present pre-K children are being disadvantaged. Not only is all of their hard work in Mandarin at risk of being gained for nothing, but they are also at risk of exposure to the stress of a new school and entirely new environment. We also feel the stress of uncertainty, both as to our children's future and to our past decision to enroll our children in Shuang Wen's challenging program from which they may be involuntarily terminated.

We also realize that the issue of making pre-K the entry point at Shuang Wen is not a new one. Families in our community have been expressing this frustration for years, and we appear to be engaging in the same argument. In the past two years, all of the children from pre-K have advanced to kindergarten. This was the DOE's practice notwithstanding its policy to the contrary. This practice created an expectation this year that the DOE would follow it again. There was never any official statement to inform us that this year would be the year that the policy, not the practice, would be enforced. This is an arbitrary approach. We do not understand why the past practice of the DOE is being disregarded this year. We can see no justification for DOE changing the practice in favor of adhering to the written policy.

Shuang Wen's success is apparent. Students' test scores are among the highest in the city. The school receives generous support from the families whose children attend. We dedicate our time and finances to provide an outstanding environment in which our children can excel. This dedication contributes to Shuang Wen's excellent reputation. The present policy is detrimental because it fosters uncertainty and sows doubt in our families when we have no guarantee that our children will be returning.

We recognize that the intent of the DOE is to provide opportunities for all families and the existence of universal pre K throughout District One ensures this. However, requiring us to enter a lottery for the second time cannot be justified for the reasons we have stated. After so many years of drawing this issue to your attention, we urge you to continue the practice of advancing all of Shuang Wen pre-K children to kindergarten in contravention to what is written and to make that the official policy. No better reason exists to do so than to support the well being of our children who have invested so much in the place they love.

Sincerely yours,

Shuang Wen Parents

---

---

---

---

---

---

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Guillermo M. Lopez

Address: 2380 65th St

I represent: NYC & DC

Address: 2235 5th Ave

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. NCHA 5th Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 2/26/07

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Barbara Slater

Address: 412 E Houston St

I represent: ES 100 PMA

Address: 412 E Houston

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: AMY SCHWARTZ

Address: 1101 1st St. VLB-165

I represent: NYC / 2000

Address: Amy.Schwartz@nyu.edu

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Marcosita Lopez

Address: 252 Broadway

I represent: NYCHA

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer Bell- Ellwanger (testifying)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: DOE

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Recy Dunn (not testifying)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: DOE

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

*That there is oversight (huge)*

Date: 2/25/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LISA BUELISS

Address: GOLES, PAROLES

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MELISSA EDWARDS

Address: SPRINGFIELD ST + NINE

I represent: CECONE

Address: 220 Henry Street

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tom Gold (no testifying)

Address: DOE

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Elegy Brindley

Address: 26 West 36th Street

I represent: Urban Neighborhood Houses

Address: 70 West 36th Street

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆