

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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September 24, 2019
Start: 1:12 p.m.
Recess: 6:15 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: Mark Treyger,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alicka Ampry-Samuel
Inez D. Barron
Joseph C. Borelli
Justin L. Brannan
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
Daniel Dromm
Barry S. Grodenchik
Ben Kallos
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Stephen T. Levin
Mark Levine
Farah N. Louis
Ydanis A. Rodriguez
Deborah L. Rose
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Eric A. Ulrich

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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A P P E A R A N C E S

1
2
3 Anthony Ramos
4 Actor and singer

5 Sara Steinweiss
6 Founder of Conflict Resolution Systems

7 Linda Chen
8 Chief Academic Officer at the Department of
9 Education

10 Alice Brown
11 Senior Executive Director for Policy and
12 Evaluation

13 Allen Chang
14 Acting Superintendent for New York City
15 Consortium Schools, Internationals and New York
16 City Outward Bound

17 Jeannie Ferrari
18 Principal of Humanities Preparatory Academy

19 Larissa Tehada
20 Graduated from Humanities Preparatory Academy
21 this past June as Valedictorian

22 Brian Pimentel
23 Senior at Humanities Preparatory Academy in
24 Chelsey

25 Cheyenne Penya
Senior at Humanities Preparatory Academy

Lucca Quillio
Senior at Humanities Preparatory Academy

Connie Delagraze Raios
From a PBAT school

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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- Marlinda Lee
Parent
- Ashley Grant
Attorney at Advocates for Children
- Ann Cook
Co-founder Co-director of Urban Academy
- Jonathan Katz
Math Staff Developer
- Tasfia Rahman
Policy Coordinator at the Coalition for Asian
American Children and Families
- Emily Carrazana
Class Size Matters
- Robin Brosche
Parent of 9th and 6th graders
- Peter Goodman
CCNY Capon and the President of the Education
Alumni at City College
- Mike McQuillan
Teacher of 18 years at Leaders High School
- Lori Gummow
retired New York City Department of Education
Special Educator
- Michael Roffman
Founder and Executive Director of Adult School
Research and Design
- Kemala Karmen
Cofounder of NYC Opt-Out
- Joanna Miller

Director of the Education Policy Center at the
New York Civil Liberties Union

Tamara Gayer
Parent of 4th grader

Susan Horwitz
Supervising Attorney of the Education Law Project
at the Legal Aid Society Civil Practice

Jennifer Gabrey[SP?]
Teacher at Hunter College

Dermot Miry
Educator

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: [GAVEL] Okay, well, I'll
3 tell you, this room is almost as packed as a Hamilton
4 show on Broadway.

5 Alright, good afternoon and welcome to today's
6 hearing. I am Council Member Mark Treyger, Chair of
7 the Education Committee.

8 Today, we will be examining Breaking Testing
9 Culture. Evaluating Multiple Pathways to Determine
10 Student Mastery.

11 Before we get started, I just want to note we've
12 been joined by Council Member Kallos and other
13 members will be filing in shortly.

14 Each year, New York City's Department of
15 Education administers high stakes standardized tests
16 to students throughout the school system. These
17 exams include grades 3-8 state English Language Arts,
18 ELA and math tests; grades 4 and 8 science tests,
19 state tests to identify English Language Learners are
20 now called multilingual learners; language
21 achievement tests and ultimate assessments for
22 students with disabilities.

23 Additionally, the DOE administers some city tests
24 to students who opt to take such exams including
25 gifted and talented tests; second language

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2 proficiency exams; advanced placement and college
3 entrance exams including the SAT and ACT. Finally,
4 all New York City students in elementary, middle, and
5 high schools take periodic assessments in multiple
6 subjects several times throughout the school year to
7 give teachers more information about what students
8 have learned.

9 That's a lot of tests and I'm not even
10 considering tests that teachers create and give
11 students throughout the year in addition to quizzes.

12 A 2015 study by the Council of the great city
13 schools found that the average student in America's
14 big city public school takes approximately 112
15 mandatory, standardized tests between pre-
16 kindergarten and the end of 12th grade.

17 One test that I haven't mentioned yet is the
18 State Regents Exams, that students in New York are
19 required to pass in order to receive a high school
20 diploma. There is growing discontent over the use of
21 such exit exams as research has shown that Exit exams
22 increase dropout rates particularly among low income
23 students of color while not increasing achievement or
24 adult incomes for graduates.

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2 As a result, many states have eliminated Exit
3 exams and there are only 11 states with graduation
4 tests in place, down from a high of 27. Recently,
5 the New York State Board of Regents convened a
6 commission to help consider whether to continue use
7 of the Regents Exit Exams in New York.

8 Students have multiple intelligences and the
9 current assessments only capture a fraction of what
10 students can do. We need to follow the research and
11 science on education and tap into accessing and
12 celebrating our students multiple intelligences. We
13 need to build a system that fully captures our
14 students abilities and talents.

15 And I would like to take a moment to welcome our
16 very special guests, the musician and actor and proud
17 high school graduate Anthony Ramos. You may know him
18 as one of the stars of the Broadway musical Hamilton.
19 He will be speaking about his experience and I want
20 to let him and his wonderful drama teacher and my
21 former colleague Sara Steinweiss to tell their story
22 shortly.

23 But let me just say that our school system did
24 not do everything possible to recognize and celebrate
25 Anthony's talents and we need to make sure that

1
2 students in performing arts, music or other creative
3 endeavors are being not only nurtured in an academic
4 setting but also celebrated for their extraordinary
5 talents that a single high stakes tests like a
6 Regents, simply cannot capture.

7 What's also very troubling is that because there
8 is so much writing on tests, there's been a lot of
9 teaching to the test. That is focusing instruction
10 on what is on the Regents and other tests and
11 spending less time on what's not on the test.

12 In fact, studies show that across the nation,
13 there has been a narrowing of the curriculum with
14 many schools reducing the time spent on science,
15 social studies and the arts in order to focus more
16 time on reading and math, the subjects tested the
17 most. Teachers are well aware of this and often say,
18 if it isn't tested, it isn't taught.

19 As a former high school history teacher, I always
20 – I felt disturbed about how much pressure I was
21 under and my colleagues were under to focus strictly
22 on the Regents exam to boost students scores and just
23 to make the system look good. And I often felt
24 frustrated that I couldn't teach in more depth on
25 issues of greater impact on students lives.

1
2 Some critics of testing contend that schools are
3 turning into test prep factories, with far too much
4 time spent on preparing for and taking in scoring
5 tests. That's time taken away from other essential
6 subjects like the arts and physical education and
7 other activities that really engage students.

8 Parents across the country and city are angered by
9 what they perceive as excessive testing and have
10 launched petitions and boycotts or have chosen to opt
11 their children out of high stakes testing all
12 together.

13 New York State has one of the highest test opt
14 out rates in the country. Parents and advocates say
15 that excessive testing and test prep rob students and
16 teachers of motivation and joy in school.

17 Further, teaching to the test narrows curriculum
18 and instruction. Thereby limiting kids' world rather
19 than expanding their horizons. Instead, they
20 advocate for replacing standardized multiple-choice
21 exams with alternative performance-based assessments
22 that measure how well students apply their knowledge,
23 skills and abilities to authentic real-world
24 problems.

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2 Examples of performance-based assessments
3 include: Student portfolios; projects; oral
4 presentations; experiments, exhibitions and dance;
5 drama; or music performances; among others.

6 In fact, New York performance standards
7 consortium, a network of about 35 schools in New York
8 City has been using only performance-based
9 assessments in its schools for over 20 years and
10 received a waiver from state requirements in order to
11 do so.

12 The majority of consortium schools outperform the
13 average for traditional DOE schools and have higher
14 graduation rates for students with disabilities and
15 multilingual learners than the citywide numbers.

16 I was fortunate to visit a consortium school
17 recently and was extremely impressed by what I saw.
18 There are very promising results in many areas at
19 these schools and I wonder who in the DOE is looking
20 at these schools best practices? Is anyone at DOE
21 sharing these best practices? Are there more schools
22 that want to adopt these methods? These are just
23 some of the questions I have for the DOE later today.

24 Clearly, this is an important topic and we have a
25 lot to examine today about the use of testing, as

1
2 well as alternative assessments in New York City
3 schools.

4 As a former teacher, I wholeheartedly understand
5 the importance of measuring students understanding
6 the critical content material. However, I question
7 if relying solely on high stakes standardized testing
8 is the right answer.

9 For one thing, teaching to the test takes the joy
10 out of teaching for teachers and I am concerned that
11 these exams are driving the best teachers out of the
12 classroom. I am also concerned about the mental
13 health of our students and that these exams are
14 causing some to undergo anxiety and have panic
15 attacks. I even heard from one hospital
16 administrator that they can predict when the local
17 schools are administering exams because of ER visits
18 by students that arrive sharply on those test days.
19 Equally concerning, is the amount of money and time
20 DOE invests in preparing for and administering these
21 high stakes exams. This money and time could be most
22 effectively spent elsewhere.

23 Today's hearing will provide an opportunity for
24 the administration to address such concerns among
25 others. It will also provide an opportunity for

1
2 students, educators, parents and experts to share
3 their concerns and provide recommendation regarding
4 alternative ways and more effective ways to measure
5 student mastery.

6 I also want to thank everyone who is testifying
7 today. I want to thank the City Counsel staff for
8 their work, Malcolm Butehorn the Committee Counsel,
9 Jan Atwell Policy Analyst, Kalima Johnson Policy
10 Analyst, Chelsea Baytemur Financial Analyst. I want
11 to thank my Chief of Staff Anna Scaife and my Policy
12 Director Vanessa Ogle.

13 Also, we've been joined by Council Member Lander,
14 Council Member King, Council Member Holden, Council
15 Member Borelli, Council Member Grodenchik, Council
16 Member Barron. And before we hear from our star
17 panel, I'd like for the Council Staff, if they could
18 play for the audience and the public this very
19 powerful You Tube animation from Story Booth about
20 the story of Anthony Ramos.

21 [YOU TUBE ANIMATION PLAYING 15:41-15:54]

22 [ANTHONY RAMOS'S VOICE ON YOU TUBE]

23 So, I grew up in Bushwick Brooklyn, I grew up in
24 the projects with a single mom and you know, it was
25 funny, my mom used to say to me when I was a kid, I

1
2 used to sit by the window and say, I don't want to be
3 here anymore.

4 She would laugh, she would be like, ha, ha, ha,
5 ha, well, where do you want to be Baba? And I would
6 be like, I don't know, I don't know. I had dreams
7 for myself that I couldn't actually like vocalize. I
8 couldn't say the words. I felt like I was just
9 locked in this box and I needed to be free of this
10 box that I feel like I was in.

11 I always enjoyed singing; I would sing at the
12 family events. I would sing at Christmas, I would
13 sing at Thanksgiving but in my junior year, I went
14 and auditioned for what I thought was a talent show.
15 My director, her name is Sara Steinweiss, she said,
16 hey, what are you singing for us? I said, I am
17 singing Ordinary People by John Legend.

18 She was like, okay, go ahead. I sang my song, I
19 went okay, great, thanks. She was like, hold on,
20 give me the lines. I said, I'm sorry Miss, I don't
21 do lines. And she was like, what? Do you know what
22 this is? And I'm like, yeah, a talent show. She was
23 like, no, it's a musical. I said, wow, hold up. I
24 didn't sign up to audition for a musical.

1
2 She was like, well, since you are here, can you
3 do these lines. And I'm like, alright, cool,
4 whatever. So, the next day, I was selected to play
5 the character of Zeus.

6 Fast forward, I get on stage, I get this
7 overwhelming feeling that came over me and I'm like,
8 I couldn't define it, but later on I realized that it
9 was this sense of joy and the sense of belonging that
10 I hadn't felt in my entire life.

11 You know when you see a movie and it's like you
12 see a superhero getting their powers like Spiderman.
13 Like how a spider bit him and all of a sudden, he's
14 like spitting webs from his wrists. You know, like,
15 I'm not saying I turned into Spiderman, but it felt
16 like I became a superhero on stage.

17 Fast forward, I'm ready to apply for colleges but
18 my grades weren't that good. All of my applications
19 had gotten withdrawn from every single school I
20 applied to because I didn't get my financial aid
21 forms in in time. Unfortunately, my family was going
22 through some hard stuff and we just couldn't get the
23 forms in in time. So, I had no school to go to.

24 I was doing a community theater show at the time.
25 Sara Steinweiss, my Director in high school, comes to

1
2 rehearsal and gave me a pamphlet and she says, you
3 need to audition for this school.

4 I'm like, I can't. This is not a school that a
5 kid like me can afford. I don't really have any
6 actual formal training. She was like, I don't care,
7 go for it.

8 I was like, alright, let's go. And I do the
9 audition and I get the call. I get into the school
10 and I'm like, thank you so much. I fall to my knees
11 and I'm like praying, I'm like God, wow, thank you,
12 thank you, thank you.

13 Next thing you know, I get the welcome packet and
14 then I see the magical page with the numbers. I was
15 going to have to take a loan for more money than I
16 could ever afford. And my reality set in. You are
17 poor from the Projects; you didn't get a scholarship,
18 and this is where your dream stops.

19 Then, Sara Steinweiss comes to our rehearsal.
20 She says, hey, I gave your name to the Jerry
21 Steinfeld Scholarship Foundation and they want to
22 meet you. So, I had this meeting with this amazing
23 woman named Kate Fenneman. I said to Kate, you know,
24 I don't need anybody to give me a handout. All I
25 need is someone to give me a shot. Somebody to just

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2 give me a shot. I am going to give it all I got.
3 I'm crying, she's crying, like, alright peace, I
4 gotta go.

5 Kate calls, she says, hey, we want to pay for
6 your school for all four years, and immediately, my
7 life changed. My mother and I will never forget it,
8 we were in the living room and we both fell to our
9 knees and we both cried. Because we knew in that
10 moment, that was a chance for me to do something that
11 was beyond anything that any of us could have
12 imagined or have ever experienced before.

13 Fast forward, I end up going to musical theater
14 school. I studied and worked my tail off. I kept
15 going and I worked hard. Today, I can gratefully say
16 that I have lived some dreams out and I still am with
17 that. I could never imagine as a kid from being in
18 the biggest musical in the history of Broadway and
19 Hamilton to working on a movie that seems to be
20 changing peoples lives and a star is born to now
21 starring in the Heights in the movie version playing
22 the lead role when I never thought that there would
23 ever be a lead role for me because there weren't many
24 lead characters that looked like me. That were
25 Latin, who came from where I came from.

1
2 But I thank God that when you dream big enough,
3 your dreams sometimes become bigger than reality.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I think we could just close
5 the hearing right now. That was powerful and I just
6 want to note we've also been joined by Council Member
7 Brannan and Council Member Louis and with that, I
8 would like to turn the microphone over to Anthony
9 Ramos.

10 ANTHONY RAMOS: Okay, word, thanks man. I feel
11 kind of weird because I have my back to all of you,
12 so hello everyone back here and all the folks in
13 front of me. Hello, thanks for coming. I am
14 grateful to be here. Thank you, Sara Steinweiss,
15 that was crazy watching it like that, it's wild.

16 So, I didn't write anything down, so here we go.
17 I wasn't a great test taker in high school. I am not
18 even going to lie, my grades are not that good and if
19 it hadn't been for the theatre guild - you know, I
20 played baseball and that kept me focused, that kept
21 me coming to school and I think we should keep sports
22 in schools. I think sports is so important, but I
23 feel that theater - programs like the theatre guild
24 and like peer mediation, where actually two students
25 can sit in the middle of a table and be in between

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2 two or more students that have just gotten into some
3 kind of fight or some kind of argument and just get
4 to the bottom of it between them, without any adults
5 involved but with the training of someone who is
6 experienced in this, can change lives. And I've seen
7 it, I've seen it happen in our school and both those
8 programs got cut from the New Utrecht High School.

9 And it's always about money right, but we live in
10 the greatest city in the world and there's so much
11 money in New York and I feel like we could find the
12 money if we wanted to and you know, again, my grades
13 weren't that good but as you saw in that story,
14 usually I tell that story, but thank God you played a
15 video, so I don't have to go through that; telling
16 that story all over again and I'm just grateful for
17 teachers like Sara Steinweiss who changed my life and
18 believed in me.

19 You know, I auditioned for performing art schools
20 like LaGuardia and such and I didn't get in because
21 of my grades. It had nothing to do with my talent,
22 at least I don't think but all that to say, is you
23 know, thank God again for people like Kate Fenneman,
24 who I sat across from and who gave me a chance. She
25 saw my grades; I had a C average. Like, it was like,

1
2 who wants to give a kid with a C average a
3 scholarship.

4 I failed the Earth Science Regents three times.
5 I failed that test three times, failed biology once,
6 I failed math once. I barely got a Regents diploma;
7 I almost didn't graduate because I failed my Earth
8 Science Regents three times.

9 And, thank God we found another way, right. And
10 I think all that to say is tests aren't everything.
11 I wish that the theatre guild was a part of the
12 curriculum. I wish it was mandatory for me to go to
13 theatre guild. You wouldn't have to drag me out of
14 bed to do something that I was that passionate about.

15 I wish we spent more time finding those things
16 that kids are passionate about. I know we only get a
17 certain amount of hours allotted in the school day,
18 but I feel like there are a lot of smart people that
19 are assigned in certain positions to help find
20 solutions to these questions. And I feel like if we
21 work just a little harder, we might be able to find a
22 way to bring the best out of students without it
23 falling so hard on their test scores. Because again,
24 I was not a good test taker but I'm so grateful today

1
2 that I can sit before you and say that my life isn't
3 so bad.

4 I've been blessed to do some amazing things and
5 work with some amazing people and live a comfortable
6 life. Not because of my test scores but because of
7 what people saw in me. What another human saw in my
8 eyes, what another human saw in my ability far beyond
9 a score on a paper.

10 So, I didn't come here to preach to anybody, but
11 I just came here to give you my personal experience
12 and in my personal experience, if it hadn't been for
13 the theatre guild, if it hadn't been for the
14 rehearsal being heard. Just seeing beyond the
15 grades, Kate Fenneman seeing beyond the grades and
16 just looking at the human and being like, there is
17 more to him than what I see on this paper, I wouldn't
18 be sitting before you today. I probably wouldn't
19 have this story to tell you. There wouldn't be a
20 story or a cartoon for us to play today.

21 So, I just as a former student of the New York
22 City public school system and a New York Native,
23 Brooklyn Native, I just ask that if can push a little
24 harder to find ways to keep the funding for these
25 programs and focus less on the testing and more - or

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2 let's balance it out maybe, right? Oh, well, this
3 kid is weak in testing but their very strong in these
4 extra curriculans. Which don't actually have to be
5 extra curriculans, these extra curriculans maybe can
6 become a part of the curriculum.

7 I'm just spit balling you know, like, maybe we
8 can take some of these things that are extra
9 curriculans - I don't use math in my life. Only when
10 I add the money, I paid for whatever I just bought.
11 If I'm going to be honest. Right, I don't use
12 algebra, but best believe I use the skills she taught
13 me in theatre guild everyday of my life.

14 When I step on the set, the things I learned in
15 peer mediation, how to treat people, conflict
16 resolution, I use that in my life every single day
17 and I wish I had more of that, but I didn't because
18 again, we only have so many hours of school and they
19 were filled with history, US history. Which even in
20 that class I didn't learn anything about Latin
21 history. I didn't learn anything about my ancestors
22 in Puerto Rico, I had to look for that on my own as
23 an adult, right.

24 But all that to say, is I just hope that we can -
25 because I am probably running out of time, I was

1
2 supposed to time myself and I didn't. But all that
3 to say, is I hope we, as in us, me being the regular
4 person that just lives everyday and you, who work
5 here and do this every single day and this is what
6 you do, if we can work together to figure out ways to
7 help students find the things that they are truly
8 passionate about. And again, hopefully focus less on
9 the A minus or the F that they got on that test. And
10 also, put more social workers in schools, maybe even
11 one can make a difference. Just someone that kids
12 can talk to and say, you know, my life is hard right
13 now. I can't even focus in class, because that was a
14 big reason why I couldn't focus in class because my
15 life was crazy when I was 17. I was going through
16 some things that a 17-year-old should never go
17 through.

18 And all I needed was just somebody to maybe get
19 it off my - to help me get it off my chest and just
20 tell me it's going to be okay. And then, I'd be
21 like, okay, maybe it is and then go to my next class
22 and then hopefully - and which it did. It helped me
23 focus. I had a great social worker in school named
24 Jason Jacobs, who is not here right now, but he was

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1
2 another person who was amazing, an integral in my
3 graduating.

4 But anyway, all that to say is I hope we can
5 focus less on tests and more on theatre guild and
6 more on programs like peer mediation and let's maybe
7 get one more social worker in these public schools.
8 Because these kids are going through a lot and
9 there's like 35 kids in a class and it's kind of hard
10 to focus on one person talking. There's like 35
11 kids, that's 35 different issues happening in all of
12 their heads and one person trying to deal with that,
13 as well as teach something that they probably don't
14 even want to teach because that was just assigned to
15 them because that's the curriculum.

16 But anyway, I'm going on and on but thank you for
17 listening to me today and I hope that again, let's
18 just try to bring out the best in the students and I
19 know I'm just like some person who acts and sings or
20 whatever, but I'd love to help in anyway if anybody
21 cares or is open to thoughts and opinions.

22 Because I did go through the New York public
23 school system and I experienced this, and I did take
24 Regents and failed many of them. But again, life
25 turned out okay and again, because of teachers like

1
2 Sara, because of teachers like Jason Jacobs who
3 listened to me when I was having a hard time and
4 almost getting evicted and my dad was on drugs and
5 all sorts of craziness and he took the time to just -
6 he was hired and payed to sit with students like
7 myself and counsel them through these things.

8 And teachers like Ms. Hal Violette[SP?] who was
9 the peer mediation teacher. And if it hadn't been
10 for that, I think I wouldn't have graduated.
11 Baseball was important for sure, but theatre guild
12 and these other programs were equally, if not more
13 important in my growing process and in me graduating
14 and me becoming an adult who has a heart for
15 contributing to society.

16 So, again, thank you so much for hearing me out
17 and I hope that helped a little bit and have a
18 blessed day. Thanks so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, we're going to hear
20 from the amazing Ms. Steinweiss shortly, but you
21 know, Anthony there are so many powerful inspiring
22 stories embedded in what we just heard, but one of
23 the most interesting ironies is for one of the most
24 talented performers to ever hit the Broadway stage,
25 our school system labeled him as underperforming.

1
2 Think about that, one of the most talented
3 individuals to hit the stage of Broadway, was labeled
4 underperforming by our school system. He is an
5 extraordinary talent and we're grateful to all those
6 supports that were there in addition to your hard
7 work to help make your success possible. And this
8 Council fully hears you and supports you on more
9 social workers in schools as well.

10 With that, I'd like to turn over to the
11 extraordinary Ms. Sara Steinweiss.

12 SARA STEINWEISS: Good afternoon ladies and
13 gentlemen. It's an honor to be here. I want to
14 piggyback off of what Anthony said, but share a
15 little bit of my story.

16 I am also a product of the New York City public
17 school system. Born and raised in Brooklyn and still
18 living in Brooklyn. And when I was going through the
19 New York City public school system, my mother was the
20 president of every PTA known to man. She was a force
21 of nature, as they said when I was growing up.

22 And the most pivotal thing in my life happened on
23 February 14, 1983 when we all came home from school
24 and my father, who was also a New York City public
25 school teacher. He taught musical education in Bed-

1
2 Stuy, had a massive heart attack in front of all of
3 us and died.

4 And what I took from that day when my entire life
5 changed, was how many of his students showed up at my
6 house. That they had to rent buses for his kids to
7 come to my house and to come to his funeral and that
8 stuck with me. In my house, there was a poem that
9 hung that one of his students wrote about him. About
10 how he is leading the celestial band in heaven. And
11 I knew at that moment, at 5 and 7 years old when I
12 kept reading that, that I wanted to finish the job
13 that he started.

14 So, I decided then that I wanted to be a teacher.
15 And when I was in the public-school system, even
16 though my mom was the president of every PTA and
17 involved in every single thing, I was a kid who
18 struggled.

19 By the time I was in the 5th grade, my uncle who
20 lived in my house was arrested and went away to
21 prison for 12 years and in our household, we had to
22 say that he went to college but he was in prison and
23 I wasn't allowed to talk about that because we were a
24 strong, tight family that pushed through. And then I
25 was raised by two very strong females who raised 7

1 kids and every time I went through school; I was
2 completely lost. Nobody saw me, least of all, my
3 classmates.
4

5 And in elementary school, I started to self-harm.
6 The first time I ever cut myself was when I was in
7 the 5th grade because I was being made fun of so much
8 that I didn't know what to do and nobody knew that
9 story until I turned 30 and I started sharing that
10 with other kids.

11 And as I move through elementary school, I never
12 had a connection and my mom was involved. She was an
13 involved parent, but I was a good liar because kids
14 who are hurting, kids who have a lot on their plate,
15 we often feel unseen. And if you're in environments
16 like Anthony and I grew up in, in certain paths, we
17 don't want to bring more to our single mothers plate
18 that they already have, and we know how to survive
19 and get through the day.

20 So, when I went to middle school, there was a
21 program called the RAP program, which was led by the
22 social worker, who I always say saved my life. And
23 then a school social worker came in and saved my life
24 again because I met with him on a week to week basis.
25

1
2 And it built in me knowing that I wanted to be the
3 teacher that sees kids.

4 So, when I went to high school, I wasn't that kid
5 that sat and was sulking, I won most popular. I was
6 President of the school; I was the Mayor of the
7 school. I ran every program but on any given day, if
8 I really thought about my life, I could have ended it
9 and it wasn't until a teacher ran a theater class in
10 my speech class that I said, maybe I should start a
11 theater program.

12 And I went to my Principal as a senior in high
13 school and I said, I want to start a theater program,
14 there is nothing going on here. And he said, we
15 don't have funding for that. I said, I will talk to
16 my friends, we'll get things going. And together, a
17 few of my friends wrote a script, raised some money,
18 begged a few teachers and the New Utrecht High School
19 Theatre Guild was born in 1995 when I was a senior in
20 high school.

21 And that foundation was a platform for me to be
22 seen and heard and that became my moto as a teacher.
23 My quote that I say all the time that I've said to my
24 kids for years is, I see you. When no one else sees
25 you, I have your back and I see you.

1
2 And as I started teaching, I first started
3 teaching at Canarsie High School, the first thing
4 that I started at Canarsie High School and I was only
5 there for six short months because I was excessed.
6 The first thing I started at Canarsie, I went to the
7 Principal of Canarsie High School and I said, can I
8 start a theater program? Yes, no problem.

9 So, I took \$50 of my own money and I started a
10 theater program and just got kids together to talk to
11 them. Because what people don't realize is what goes
12 into theater, is not just what you come to see on
13 show night. What goes into theater is reading a
14 script, annotating a script, understanding your
15 character, putting together a play bill, doing the
16 research on your characters. Figuring out the
17 finances that we have to do and how we fund this.
18 How do we build the sets? Where do we get the money
19 from? Where do we network? We need some lighting,
20 how do we run a lighting board? We need some sound;
21 how do we get sound in here?

22 So, when you're doing that, a true theater
23 program is student led. They have to figure out how
24 to get that money. I look to them to say, how are we
25 doing this today? How are we getting through it?

1
2 And it was an honor for me to be at there for the 13
3 years that I was there to build this program. But
4 what Anthony said, resonates so profoundly because he
5 is the face of thousands of kids that have gone
6 through my classroom. That's what he is. One of my
7 students who was my stage manager, I just want to
8 give you a quick tidbit on her. She was my stage
9 manager for years and she was the valedictorian, she
10 graduated a few years before Anthony. She was the
11 valedictorian at New Utrecht High School, and she got
12 a full scholarship to Cornell and it was a big thing
13 for New Utrecht High Schools, because we had a child
14 who got a full scholarship to Cornell and what
15 Cornell looked at was her SAT scores, her Regents
16 exams, the fact that she was the President of the
17 school. She was the Captain of the softball team;
18 she ran the theatre guild backstage for me. But what
19 Cornell also made her do was in order for her to
20 accept the scholarship, she had to leave the day of
21 graduation and go sit in a summer program at Cornell
22 with other inner-city school children who received
23 scholarships to do a two month summer program or they
24 would have taken her scholarship away, because

1
2 Cornell knew that New York City public school kids
3 were not prepared for an ivy league education.

4 That's something huge, because our kids who are
5 graduating, as an English teacher, because that's
6 what I taught and Council Member Treyger spoke about,
7 teaching to the test. I refused, I got into a little
8 trouble with my AP sometimes, because I refused to
9 teach 10th and 11th grade. It was not allowed to be
10 on my program, I wanted freshman and seniors. The
11 reason for that is because the students in New York
12 City public school systems take their English Regents
13 in the 11th grade.

14 So, if I'm teaching 10th and 11th grade, I don't
15 get to teach. I have to do test prep from the day
16 they walk into my class until the day they pass that
17 Regents.

18 So, as a freshman, I get to teach. I get to
19 teach you how to love literature. How to understand,
20 how to critic literature. How to look at characters,
21 how to grow through literature and as a senior, I get
22 to prepare you for life.

23 I wasn't allowed to do that in the 10th and 11th
24 grade. What I had to do was teach you how to write
25 to a critical lens and put some literary elements and

1
2 make sure you had three of them, but if your
3 punctuation wasn't okay and you didn't have sentences
4 correctly or you didn't write with a capital letter,
5 that's okay as long as I could figure out what you
6 were saying, you had to pass that Regents.

7 So, now, we have these students graduating with a
8 Regents diplomas and what we tell them, is you are
9 prepared to go out into this world. Yet, if you look
10 at the statistics from colleges, most of our students
11 are stuck in remedial classes for one to two years
12 before they're even allowed to take any of their
13 other classes because colleges know these kids have
14 been ill prepared and they don't know how to sit as a
15 college student.

16 So, needless to say, in all of this and going
17 through a lot of this, in 2011 I decided to resign
18 from the Department of Education, because I wasn't
19 okay with being immoral anymore. I think the
20 Department of Education is a profound system. I
21 think that we do a lot of tremendous, phenomenal work
22 for your kids but there is a great deal and room and
23 need for improvement. And hearings like this, are
24 the beginning of something extremely exciting for
25 someone like me, because it's about time we're

1
2 talking about looking at alternate ways to access
3 students.

4 The students that came through the theater
5 program, on any given day would come out of class at
6 three o'clock and not leave that building until 11
7 p.m. They did an extra day of school in rehearsal.
8 So, when they're rehearsing, their learning
9 leadership, their learning perseverance, their
10 learning commitment, their learning how to read. They
11 are learning how to take what they read and process
12 it and put it together, how to speak to people. How
13 to be a part of something greater than themselves.

14 ANTHONY RAMOS: And trying to do homework.

15 SARA STEINWEISS: Yes, he's right and on top of
16 that I had to give them time to do homework in
17 addition to that because I would weasel that in, in
18 some way. And they also learned how to balance
19 schedules. Things that we all do every single day,
20 that I couldn't teach on any critical lens essay that
21 I taught. But when it came time to graduation, I
22 would sit with the list that I would get from the
23 office of all my kids in theatre guild who were not
24 going to graduate.

1
2 And I was brought in because I was always
3 notoriously brought in, because I had kids who I
4 would literally walk to the corner store and say, oh,
5 we're cutting out again today. Come inside, I have
6 something for you to do. I don't sing and dance,
7 great, why don't you type the play bill for me? I
8 don't want to do the play bill. Awesome, you want to
9 learn how to do a lighting board? Let's do a
10 lighting board.

11 And giving them skills that are necessary for
12 life and now when it comes time to graduate, none of
13 those skills matter. I can't comprehend how none of
14 those skills matter. Their time spent when they're
15 not on the street, their not doing questionable
16 things. I'm not going to say you did questionable
17 things in front of people. Their not doing
18 questionable things that can lead them down other
19 paths, but they're really putting in their time and
20 they want to grow and believe in themselves.

21 How do we as a Council, as the Department of
22 Education, as people in the industry come together to
23 create alternate assessment and pathways? Because I
24 always say this, as an educator, we teach kids how to
25 break down brick walls. That's at least what I

1
2 believe my job was and is as an educator, because
3 even though I resigned and then I worked for
4 Councilman Gentile as his education liaison, and then
5 I left working for Councilman Gentile and now I own
6 my own business running workshops and trainings for
7 Department of Education schools in helping teachers
8 understand what their job is. Teaching kids
9 leadership skills, helping schools grow programs
10 because I feel like that's where I will be of best
11 service, but our job is to help kids break down
12 walls.

13 What happens when you teach them to break down
14 that wall and behind that wall is a cement wall? Now
15 what? So, I gave people like Anthony and others this
16 dream of here you go, but now, without Kate Fenneman
17 and the Seinfeld Foundation, there really was no
18 other path for us to go. Because the truth was,
19 because his grades were so poor, scholarships were
20 not available to him. That was just the end of it.

21 So, I constantly had to think out of the box, and
22 I am grateful always that opportunities came my way
23 for my students that led them to their path to
24 greatness. And I think if we all work together, we
25 can make this work this time. We really need to make

1
2 this work because if we don't, just teaching to the
3 tests, it's proven we're losing a generation. We are
4 losing a complete generation of kids because they
5 don't want to stay in school, they don't want to be
6 there, and I still cannot fathom why in this day and
7 age, theater programs, mediation programs, conflict
8 resolution programs, culinary programs, debate
9 programs, mechanic programs, plumbing programs are
10 not a part of the curriculum.

11 They need to be a part of the curriculum. We
12 talk about choices with choosing different schools
13 and having the opportunity to go to Charter schools,
14 well, what about a kids choice to choose what they
15 want to be in life? Where is that choice within our
16 education system? We have the people to do it, you
17 have dedicated people that want to do it. If we
18 bring that all together, you bring a passion back and
19 you bring opportunities for greatness to happen,
20 because he is one of thousands.

21 So, I thank you for this opportunity. Like
22 Anthony, I am ready, willing and able to be on the
23 ground running to help in whatever way I can. To be
24 part of the grander conversations of what works and
25

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2 what can work, because you know, it only takes one
3 person to start the conversation to get things going.

4 So, I thank you all for having me today.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, Ms. Steinweiss.
6 Ms. Steinweiss and Anthony are used to getting
7 applauses.

8 I will say this, and my colleagues have some
9 questions and I will get to them. Let me be very
10 clear, I challenge any critic of our school system to
11 label this man underperforming. I challenge anyone
12 to say that. That's the heart of what we're trying
13 to get at in today's hearing and today's analysis.
14 Our system is not capturing the fullness of who our
15 students are and their talents and abilities.

16 I will turn it over to my colleagues for
17 questions. Just to note that you are on the clock
18 because Anthony's schedule and also, we want to hear
19 from the DOE. We have a lot of questions for DOE as
20 well. We will begin with Council Member Kallos.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I want to thank you Sara
22 Steinweiss. We need to elevate our teachers who go
23 the extra mile for their students. My Sara
24 Steinweiss was named Steve Kallum[SP?]. He taught me
25 how to fix computers, he got me my first job building

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2 websites when I was 15 and that skill and talent
3 actually got me paid while I was running for office
4 to this day.

5 So, my question to Sara Steinweiss is, how do we
6 encourage more teachers like you and Steven Kallum to
7 go that extra mile, how can we facilitate that? How
8 can we support you in all those hours that you put in
9 that you wouldn't otherwise be. That you aren't
10 going to get paid for and just thankyou to Anthony
11 Ramos. I don't know many people who've made it like
12 you. Who return calls to their old friends, let
13 alone come testify at the City Council. Believe me,
14 I've tried.

15 I also grew up in a household with a single mom.
16 Wasn't stable at home and I find it hard to explain
17 to some of my colleagues here what that's like and
18 why it can be so hard to get those good grades when
19 you might not even have a desk at home to do homework
20 on. And for me, after school programs were a way of
21 not going home and they did provide a safe, nurturing
22 environment and I love the idea of why couldn't we
23 offer kids grades for some of these programs,
24 especially when they have an academic component. But
25

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2 I guess, if both of you could just share a little
3 bit.

4 SARA STEINWEISS: So, to your how do you support
5 teachers like your teacher and myself. I think
6 overall, the number one is to let them know they are
7 appreciated and give them the resources that they
8 need. Most teachers don't go into this for the
9 money. We pretty much know we're not making any
10 money going into this. We go into this because we
11 want to help kids get to where they need to be in
12 life.

13 And when I was at New Utrecht's the
14 Administration continually made it extremely
15 difficult for me to run this program, because as
16 directives came down from the Department of
17 Education, that we needed to start going with the
18 common core and work to the test, all the money and
19 funding went to everything in that realm or into
20 sports activities. And it felt that what I did for
21 our kids was not worthy and not important. And I
22 really think at the end of the day, if you see a
23 teacher, you know how I said, I see you when no one
24 else sees you, the same holds true for teachers.
25 Teachers need to be put back on the pedestal that I

1
2 don't know who took them off of, but they are not the
3 enemy. Teachers are there to do their job and in
4 order for us to do our job, we need resources. If we
5 don't have the resources to do our job, we talk about
6 equity in education. Equity in education is giving
7 the teachers in all backgrounds, in all areas the
8 resources they need to provide it for all of their
9 kids. Without that, it makes our job ten times
10 harder.

11 So, to keep teachers like us, to bring teachers
12 like me and some of my colleagues who have left and
13 who are in the system now, it's just do whatever you
14 all can to continue to work with the Department of
15 Education to lift teachers up rather than make them
16 the enemy.

17 ANTHONY RAMOS: Yeah, I mean, Sara said it
18 beautifully, but it's support. It's just support and
19 it's not that hard.

20 SARA STEINWEISS: No, it's not.

21 ANTHONY RAMOS: It really isn't, I've seen some
22 amazing things happen for \$5,000. We can find money
23 when we need it and in this case, when it comes to -
24 if a teacher says I have X amount of students who are
25 thriving in this but we are on the verge of losing

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2 this program if we don't do X, Y, and Z, I think it
3 is a crime to not go the extra mile to try and help
4 that teacher get what they need to keep that program
5 going.

6 You know, and I think sometimes we just give up
7 because we're like, ah, we just don't have it. Well,
8 work harder. If we got \$800 million – we got a
9 wrestling team, we got a swimming team, we got a
10 tennis team, we got a team for everything. Why can't
11 we keep this one theater program here? Why can't we
12 keep this one mediation program? We got a million
13 teams, and no one goes to the games. What are we
14 doing? Right, and I'm just like, I think it's really
15 about the assistant principals. The principals, the
16 Deans, when a teacher comes to you and says I really
17 feel passionate about this and I think that the kids
18 can succeed and thrive if we do this.

19 We at least owe it to the teachers to listen to
20 them right. When you all have issues right, you hope
21 that when you bring these issues to whoever you're
22 bringing them to, that they at least listen. They
23 may not give you what you want, but we hope that we
24 have concerns and we bring them to the people who can
25

1
2 solve these problems. We at least hope that they
3 listen because we feel like that is owed to us.

4 So, I feel it's reciprocation, right. Resources;
5 let me at least hear you and I can give you the
6 reality. If we don't have the money, I will tell you
7 to your face, we don't have it. But we can try
8 right, we'll try and again, I can't promise you, but
9 we will try. And then we do that and honor our word,
10 right, but I feel like you know, I just think it's
11 support. You know, somebody says I think these
12 students can succeed if we do this, if we keep this
13 and just hearing them out and listening to them and
14 actually doing what we can and going the extra mile
15 to make that happen for them. Because in turn, that
16 will only make teachers work harder. That will only
17 make teachers want to come to work.

18 I don't know about you all, but if you all felt
19 like, again, whoever you're bringing these issues to
20 was actually listening to you, wouldn't that make you
21 want to work extra hours because we're making
22 progress, we're making progress, we're doing this.
23 You know, so, it's about support and just listening
24 and actually doing something about it.

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much. In
3 the interest of time, we have two more members and
4 then we're going to hear from DOE. I want to next
5 hear from former Principal, educator, still always an
6 educator, Council Member Barron.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you Mr. Chair and
8 thank you to the panel for coming and sharing and as
9 my colleague stated, there was a teacher that
10 exemplified what you talked about and for me, that
11 would be Mrs. Ann Yearwood and she was a teacher
12 without comparison. And it was a program designed by
13 the Department of Education, which at that time it
14 was called the Board of Education, which allowed for
15 the arts to be incorporated in the day of
16 instruction.

17 So, Ms. Yearwood, a very talented teacher, would
18 teach us music and took my music theory and reading
19 notes and keeping rhythms. She would teach us art,
20 because that was her interest, art. We had keel in
21 the basement and the students in the school were
22 allowed to go down and do their models and put them
23 in the keel and fire them. Every year we had a
24 musical production and you talk about the sets and
25 you talk about costumes and all of that was supported

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2 by as you mentioned flexible scheduling and allowing
3 people to get involved and have a way to express what
4 their talents were, and we know that Garner talks
5 about multiple intelligences. It's not all academic,
6 there are the artistic, the naturalists, the
7 linguists, the musical person. And until the
8 Department of Education finds a way to incorporate
9 all of that in the instructional day, not as a tag on
10 or add on, but incorporates that into the
11 instructional day and until they give teachers the
12 training that's needed.

13 It's not just that you went to school and you got
14 a degree and you came out and now your ready, no.
15 You may need a mentor, you may need someone who has
16 done that to be able to model for you how to value
17 children, let them know they are important and that
18 undergirds all that goes on.

19 So, I just wanted an opportunity to commend you
20 for what you are doing. To encourage you and to say
21 that the DOE has got to do better and move away from
22 these high stakes tests, which really don't give us a
23 full measure of what it is that people are able to
24 do. Thank you.

25 ANTHONY RAMOS: Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you. Spoken like a
3 true educator, Council Member Barron.

4 Next, we will hear from Council Member Cornegy.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: Good afternoon. Thank
6 you so much for spending this time with us. My Sara
7 was Steve Sultan who actually allowed me to be in the
8 jazz band and a visual monitor as well as being on
9 the basketball team and this high-stake testing
10 culture, this is a perfect example of why it should
11 be abolished in its current form. There are so many
12 different measurement tools to determine the capacity
13 and acumen of students that it is really ridiculous,
14 and we are robbing the world of the ability to
15 benefit from the talents and gifts that all students
16 have.

17 Mr. Sultan spent - I was the kid who was there
18 until nine, ten, eleven o'clock based on one of those
19 activities. School was a second home for me. Those
20 hallways have cherished memories for me whether it
21 was sitting in the hallway having a conversation or
22 talking about a play or the set for the jazz, the new
23 jazz ensemble band.

24 Like, those memories, I'll never forget. So, I
25 sit here today before you as a legislator, based on

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2 having an opportunity to hone all of those other
3 skills. So, I thank you for what you are doing.
4 Thank you so much for being here today. I am
5 obviously against high stake testing as a culture and
6 just thank you for your voice.

7 SARA STEINWEISS: Thank you.

8 ANTHONY RAMOS: Thank you, thanks for having us.

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much Council
10 Member Cornegy and just to note as well, New Utrecht
11 High School is in the home district of the big
12 supporter of New Utrecht High School, Council Member
13 Justin Brannan. Thank you for being a big supporter
14 of our schools as well and I just – if my colleagues
15 have any additional comments.

16 I want to thank both of you. You know, Anthony,
17 you've chosen to turn your story into a platform to
18 help other students and children and that to me, is
19 extraordinarily, so commendable. You are paying it
20 forward. This story has to be shared. There is
21 power in a story and we have to share this story, as
22 there are many other stories to be shared in the
23 public-school system.

24 And Sara, as you hear, everyone seems to have a
25 Sara Steinweiss in their life. We need to help

1 support our educators who in turn always are there
2 for our students. In your story Anthony, I heard the
3 story of resilience, I heard the story of class size,
4 I've heard the story of a culturally responsive
5 curriculum. I've heard the story of just giving kids
6 a shot, not a handout but just a shot. The story of
7 more social workers that are needed in our school
8 system. Many of the things that we are talking about
9 that we need to act.

11 And so, thank you for setting the framework of
12 this hearing and this discussion. I think in lesson
13 plan, this is called the hook, Ms. Steinweiss.

14 SARA STEINWEISS: Yes, it is.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: We grab folks attention and
16 we have a lot of work to do. So, I want to thank
17 both of you for taking the time out of your
18 extraordinary busy schedules to help pay it forward
19 for our students and our future generations.

20 Thank you both very much.

21 SARA STEINWEISS: Thank you.

22 ANTHONY RAMOS: Thank you all for having us.

23 Take care.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I've just been notified
25 that they have concluded the hearing next in the

1 Chamber. So, in order for us to be a little bit more
2 comfortable we could actually move into the Chamber
3 for some more space. And just to note, the first
4 panel that we'll hear from will be from the DOE,
5 Linda Chen, Alice Brown and Allen.
6

7 Okay, so, before we hear from the DOE, I will
8 just ask our Council to swear in the Administration.

9 COUNCIL CLERK: If you could just raise your
10 right hand please. Do you swear to tell the whole
11 truth and nothing but the truth before this Committee
12 and to answer Council Member questions truthfully?

13 Okay, you can just hit the button and state your
14 name for the record and then begin.

15 LINDA CHEN: Yes.

16 ALIYAH BROWN: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You may begin.

18 LINDA CHEN: First, I do want to acknowledge and
19 show our gratitude for Anthony Ramos who his story is
20 a testament of the greatness within every student and
21 the power of a great teacher like Sara Steinweiss,
22 that truly sees every student to find their passion,
23 purpose and contribution and unlocks access and
24 opportunity for every student to fully thrive. Thank
25 you Chair Treyger for inviting them.

1
2 Good afternoon, Chair Treyger and Members of the
3 New York City Council Committee on Education here
4 today. My name is Linda Chen and I serve as the
5 Chief Academic Officer at the Department of
6 Education. I am joined by Alice Brown, our Senior
7 Executive Director for Policy and Evaluation.

8 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.
9 We appreciate the opportunity to discuss the
10 critically important issue of ensuring strong
11 instruction in every New York City classroom that is
12 focused on preparing our students for college and
13 careers.

14 We know that you have called this hearing today
15 due to real concerns about standardized test
16 preparation and we want to reiterate this
17 administrations focus on a rich, rigorous, joyful and
18 inclusive learning experience for every student.

19 A well-rounded education includes social studies
20 and civics, science, hands on and project-based
21 learning opportunities. The arts, world languages,
22 physical education, social/emotional learning,
23 opportunities to explore and learn from our amazing
24 city and so much more. This is the foundation of our
25 equity and excellence for all agenda, including pre-k

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2 for all, 3K for all, universal literacy, computer
3 science and AP for all, as well as programs focused
4 on college and career readiness. We are deepening
5 this work with a systems approach to improve every
6 classroom in every school. Including through the
7 instructional framework, our approach to accelerate
8 learning and instruction in every classroom for every
9 student.

10 Schools across the city have formed or are
11 forming instructional leadership teams or ILT's in
12 order to ensure cohesion and rigor in their schools
13 academic approach. ILT's are composed of school
14 leaders, teachers and staff and serve as a driving
15 force in the school to improve instructional
16 practices and student outcomes.

17 This is a commonsense strategy building on this
18 administration's focus on expanding and strengthening
19 professional learning for teachers and building
20 trusting, effective relationships amongst school
21 staff.

22 Many schools already have ILT's or use a similar
23 approach to instructional leadership and ongoing
24 supports will be offered this year for those teams.
25 ILT's will examine what is happening in classrooms

1
2 across the school to ensure all students are engaging
3 in rigorous, authentic and culturally relevant
4 learning experiences.

5 Through the instructional leadership framework,
6 schools focus on one of three instructional
7 priorities. Strengthening core instruction, knowing
8 every student well or using a shared and inclusive
9 curriculum.

10 While I'd be happy to discuss the instructional
11 leadership framework in greater detail, I'd like to
12 speak to one but important part of this approach and
13 the focus of this hearing today.

14 Limited and targeted assessment is a natural part
15 of good instruction. It provides necessary
16 information on the progress students are making
17 toward year end benchmarks in preparation for future
18 learning. It is important to have multiple stopping
19 points in multiple ways throughout the year for
20 teachers to evaluate where their students are on the
21 learning continuum and what they need to do to
22 continue to help students make progress.

23 There are two primary types of assessments
24 already in use in the New York City schools. First,
25 schools use formative assessments to provide teachers

1
2 across grades in subjects with information about what
3 students know and are able to do in relation to grade
4 level year long standards expectations. They can be
5 administered in a variety of ways, paper, pencil,
6 booklets, on the computer or oral conferencing.

7 Formative assessments are designed to provide
8 data that can be used for teams of teachers to
9 reflect on past instruction and to plan for tailored
10 supports in upcoming instruction for students based
11 on their current level of performance. Collaborative
12 inquiry and conversation is a significant component
13 of administering formative assessments.

14 Through data and student work analysis, teams of
15 teachers can reflect on and analyze the
16 implementation of their schools curriculum and
17 instruction to assess their effectiveness and
18 providing opportunities for students to develop
19 required grade level skills and determine where gaps
20 and instruction may exist. Then allows teachers to
21 plan for adjustments or enhancements to their
22 instruction to address those gaps and ensure students
23 are mastering content.

24 It also provides opportunities for teachers to
25 share the best practices and instruction and the

1
2 opportunity to collaboratively reflect on
3 accommodations provided to students with special
4 needs and to make adjustments where necessary. For
5 instance, through conversations between general
6 education teachers and special education teachers.

7 The second form is outcomes-based assessments,
8 which are formal assessments that are given on an
9 annual basis to all students in a grade level or a
10 school. Outcomes based assessments are an indication
11 of overall achievement levels across the school or
12 district or state. The New York State Education
13 Department requires the DOE to annually administer
14 math and English Language Arts or ELA tests in grades
15 3-8; science tests in grades 4 and 8, as well as
16 Regents exams in multiple subject areas that are
17 required for graduation in grades 9-12.

18 The New York State Board of Regents and New York
19 State Education Department also grant some schools a
20 variance to provide a Regents diploma without taking
21 all five required Regents exams. Including 46 high
22 schools that belong to the New York Performance
23 Standards Consortium or the Internationals Network.

24 Like all New York City high schools, these
25 graduates are required to earn 44 distributed credits

1
2 and pass the Regents ELA exam and for some schools, a
3 math Regents exam. These schools instead administer
4 performance-based assessment tasks, sometimes
5 referred to as PBATS, in the other subject areas.

6 The PBATS are written tasks and oral
7 presentations that are reviewed by evaluators
8 external to the school and are graded based on a
9 rubric. Each year, we produce reports to support
10 schools in utilizing the results from outcomes-based
11 assessments to refine their overall instructional
12 planning for the year. The results from the test can
13 also be used as one part but not the primary part of
14 promotion decisions as well as search and admissions
15 decisions.

16 New York City and New York State use the results
17 as part of school accountability metrics. In New
18 York City, these exams are included in the school
19 quality guide and school quality snapshot as only a
20 part of one of seven measures aligned to the
21 framework of great schools. Namely, student
22 achievement.

23 These family facing resources are provided to
24 help families understand the quality of their schools
25 and include data from a variety of sources.

1
2 Including formal school visits; feedback from
3 students, teachers and parents from the New York City
4 school survey; and a variety of student achievement
5 measures.

6 The New State Accountability System is comprised
7 of six measures at the elementary middle level and
8 seven measures at the high school level. At the
9 elementary middle level, four out of six of the
10 measures consider performance on standardized
11 assessments. At the high school level, five out of
12 the seven main measures considers performance on
13 standardized assessments. These measures are used by
14 the State Education Department to determine which
15 schools are designated as comprehensive support and
16 improvement or CSI, or targeted support and
17 improvement or TSI schools.

18 In recent years we are pleased that the New York
19 State Board of Regents has made improvements to the
20 administration of grades 3-8 math and ELA
21 assessments, including shortening the administration
22 from three days to two days and making these tests on
23 time, so that any student who is productively working
24 will have the time they need to complete the
25 assessment.

1
2 They have also enacted a moratorium on the
3 required use of these assessments in the evaluations
4 of teachers and principals. We are also closely
5 monitoring the Board of Regents review of graduation
6 requirements through the Blue-Ribbon Commission that
7 will be established later this year.

8 The Commission will be charged with reconsidering
9 current diploma requirements, ensuring all students
10 have access to multiple graduation pathways and
11 ensuring a transition timeline to allow districts to
12 prepare for and implement any changes.

13 The DOE also offers optional outcomes-based
14 assessments to increase college and career readiness
15 through the AP for all initiative and college access
16 for all initiative. The AP for all initiative is
17 part of Mayor de Blasio's equity and excellence
18 agenda with a goal that all students will have access
19 to at least five AP classes by fall 2021.

20 In 2018, 550,011 took at least one AP exam, a 22
21 percent increase since 2016. As part of college
22 access for all, the DOE has provided all juniors with
23 access to the SAT during the school day free of
24 charge. This has led to record high participation.
25

1
2 For the class of 2018, 63,499 students took the
3 SAT at least once in four years of high school. This
4 is 80 percent of the cohort. We remain focused on
5 setting and ensuring a high bar for learning where
6 every student has access to rigorous learning in all
7 content areas and attainment of New York State
8 Standards at grade level and beyond.

9 Thank you for your partnership and for the
10 opportunity to testify before you today. We will be
11 happy to answer any questions you have for us.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you very much. We've
13 also been joined by Council Member Alicka Ampry-
14 Samuel, Council Member Levin and I believe that is
15 it.

16 Just, I guess, before I get to some prepared
17 questions, what is your reaction. I mean, we heard -
18 thank you, which I appreciate. Any reactions to the
19 powerful stories shared by both Anthony Ramos and his
20 teacher Ms. Steinweiss?

21 LINDA CHEN: I have many reactions. One, first
22 of all, in terms of the student focus, there is a
23 greatness that Anthony Ramos represents in every
24 student across this great city. And that greatness
25 is within every student and it is our job as

1
2 educators in schools across the city to be able to
3 see who every student is. Much like Sara Steinweiss
4 shared, how she see's every student and that is the
5 role of the Department of Education. To be able to
6 cultivate that kind of professionalism and passion
7 for every one of our students to accel and find what
8 their passion is. To be able to equip them with all
9 the skills necessary in order to pursue those
10 passions.

11 So, those are just the beginnings of my takeaway
12 from there and the idea that there are many ways
13 multiple measures, many different opportunities to
14 acknowledge and represent a students mastery of
15 learning across a varied level of subject areas and
16 interests.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I appreciate that Linda
18 Chen. If you heard me earlier discuss the irony in
19 his story, because many times when I was teaching and
20 to this day, I still see government documents
21 referred to schools or students as underperforming.
22 Is that term still used to this day, underperforming?

23 LINDA CHEN: I agree with your assertion around
24 that label, because again, to truly see every student
25 is beyond a label of a single test score and we stand

1
2 wanting to ensure that we have multiple ways to view
3 every student and their competencies, so that we can
4 also support them where needed and those kinds of
5 indicators in a variety of ways are important to take
6 notice of.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, I appreciate that. I
8 guess that's maybe your diplomatic way of saying that
9 you hear me, because Anthony is not underperforming.
10 He is quite the talent and again, the current
11 structure, which I recognize there are a lot of state
12 mandates in place here, but the state has to hear us
13 to. We are the largest city in the state, and we
14 have a big microphone and a big voice, we have to use
15 it. We are not fully capturing the amazing skills
16 and talents of our students. It's just, we're not
17 capturing it. I think that was a powerful story that
18 I believe many students across our system share. And
19 as you also heard from Ms. Steinweiss, there are
20 educators who just refuse to shortchange their
21 students and shortchange learning. And so, we're
22 losing quality educators because of this current
23 structure as well. So, this issue is very pressing
24 for a number of reasons.

1
2 I will get to some questions. So, does the DOE
3 have an estimate of how much money does the DOE
4 actually spend on exams? Both in terms of purchasing
5 exams, administering exams and test prep? Is there a
6 ballpark number?

7 LINDA CHEN: So, we know that we spend
8 approximately \$3 million on Regents and grades 3-8
9 ELA and math assessment materials. And in terms of
10 the many things that you listed, some of those things
11 are procured individually by schools as well. So, I
12 don't have a number in terms of a sum of all of the
13 things that you listed, but I do know that we spend
14 about \$3 million on the materials for Regents in ELA
15 and math.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, and I know for
17 example, we heard in testimony or in other hearings
18 that DOE has a contract with Pearson in terms of
19 asking Pearson to design the specialized exam for
20 high school, is that correct?

21 LINDA CHEN: We do have a contract with Pearson
22 for one of the assessments for gifted and talented.
23 Alice can give the details.

24 ALICE BROWN: About \$1.9 million is spent for the
25 specialized high school admissions test. Which

1
2 includes some of those are not directly to Pearson,
3 but just for the Administration in terms of teachers
4 support and the Administrative support that goes
5 along with it.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, so, if I hear
7 correctly, \$3 million for Regents, is that right?

8 LINDA CHEN: Regents in 3-8, ELA in math
9 materials.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Regents in 3-8, math, ELA,
11 we're hearing about \$1.9 million and that's just in
12 the last budget, is that correct? That's the size of
13 the whole contract?

14 ALICE BROWN: Yes, for the specialized high
15 school admission test, yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, and then there is
17 exams for gifted and talented. Do you have an
18 estimate how much that costs?

19 ALICE BROWN: The estimate for the administration
20 is about \$4.4 million, which includes – a large
21 percent of that, however, is for the – it is not to
22 the contracted vendor, it is for the support of the
23 administration of the test.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, so, but it's fair to
25 say and I would appreciate if the DOE can get back to

1
2 me on the total of all exams that I mentioned in my
3 testimony, just to have a full picture of how much –
4 to put a dollar amount to this issue, because I think
5 that's important to kind of discuss the gravity of
6 the test culture. And the cost of the test culture
7 in our school system and I hear you about – there is
8 a place for assessments. I think what we're going to
9 get at is why are we relying solely on this one area
10 when there are so many other pathways that should be
11 and must be explored to demonstrate student
12 proficiency and mastery.

13 By the way, you mentioned in your testimony, I
14 think a number in the 40's, council folks, how many
15 consortium schools do we have in New York City's
16 school system, just so we're clear?

17 LINDA CHEN: I believe it's 40 – hold on, I want
18 to make sure I give you the right number.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Because I am hearing
20 different numbers. I just want to get a number on
21 the record.

22 LINDA CHEN: There is 38.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, 38. It's not in the
24 40's?

25 UNIDENTIFIED: [INAUDIBLE 27:58]–

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I'm sorry, can you just
3 tell us who you are?

4 ALLEN CHANG: Hi, good afternoon. My name is
5 Allen Chang, I am the Acting Superintendent for New
6 York City Consortium Schools, Internationals and New
7 York City Outward Bound.

8 And so, just to clarifying that particular number
9 where Dr. Chen mentioned was all the schools at the
10 high school level that are either consortium or the
11 internationals who have a slight variance and so,
12 some of our international schools, at those schools,
13 the students take both a math and an ELA exam and
14 then when we're looking at full consortium schools,
15 of which there are 38, those schools take just the
16 ELA exam.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And Superintendent, what is
18 your background prior to you being in this role? You
19 oversee the consortium portfolio, is that correct?

20 ALLEN CHANG: So, I am a high school
21 superintendent with the New York City Department of
22 Education and prior to this, I was a principal of a
23 consortium school and a teacher in a consortium
24 school.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, your whole history was
3 in consortium schools?

4 ALLEN CHANG: That is correct.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, because I am very
6 interested in learning more about this and I also
7 find it fascinating that this might have been like
8 the best kept secret in the school system. Because
9 many of my colleagues sometimes have never heard of
10 the consortium network and my question is why? If
11 there are things that are working, if there are
12 things that are promising, particularly in some
13 groups, students with IEP's multilingual learners,
14 why aren't we sharing these best practices?

15 So, can you just summarize very quickly for me,
16 because I actually visited - I visited one recently,
17 I am visiting more. January, I think is PBAT season
18 if I'm not mistaken. I know the terms now. Tell us
19 quickly your thoughts on what you believe is working
20 in consortium schools. What is consortium? What do
21 you think is working? And how are we sharing those
22 practices across the system?

23 ALLEN CHANG: Sure, and I really do appreciate
24 you know, and any time on behalf of the schools and
25

1
2 the DOE for us to share some really great work that
3 is happening.

4 So, as I mentioned, there are 38 consortium
5 schools, 27 of them are officially in my district.
6 There are 8 transfer schools, there are additionally
7 1 school that's a 6-12 in District 7 and then there
8 are 2 consortium schools that are in upstate New
9 York.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Are these all high school,
11 middle school?

12 ALLEN CHANG: They are all high schools. They
13 all culminate in high school. There are a few
14 consortium schools that are grade 6-12.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Nothing elementary?

16 ALLEN CHANG: No.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, please continue.

18 ALLEN CHANG: Yeah, and so, it really at the
19 heart of the consortium model, is this idea of
20 performance assessments. And it's a performance
21 assessment that is really practitioner developed,
22 student focused and really externally assessed. And
23 what I mean by that is that teachers are really
24 working hard to be able to design the curriculum and
25 the rubrics using a wide variety of resources

1
2 aligning them to the state standards. Students are
3 engaged in those particular practices and their
4 chance to go much deeper into a particular subject
5 area and express their work and that is assessed by
6 other teachers that are at the school as well as
7 external evaluators who are brought in both on their
8 written work as well as their oral presentations.

9 Overall, the work of the consortium schools is
10 something that is deeply shared across the district
11 and that that means principals are collaborating with
12 each other. In my district, there are additional
13 schools that are not consortium schools but were also
14 part of the affinity executive super intendency which
15 has a 162 schools.

16 So, there are many structures that are in place
17 to be able to highlight really great practices in
18 which we invite outside officials, outside
19 principals, leaders, who want to be able to come and
20 visit and do that work. The consortium also hosts an
21 annual conference in which members are able to be
22 able to attend, lead professional development
23 workshops, participate and that often times has a
24 national presence as well.

1
2 And I would say that, you know, the performance
3 assessments is one part of what it means to be an
4 excellent consortium school and really at the heart
5 of what the department believes is that project focus
6 instruction culturally relevant instruction, things
7 that are really grounded in what our students believe
8 and value and want to learn is extremely important.
9 And those things don't only occur in consortium
10 schools, but rather, we're working hard to ensure
11 that that's occurring really across our system.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I really appreciate
13 that response. I would just note for you that I was
14 elected in 2013, joined the Council in 2014. I was
15 very active in my school and in my school community.
16 I did not hear about consortium schools until I
17 joined the Council, and this is coming from someone
18 that is very active in education.

19 And I am amazed by – I visited one, I am visiting
20 more. I have a schedule that's going to be – I'll be
21 visiting PBAT season, I can tell you that
22 Superintendent. But I'm trying to figure out, you
23 know, can you confirm where we're seeing that there
24 are promising results in terms of student
25 proficiency, particularly students with IEP's and

1
2 multilingual learners. Are you seeing that data that
3 we're seeing internally here as well?

4 ALLEN CHANG: That is correct. I mean, I think
5 there are many different ways for us to be able to
6 measure overall. I mean, I think partly, because the
7 consortium schools don't take all the exams, the
8 comparisons are a little bit different. But if we're
9 looking at overall graduation rates, the graduation
10 rates are a little bit higher when you're looking
11 across the consortium schools.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And they except all kids,
13 am I correct on that? The application process is
14 open to all?

15 ALLEN CHANG: Yeah, so the application process is
16 open and you know, I think what's important here is
17 that you know, I think there are hundreds of high
18 schools in New York City and you know, I know many
19 parents who are looking into the high school process
20 and it can be hard to find just exactly the right
21 match and then as a district, we've really attempted
22 to be able to work with various offices, family
23 welcome centers, to really make sure that these
24 options are well known. Because really at the heart
25 of it, the parents and the families really need to

1
2 understand what this model is about. Because as much
3 of a fan as I personally am, because I taught in one,
4 I led a school, I was out there being as big of a
5 cheerleader as you can be. I also know that it needs
6 to be the right kind of match and there are some
7 places and some schools and some particular students
8 for which we want to make sure that this is an option
9 that is available. In which they can apply through
10 the high school admissions process.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You hit on something
12 important, because in my visit to the school, I
13 visited outward bound leaders in my district and
14 very, very impressed with the visit and the talk we
15 had with students. The students shared with me that
16 during freshman year, they had to educate their
17 parents and their families about what the school was
18 doing in terms of assessing their performance because
19 PBAT is kind of new term. They are used to hearing
20 Regents or big, big tests and I think there is more
21 work to do in this area to inform the public about
22 alternative assessments.

23 And for those folks, because I have been waiting
24 for this. For those folks who are saying that any
25 discussion of moving away from high stakes or you

1 know that the Regents is watering down education.
2 The work that those students are working on at
3 leaders is extraordinary and it is rigorous. I read
4 that rubric, there is a lot to read in that rubric
5 and try convincing me that a student sitting with a
6 Barron's Regents review book all day in a library,
7 memorizing or trying to memorize dates and names of
8 things that happen 500 years ago. That's not
9 rigorous to me. That is not rigor, I will debate
10 that anytime.
11

12 Because that's what I witnessed and observed with
13 my own two eyes. The type of work that students are
14 working on that I observed, is actually far more
15 rigorous, far more complex and actually it's amazing,
16 because they actually get to work on this during the
17 course of the year. There is no one big test that
18 just they have to just obsess over. They are working
19 on this along the way, there are benchmarks along the
20 way. Actually, this school has a unique, this is
21 unique to the Outward Bound model, it's not for the
22 all consortium but they have something called Crew,
23 which is really interesting where they have like a
24 home room but it's the same students throughout the
25 year with the same Crew teacher throughout the year

1
2 and they create a support network within that
3 classroom for each other.

4 And there is peer mentoring, peer tutoring, peer
5 support. Everything that I was taught in school that
6 we should be doing, they are doing. But it's not
7 being shared across the system. And so, that's why I
8 do have to kind of ask - you're the Superintendent
9 that oversees these schools. Is there someone in a
10 more larger [inaudible 43:42] in DOE that says, hey,
11 this is working here in these 38 schools. Can we
12 apply these types of strategies and these thinking
13 and this approach beyond 38 schools? And are there
14 other schools that are interested in applying and
15 also becoming consortium schools that are on a wait
16 list? How long is this wait list? Tell us about
17 these things.

18 ALLEN CHANG: Sure, I mean I will say that
19 certainly on your very first question in terms of
20 collaboration, I mean, I think that is certainly one
21 of the most important values in the hallmark of this
22 particular administration that you know, we're really
23 ensuring and doing our best to make sure that school
24 to school leaders are the leaders, teachers the

1
2 teachers, that there is that collaboration that is in
3 place.

4 And I certainly, you know, on behalf of that
5 particular district welcome people who want to learn
6 more about those schools, come and visit. You know,
7 I'd love to be able to go on a visit along with you
8 and other members of the Council.

9 I think when we're talking about sort of
10 officially becoming a member of a consortium, I want
11 to clarify that the particular variance that Dr. Chen
12 spoke about is a variance that is granted by the New
13 York State Board of Education and the New York State
14 Regents.

15 And you know, while at the city, we certainly
16 want to be able to encourage the kinds of practices
17 that are in place. It's a state requirement that is
18 there with regards to high school graduation and over
19 the past several years, New York State has not
20 increased the number of schools.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: But have you asked?

22 ALLEN CHANG: So, you know, there are many
23 schools that are interested.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: How many?
25

1
2 ALLEN CHANG: I, as a Superintendent, they don't
3 reach out to me directly.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Who do they reach out to?

5 ALLEN CHANG: Well, they reach out to Ann Cook.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Who is amazing but yes, she
7 is here.

8 ALLEN CHANG: And she hopefully will be able to
9 speak to that a little bit more and I think really
10 there, the dynamics are that you know, as somebody
11 who helps supervise and lead one of those schools,
12 it's a complicated transition. And in particular,
13 when we're thinking about schools that were designed
14 under one particular model and shifting the mindsets
15 of the students and the teachers.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I would just respectfully
17 add, I hear you that it's complicated. Dismantling
18 inequity is complicated but it's necessary.

19 ALLEN CHANG: I have no disagreement with that.
20 And so, over the last several years, it's a five-year
21 variance at a time in which they grant, and they have
22 not increased the number of schools. I certainly
23 would happy to work with you and others to think
24 about how might we be able to advocate on behalf of
25 those schools that are interested.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, and now, in the
3 testimony we heard, we heard about a Blue-Ribbon
4 Commission. Will the DOE give names or make
5 suggestions to the membership of the Regents Blue
6 Ribbon Commission?

7 LINDA CHEN: As we get more information from the
8 state, we will certainly engage you and other elected
9 officials to advocate for ensuring that we have fair
10 multiple measured ways to determine graduation
11 pathways.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Dr. Chen, are you aware or
13 who is aware within DOE about the number of schools
14 in addition to the 38 that are interested in being
15 granted such a waiver away from the traditional
16 assessment model. Is anyone keeping a list?

17 LINDA CHEN: My understanding of the process is
18 that schools that are interested would then reach out
19 to the consortium and there would be a process
20 involved. And, as the Superintendent mentioned, it
21 is determined the timeline and the processes are
22 determined by the state and so, those are things that
23 we do track to make sure that folks have the
24 opportunity and know where to go.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And is there some sort of a
3 report or a paper or something that summarizes some
4 of the practices that are being applied – effective
5 practices that are being applied in consortium, that
6 are being shared in non-consortium schools? Because
7 I've been to many PD's during my career and I always
8 mention that the cookies and muffins are very tasty
9 at these PD's, but this is what I would have really
10 appreciated seeing and hearing about, rather than
11 test prep. Because many PD's, that's why I asked you
12 about how much the cost, many PD's were about, how do
13 we get more kids to pass the Regents? When the work
14 that they're doing is far more rigorous and far more
15 meaningful in the lives of our students. Is there
16 sort of a concept paper? Is there some sort of
17 report that we could share PDF, we could email to our
18 schools?

19 LINDA CHEN: So, I will just jump in here. We
20 have had a structure around showcase and learning
21 partner schools in the past that work will continue
22 on in instructional leadership framework, but that is
23 a structure where schools learn from each other.
24 It's the kind of professional development that you
25 are describing. Where they come together to learn

1
2 from each other and the best practices. Not only in
3 a setting outside of the classroom, but more
4 importantly, inside school buildings. So, they can
5 actually see what is happening from the learning that
6 they have been working on together.

7 So, in terms of the instructional leadership
8 framework, part of the design of that is for schools
9 to be able to learn from each other around best
10 practices and that's why it's so important that
11 systemwide, that it isn't just limited to one
12 network, such as the network that we've described.
13 So that all schools can learn about what consortium
14 schools are doing, what international schools are
15 doing, what all schools are doing across the city.

16 Because as you know, we have very great work
17 going on all over the city.

18 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, Dr. Chen, I taught at
19 New Utrecht which is the 11214-zip code. Leaders in
20 the 11214-zip code, no one ever partnered my school
21 with Leaders. They partnered me with other large
22 high schools, like Fort Hamilton and FDR where we
23 shared information with each other, but we do the
24 same thing.

1
2 I would have much rather sat down with teachers
3 from Leaders and learned about what they are doing
4 with students rather than just repeating the same
5 practices within the traditional school models. Just
6 a suggestion, because you have schools that are next
7 to each that are not talking to each other and we
8 really should – let me just move on.

9 Although Every Student Succeeds Act ESSA,
10 requires states to assess high school students in
11 reading, language, arts, math and science for the
12 purposes of state accountability. No federal law
13 requires high school exit exams.

14 Today, as we heard, New York State is one of only
15 11 states that still require students to pass exams
16 to graduate, down from over half of all states. Why
17 do you think so many states are moving away from exit
18 exams and does the DOE believe New York State should
19 eliminate use of Regents as a diploma requirement?

20 LINDA CHEN: This is why we look forward to this
21 official capacity with the Blue-Ribbon Commission at
22 the State Ed department because we do need to have
23 this important conversation and subsequent action to
24 determine what is it that we need to do to ensure
25 there are fair and multiple pathways for our students

1
2 for graduation. And I think that's why you've seen
3 those changes in state exit exam requirements across
4 the country and I appreciate you convening this
5 conversation today. Which is a great prelude to
6 being able to as you said, being heard by our New
7 York State Education Department. That is what is a
8 critical and important conversation for us to have
9 and influence together.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And I appreciate that, but
11 I am not sure if I am hearing an answer. What is the
12 DOE's position on the Regents exams being used as a
13 requirement for diploma in our high schools?

14 LINDA CHEN: So, Regents are what I referred to
15 early as outcomes base assessments and those outcome
16 base assessments have a role of some information but
17 not complete information about a student, much like
18 what we saw earlier where those assessments wouldn't
19 capture the fullness of everything that Anthony Ramos
20 knows and is able to do.

21 And we support looking at the ability to have
22 multiple measures to determine a students graduation
23 and pathway.

24 There is value but it's not the only measure that
25 should be considered.

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And I also share with you
3 one of the worst kept secrets in the school system is
4 that if you are a – well, I could speak from some
5 history teachers, is that if you are a history
6 teacher teaching a Regents class, I think I could
7 speak for many of my colleagues that at some point in
8 March of the year, you're are told to stop what you
9 are doing with your curriculum and shift everything
10 to Regents prep.

11 And so, if you are teaching a global 3 or global
12 4 curriculum, usually you get stuck somewhere in
13 World War II and it's as if the world stops after
14 World War II.

15 So, we just had a powerful, inspiring
16 transformative climate change march, led by our young
17 people. Ask the average high school history teacher
18 if they can get through the curriculum to teach about
19 the gravity of the issue of climate change.

20 I had more time to discuss it in depth senior
21 year government class, which has no Regents. So, I
22 had more freedom to teach in that class, but
23 everything was about making sure that the test was
24 our guide. And if it was not tested, it was not
25 being taught. And so, all the politicians cheer on

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2 the students for marching and leading and doing a
3 great job, meanwhile, they know that it is so
4 difficult to get through that curriculum to even get
5 to teach and discuss the biggest crisis facing our
6 planet today.

7 And so, we are shortchanging students, we are
8 shortchanging learning. There is a difference
9 between testing and learning. We have to ask
10 ourselves Dr. Chen, do we actually value learning in
11 the school system? Because what we're doing right
12 now is not learning.

13 I have a few more and I am being mindful of my
14 colleagues and time, I am also concerned about the
15 mental health of students, particularly during
16 testing season. Have any schools reached out to DOE
17 about testing anxiety? Does the DOE have any
18 knowledge of students visiting emergency room, due to
19 test related anxiety or panic attacks? Are there
20 increases in visits to school social workers and
21 counselors during testing season? And if so, how
22 does DOE support schools with this influx?

23 LINDA CHEN: So, in terms of incidents around
24 testing season, we're not seeing any significant
25 differences in terms of the kinds of incidents that

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2 you are bringing up. We do focus and it has been
3 very clear from the chancellor around focusing on
4 teaching rigorous instruction throughout the day and
5 so, when the test comes up is simply another time to
6 be able to demonstrate their learning and we do make
7 sure that we reinforce the importance of learning
8 throughout the day that's not just focused on
9 testing.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I'm going to give you
11 some anecdotal data because I don't have anything
12 concrete at this time but I heard from local hospital
13 administrator in Southern Brooklyn that said to me
14 that he could almost predict testing season based on
15 the visits he sees in his ER from young people who
16 come into the emergency room because of test anxiety
17 and panic attacks.

18 I will also share with you that an administrator
19 who oversees a guidance counselor department of one
20 of our large high schools shared that there are
21 students who come in during high stakes testing
22 season with evidence of self-harm because of the
23 stress associated with exams.

24 So, just because you're not seeing it, it does
25 not mean it's not happening. I am not sure if you

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2 are looking to see it. I am not sure if the DOE is
3 actually trying to find supportive ways of hearing
4 from schools about the impact.

5 First of all, when you mentioned in the testimony
6 that the state moved from three days to two days, Dr.
7 Chen, let's be clear why they made that move. What
8 they were doing to young children was outrageous and
9 I know some people are also applauding this
10 announcement of the shift to make the test on time
11 all together, their not even giving them guidance on
12 when to tell a child, are you okay? Just ask, are
13 you okay. Some students are just there for hours and
14 hours and hours and no one is just asking the child,
15 are you okay. This is not learning. This is not
16 even normal in my opinion. It's not backed by
17 research in my view.

18 So, I do think we need to actually get more data
19 on this because what I'm hearing from credible stake
20 holders is that there are students who are hurting
21 themselves. There are students who are experiencing
22 stress and anxiety, particularly during testing
23 season and if they lack social supports in the
24 school, which we know they do, we have work to do.

25 LINDA CHEN: I do want to note.

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CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Please.

LINDA CHEN: That part of this administrations focus is being able to support the social/emotional learning of all students. I think you've heard a number of examples of our investments in those areas and that's important to us whether it's test anxiety or other anxieties. And thank you for your advocacy around social workers and so on.

That has been tremendously helpful in pairing with our messaging to principals and teachers on the importance of the day to day learning. That will continue to be a focus in this administration.

CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, and Dr. Chen, and I appreciate that, and I am hearing you saying that we should be looking at other assessments. That students are more than a test score, but I will tell you that the current DOE structure when they visit schools, and this is folks that visit schools from Tweed and from Central. Many of the questions asked of our school communities are based on those scores.

When I was called in by administrators, the question was not really, how could I support you. The issue was Mark, I'm being grilled by Central, how do we get more kids to pass the test? And I had

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2 students that were absent, chronically absent because
3 they were facing enormous challenges at home.

4 And respectfully, the last thing they cared about
5 right now was a Regents, when they didn't know where
6 they were going to sleep at night. And so, if we're
7 not caring for their whole needs, we're really
8 shortchanging them.

9 I want to turn to my colleagues who have been
10 very patient. I will begin with Council Member
11 Borelli, but just note that we will start a clock
12 just to be mindful of everyone's time. Thank you
13 very much.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: You mentioned the
15 climate change protest. Did the Mayor and Chancellor
16 seek any guidance from the Conflict of Interest Board
17 before allowing students an excuse?

18 LINDA CHEN: I would not be able to speak to
19 that, but we can certainly gather a collective
20 response to provide for you.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I did ask for one, I
22 didn't get one, so that's why I am asking now. Is
23 there any policy difference between two weeks ago
24 versus today as to what protest students will be
25 excused for?

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2 LINDA CHEN: Again, I would want to make sure we
3 get that information from our other offices to be
4 able to provide you accurate information.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So, we're talking about
6 test taking and I noticed that at Maspeth High
7 School, 98 percent of students graduated within four
8 years, which is significantly higher than the
9 citywide averages; it's impressive. Obviously, there
10 have been some allegations of cheating. Has the DOE
11 begun an investigation of those claims?

12 LINDA CHEN: We take all such allegations
13 seriously around academic integrity. And when those
14 came up, we did refer those allegations into SCN and
15 currently there is an investigation underway, yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So, some of the other
17 schools in the same school district, I think District
18 24 have equally remarkable statistics. So, in one,
19 PSIS 87 actually where 18 percent of kids go to
20 Maspeth. They have 100 percent pass rate on core
21 math, English, science and social science exams.
22 Now, 100 percent is remarkable because 100 percent
23 means not one child has failed or not passed their
24 classes. So, how come only 42 percent of the
25 students there passed their math exams? How can we

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2 marry that between 100 percent of the students
3 passing, which is remarkable versus only 42 percent
4 of the students pass? Mr. Chair, could I have some
5 more time?

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Just to be mindful, but I
7 will give you an extra minute Council Member just to
8 follow up the question.

9 LINDA CHEN: We would need to speak with the
10 school and get a sense from them directly on what
11 those differences would be looking at the instruction
12 and the abilities of the students. I would not be
13 able to give you an answer here.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So, just down the road
15 from PSIS 87, there is junior high school, same
16 situation, 90 percent of the kids pass their core
17 classes but less than a third pass math and English.
18 I'm not going to ask the same question, but I'm going
19 to ask something different. You guys rate PSIS 87 as
20 fair as far as student achievement. You rate JHS 8
21 as good, three out of four in student achievement.

22 How do you justify the fact that at one school
23 where more kids pass the curriculum and pass the
24 state exams is fair, whereas the adjacent school,
25 less kids pass the curriculum and less kids pass the

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2 state exam and that's a good school theoretically for
3 the purposes of student achievement?

4 LINDA CHEN: We have a number of metrics for
5 student achievement. I can certainly have Alice
6 Brown delineate what those are, but it would come
7 down to the difference between all those metrics
8 between those two schools.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: What can be more
10 important than both -

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: This will be your final
12 question. Just to move on, this final question, and
13 answer and then we can move on. Thanks.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Yeah, what is more
15 important than passing the school standard for
16 passing the grade and the state standard? If both of
17 those are higher in one school and you are saying
18 that's worse than the other school. What other
19 metrics could be weighing on that?

20 LINDA CHEN: Do you want to go through the
21 metrics?

22 ALICE BROWN: I think when you see a difference
23 between the grades that students are using and I
24 believe that's what you are referring to and the
25 junior high schools that you mentioned, it's that

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2 next ready levelness metric. Which is taking in the
3 multiple measures that we are talking about versus
4 the one single test score. So, I believe that's what
5 you were referring to.

6 So, we're here today talking about what does that
7 one single test score mean? And in this case, it's
8 the ELA and the math exams from the state versus all
9 the work that students do across an entire year in
10 many multiple formats to show their mastery and their
11 growth towards the state standards. So, those are
12 included in the elementary and in the math -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I thought you were going
14 to say the next level and I will end it here. My
15 next question is we're going to go into the schools
16 that these kids go into, because clearly, they're not
17 ready for the next level. But I will yield the rest
18 of the time, I have none left anyway.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Council Member
20 Borelli for your questions. I just would note that
21 I've always argued that any state report of our
22 schools should come with an asterisk noting how much
23 money New York State owes the New York City school
24 system. Because I find it really interesting when
25 the state produces all these fancy glossy reports of

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2 our schools, knowing that they are still
3 shortchanging us default of a lawsuit. My professor
4 Glenfield who educated me so well in class, that they
5 lost and yet are lecturing us and trying to tell us
6 about how to do better. So, pay your bill Albany,
7 start with that.

8 Next, we'll hear from Council Member Holden.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you Chair. Talking
10 about Maspeth High School again; it's in my district
11 and we've had now almost a dozen teachers come
12 forward and say that there is a no fail policy at
13 Maspeth High School.

14 And then we're seeing on certainly on social
15 media that it's happening all over; the no fail
16 policy. Is the Administration allowed of a
17 particular school, allowed to change a grade without
18 notifying the teacher of that particular grade?
19 Let's say the student got a 55 and somehow it
20 magically changed to 65?

21 LINDA CHEN: So again, academic integrity is
22 important to us. We also have academic policies
23 around grading that I will ask Alice Brown to
24 summarize.

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2 ALICE BROWN: Each school should have a grading
3 policy that is well known to all of the teachers and
4 the students and the teachers who are in charge of
5 each class, should administer those grades. If there
6 is such a change, that change should be discussed,
7 and the teacher should enter that change.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: But the administration
9 cannot change it?

10 ALICE BROWN: Right.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, is it against
12 regulations, against the law?

13 ALICE BROWN: It's our policy.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: It's a policy, okay.

15 ALICE BROWN: For a teacher to be able to know
16 the grades that they're giving and have them be
17 aligned to the grading policy as has been published
18 to all of the students and the parents, so that they
19 know what the expectation of the course are.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, so we have for
21 years, it's not only a few years. We have a lot of
22 evidence, a mountain of evidence that says, there is
23 a no fail policy and a no fail policy now, in many,
24 many schools. And I'm just wondering why DOE has
25 never red flagged any of this. That faculty,

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2 teachers are being driven out, good teachers who won
3 awards from other schools when they come to Maspeth
4 High School are driven out. Because they refuse to
5 change grades, they refuse to have a no fail policy
6 and they are then given bad evaluations and driven
7 out of the system. And this has been going on
8 allegedly for years and we notified DOE of this. We
9 notified the investigators and it took three or four
10 weeks for them to even come around and interview the
11 whistle blowers.

12 So, this is a real – and what we're hearing
13 around the city that this is going on, it's
14 widespread, it's systemic. And, by the way, I just
15 want to ask one other question Chair, because I know
16 my time is up. Do Special Ed education students get
17 – is there extra funding available for the school for
18 accepting Special Education students?

19 LINDA CHEN: We have a fair student funding
20 formula and according to that formula, there are
21 associated waits for characteristics aligned to the
22 needs of students, students with disabilities
23 included in that.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, we've seen – there
25 was an article in Sunday's post that we saw a student

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2 graduate early who never attended class in his senior
3 year. He graduated six months early in December and
4 is that being investigated? Because this is going
5 on, now we're getting more people coming forward that
6 other special needs students are graduating early
7 because they're problems and the school gets rid of
8 them. Is anybody red flagging this?

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You can answer and then
10 move on, but you can answer the question.

11 ALICE BROWN: I think that it's what Dr. Chen
12 said earlier, that all of those allegations are part
13 of the SEI and OSI investigation.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, and so, I just want
15 to turn to more of my colleagues. Those are very
16 serious allegations made at Maspeth and I am hearing
17 that there is an active investigation by both SEI and
18 OSI, so that is welcomed news that there are folks
19 who are following up to take appropriate action when
20 necessary.

21 LINDA CHEN: Sorry, just to specific, OSI.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: OSI, forgive me, OSI, yes.
23 Just to note also important is that equally important
24 in terms of following up on the seriousness of the
25 allegations is also the idea of also due process.

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2 And not, also, you know, issuing verdicts via tweet
3 or social media. There has to be follow up here but
4 just because a story is published somewhere, doesn't
5 mean the whole story is true or are we in the
6 fullness of the story. I have seen that through my
7 experience being a public-school teacher,
8 particularly by certain folks who have an agenda in
9 my view, to really hurt the public-school system.
10 And the whole issue of cheating in general, think
11 about what we're talking about. Folks who feel
12 pressured or folks who are accusing administration
13 officials or pressuring them to pass tests. Rather
14 than talking about learning and comprehensive
15 curriculum and finding ways to bring out student
16 talents and traits. This is one of the impacts of a
17 testing culture that's just hyper driven in our
18 school system.

19 They are not talking about learning, their just
20 talking about tests and this is a part of the
21 hearing. News to my colleagues, this is a part of
22 our hearing. We are not focusing on learning in our
23 schools when everything is just about tests.

24 Next, we'll hear from Council Member Barron.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you to the Chair
3 and thank you to the panel for coming. Just a few
4 quick questions.

5 You mentioned an increase in the percentage of
6 students who are taking the AP exams. What is the
7 data on the students who are passing or achieving the
8 score that shows that they have completed that
9 successfully?

10 LINDA CHEN: We're just looking to see if we have
11 that with us right now.

12 ALICE BROWN: Hi, so in 2018, 55,011 students
13 took at least one AP exam, 28,581 passed at least one
14 of those AP exams.

15 So, since 2017, that was an increase of 11.4
16 percentage point of the number taking and 10.7
17 percent increase of the number passing.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: That's great, but I also
19 want to talk about the reflection of how much – and
20 Mr. Chair just to notice, it took a minute for them
21 to get me my answer. So, I want to add that time
22 back.

23 LINDA CHEN: We'll work a little faster.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Regents Chancellor Betty
25 Rosa said that the Board will be meeting to exam, "to

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2 what degree requiring passage of Regents exams
3 improve student achievement, graduation rates and
4 college readiness." So, again, these high stakes
5 tests, they may be getting improvement in the
6 percentage of the number of children passing but we
7 don't know what positive impact that may have on
8 students moving forward and secondly, what is the
9 budget that the DOE has for all those companies that
10 prepare testing material, particularly Pearson's?

11 ALICE BROWN: The testing material for Pearson
12 for the SHSAT and the GNT I gave earlier, so I can
13 find that again.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: What percentage of the
15 budget goes to that contract for testing?

16 ALICE BROWN: The percentage of the overall
17 budget?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Hmm, hmm.

19 ALICE BROWN: I don't have that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, I would like to get
21 that information. In terms of the consortium
22 schools, how are they selected?

23 LINDA CHEN: I will ask the Superintendent to join
24 to respond more specifically to that question.

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2 ALLEN CHANG: Can you repeat that question one
3 more time?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Yes, how were the
5 participant in the consortium schools, how are they
6 selected? What schools, what criteria determine the
7 schools that participated?

8 ALLEN CHANG: So, the schools that are in the
9 consortium reach out to the consortium, which is an
10 independent non-DOE organization.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: What outreach was done to
12 those schools for them to know that this opportunity
13 existed? Because are there a concentration of them in
14 a particular geographic area?

15 ALLEN CHANG: No, they are spread out over all
16 four boroughs. They are not concentrated.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: There in four of the five
18 boroughs.

19 ALLEN CHANG: Sorry.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay, alright, and then
21 finally, does the DOE have on it's website any notice
22 to parents that they have the right to opt out of
23 testing without any consequences because parents who
24 are friends of mine, have said that they've been told
25 that if their child is absent and opts out, there

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2 will be negative consequences. And I've told them,
3 go back and tell that principal that's not true.

4 So, I don't know if the DOE has such a policy.
5 If not, I'd like to offer that we prepare that Mr.
6 Chair, so that it be noted on the website that that
7 is an option that they have without penalty.

8 LINDA CHEN: There is information for families on
9 the website and that is also shared with principals,
10 so that they are aware and are in alignment with what
11 we've communicated.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: So, does it say on the
13 website, parents, you can opt out for your child and
14 there are not consequences? Is that what it says?

15 LINDA CHEN: It doesn't say those words exactly,
16 but it does provide them the opportunity to refuse
17 the state exam for their students and that
18 information is also backpacked home, so that families
19 get it even if they're not looking on the website.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Well, it wasn't in that
21 particular child's backpack, because the parent does
22 go through it and it said the contrary. Don't miss
23 having your child here, because it affects our rating
24 and there will be consequences.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you Council Member
3 Barron. I think your point is well made that the
4 onus should not be on parents and families,
5 communities. The DOE has a responsibility to inform
6 folks of their rights. Just in the case – the answer
7 we heard with regards to the knowledge of the
8 consortium schools, that the onus should not be just
9 on the school. DOE should be proactively informing
10 school communities about opportunities that exist
11 within its system. And it just – it amazes me that
12 you have like these schools that are really onto
13 something really promising that address areas of
14 education that historically have plagued the system.
15 And we're not talking to each other.

16 So, there's a lot of work to do. So, I want to
17 thank you for that. Next, we'll hear from Council
18 Member King.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Good afternoon and thank
20 you Chair. Thank you, doctor, thank you both. I
21 have a quick question. How long have you been with
22 the DOE in this leadership role?

23 LINDA CHEN: In this leadership role, this is my
24 second year, but I was previously a teacher and a
25 principal and a literacy supervisor in the DOE.

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COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, and you as well.

ALICE BROWN: 22 years.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: 22 years in leadership?

ALICE BROWN: Oh, no.

COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Okay, so, I'm pretty sure that none of you have been part of the structure putting together the DOE for the last 25 years. Can I assume that correct? You didn't put the rules together for the DOE in the last -- we're just going 25 years. Okay, I'm just going to go there first.

So, right now, then I'm saying that you're not responsible for the crumbling or the mismanagement or somebody's bad ideas that have been placed on our children and our teachers and our principals that have to manage a curriculum that's always changing depending the Chancellor or whoever is at the top of the hill.

So, I'm asking you right now to figure out ways for when you see something that is wrong, how do we correct it. The DOE over points of time, people will say it's not segregated but parts of it is segregated. You have a consortium, you have charter schools, you have public schools who operate on different program depending on who is managing it.

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2 So, I'm saying to you all, how do you all come
3 together in a world of testing? I'm not a guy who
4 says testing is a bad thing, but I just think it's
5 the be all to everything. And we had a great young
6 man who came in and told his testimony of how he had
7 to navigate a system that kind of was just bias
8 towards him because he wasn't a great academic
9 student.

10 Again, not every student needs to know the
11 definition of pie and what is x square minus 4 square
12 hypothesized. That has nothing to do with anything
13 when you move on in your life, but we'd be held
14 accountable if we don't understand it at 14 and 15
15 years of age and it hurts later on when we're trying
16 to get scholarships or when we're trying to graduate.

17 Right there, that just says to me, there is a
18 system that is bias to some of our students. When we
19 can have a consortium school that's getting it right,
20 but our kids who live on 149th Street or Brownsville,
21 don't have access to that type of education.

22 So, I'd like to know the first thing, Anthony
23 Ramos's story, it's not new to you all. What have
24 you done to build on his story to allow children who
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2 are on that path to have greater access to graduating
3 and being a great student? That's my first question.

4 My second question, you mentioned something about
5 these surveys and people come back and give you
6 assessments of all the data they've collected. Who
7 are the people that are gathering this data, and do
8 they reflect the children who are in the school
9 system?

10 The reason I ask that question, I went into a
11 high school system where I saw 90 percent of the
12 administrative was one ethnicity and the students
13 were totally different than the leadership in the
14 building. So, there's definitely a disconnect from
15 what the students are going through each and every
16 day to the people who are supposed to be educating
17 them.

18 That's my second question. Then I would like to
19 know from all of the education that's being taught
20 with these testing, where are we teaching our kids,
21 because if I'm good at drawing, maybe I don't need to
22 understand all these different fractions. If I'm
23 good at acting, maybe I don't need to have to
24 understand some of the other things that you are
25 holding me accountable on a Regents test. The basics

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2 that every child needs to know is how write, where to
3 put a semicolon, learn a little bit about history and
4 then that means it's inclusive of everybody's
5 history, not one particular story on this globe. And
6 how do we manage that when it comes to making sure
7 that we have a good education curriculum for our
8 kids? And I'll end there.

9 LINDA CHEN: Okay, so, I will tackle the first
10 and third questions because I see some relationship
11 between those and then I will also have Alice Brown
12 share the process for the report card, the surveys
13 and the quality reviews, those reports that you
14 mentioned.

15 To you point, regardless of who is leader, what
16 you are seeing right now under this administration,
17 this Chancellor, is the need to even the playing
18 field and ensure that there is access and opportunity
19 and I would also say, an expectation for attainment
20 of learning for every student.

21 So, you see those things in some of the signature
22 initiatives. The excellence and equity initiatives
23 around college access for all, AP for all. Those are
24 examples of what we are doing to make sure that we
25 are giving access and opportunity. And to the

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2 question asked about attainment rates and AP, to make
3 sure that all our students are able to attain those
4 skills and knowledge as well.

5 And part of that work is also making sure that we
6 have streamlined these expectations for schools if
7 you will. So, I shared briefly around the
8 instructional leadership framework. The idea there
9 is to make sure and to Segway a little bit to your
10 third question, that every school has a coherent and
11 full curriculum. So, what we heard from Anthony
12 Ramos, this ability to have an education that meets
13 all of their needs.

14 So, every student, whether or not you're an
15 Anthony Ramos that ends up having a career in the
16 arts or not, you have exposure. It's the right of
17 every student to have, exposure and access and
18 attainment to a full education and that is part of
19 what we expect through our instructional leadership
20 teams at the schools, to make sure that they figure
21 out how to make that content and those standards that
22 the state expects us to teach and that is across all
23 content areas. Including the arts, including world
24 languages, including physical education, that all

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2 students are attaining that in a way that considers
3 who they are.

4 And that piece is important to this
5 administration similar to some things that the
6 Chancellor announced yesterday around our
7 instructional approach and the importance of aligning
8 and identifying who our students are. Leveraging
9 their strength and their identities in their learning
10 and to learn the identities and the characteristics
11 and perspectives of those outside of themselves in
12 their own immediate culture and context as well.

13 So, those are the things that we are doing that
14 in terms of what the Chancellor has also shared, is t
15 really be able to change the systems and structures,
16 so that regardless who is at the helm at the moment,
17 to your point, that we are making sure that we are
18 developing these capacities and systems that will not
19 go away depending on who is in leadership at the
20 time. And part of that is through our comprehensive
21 supports framework, which is having an ability to
22 share with schools, with each other, to learn from
23 each other but also to look at, every school doesn't
24 need the same thing and the same kinds of supports.

1
2 It is our responsibility centrally to be able to
3 know our schools well through our executive
4 superintendent structure, to be able to allocate the
5 supports where they are most needed. So, that every
6 student does indeed be able to access and attain
7 those opportunities that we are speaking of.

8 So, I'll have Alice answer some of the questions
9 around who does the survey's and the quality review
10 reports.

11 ALICE BROWN: The multiple measures that have
12 been used in this administration include having
13 surveys. We survey our students in grades 6-12, our
14 teachers of all of the grades and our parents of all
15 of the students. We invite them to participate in
16 the survey and those measures get included in our
17 school quality reports. There are other measures
18 that we use, like a school quality review and also,
19 we use student achievement data and some other data
20 that compile those reports.

21 I think you might have asked specifically, who
22 are the people who do that, am I right?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Yeah, because I want to get
24 a make about the ethnicity of every one who is part
25 of the process. Because again, I go back to a school

1
2 where 90 percent of administration was one ethnicity
3 and the children were a whole other ethnicity.

4 So, I know there is a breakdown in relationship
5 where whatever thoughts are thinking or how much
6 energy that gets put in there. Is there any bias
7 into this conversation. You know, whether implied or
8 not, you know, so, I just want us to be honest in a
9 conversation when it comes to the Department of
10 Education when you look at the makeup of the DOE, who
11 is doing what for a system that has 70 percent people
12 of color in it. And the leadership throughout all
13 the schools don't reflect that.

14 So, how do we have a real conversation? I'm
15 asking you all if you see a problem, and I end with
16 this as you answer this question. What do you think
17 is your number one issues when it comes to curriculum
18 and if you know what that is, how do we seriously
19 address it, other than talking points in a
20 conversation?

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, so, you can answer,
22 and this will be the final, because we have to move
23 on.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Thank you, Mr. Treyger.

25 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Sure.

1
2 LINDA CHEN: I would say the number one challenge
3 is to make sure that every student gets access and
4 attainment to a full curriculum taught at the highest
5 levels where there is expectation for every student
6 to learn. That is our greatest challenge of being
7 able to have every student – and part of that
8 challenge is making sure that we understand who every
9 student is in order for them to be able to partake in
10 that education.

11 So, it's the high standard for everyone and the
12 ability to differentiate for everyone of our
13 students, that's the challenge before us.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, so thank you and we
15 will move on. I think Council Member Borelli had a
16 second round of questions.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Sure, I don't think I
18 have time to explain all the stats, but I'm looking
19 at one middle school in the same district as Maspeth,
20 and this school has 98 percent passing rate of the
21 course, but only 5 percent of the students passing
22 the state exams.

23 I'm looking at another school in a similar
24 district, I think it's the same district where less
25 students, 90 percent passed the core courses, but a

1
2 lot more passed the state exams and I follow these
3 two middle schools to the high schools, to where the
4 majority of their students are going. Does it
5 surprise you that the outcomes at the high school
6 where the higher amount of kids pass the state tests,
7 did better than the high school where less kids
8 passed the state test.

9 In other words, are state exams a good indicator
10 of future success or at least better than perhaps in
11 this case, your passing rate or the schools passing
12 rate?

13 LINDA CHEN: I think that is the essential core of
14 the very conversation we're having, which is that it
15 is one single measure and it measures a certain
16 amount of what a student knows but not the complete
17 reflection of what the student is learning in school.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: We're not really gaging
19 - we can't gage this entire metaphysical needs of a
20 student, we're looking for ways to predict outcomes
21 and measure our success in the classrooms. Do you
22 think standardized tests are a good method of that?

23 LINDA CHEN: It's a method that we currently have
24 that gives us insight as a system. Because we are
25

1
2 responsible for over a million students in the
3 system.

4 It gives us insight as to what kinds of things we
5 do need to do. It gives us insight into are there
6 areas of the curriculum that we need to pay more
7 attention to when we see trends of students
8 struggling particular aspects of mathematics or
9 aspects of English Language Arts. That is what the
10 state assessments allow us to do. It gives us a look
11 ahead if you will, for schools to think about what's
12 the overall planning for the students that are coming
13 into them that happen to have -

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Should parents be
15 concerned if there school has a passing rate on state
16 exams of only 5 percent?

17 LINDA CHEN: I'm sorry, could you repeat the
18 question.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Should parents be
20 concerned that a school that their child attends has
21 a passing rate on state exams of only 5 percent?

22 LINDA CHEN: I think that as one indicator, we
23 hope that families will look at everything that the
24 DOE provides about a school.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So, is that why it's
3 more important then to give the school the higher
4 rating?

5 LINDA CHEN: Is it more important? I think it's
6 looking at the full measure and I think parents would
7 want to look at what else does the school provide.
8 Of course they would want to know the data that you
9 are referring to but I believe that all of our school
10 quality reviews and the numbers, that the amount of
11 data we have on the website does provide our families
12 with multiple measure and we do hope they look
13 critically at all of those measures including the
14 surveys and perceptions of other parents and
15 teachers.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So, then my final
17 question is back on cheating. Can you just explain
18 to me why Kathleen Elvin is still on the job if OSI
19 determined that she had passed kids who did not
20 perform the critical parts of their curriculum?

21 LINDA CHEN: As I mentioned earlier, this matter
22 is under investigation and we certainly would not be
23 making personnel commentary either.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Well, this is from 2014,
25 I mean she was still on the payroll at DOE correct?

1
2 LINDA CHEN: We can confirm that and get back to
3 you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I know it's confirmed,
5 I'm kind of asking why? That's kind of the question.

6 LINDA CHEN: I -

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: We can't be serious
8 about cheating but when OSI brings charges against
9 someone and nothing happens to them, I think that's
10 where I'll leave it.

11 LINDA CHEN: I will refer to Chair Treyger's
12 comment earlier to around due process. So, there are
13 a multiple number of things here, but I couldn't
14 comment on that personal matter.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, and it's a lot to
16 unpack but I do have some critical follow up question
17 and I want to hear from students as well.

18 This again, as mentioned before to my colleagues,
19 there are serious allegations made and there must be
20 critical follow up in terms of investigations. I do
21 believe that this is an outgrowth and one of the
22 impacts of a hyper driven culture that's driven by
23 exams and to answer Council Member Borelli's question
24 about whether these state exams are the best
25

1
2 indicator of student success, I think we heard from
3 Anthony Ramos the clear answer.

4 A student that was labeled by the state and by
5 the city as underperforming is one of the best
6 performers ever to hit the Broadway stage. And I
7 think that is kind of the crucks that we're trying to
8 get at. Is that, have we built a system, are we
9 perpetuating a system that only captures a small
10 fraction of student abilities and actually
11 perpetuates inequality and injustice in our
12 communities and our society.

13 So, I think that that's really the crucks of some
14 of these matters. And I would also ask the question
15 about the school with the 5 percent passing rate.
16 How much is that school owed in terms of resources,
17 because I have schools that you know, the state would
18 label as struggling but their lacking about \$400,000
19 to \$500,000 of critical state funding and their
20 desperate to hire a full-time guidance counselor.

21 New York State doesn't even mandate that
22 elementary schools have guidance counselors. Our
23 schools need them and social workers and supports.
24 Because as I mentioned before, it's very hard to
25 think about passing a test when you're not sure where

1
2 you are going to sleep at night. If you'll have a
3 warm meal at night and how are you going to pay the
4 bills to make ends meet. You can't divorce these
5 realities and no one's making excuses. What you
6 heard from Anthony was not -- he didn't ask for a
7 handout, he asked for a shot. Let's be clear, he
8 asked for a shot and we are denying kids that shot
9 and we are denying kids that shot. That's the point
10 and I have some final follow up questions to the DOE
11 and then I want to hear from students.

12 Has DOE analyzed the relationship between class
13 size and test scores?

14 LINDA CHEN: No, we have not.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I would appreciate some
16 data on that, because again, my former teacher hat on
17 right now, class size does make a difference in terms
18 of instruction, in terms of learning and I would
19 appreciate some data from DOE on that.

20 Actually, Anthony Ramos's story talked about that
21 as well. He mentioned a class of over 35 students
22 which I believe actually contractually is even higher
23 than it's supposed to be in high school, I think it's
24 34. I had over credit classrooms as well.

25

1
2 Next question, how many students in the school
3 year 2018, 2019 received testing accommodations?

4 LINDA CHEN: I think we will need to get that
5 information back to you, we do not have that with us.
6 The total number of students -

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, receiving testing
8 accommodations, right. And also, forgive me, we
9 missed - Council Member Holden has a follow up
10 question as well, so I want to give him time to ask
11 his follow ups, forgive me, yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you Chair. Does
13 each school come up with their own or establish their
14 own grading policy?

15 ALICE BROWN: The schools publish their grading
16 policies. We give guidance for how to do so, and
17 then they have a grading policy per school, per even
18 subject area if they want to because you might have
19 different expectations right, for arts versus social
20 studies.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, so, different
22 schools grade different ways. They have slight - and
23 some schools grade a little bit more lenient possibly
24 or more strict and that's throughout the system in
25 different classes. But let me know the process of

1
2 how a student graduates early. Is there a process
3 they have to go to DOE and put an application in and
4 how is that possible?

5 ALICE BROWN: Students have credit and exam
6 requirements for graduation. So, when they meet
7 them, they're eligible for graduation.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And does anybody oversee
9 that? Let's say DOE, Central?

10 ALICE BROWN: For the graduation of each
11 individual, the school has multiple check points
12 throughout the career of the student to see that they
13 are meeting the requirements, both of credits and
14 exams. And then, the staff at the school, generally
15 a guidance counselor works through to be sure that
16 those particular subject area requirements are met in
17 the exam and then presents it for approval from the
18 administration for a student to graduate.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, it's all within the
20 school. So, if the school wanted that person to
21 graduate early, there's no outside entity that
22 evaluates that?

23 ALICE BROWN: Not if the requirements are met.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, but that explains a
25 lot of it. Okay, thank you and this EduStat, it's

1
2 like a CompStat, will that be an oversight? Will the
3 principal come before this body of performance
4 management? Is that how it will work?

5 LINDA CHEN: EduStat is a process and protocol
6 that we did fashion after learning from CompStat as
7 well as ChildStat and ACS and it is to measure the
8 systems health.

9 So, currently the plan is not for an individual
10 principal to come before, but we do this in groups
11 such as in the borough by Executive Superintendent
12 groups.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, alright, thank you.
14 Thanks, Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, that actually is
16 going to be my next question. Well, actually I have
17 some other questions to EduStat.

18 Earlier this year, the administration as we heard
19 announced the development of EduStat, a performance
20 management system modeled on the NYPD's CompStat and
21 ACS ChildStat. Can you provide us with more details
22 related to what this system will entail and how is
23 this system different then ARIS, a system that I had
24 to endure when I was a teacher in the school system.

1
2 LINDA CHEN: I had to endure that as well as a
3 principal Chair, so I commiserate. It is not a data
4 system like ARIS was, it is really process and a
5 protocol tracking certain data points to make sure –
6 sometimes the Chancellor talks about it. Like a
7 checkup; when you go in, whatever reason you are
8 going in to see the doctor, you get your blood
9 pressure taken and those kinds of things.

10 So, it is a way for us to have a health check on
11 how we are doing as a system and importantly for us
12 to respond as a system to places where perhaps course
13 accumulation isn't on track in the way that it should
14 be. What do we then need to do as a system to
15 support and ensure that every student is on track to
16 graduation?

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, can you provide some
18 additional details, what will the system entail.
19 What will this give you that you don't have right
20 now?

21 LINDA CHEN: What it will give us is a way to
22 look at one particular group. So, the example that I
23 used earlier was through a borough or Executive
24 Superintendent supervision, to look at that group of
25 schools. To look at a number of indicators; and

1
2 Alice can talk a little bit more about this. But we
3 want to make sure and again, we are starting this.
4 This is different, this is not something the system
5 has done before. But we need to be able to look at
6 one large group of schools at a time to be able to
7 hold frankly, ourselves, accountable at Central
8 around some of the various questions that have come
9 up today are around what's happening in individual
10 schools. Something like an EduStat is going to lift
11 up in regularity a routine and a process for us. And
12 a Chancellor is part of everyone of these sessions
13 and senior leadership, so that we have requisite
14 oversight and most importantly supports to ensure
15 that every student is on track.

16 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: How do you reassure someone
17 like me that this is not just another fancy endeavor
18 to tell us what we already know in a very fancy,
19 expensive way?

20 LINDA CHEN: While it is new, it does have - it
21 really is about and what I would frame as internal
22 accountability for us to be able to do something for
23 our schools.

24 Now, what is part of this I would say too that's
25 important here, is that there is also progress

1
2 monitoring that's aligned where schools on an
3 individual basis are measuring their own goals and
4 where their meeting every student that's aligned to
5 what every Superintendent is doing in terms of their
6 schools.

7 Which is aligned to what every Executive
8 Superintendent is doing around the oversight of an
9 entire borough and this simple is to some degree, a
10 Central version of making sure that we have all of
11 our systems in place and know when things flag, that
12 we have a way to systematically catch those things
13 and that, I think is the key here. Is that there is
14 a system that's much like CompStat and ChildStat.
15 There's a way where regularly we come together and
16 we're able to see things flag and that means we must
17 do something about that. And there are solutions on
18 the spot that happen as a result of this. And that
19 is what I would say to you, is a main purpose of
20 that.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Can you provide us with a
22 cost breakdown of EduStat?

23 LINDA CHEN: Okay, we can give that to you. We
24 can provide that.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yeah, we need that
3 information and I respectfully – we need that
4 information. As someone who lived through the ARIS
5 era, respectfully, I heard many similar things where
6 I just heard now about what the promise of ARIS was.
7 It was also hard to utilize ARIS in a school that
8 didn't have adequate computers and internet access as
9 well.

10 LINDA CHEN: Well, believe me, I remember the
11 circle. I just want to be very clear and I don't
12 think I was, that it is not a data system like a data
13 dashboard where someone logs into this. It is a
14 protocol and process where key leaders in the DOE
15 including the Chancellor come together to ensure that
16 we are tracking what should be on progress, if you
17 will.

18 So, there is not a logging into something. I
19 just want to be very clear about that.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, and so, I think ARIS
21 costs an excess, I don't have it in front of me, an
22 excess of \$180 million, somewhere in that range.

23 Let me tell you what we already know. We already
24 know that many of our schools desperately need more
25 school counselors and social workers. Just imagine

1
2 how many counselors we can get with \$180 million or
3 so.

4 So, if all of this is just going to simply find a
5 new way to regurgitate what we already know or
6 already should know in a fancy title, I'd rather
7 invest in schools directly. I'd rather get money
8 into those schools to hire more social workers,
9 school counselors, find better ways, effective ways
10 to assess student proficiency and mastery. Art,
11 music, physical education, but I do want to hear
12 more. And also, has the DOE engaged NYPD and ACS to
13 learn from those agencies the issues and challenges
14 faced when they implemented their respective systems?

15 LINDA CHEN: Both agencies were gracious enough
16 to have cabinet members and those involved in the
17 design of EduStat to not only observe but have
18 discussions around some of those very challenges.

19 Again, of course, we're looking at different
20 kinds of data points, but I must extend you know, on
21 behalf of the Chancellor, our gratitude for those
22 agencies in sharing their lessons learned.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, I'll just tell you
24 that as someone that worked in the school system and
25 at times the school had to interact with ACS, and I'm

1
2 saying this respectfully. The feedback that we would
3 get back from ACS to our school; hire more social
4 workers, hire more support staff in your school.

5 So, if that data is going to be memorialized in a
6 new way, I hope it reaches someone that has the power
7 to make a decision to get us more supports in our
8 system.

9 I'm going to just the final and then we will hear
10 from our colleagues – the students here. We
11 understand that Principals were told that DOE intends
12 to administer a single, uniform new assessment four
13 times a year in place of school selected periodic
14 assessments. Is this true? If so, what assessment
15 is this and when will this information be shared with
16 families? Will this be an off the rack assessment
17 that the city purchases?

18 LINDA CHEN: So, yes, the Chancellor has shared
19 the need for us as a system to be able to know how
20 ever student is doing in any particular grade level
21 prior to a state exam. Which is really an outcome
22 that happens after we have the ability to do
23 something about this while the student is still in
24 that grade, if you will.

1
2 So, yes, we are looking at a long-term plan of
3 having a formative assessment system and the reason
4 why one single measure as part of many, right. So,
5 that's one way of being able to see how all students
6 are doing, so that we can – most importantly, this is
7 not a high stakes, this is about informing us as to
8 what we need to do to better support our students.
9 And it is difficult to compare or be able to see the
10 differences, rather it's equity of resources or
11 impact if there are multiple different assessments
12 happening simultaneously.

13 The idea is to streamline and to have one – but
14 we're looking into right now, actively, as one that
15 schools are already using. So, I do want to be clear
16 that a lot of these practices are somethings that
17 schools are already doing and electing to do on their
18 own and we'd just like to be able to do that
19 centrally with some subset of schools to begin with
20 during the course of this year.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, but Dr. Chen, you
22 just kind of answered my – schools already should be
23 conducting formative assessments with students and
24 what I'm hearing goes against a lot of the training I
25 received as a teacher when I was told over and over

1
2 and over again. Including on PD's I went to when I
3 worked for the DOE was to differentiate my
4 instruction.

5 What they never differentiated was assessments,
6 but they always said to differentiate your
7 instruction. And now, we just had a whole discussion
8 on the gravity and the impact tests have on our
9 schools and we're saying that we're going to
10 implement another one.

11 You see, teachers that I've worked with, when we
12 first start teaching in high school, we like to
13 advance low stakes assessments that give us baseline
14 data to work with to see where our kids are at
15 without the pressure and the stress and just work
16 with them during the course of the year.

17 I think you could just simple call the school and
18 speak to a teacher and get some data on formative
19 work, rather than investing in a new fancy test. You
20 will save money, headaches, bad press, from simply
21 picking up the phone and calling an educator on how
22 kids are doing and what their needs are in a school
23 building.

24 So, I would like to learn more and find out more
25 information about this, because I have concerns about

1 instituting or requiring more assessments that I,
2 quite frankly, I'm not sure we're measuring anymore
3 other than just paying test companies a lot of money.

4 LINDA CHEN: If I might.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes.

6 LINDA CHEN: The concept that you expressed as a
7 teacher, of being able to look at baseline
8 information, to be able to then make decisions about
9 your teaching and meeting the needs of every student.
10 That is the purpose of a formative assessment system
11 and again, this is something that many schools are
12 already engaging with. This will not necessarily be
13 a new resource for schools.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, so why spend money
15 to institute something that we're already doing?

16 LINDA CHEN: I think the difference is that we're
17 doing it in a number of different ways and so, that
18 doesn't allow the system to be able provide the
19 resources and supports in the most needed areas. And
20 that is why for the very same reasons that you're
21 expressing, is to be able to determine what those
22 needs are and to be able to provide those supports.
23

24

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, so, we'll follow up
3 with more discussions on that and I think with that,
4 I thank the panel for your time.

5 Next, we're going to hear from the next panel.
6 Jeannie Ferrari, Connie Delagrazie Raios[SP?] Lucca
7 Quillio[SP?] , Cheyenne Peña[SP?], Brian
8 Pimentel[SP?], Larissa Tehada[SP?] and Alex Brooks.

9 Folks, each witness will be given around two
10 minutes to speak and there could be some additional
11 follow up, but I appreciate everyone's time and
12 patience today.

13 I guess, whenever you are ready, you may begin.
14 Just tell us your name and you can get started.

15 JEANNIE FERRARI: Alright, so, my name is Jeannie
16 Ferrari, I am Principal of Humanities Preparatory
17 Academy. We are a consortium high school located in
18 Manhattan. We are unusual, we're a highbred model of
19 enrollment, so half of our students come to us as 9th
20 graders from all five boroughs and the other half are
21 transfer students, which means they may have
22 struggled in another school setting. Sometimes they
23 were in a school with a high stakes testing culture
24 and they want to find something that's more tailored
25 to their needs in individuals and more nurturing.

1
2 So, I'm just going to read a statement, it has to
3 do more with college preparation and consortium
4 schools.

5 So, standardized tests like the Regents assess
6 compliance, recall, memorization, speed, how to
7 follow directions and how to sort. These skills were
8 very useful in the past century when the majority of
9 our students were trained for routine labor in
10 factories, but they are very outdated in the 21st
11 century. What and how we choose to assess drives
12 everything from instruction, culture, equity and even
13 safety in a school.

14 New York State students, many of whom are English
15 Language learners or have IEPs are subjected to
16 entire courses designed to prepare them for tests.
17 Many are taught to cram, memorize, recall, sit still,
18 be quiet and follow directions.

19 What we assess shows what we value, and it also
20 shows what we value in our children. Our Chancellor
21 has courageously set a vision of equity and access
22 for all students in New York City. Let's adapt an
23 assessment system that aligns with those values. My
24 school, Humanities Prep is part of a consortium of
25 high schools in New York City and New York State who

1
2 assess students based on their performance on a
3 series of research projects called PBATS or PBA's.

4 These projects are aligned with state standards
5 and common core standards. Each student presents a
6 minimum of four PBAT projects in their core subject
7 areas and they present them to a panel of teachers
8 and an outside evaluator who is a member of the
9 community and often an expert in the field the
10 student is presenting in.

11 Am I done? Okay.

12 They spent a lot of time preparing for these
13 projects and presentations. They are tailored to the
14 individual learning needs of each student and ensures
15 that each student gets consistent and meaningful
16 feedback about their work.

17 Perhaps most exceptionally, PBAT projects teach
18 and assess college and career readiness skills for
19 the 21st Century. Skills that use reasoning and
20 logic to solve a problem. They help teach students
21 how to determine the validity of evidence in
22 arguments, find credible and strong sources to
23 support ideas, make connections between an issue and
24 it's larger social and political context, revise
25 written work, present ideas to an audience in a clear

1
2 and convincing way, collaborate with others on a team
3 to find solutions to complex problems, develop
4 stamina and persist us in the writing process and
5 utilize experimental design. These are the things we
6 want our kids to know when they go to college, not
7 how to memorize, not how to cram and not how to sort.

8 The PBAT's measure much more rigorous skills than
9 the Regents but each student is supported
10 individually to master them. It is not one size fits
11 all. Assessing students in this way would
12 fundamentally shift how students engage with school
13 if this were widespread.

14 As a Principal, I know that my students have
15 truly succeeded when they graduate from college, not
16 necessarily when they graduate from high school, not
17 even when they get into college but when they
18 graduate from college and every single graduate who
19 has come back to Humanities Prep has told me that the
20 single most important process that prepare them for
21 college was the PBAT was going through this, was
22 getting the feedback and practicing and rehearsing
23 and revising.

24 I hope that New York State and New York City will
25 lead the way towards a truly equitable rigorous and

1
2 effective assessment system that truly measures what
3 students actually know and can do.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I liked your opening better
6 than mine. Please, go ahead.

7 LARISSA TEHADA: Good afternoon. My name is
8 Larissa Tehada. I had graduated from Humanities
9 Preparatory Academy this past June as Valedictorian
10 and I am currently a freshman at Brooklyn College.

11 Humanities Preparatory Academy is a small New
12 York City public high school that is in the New York
13 Performance Consortium. A group of schools that
14 focus on portfolio base assessments as a graduation
15 requirement rather than Regents exams.

16 For those who don't know, my former school,
17 Humanities Preparatory Academy and the other schools
18 in the consortium are exempt from New York States
19 Regents exams with the exception of the English
20 Regents and use portfolio-based assessment tasks or
21 PBATS as an alternative.

22 My classmates and I all wrote research papers in
23 the four core subjects; English, history, math and
24 science and presented them to a panel of teachers
25

1
2 that read, questioned and graded us off both our
3 writing and presentation skills.

4 Personally, my four PBAT's were empowering and
5 allowed me to be the intellectual I am today. As a
6 freshman at prep, I was taught how to properly write
7 a cohesive essay and how to defend this essay with
8 peer view and discussion.

9 As my high school career proceeded, I grew as a
10 writer and an intellectual. My junior year I wrote
11 and presented three PBAT's, English, science and
12 math. It was a challenging year. I was taking APUS
13 History, starting to think about the college process,
14 writing three of my graduation requirements and
15 dealing with personal issues of my own. However, I
16 knew I was prepared to face all of my
17 responsibilities.

18 My three papers were about three distinct topics.
19 Dystopian Literature and Patriarchy, Physics and
20 Warfare and Statistics and School Policing. After
21 presenting my three papers and passing, I felt more
22 secure in my education. I knew I actually understood
23 what I had learned in each class and that I can apply
24 it to real world experiences. This is where I find
25

1
2 that standardized tests, such as the Regents fail the
3 students.

4 At Prep, I was taught in a way which ensured that
5 I understood the topic and allowed for my own
6 interpretation, rather than a system that forces us
7 to cram and regurgitate what we can onto a test that
8 eventually determines if we fit to graduate from the
9 high school program.

10 After writing and presenting my final paper for
11 history, focusing on the death penalty, I knew I was
12 prepared as a writer and student to move onto
13 college. I recently submitted my first draft from my
14 first college paper. My professor gave us a prompt,
15 the MLA format requirement and no rubric. And with
16 little guidance, I applied the writing schools I
17 learned at Prep and submitted the draft.

18 At the end of last week, my professor sent me my
19 edits and included a message. This is a strong,
20 vividly embodied and committed first draft. My
21 comments have marked local areas where sentence
22 structure can be smoothed out and generalities can be
23 deepened.

24 Two, I have marked how you can widen the angle on
25 your conclusion, but overall, you're well on your way

1
2 toward a final draft and unified narrative voice,
3 Well done.

4 It is safe to say that I was successful on my
5 first draft because of the education I received at
6 Humanities Preparatory Academy. And the focus on
7 educating students and preparing them for both
8 discussions and writing in college rather than
9 preparation for a test. Thank you.

10 BRIAN PIMENTEL: Good afternoon, my name is Brian
11 Pimentel. I am a senior at Humanities Preparatory
12 Academy, a school in Chelsey.

13 Before coming to Humanities Prep, I used to be at
14 a Regents bilingual school. When I first started my
15 freshman year in that school, we didn't get to do ice
16 breaker games or get to know each other. Instead, we
17 started doing work based on getting as ready for the
18 Regents exams.

19 Personally, I'm not good at taking tests and
20 would always fail every test or quiz. I was worried
21 that I was not going to do good in the Regents and I
22 graduated on time. But when I found out about a non-
23 Regents school that only takes PBAT's, I was amazed
24 because I'm not a good test taker. And for me,
25 PBAT's were going to be better. I was grateful that

1
2 a school like Humanities preparatory Academy helped
3 me be a better person and a better writer while
4 preparing me for college.

5 I feel that PBAT's, a superior system, because
6 once I head to college, I will already know how to
7 write a paper. I don't remember any of the Regents
8 exams that I have taken. I felt pressured training
9 myself to master multiple choice question. The
10 PBAT's helped me learn more of a vocabulary and how
11 to read and write at a higher level. I also got to
12 analyze problems and ideas, instead of just
13 memorizing.

14 CHEYENNE PENYA: Hello, my name is Cheyenne Penya
15 and I am a senior at Humanities Preparatory Academy.
16 Today, I will be speaking about my experience with
17 PBAT's and my past history with standardized tests.
18 As a student at Prep, I am confident that PBAT's have
19 made me a better writer by increasing my writing
20 stamina, improving my analytical skills and allowing
21 me to voice my opinions.

22 Before in middle school, I was intimidated by
23 writing. My hands would get sweaty, I would get
24 headaches and a horrible feeling in my stomach. That
25 not only extended to my writing but also the tests in

1
2 general. The thought of having a cap on how much
3 work I had to do in one sitting was unbearable. Once
4 I finished with the multiple-choice answers and the
5 short answers, I was left with a cramped and clammy
6 hand and three to four pages of MD space essay.

7 I wasn't always the best test taker, but I tried
8 my best and I felt that that was enough or so I
9 thought. When I would get those tests back, I was
10 disappointed in myself for not getting as high as my
11 peers and was ultimately embarrassed. I questioned
12 if I was as intelligent as I thought I was and if
13 school was meant for me.

14 The teachers taught us that it took practice, but
15 I felt as though every time we took a test I was
16 doomed from the start. So, I told myself that I
17 would never take a test again and apply to Humanities
18 Preparatory Academy. However, when I got to Prep, I
19 found out about PBAT's. Again, that nervous,
20 nauseating feeling came back. I was only a freshman,
21 but the anxiety of tests still filled me up.

22 When I reached my junior year, I figured it was
23 best to take PBAT's head on. I stayed in during
24 lunch and after school to work on PBAT's. I was
25 frustrated but still motivated because after all, I

1
2 had three more to do. So, I worked hard on my paper,
3 constantly asking my teacher for help. When I was
4 done, I felt like I had a weight off my shoulders and
5 also found a new sense of confidence in myself.

6 I was able to write an eleven to fifteen-page
7 paper with convincing evidence, proper citation and
8 analysis. For my first PBAT, I got a 4 on my
9 presentation and a 3.5 on my paper. I was elated and
10 happy to be done with one PBAT.

11 Coming over that experience was stressful
12 considering my test stress and my thinking that I was
13 unable to write, but looking back at it, it was one
14 of my best moments. I came to the realization that
15 it wasn't that I couldn't write. It was the fear
16 that was instilled in my head from middle school that
17 tests were the only thing that mattered.

18 Those experiences of staying in a room for three
19 hours with two number two pencils, a calculator, with
20 anxiety and not having the ability to stay still,
21 stayed with me until I was a junior in high school.

22 PBAT courses and teachers taught me that I am
23 more than test scores, more than my fears and that I
24 am more than capable. That following summer of my
25 junior year, I signed up for a summer emerging

1
2 program called, Freedom and Citizenship. There I
3 would be reading some material from philosophers,
4 writing daily responses to what we had read. Then
5 later, in the year we would create a project calling
6 attention to a social issue. The same feeling of
7 anxiety came over me, but I was able to sooth it. I
8 told myself, you've already written three papers that
9 are up to 20 pages, what is a one-page response to a
10 20-page paper.

11 So, I did the one-page response every night. I
12 was able to analyze difficult content from Socrates,
13 John Hobbs and others. I was able to connect their
14 ideas and make connections with present day life. I
15 was able to form a sound argument and stand up for my
16 ideas. While everyone was complaining about the
17 whole ordeal, I was okay. I felt peace because I
18 knew I could do it and I did.

19 Now, whenever there is a paper due at school, or
20 writing samples are due for college, I can do it
21 because of PBATs. Tests and writing no longer make
22 me afraid. I am confident in the work that I do.
23 Most of all, I feel prepared for college more than
24 ever. Thank you.

25

1
2 LUCCA QUILLIO: Good afternoon, my name is Lucca
3 Quillio. I am currently a senior at Humanities
4 Preparatory Academy, and I moved from Brazil actually
5 not a long time ago. I came during the second
6 semester of freshman year, so I was new to that whole
7 PBAT experience. I grew up in an education system
8 where tests are the main form of providing how much
9 people know about a certain subject. Therefore, all
10 me and my classmates would do is try to memorize and
11 somewhere understand the subject and prepare for
12 those tests.

13 And ironically, memorizing/remembering is
14 considered the lowest level of thinking. For the
15 past hundred years, we have been using the same way
16 to test peoples knowledge based on how well they
17 remember, rather than deeply analyze their capability
18 to create, evaluate and apply their understanding
19 into a piece of work. I always questioned why do
20 colleges always ask for a graded written assignment
21 and why are so many of them going test optional and
22 requiring more written creations.

23 Well, because I guess times are changing and so
24 are our minds. Our goal isn't to prepare students to
25 follow orders and turn into robots working in

1
2 factories anymore. Our goal is to show them how they
3 can improve their critical thinking, problem solving
4 and creativity. And PBAT's require a lot more effort
5 from your whole brain than regular tests.

6 I would like to use an example as the math PBAT
7 is a pretty one. In tests, you have to use formula's
8 that you were taught to remember under time pressure
9 to see if you can get the answers right.

10 While in a math PBAT, you are meant to explain
11 why you would use search formula and what the formula
12 actually means. And part of Rubric says, make sure
13 it includes proof, reasoning and analysis. Most of
14 the time you can either create your own formulas or
15 reach for many different branches over a single
16 concept, just by simply taking your time to dig into
17 it.

18 The second and last step of a PBAT is to present
19 it. Teachers will be able to brainstorm with the
20 students and get a more in-depth perspective about
21 what is great and what isn't about their work.

22 Giving them feedback that could be used for future
23 experiences rather than just a grade in the form of a
24 number.

1
2 Having test taking skills is definitely not a bad
3 thing, but I would argue that having wider and more
4 developed methods of thinking would prepare you for a
5 better future.

6 Thank you for your time.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: Transferring to a PBAT school was
8 a breath of fresh air after being in a Regents
9 focused school. Teachers in a Regents school seem
10 more focused on improving test scores than on student
11 learning. We memorized material that the teacher
12 knew the test would ask.

13 Schools like kill the fun in learning. A student
14 can only stay interested for so long when even the
15 teacher is bored, because they have been repeating
16 themselves for the past decade. That's why teens
17 don't do homework, skip class and drop out. The
18 school system is not tailored to the children of
19 today.

20 It is rare to see the passion or nurturing care
21 found in a PBAT schoolteacher in a seasoned Regents
22 teacher. In a consortium school, we learn about
23 current issues, law and world events. Let me tell
24 you about a real-life situation that happened to me
25 and how being in a PBAT school was important.

1
2 I've had courses where I've learned research
3 skills, how to gather evidence, and how to express my
4 ideas. I was able to use these experiences to solve
5 a serious problem.

6 In April of 2018, my family which was living in
7 the Bronx, was relocated by New York City's
8 Department of Homeless Services to Patterson New
9 Jersey as a part of a program of what the city called
10 stable housing. There were many problems with the
11 conditions of the apartment, but we didn't have too
12 much choice.

13 In May of this year, my mom received a tenancy
14 summons saying that since she hadn't paid the rent
15 for one month, she had to appear in court. Although
16 our rent was supposed to be covered by NYC, something
17 had gone wrong and we were scared. We thought we
18 might be evicted. I remember thinking I should try
19 to help my family, but this is the sort of problem
20 that deals with like legal stuff and legal rhetoric
21 is complicated in deciphering that jargon is
22 difficult.

23 Then I remembered the course I took called
24 Constitutional Law. One of the teachers was a lawyer
25 and it helped me understand more of the legal world.

1
2 Every class we'd analyze a case individually and then
3 come together to discuss it. We would debate and
4 have some homework on the topic. Pairing research
5 skills that I had learned in another course called
6 English Foundations, with the legal rhetoric, I found
7 fundamental laws that the landlord, our property
8 company had violated. I even found that there are
9 you tube videos describing legal ideas.

10 Another great help was the contact my school
11 helped me get with a housing lawyer who helped me
12 find my footing. When the day came for my mom to go
13 to court, I went with her. My mom wasn't clear about
14 what the focus should be, and I was able to help keep
15 the discussion on track. The results were positive.

16 This experience showed me that my PBAT education
17 was preparatory for life. Yes, we write papers and
18 take courses, but the way PBAT's work, you learn how
19 to present your ideas and topics become something you
20 care about and you also learn how to stick up for
21 yourself and know when to ask for help. I believe
22 PBAT schools teach you lifelong skills. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You know, I could just drop
24 the mic for all of you right now. This is
25 extraordinary. First of all, you supposed to teach

1
2 your quorum not to do clapping in this room, but I
3 just want to applaud these amazing students here for
4 their amazing testimony.

5 Just some quick follow up questions to this
6 amazing panel. A question I ask the students at
7 Leaders in my district, is a question I'd like to ask
8 the students here as well. How did you hear about
9 the consortium school? Who was the first person to
10 tell you about it? How did you hear about it and
11 feel free if anyone could just to the mic.

12 LARISSA TEHADA: So, when I arrived at Humanities
13 Prep as a freshman, I had no idea it was a consortium
14 school. I had heard of similar schools like Beacon
15 High School, which is pretty well known around the
16 city and I was actually in my middle school, I was
17 discouraged to apply to Humanities Preparatory
18 Academy because it seemed too farfetched for people
19 from my district.

20 So, I was suggested to apply like a vocational
21 school in Queens.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Who suggested that?

23 LARISSA TEHADA: My school counselor in middle
24 school.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: From a non-consortium
3 school suggested to do that.

4 LARISSA TEHADA: Yeah, she was like, oh, these
5 schools are really hard to get into. It's really
6 farfetched to even apply and like risk not getting
7 in. So, you should apply to these schools instead
8 and then after discussions with the principal and my
9 mom, I went ahead and applied to Humanities
10 Preparatory Academy and gratefully got in.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Good for you. Please, I'd
12 like to here -

13 CHEYENNE PENYA: I really love my story about how
14 I found my PBAT school because yeah, I didn't know
15 PBAT schools existed and the main thing on everyone's
16 plate was like, oh, like audition for one of the big-
17 name brand schools and I didn't believe that like, my
18 art and my skills of that nature were that good. So,
19 it was like the last night of me - like, the night
20 right before they were taking the high school
21 application papers, I was filling it out and it was
22 like I was looking for art school that didn't have
23 like an audition. Yeah, you didn't need to audition.

24 So, that was Gotham Professional Arts Academy
25 which is my first PBAT school and yeah, I didn't know

1
2 either or I didn't know at all but I fell in love
3 with how the school was ran and so much so, when I
4 transferred to a Regents school and saw that it was
5 run differently, I was ready to drop out. That's how
6 bad it was, so I had to go back to another Regents
7 school which is Urban Academy presently but yeah, I
8 didn't know. I was just looking for a school without
9 an audition.

10 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, you found it on your
11 own, interesting. Next, just how did you find it?
12 Who told you about it?

13 BRIAN PIMENTEL: So, after I was done with my
14 freshman year at my old school, I went back to the
15 enrollment center because I didn't like the
16 environment in my old school. But then, they gave me
17 a huge list of schools to look at and then he told me
18 that there was like, consortium schools, which I
19 didn't know what they were back then. And he gave me
20 two Humanities Prep and James Baldwin.

21 So, I'm like, I'll try out Humanities Prep and
22 then when I found out that it was a non-Regents
23 school, I was actually glad that Humanities Prep got
24 to take me in. I was like actually grateful because
25

1
2 I actually learned more like the writing and through
3 public speaking also.

4 So, yeah, I felt like if I stayed at a Regents
5 school, I wouldn't learn as much as I do now and I'm
6 actually really grateful for that.

7 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you.

8 LUCCA QUILLIO: In my case, like, since I had
9 just come from a different country, it's pretty hard
10 to accept a student in the middle of the year
11 especially, not having English as a first language.

12 So, I had the high school book and I basically wrote
13 down about like ten names and we called every single
14 school and nine out of those ten were Regents
15 schools, but I didn't really know about any of that.

16 So, the only school that actually opened their
17 arms and said, yes, you can come in was a non-Regents
18 school and that was Humanities Prep.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Interesting.

20 CONNIE DELAGRAZE RAIOS: I first found out about
21 Humanities Prep when I was looking through the high
22 school book.

23 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Directory.

24 CONNIE DELAGRAZE RAIOS: Yeah, high school
25 directory when I was in 8th grade and I had applied

1
2 to - I think 12 schools, like the normal amount and
3 **[INAUDIBLE 3:00:11]** was my 5th choice. I didn't
4 think I was going to get into it, I didn't really
5 want to go to it.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Keep it real.

7 CONNIE DELAGRAZE RAIOS: And when I found out I
8 was kind of upset, but then when I arrived at the
9 school and they told me that they didn't have
10 Regents, then I was like oh, this is different, okay,
11 this sounds better. And then, after looking back on
12 it, I'm actually really happy. If there is such
13 thing as fate, I think fate had it, but I was
14 supposed to go to this school.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Interesting, I'm learning
16 quite a bit because a lot of the answers I heard
17 today were the answers I heard in my visit to Leaders
18 as well. It sometimes just happened by chance; some
19 student just did some research on their own. A lack
20 of guidance from the system to educate you about the
21 opportunities and the options.

22 Last question for the students and I'd like to
23 kind of here because I have to ask this question.
24 How did you explain to your folks at home about a
25 school that does not administer the Regents, because

1
2 a question that came up in my visit was some parents
3 are saying, what do mean there's not Regents. How do
4 they objectively assess your performance, that sounds
5 crazy. Did you get that at home and how did you deal
6 with that?

7 LARISSA TEHADA: So, I'm the youngest of three.
8 So, both of my older siblings went to New York City
9 public high schools and they were distraught when
10 they found that Humanities Prep didn't do Regents,
11 and everything seemed kind of foreign.

12 But it was something that I only had to deal with
13 in my junior and senior year, so we went along with
14 it and then as they like, looked over my schoolwork
15 and proofread all my essays, they were like, wow,
16 this is really excelled writing for somebody who's a
17 freshman and sophomore in high school.

18 So, once I did reach the junior year, like
19 threshold, and started writing my actual PBAT's and
20 got ready to present, they understood why it was an
21 alternative to Regents and they understand like the
22 whole test anxiety. So, they supported me full-
23 fledged and my siblings definitely did help me edit
24 my papers.

25 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: That's great, that's great.

1
2 BRIAN PIMENTEL: In my case it was different
3 because my parents didn't really know what the word
4 Regents meant, but they were surprised that there was
5 no main test to make sure I passed to the next level.
6 But after I explained it and explained why we do it,
7 they were actually fine with it, completely fine with
8 it.

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Great.

10 CHEYENNE PENYA: I remember that my mother, she
11 was very suspicious. She was like, what do you mean
12 they don't have tests? Are you lying to me? And she
13 didn't understand.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Understandable question,
15 yeah.

16 CHEYENNE PENYA: And my brother too, he was like
17 you're lying. No, because he goes to a Regents
18 school and so he was like, no, that's not true and
19 I'm like, no, it is true and it was weird because he
20 would get out of school June 26th and I would get out
21 like two weeks earlier because I didn't have to take
22 PBAT's like my freshman and sophomore year. So, I
23 had all this free time and he was like, no, that's
24 not fair. And then when I actually got time to
25

1 writing, my mom was like, oh, okay, I see. Because
2 it was like rigorous writing every single day.

3 Like, I can't talk right now, I have to write, I
4 have write. And then she was like okay. And then
5 she understood like, what the school was about.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Fascinating.

7 LUCCA QUILLIO: So, my mom was like, oh, you're
8 going to a PBAT school. For my mom, she was like,
9 oh, you're not taking Regents. And I'm like, no,
10 because I have an IEP so like, I'm not good at taking
11 tests. Like, I noticed since I was in 3rd grade
12 because I had trouble taking tests always.

13 So, she knew that that school would be a perfect
14 fit for me. Like she would support me and then she's
15 seen like, how much I've improved throughout this
16 whole year. Like, especially, now that I'm a senior,
17 she's seen like how much I've accomplished like
18 writing papers.

19 And she's actually been like proud of that
20 because I've been like not writing as much as I used
21 to.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Extraordinary stories and
23 question for the principal, thank you by the way,
24 very powerful opening which I took some notes on.
25

1
2 How do you respond like, what are your general
3 thoughts? You heard me earlier exchange with the
4 administration. I was very active in my school
5 community. I attended many PD's; I was a member of
6 my SLT. I never heard of consortium schools when I
7 was a teacher. I would have loved to have learned
8 some of the amazing practices that can be applied
9 even in a non-consortium school. Do you get
10 opportunities to speak with your peers beyond the
11 consortium network? Does the DOE foster that
12 environment where you collaborate beyond the 38 or
13 just the consortium network because I would have
14 loved to have learned some of this amazing practices
15 that happens obviously here in consortium schools.

16 JEANNIE FERRARI: So, I've been principal for
17 this is my 8th year, but I've been a teacher for 10
18 before that. So, a long time; I've seen the kind of
19 arch of the DOE and the state.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, right.

21 JEANNIE FERRARI: Kind of there are different
22 relationships depending on who the Mayor is and so,
23 whenever you are doing radical work that is somewhat
24 diversative and not what other people are doing,
25 people want to stop you.

1
2 Sometimes it's the state, sometimes it's been the
3 city and I think we're in a unique opportunity right
4 now where both the city and state are open to this
5 model of instruction where parents and students are
6 exhausted by the testing culture and we have an
7 opportunity for real change.

8 You know, I say that to say that sometimes we've
9 had to float under the radar, just because you know,
10 if you are heavy on the radar, people try to stop
11 what you're doing. Now, we feel we can come out and
12 you know, announce who we are - at least I do. This
13 is my perspective; I don't represent the entire
14 consortium and the DOE does foster opportunities for
15 learning and it hasn't necessarily not been any fault
16 of their own. I think they are learning about us.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: 20 years, there are
18 lifelong learners, yes.

19 JEANNIE FERRARI: There's different Mayors at all
20 different -

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, I hear you.

22 JEANNIE FERRARI: And they have to kind of relearn
23 the system, you know. So, I think that we will have
24 opportunities to be able to show the work that we're
25 doing and showcase it and certainly, nationally and

1
2 internationally, we've had visitors from all over
3 different countries. We had someone from Australia,
4 a team of educators from Australia, from Canada, from
5 the Netherlands in the last few years. All over the
6 world that come and visit our school and learn about
7 our practices nationally. We've been part of a group
8 of all kinds of schools that do similar things and
9 they visited us, we visited them. We train them in
10 restorative justice, consortium schools we're doing
11 restorative justice in the 90's.

12 So, you know, it's a safe and comfortable
13 environment to share what we do now.

14 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And tell us about your
15 admissions process.

16 JEANNIE FERRARI: So, ours is unusual because
17 we're split. So, the 9th graders have to go through
18 that horrible - you know the 8th graders go through
19 that horrible process - if you are a parent, you know
20 what it's like or you have to apply to the schools
21 and everyone has a standardized rubric and you know,
22 they apply and then they get sorted and either get
23 seats or they don't. But we get transfer students
24 from all four grades. No age limits, nothing and no
25 testing requirements.

1
2 So, I can't even tell you. We have transfer
3 students from all different kinds of situations.
4 Some of them like Lucca have come in from a new
5 country and don't have a placement. Some of them
6 have really struggled like Brian in a testing
7 culture. Some of them you know, we have students who
8 are transitioning from incarceration. We have
9 students - for them, it's like wow, this is amazing.

10 You know, we have students who have left the
11 system, are in temporary housing placement. We just
12 had a student, well, I won't say this, but you know,
13 in the past we've had students come in from different
14 temporary housing situations.

15 There's no one type of transfer student, but the
16 admissions process is, enrollment will often send us
17 kids, sometimes guidance counselors, advocates for
18 children, different children advocates groups in the
19 city. They will show up in our office, we'll meet
20 with them, we'll assess their needs if we have space
21 for them and we'll talk about them.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, to be clear, you
23 welcome all, is that right?

24 JEANNIE FERRARI: Yeah.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You welcome all. You meet
3 students where they are at and you are building a
4 school culture around their strengths and their
5 abilities and you're still meeting standards along
6 the way. Is that correct?

7 JEANNIE FERRARI: Absolutely.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: For the public that's
9 paying attention, because that's really important and
10 you're graduation rates if you could speak to that.
11 Some of the metrics that they use.

12 JEANNIE FERRARI: The one that just came out for
13 this past year was 94 percent which is a lot higher.
14 And I think it was our six month - I don't know what
15 they call it, but six month after graduation are in
16 college is 83 percent.

17 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: 94 percent and how are key
18 subgroups? Students with IEP's, multilingual
19 learners, how are they doing?

20 JEANNIE FERRARI: So, students - our English
21 Language learners I think they had a higher
22 graduation rate for some reason than the rest of our
23 normal number of students. We do very well with our
24 population of Black and Hispanic males. I think it's
25 20 or 30 percent higher than a citywide average,

1
2 their graduation rate and IEP students, I'd have to
3 get back to you on that because I just got that
4 report.

5 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: No worries and if anyone, I
6 know many folks here might know but if anyone in the
7 public that's paying attention, if the term PBAT is
8 new to you, it was new to me. I copied it from one
9 of the rubrics for the presentations, check it out.
10 Before anyone passes judgment that it's a watered-
11 down version of education, it is far more rigorous
12 than any New York State Regents exams. Take that to
13 the bank as someone who taught Regents classes for a
14 number of years. What these kids are doing is far
15 more rigorous, complex and actually meaningful than
16 the Regents.

17 It is not simple but it's also not a surprise or
18 a gotcha game and you're always in it together. And
19 one of the things I will leave you with is that when
20 I visit schools, and I always encourage the DOE to do
21 the same, because I can't say when they sent their
22 Central folks in about test scores. Rather than ask
23 schools about test scores, what kinds of problems are
24 our students tackling?

1
2 Look, I was never a great calculous – I was not
3 great in test or in areas as well, but you know what,
4 all of you are amazing problem solvers. And in this
5 world today, in this country today, we need you more
6 than ever. You are so much more than a score. Thank
7 you very much, appreciate you all.

8 Next, we'll hear from Emily Carrazana, Ann Cook
9 who is an extraordinary person, Johnathan Cats,
10 Tasfia Rahman, Ashley Grant and Marlinda Lee[SP?].

11 And I think there is a clock I think for three
12 minutes.

13 Whenever folks are ready, you may begin.

14 MARLINDA LEE: Good afternoon, my name is
15 Marlinda Lee and in three minutes I'm going to
16 describe the whole world of Board of Education to me.

17 I have a daughter 23 years old with Downs
18 syndrome. I have advocated on behalf of my child
19 since before she was born. They told me to terminate
20 her, so that was the first test. She is now 23 years
21 old attending BMCC in a Reggio program. I say no, to
22 the Board of Education with the advocacy that I have
23 had to endure persistently to get her an appropriate
24 education to have an impartial hearing on seven
25 occasions to actually get a compensatory order. I

1
2 say no to Regents and the reason being, my son is 15
3 years old attending a Charter school where they do
4 nothing but testing. They don't have life other than
5 testing, testing. They are failed on purpose but
6 then they pass the Regents. The rhetoric as the
7 Board of Education says, they come to kids where they
8 are, they don't.

9 This whole myth of 25 years of we're going to
10 meet them where they are, they're not. I am 57 years
11 old, I have just as much Downs syndrome in me as my
12 daughter. The Board of Education, I don't know where
13 they came from, but they set behind a table and they
14 decided that they were going to take special needs
15 and put them in a bubble with all this money. But
16 what they didn't do was to release our children, so
17 that they can be their best self.

18 Meet me where I am and let me be who I am. Not a
19 Regents, not a CPAP or all these other entities SSVR.
20 You have so many different resources that you're
21 supposed to align your kids with that they are able
22 to obtain.

23 My daughter may never be the president, she may
24 never drive a car. I, myself, will never be the
25 president or drive a car. I am retired from New York

1 City Transit as a station agent for over 17 ½ years.

2 I came here today because on behalf of every
3 individual with intellectual disability, there has to
4 be another pathway. You cannot give a child a
5 certificate that says you have completed. My
6 daughter has attended over 21 years of school. I
7 took her to SSVR, they told me oh, go get her GED.
8

9 I took her to HRC Supportive Employment because
10 she was diagnosed to need supportive employment. My
11 daughter has an income of over \$500 a month. She
12 receives \$15 in SNAP benefits. In this real world,
13 what we live in in New York City, what is that? My
14 child is able to read, write, get on a computer
15 better than me. Has more common sense and will help
16 anybody.

17 Our system today amongst all of us, we have to
18 make them stop. This is not the norm. To stand here
19 today, I am privileged, and I am blessed but as I
20 advocate, you get tired. Fighting and fighting and
21 fighting, I am that story.

22 I came from a mom of seven. I have a 33-year-old
23 that just got 33 credits or 3 years of credits
24 incarcerated. I have a daughter 25 years old, cancer
25 survivor, got an alternative diploma.

1
2 So, I'm going to finish my statement with this,
3 please revise the way that we test our kids. Please
4 give them their life that they deserve. Please allow
5 them to be who they are and go where they need to be,
6 because I am somebody and I have special needs.
7 Thank you.

8 ASHLEY GRANT: Hi, my name is Ashley Grant and
9 I'm an attorney at Advocates for Children. I also
10 coordinate the statewide coalition on multiple
11 pathways to a diploma.

12 So, on behalf of the coalition, I thank you for
13 the opportunity to speak about high stakes tests and
14 the need for more ways to determine that students
15 have mastered graduation standards.

16 Our coalition of more than 70 members includes
17 advocates, educators, parents and youth and we
18 represent a broad cross section of students including
19 students with disabilities, multilingual learners and
20 economically disadvantaged young people.

21 For more than 12 years we've come together to
22 urge New York State to create multiple instructional
23 and assessment pathways to a high school diploma.
24 Each of which holds all students to high
25 expectations, provides them with quality instruction

1
2 and opens the door to career and post-secondary
3 opportunities.

4 We are also unified by the concern that access to
5 existing graduation pathways like career and
6 technical ed or CTE and work base learning
7 opportunities that have been shown to improve student
8 engagement, reduce drop out rates and improve college
9 completion rates. These opportunities have been
10 limited for many students.

11 So, I'm attaching to my written remarks, a copy
12 of our coalitions full policy goals. New York
13 students need pathways to a diploma that do not rely
14 on high stakes exams. As has been said before, to
15 earn a diploma in our state, students must generally
16 five Regents exams or substitute other types of high
17 stakes exams in those subject areas.

18 But research shows that high stakes tests are
19 poor indicators of student readiness and that locally
20 determine measures like GPA, better predict how
21 students will do in college. High stakes tests also
22 disproportionately create barriers for students with
23 disabilities, multi-language learners and for
24 students of color.

1
2 So, as the Council Member has shared, New York is
3 one of only eleven states that maintains exit exam
4 requirements and with the requirements the students
5 pass five exams, we have some of the most burdensome
6 in the country.

7 So, it's really time for New York to catch up
8 with the rest of the country and to find ways to
9 demonstrate that students are ready for college and
10 career without forcing them to pass these high stakes
11 tests.

12 The states current graduation requirements create
13 a barrier to opportunities for students who are
14 already ready to graduate and move on to the next
15 phase of their lives.

16 So, take for example, an English language learner
17 in foster care who advocates for children assisted
18 and who I am going to call Myra.

19 Myra is very bright, she earned more than 50
20 credits, far exceeding the course work required for a
21 Regents diploma. Myra did well in her classes, and
22 she maintained B average, but she struggled to pass
23 the Regents exam in English Language Arts.

24 After completing all of her other graduation
25 requirements at age 19, rather than going on to

1
2 college, Myra had to spend two more years studying
3 for and retaking the English Language Arts exam.

4 Eventually after taking that single exam seven
5 times, she finally passed at the age of 21. She
6 eventually went on to college and she did well, but
7 if she had been able show her mastery of those
8 English Language Art standards another way, through a
9 performance-based assessment, through her course
10 work, through a capstone project, she could have
11 spend those two years working toward her college
12 degree, rather than retaking a single test.

13 Our coalition is very pleased that the New York
14 City Council and the New York State Board of Regents
15 and the New York State Education Department are all
16 considering other ways in which students like Myra
17 could show that they are ready to graduate. And we
18 strongly urge New York State to create pathways to
19 graduation that don't rely on high stakes tests.

20 I would be happy to answer any questions.

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: A lot of good stuff today.

22 ANN COOK: Well, a lot of the issues that are in
23 the printed statement have been dealt with I think
24 very adequately. There are few things I'd like to
25 just kind of emphasize.

1
2 One is that you know, I think it's wrong to thing
3 about an assessment system as the be all and end all.
4 It's what the assessment system creates for teachers.
5 And I think that what you heard today from the kids
6 and from other people is that that's really the
7 issue. You know, you need some way of allowing
8 teachers to really teach and be professional, form
9 professional communities which is I think, one of the
10 things that is built into what the consortium is
11 trying to do.

12 So, I think just to kind of really emphasize that
13 and I want to thank you very much for raising a lot
14 of really critical issues that I think are really an
15 issue here. We have been an existence as you said,
16 for more than 20 years. We've seen something like
17 six Chancellors come and go, five state commissioners
18 come and go and most of them have been I would say,
19 less than enthusiastic about what we're trying to do.

20 I think that there is a change at least at the
21 state level. I think people are starting to ask
22 question about what do we want kids to be able to do
23 when they leave high school. I would like to see the
24 department be as you were sort of indicating more
25 open about the opportunities that exist for kids. I

1 think it would be very valuable for the city to be as
2 the biggest district in the state to really be able
3 to present to the Regents and to the state ed
4 department, a very solid case for why the state
5 should move away from coupling graduation with the
6 tests and also why they shouldn't really open it up.
7 Unless it provides an opportunity to design a
8 different way of doing assessment in every state.

9
10 In New York under the previous commissioner did
11 not want to participate in that. I think that was a
12 very large mistake and I hope that it's something
13 that we can begin to think about in the future.

14 The other point that I would like to just mention
15 is that you know, it's not only the kids that get
16 affected by this, it's also the teachers and you
17 know, one of the teachers said something to the
18 effect that it's no doubt that it's made me a better
19 teacher; more knowledgeable, more engaged and more
20 enthusiastic. What more can you ask? I mean that is
21 what you want professional to be able to feel about
22 what they're doing when their working with kids.

23 People have asked what does mean as a system
24 because we talk about it as a system and I guess
25 there are sort of four things that are very important

1
2 to us. One is that it's a pedagogy based on inquiry,
3 teaching and in-depth learning and it's a respect for
4 the diversity of ideas and experiences. High
5 expectations for all students and a value of
6 community and collaboration. And I think that one of
7 the things that the people ask a lot; you've asked a
8 lot about. What are the byproducts of this? In what
9 ways has this affected the system?

10 One of the ways that I think is particularly
11 important is a pilot that we ran with CUNY and
12 because what we discovered was when we pulled all our
13 college admissions people together, they said you
14 know, our kids are getting into private colleges,
15 they're getting into state universities, they're not
16 getting into the CUNY four year colleges.

17 And we then went to CUNY, we designed a pilot.
18 That pilot has been running for four years. Over 400
19 kids have now gotten into CUNY; into the CUNY four-
20 year colleges that would not have gotten in before
21 because we shifted the admissions from test scores to
22 looking at their GPA and looking at their PBAT's.

23 So, and that's affected CUNY because they've now
24 changed the way they do the admissions. They're more
25 open to recommendations. They're more open to looking

1
2 at student work and it's also moved them away from
3 remediation because we've been able – and Dr. Katz
4 will talk about this. We've been able to get kids
5 into the freshman level math classes without doing
6 the remediation and they've succeeded.

7 So, I think we've had an affect on for all the
8 kids in New York City on kind of convincing CUNY that
9 there are other ways of looking at student admission.
10 That's one thing and there are other things. There's
11 an LGBTQ curriculum that was out that the department
12 actually knows about and we put that out online.

13 There are things like PRO's which is one of the
14 critical areas that teachers in the UFT got involved
15 in, which was really the push where that came from,
16 the consortium. Those are things; there are money
17 things that we've been able to kind of suggest;
18 college preparatory courses that we started way
19 before they started AP for All and I was very
20 interested in the data on AP For All. I think it's
21 very important to find out how much is being spent on
22 that and how many kids are actually using those
23 credits and getting credit for that because the
24 teachers feel in competition with that. That they
25 have college ready course, college preparatory course

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2 that they would like to teach and have credit for
3 that for the school and I think it's something that
4 the department needs to really think again about how
5 they're doing that.

6 So, finally, I would say that one of the critical
7 things is, is this for all kids? And I think it is
8 for all kids. It's particularly relevant because one
9 of the critical issues in teaching this way is
10 discussion. And, I think that, I just want to read
11 one observation by a student about coming to a school
12 where discussion was really valued.

13 He says, the school I came from before this one,
14 which was a very competitive school with all
15 collegebound students was not a very diverse
16 environment. So, there weren't too many
17 opportunities to hear ideas from kids who came from
18 really different backgrounds and neighborhoods. It
19 wasn't a place where your ideas really mattered in
20 classes. Discussions were pretty predictable,
21 leading to specific answers that we knew the teacher
22 wanted us to give.

23 The first week I came here, I was in a class
24 where students were having a lively discussion about
25 the behavior of people during the great depression.

1
2 And I hear a White girl, someone with dyed red hair
3 make a controversial point. I'm sitting there
4 thinking, wow, I agree with her. I didn't expect
5 someone like her to say that and the next person who
6 speaks is a Black guy in a hoody and he is agreeing
7 with her.

8 That was a very important moment for me, because
9 I suddenly realized that in this school, in this
10 class, in this discussion, kids could learn from one
11 another; from what others say.

12 School wasn't just a social place, it was
13 academic. You could agree with kids and share
14 something uncommon. The hoody guy and the dyed red
15 head could agree on a topic. People who were not
16 like one another could agree on a point and the
17 teacher could listen to the points being made without
18 judging.

19 And it seems to me, that's really the essence of
20 what your trying to create as an environment where
21 kids feel that that is something that is to be
22 respected and honored.

23 So, I think the question about what we do next
24 and how we move things along. I would like to see -
25 I think parents are looking for something to opt into

1
2 and I think that this is an opportunity. Parents in
3 the city that go to private schools are able to
4 choose schools with a particular pedagogical
5 perspective and I think that could happen in our
6 schools. That not everybody wants to do performance
7 assessment but those schools that want to do it and
8 more parents should know about it. And should know
9 that those opportunities exist, and I think the DOE
10 should advocate on behalf of those parents and kids
11 to persuade the Regents to expand the number of
12 schools that are covered by the consortium.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I have to applaud her.
14 Your name was referenced during the exchange with the
15 administration. That schools interested in joining
16 the consortium are told to refer to you. Is that
17 correct?

18 ANN COOK: Say that again, I missed it.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I was told by the
20 administration when they testified earlier, that if a
21 school would like to join the consortium network,
22 that they are referred to speak to the one and only
23 Ann Cook, is that right?

24 ANN COOK: You know, the issue is that the state
25 put a number; they created a number of schools that

1
2 could be in the consortium and over the years there
3 were some school on there that we have nothing to do
4 with. Some of those schools got removed and then we
5 were able to put some schools in there because there
6 was a number.

7 I don't know where they came up with this number
8 in the first place. You know, our origins go back to
9 Tom Sobol who was the Commissioner in 1995 who was
10 the originator of the waiver. And it's been passed
11 by five different unanimously, about five different
12 Boards of Regents to extend it.

13 I think that they could extend it further, I
14 think there's a tremendous amount of interest not only
15 in the city but across the state for clusters of
16 schools to come together, not necessarily under us.
17 But form a consortium that would serve another group
18 of schools.

19 It isn't up to the DOE, except that the DOE could
20 become a vocal supporter and advocate for the state
21 to really take this on.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: And I thank you for saying
23 that because this is my point. I mean, I understand
24 that this is the states decision and I know the DOE
25 kept punting to that, but we are the largest city in

1
2 the state. We have the largest microphone in the
3 state, and we have folks here including me that's not
4 shy to use the microphone.

5 Where is the advocacy? Where is the movement?
6 The only thing we heard from the Mayor as far in the
7 last time we went out to Albany last years was you
8 know, mayoral control and the SHSAT and there was no
9 other conversation. Also, about CFE by the way, they
10 owe us money.

11 So, I hear you and you're absolutely spot on and
12 the last question I'll have for you is that, you
13 heard my example before that I taught in the same zip
14 code as Leaders but I never had an opportunity to sit
15 down with teachers from Leaders to learn about some
16 of the amazing practices happening there. Has anyone
17 in DOE reached out to you or to the consortium
18 network to say hey, you know, our schools might not
19 have the waiver from the Regents from the test, but
20 your doing some amazing things that we could still
21 apply here. Has there been any of that cross
22 departmental or am I asking too much? Has there been
23 any? You can be diplomatic.

24 ANN COOK: Well, I mean I think that when you
25 hear from Jonathan Katz, I mean, one of the things

1
2 that we've been interested in is how do you work with
3 math. You know, the city's had a struggle around
4 math for example. And the state looks at the data
5 and it's awful. There are some schools that are
6 trying to do some really different things and it
7 would be I think helpful for this department to start
8 to listen. To bring some of these people together to
9 talk about, what are some of the things that they're
10 finding. And there are veteran teachers out there
11 who have had really some interesting experiences who
12 tend to take the temperature of their kids every year
13 and nobody asks them, what's really happening in your
14 schools?

15 And I think what you're suggesting when you were
16 in the classroom how useful it would have been to
17 have had an opportunity to share with other people.
18 I think one of the things that we've discovered is
19 that we have something called exchanges, where we
20 bring some of the consortium schools together around
21 a subject discipline and Jonathan will talk about
22 that a little bit.

23 And that has proven to be one of the most
24 effective teacher professional development strategies
25 of bringing teachers together from different schools

1
2 to grade student papers and do a moderation study, so
3 that the instruments have reliability. Coming
4 together and talking about student work, having
5 teachers come together around a discipline and
6 talking about what are they trying to do in their
7 classes and going to see each other teach.

8 Those are things that I think could be scaled up.
9 They're always talking about scaling up and that is
10 something that the system could be much more
11 aggressive about, I think.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: The last thing I will say,
13 and I'll turn to the rest of the panel is, one thing
14 they could do immediately without any waiver or
15 application process. For example, at Leaders, which
16 I know is unique to their outward-bound model. It's
17 not that every consortium school does this, but this
18 model of crew, which I find so interesting because my
19 school where I went, I went to Morro High School, we
20 had like a home room so to speak.

21 But Crew has an entire, almost like a period
22 block out which meets during the week. It's more
23 than just five minutes of check in attendance. They
24 actually meet for a block during the day. It's the
25 same; every child, every student is assigned, and

1
2 they meet pretty much across the week and throughout
3 their entire school tenure. So, that's your crew,
4 that's your class and it's the same crew teacher that
5 mentor with you throughout your academic career. And
6 every freshman is given the opportunity to attend a,
7 I think, it's a school sponsored trip to kind of you
8 know, I think it's a camping trip to build just
9 comradery, support, trust, relationships.

10 And sometimes, I worked in a large comprehensive
11 high school and the challenge for us; how do you
12 create a small learning community within such a large
13 place. They're on to something there. They created
14 a small family within a large place and the students
15 talked to be about less incidents of bullying or less
16 incidents of not knowing each other. They all knew
17 each other and during the PBAT season, which we kept
18 hearing about, the students during the crew time were
19 helping each other for their PBAT's and the teacher
20 would be their support system as well.

21 So, they are onto incredible things that I wish
22 other folks can also learn from and apply. So, I
23 thank you Ms. Cook for your leadership in so many
24 different ways. Thank you so much. I am going to
25 applaud you.

1
2 Next, I'm sorry.

3 JONATHAN KATZ: I work with Ann and I work with
4 the consortium and I do the math work. So, I am
5 going to talk a little bit about that.

6 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Just make sure that you're
7 speaking into the mic and also just announce your
8 name.

9 JONATHAN KATZ: Okay, my name is Jonathan Katz.
10 I've been involved in education for almost 40 years.
11 24 of those years as a middle and high school math
12 teacher and it has been a great privilege to have
13 worked with thousands of New York City public school
14 students and hundreds of teachers across the country.

15 I've taught students who were required to take
16 the math Regents and students who had a waiver from
17 the math Regents. So, I taught in the consortium in
18 the 1990's when it became the consortium.

19 I want to take this opportunity to describe the
20 difference between these two experiences through the
21 views of myself and the thoughts of a student.

22 As I view the teaching and learning of
23 mathematics, I believe we have two purposes in our
24 work. One, students should come to appreciate the
25 power and beauty of mathematics. And two, students

1
2 should come to understand mathematical ideas with
3 depth and nuance, and this will enable students to
4 think mathematically.

5 So, how can we make this happen? Mathematics has
6 both great simplicity and complexity. It can create
7 frustration in a students mind if they are not given
8 time and opportunities to make sense of ideas and
9 procedures that are presented to them.

10 I stress the term time because that is the
11 crucial difference when you are teaching towards an
12 exam or when you are teaching for deep thinking and
13 understanding.

14 When you are asked to have students successfully
15 understand a great deal of math content over a fairly
16 short period of time, the learning will be
17 superficial at best and nonexistent at worst.

18 Teachers often feel rushed to cover the material
19 while many students feel frustrated and angry and
20 come to dislike this beautiful discipline of
21 mathematics.

22 How disappointing is that and how hurtful it is
23 to both teachers and students. And we can see the
24 results of this conundrum with the New York State
25 math Regents is scored on a scale where a passing

1
2 grade of 65 is equivalent to less than 33 percent of
3 the answers being correct. We make believe that
4 students understand mathematics in this state.

5 But I want to share a more hopeful story. In the
6 New York Performance Standards consortium, we believe
7 in depth over breath. Students spend three to four
8 years grappling with problems, thinking about
9 concepts and procedures with the major goal of having
10 the students view mathematics as sensible and worthy
11 of their time.

12 As a culminating experience, students in our
13 school will spend one to two nights working on just
14 one problem. Why would we do such a thing, because
15 that one problem takes on new meaning over time as
16 the student keeps thinking about it. The problem
17 becomes his or her vehicle to expressing their
18 deepest mathematical thinking and understanding while
19 learning new ideas and raising new questions about
20 mathematics.

21 And the young man who was sitting where I was,
22 Lucca, is that perfect example. He last year, took
23 on what is a famous Joe Sevis problem written in the
24 1800's and did incredible investing and thinking and
25 going to new places for himself at incredibly

1 interesting places. And so, he was just one example
2 of what happens when a kid does this work.
3

4 The problem becomes his or her vehicle to
5 expressing their deepest of mathematical thinking and
6 understanding while learning new ideas and raising
7 new questions about mathematics.

8 Students become independent thinkers and creators
9 of original thoughts. Now, that is not how we
10 definitely think mathematics is thought about. You
11 have original thoughts of mathematics, that's crazy.
12 You're just answering questions and you're right or
13 you're wrong. We don't look at it that way.

14 Students write about their experiences with this
15 problem along with the mathematical thinking and the
16 ideas they use to try to make sense of the problem
17 and find its solution. Through this endeavor,
18 students are experiencing the work of a
19 mathematician.

20 This approach to teaching and learning prepares
21 students to develop in-depth understanding that is
22 required for students to succeed in mathematics
23 courses once they enroll in college and this has been
24 proven by what has happened in the pilot study.
25 Because in one year, and I forget the number, so I

1
2 will be a little off, but 80 kids were accepted who
3 had not met the certain criteria at that point what
4 is accepted and over 90 percent passed a math course
5 that was going to give them credit. It was not a
6 remedial course and so, 90 percent who didn't meet
7 the requirements that they had passed the course that
8 was a regular course and that raised eyebrows for the
9 people in CUNY. So, that really supports the impact
10 this kind of work has.

11 I want to share words of an incredibly young man
12 from Gambia and they call it The Gambia, so I should
13 say, the Gambia. Who never studied mathematics in
14 his country. He only went to coron school in
15 country.

16 So, when he came to the United States two years
17 ago, he never went to a math class. He had some
18 mathematics just by living and because he's an
19 incredibly curious human being, but he wanted to come
20 to this country, because he wanted to learn math and
21 left his family to do this.

22 So, he went to International Community High
23 School which is a consortium school. He was given a
24 problem created by Zeno over 2,000 years ago. People
25 have heard about Zeno's paradox and there are four

1
2 paradoxes, he took on one of them. And he wrote this
3 as he was doing his PBAT.

4 Learning math at ICHS has helped me to think
5 mathematically, learn how to think outside the box
6 using different strategies. When I was given a
7 problem, I had to think in new ways and research
8 ideas I didn't know about. I have spent two month
9 thinking about one problem which we called a walk to
10 the door. It led me to thinking about limits.

11 Now, this is a person whose been only learning
12 math for two years and anyone that knows math, limits
13 is a precursor to work you do in calculus.

14 And I had to study fractions, which he knew
15 nothing about, in order to be able to think about
16 this problem.

17 Through doing the problem, I got fascinated by
18 the ideas of the infinite and the fine knight and I
19 was able to connect it to my life. The amount of
20 math I know today as compared to when I came to this
21 country is amazing and I thank my teachers and ICHS
22 for believing in and supporting me.

23 This young man's experience is not unusual.
24 Working on a PBAT changed the way he thought about
25

1
2 math and thought about himself and this is a curd for
3 many students in the consortium schools.

4 If we are willing to rethink what it means to
5 teach and learn and have the belief that all students
6 can truly learn mathematics, we can see a dramatic
7 change in the way students experience and talk about
8 this subject. Thank you.

9 TASFIA RAHMAN: Good afternoon Chair Treyger and
10 Members of the Committee on Education. My name is
11 Tasfia Rahman and I am Policy Coordinator at the
12 Coalition for Asian American Children and Families.
13 The nations only Pan Asian children and family
14 advocacy organization that leads a fight for improved
15 and equitable policy systems funding and services to
16 support those in need.

17 The Asian Pacific American population comprises
18 over 15 percent of New York City, yet their needs are
19 consistently overlooked, misunderstood and uncounted.
20 The Asian model minority masked the many challenges
21 that marginalize APA students face in education.

22 In New York City our students often come from
23 immigrant and low income families, face language
24 barriers and are the first generation in their
25 families to attend American schools and pursue higher

1
2 education and the perceived success of Asian students
3 in education particularly around testing, is
4 consistently used not only used as a reason to
5 further marginalize students within the community but
6 also, students from other disenfranchised
7 communities.

8 The monolithic view of the community is why we
9 continue to advocate for the implementation of
10 policies, asses the data disaggregation to better
11 accurately represent the needs of APA's

12 Today, we will testify on how a single test
13 culture negatively impacts APA students, despite the
14 perceived notion of their success in testing. As an
15 alternative, we advocate for utilizing a multiple
16 measure model for assessing a students academic
17 progress, potential and interest.

18 In the case specifically and the most relevant,
19 New York City specialized high schools entrance exam,
20 for APA families when faced with the challenge of
21 navigating a complex education system, a single
22 testing comparison is seen as the least difficult
23 barrier.

24 Unfortunately, this misguided hope motivates many
25 families, particularly limiting English proficient

1
2 APA parents vulnerable to spending money they do not
3 have. Ultimately, a vast majority of Asian students
4 in public schools do not end up attending specialized
5 high schools or other screened programs despite the
6 over investment in test prep.

7 Our communities should be able to explore and
8 understand the variety of academic options available
9 to their children. Language access and access to
10 teachers would help ELL and new immigrant parents
11 unfamiliar with the DOE system and opportunities,
12 rather than of making them rely on private tutoring
13 centers that provide expensive in language support
14 but that are incentivized to uphold the paying
15 customer base who are prepping for the SHSAT and
16 other high stakes exam.

17 Teaching to a single test hurts our students,
18 their critical stages of childhood and adolescent
19 development. Rigorous tutoring and exam prep often
20 contribute to high levels of stress, isolation and
21 shame that young students do not yet have the social
22 skills to manage independently.

23 It also diminishes the capacity to foster more
24 holistic learning among all our youth. Further, the
25 emphasis on high stakes single tests sends a message

1
2 that a students worth beginning as young as four
3 years old has already been defined by a single
4 number. Even before they enter the education system.
5 This can foster lifelong unhealthy learning
6 environments for many students that can have a
7 negative impact on their mental health, learning
8 abilities, and outcome.

9 In advocating for a multiple measure model, we
10 also caution the use of specific measures that are
11 vulnerable to existing negative biases about APA
12 students and other students of color.

13 Finally, we commend the Committees and the City's
14 commitment to educational equity across our school
15 system for all our students. We hope that at the
16 very least, high stakes single tests that harm the
17 social and emotional wellbeing of all of our students
18 are eliminated.

19 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

20 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you for your powerful
21 words and I think further advancing you know, the
22 concern about shortchanging education for many of our
23 students. You just reminded me of an experience when
24 I was teaching the global history regents class and I
25 was able to get through World War I and we would

1
2 review over and over and over again, the treaty of
3 Rasi.

4 On the regents, there was a question, which one
5 of the following choices was not a provision of the
6 treaty of Rasi? Because we never covered or
7 discussed the word provision, it threw off a number
8 of my students. We usually described it as terms,
9 conditions of the treaty, but that one vocabulary
10 word threw so many of them off and some of them left
11 the question blank.

12 Now, I assure you those students know the treaty
13 of Rasi, we discussed it, I saw their work. That one
14 question threw them off because of that one word and
15 so, you brought me back to that painful memory during
16 my teaching days.

17 Thank you all. Actually, we have to hear more,
18 I'm sorry, but thank you for that powerful testimony.
19 Please, next, I'm sorry.

20 Thank you Chair Treyger for holding this
21 important hearing and for always holding these
22 marathon hearings, listening to all advocates.
23 According to the term that was used in the first
24 panel, we see you and we very much appreciate that.

1
2 EMILY CARRAZANA: My name is Emily Carrazana, I
3 work at Class Size Matters. I attended elementary
4 and middle school in the public system here in New
5 York City and I am here today in part to advocate for
6 my younger self.

7 Beginning in the 6th grade, I would truck up to
8 Bronx Science two to three times a week and spend my
9 summers there. I was participating in the dream
10 program specialized high school institute and after
11 many hours of sacrificed time out of my childhood
12 learning math formulas and dissecting sentence
13 structures at nauseum, I did not get into a single
14 specialized high school.

15 And this is despite having high grades in my
16 courses and performing well on the state exam. The
17 entire premise of the program was to give prep to low
18 income high achieving students, and I was fortunate
19 to be one of them, but not as fortunate as I thought
20 I was.

21 My parents well-intentioned first-generation
22 immigrants. They didn't know how to navigate the
23 bureaucratic system that is this complex admissions
24 systems in our high school admissions program in New
25 York City.

1
2 So, when I was rejected, they did the only thing
3 that they thought they could do, and they uprooted my
4 entire family and we moved to neighboring New Jersey.
5 Yeah, and from there I attended in my towns public
6 high school. I took AP course, IB courses, did very
7 well. Went on to go to Rutgers University, earned my
8 bachelor's degree in political science of a
9 concentration in philosophy in three years.

10 My SAT results were no indication of where my
11 ability stood back in 8th grade, just as they are not
12 a valid marker for success for any student today.

13 While many argue that eliminating this exam or
14 the gifted and talented programs will cause the
15 families of high achieving students to move out of
16 the city, the example of my family shows how the
17 opposite happens currently because of the use of an
18 unfair, high stakes exam which has been shown not
19 only to discriminate against students of color, but
20 also high achieving girls.

21 This is a portion of discussion that has not been
22 touched on. While nearly all the discussion has so
23 far revolved around the clear racial disparities,
24 this exam has also been shown conclusively to be
25 highly gender bias.

1
2 The New York City girls receive higher test
3 scores on the state exams and better grades. They
4 are accepted into the specialized high schools at
5 much lower rates.

6 It is high time that we consider relying on more
7 holistic factors when deciding on the policies that
8 shape the life trajectories of our students. If we
9 instead move to implement more gifted and talented
10 programs and implement more specialized high schools,
11 we would be moving backwards and replicating the same
12 damaging practices that have undermined educational
13 opportunities in our schools.

14 I thank you for the opportunity to testify.

15 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: How do you follow some of
16 this. Thank you and I believe that every single
17 child, every single student is gifted and talented.
18 I don't care what any test says. Every single
19 student; if given the opportunity, students always
20 accel. Take that to the bank, so I really do
21 appreciate that. I appreciate everyone's work and
22 testimony. We have a lot of work to do but I
23 appreciate the fact, this is has been a very rich
24 conversation so far that is really needed.

1
2 And we need to educate the system that there are
3 other pathways and where an alternative throws people
4 off because they think it's some sort of less, no,
5 it's actually more. We are denying kids this
6 opportunity. And so, thank you all for your
7 incredible work and advocacy. I appreciate you,
8 thank you.

9 Okay, next panel, Robin Brosche, Michael
10 McQuillan, Peter Goodman, Melinda Lee, Lori Gummow,
11 Kemala Karmen and Michael Roffman.

12 Whenever folks are ready, they may begin.

13 ROBIN BROSCHÉ: Okay, my name is Robin Brosche, I
14 am actually the parent of 9th and 6th graders at
15 consortium schools. Although that not what brought
16 me here, but I was delighted to hear the topic of the
17 conversation.

18 Ironically, they had to both submit their
19 respective fourth and seventh grade state
20 standardized test scores in order to be admitted into
21 schools that are not going to be using state
22 standardized tests.

23 I've served as a member of the CEC for school
24 district 2 in Manhattan for over five years and I
25 formally served as its president for three years. My

1
2 children have taken every state assessment since
3 third grade with varying degrees of personal stress
4 on them and me and their principal, but I do believe
5 there is some merit to standardized assessments to
6 help districts in schools understand both their
7 instructional strengths in the areas where they may
8 need further development.

9 But of course, two days of testing is too much
10 and the stakes remain much too high and I think that
11 current DOE policy around using the results of state
12 assessments for selective school admissions
13 contributes to the high stakes climate.

14 In 2014, the New York State legislation passed a
15 revision to the state's education law, which I've
16 attached to the back of my testimony. That mandated
17 that New York State assessments could not account for
18 the majority of the schools admissions criteria.
19 Resulting in the adjustment of many school admissions
20 rubrics to reduce the role of state assessments to
21 ensure compliance with the law.

22 However, my reading of the law is that it also
23 mandates that the student scores on state
24 administered ELA and math assessments for 3rd and 8th
25 grade may not be placed on a students official

1 transcript or maintained in a students personal
2 record.
3

4 The law has language obligating districts to
5 provide families with a clearly written notice that
6 the results will not be part of a students official
7 transcript, nor the students permanent record. And
8 that the results are being provided to families for
9 diagnostic purposes only.

10 That's me paraphrasing the language and the law.
11 And so, I believe the DOE is not in compliance with
12 that aspect of the law, because they don't provide
13 that information when they give parents test results.

14 Further, the DOE then uses these student records,
15 which I believe are out of compliance because they
16 include state assessment outcomes as part of the
17 application process for selective school admissions
18 without giving families an option to withhold scores
19 on assessments that are not designed to be used for
20 academic placement.

21 Although families have the option to opt out of
22 the assessments, the black box nature of selective
23 admissions leaves them worried that the selective
24 schools might take their child's opt out status into
25 account. Additionally, confusion around the latest

1
2 ESA implementation in New York State leaves some
3 families and even some school administrators I've
4 spoken to with the misunderstanding that children who
5 opt out will be assigned a 1 on their individual
6 transcript.

7 Earlier this month, I reached out to the office
8 of enrollment on behalf of some families in School
9 District 2 for guidance on how they may withhold
10 their own child's scores on their record during the
11 application process and I'm still awaiting feedback.

12 I'm not optimistic the DOE is going to share my
13 interpretation with the law that would allow families
14 to withhold these diagnostic assessment scores in the
15 application process.

16 To the extent that there are pedagogical merits
17 to using thoughtfully designed standardized
18 assessments, the current system of mandating that
19 families provide their child's assessment results for
20 the purpose of selective admissions increases
21 pressures on teachers to focus on test prep and
22 incentivizes families to provide outside instruction
23 to students in 4th and 7th grades muddying the utility
24 of the assessments for diagnostic purposes.

1
2 Although, working through changes on how
3 assessments are designed does live at the state
4 level, I believe it is within the DOE's power right
5 not to change the high stakes climate around the
6 assessments, while also increasing their reliability
7 by properly complying with the state law as it is
8 currently written.

9 PETER GOODMAN: My name is Peter Goodman, I write
10 a blog called, Ant in the Apple, the intersection of
11 education and politics. I am a CCNY Capon and the
12 President of the Education Alumni at City College. I
13 attend all of the Board of Regents meetings, so I've
14 sort of made my life after retirement trying to
15 change the galaxy one planet at a time.

16 Let me speak in three sections. First, was
17 EduStats, which we heard from the Board of Ed, which
18 to me is the Board of Ed interpretation of Hunger
19 Games. It's accountability on steroids; it is a
20 terrible idea.

21 As a teacher, we give tests for understanding
22 every period. We teach something and we test whether
23 the kids learned it or not. We do it through calling
24 on kids in class, calling on non-volunteers, giving a
25 quiz, we know what our kids don't know and don't

1
2 know, and we constantly try to find some way of
3 getting the kids to understand the concept.

4 It's challenging, we have good days and bad days,
5 good periods and bad periods; that's the nature of
6 teaching. As we teach, we build a bigger toolkit, we
7 have more ways of doing things.

8 So, when someone tells me, some computer
9 somewhere is going to spin out numbers and is going
10 to tell me how to teach some kid, it's ludicrous and
11 I think it could be extremely dangerous because it
12 could turn teachers off, it could turn the whole
13 system into test and punish.

14 So, I have confidence that City Council and
15 others will do what they can to bring some
16 enlightenment for those people who are running the
17 system.

18 As far s the consortium schools, I've been
19 involved with them since Eric Nadelstern back in the
20 90's when it first started. I visited them many,
21 many times and has fought a war with various
22 Chancellors to keep the consortium going. Time and
23 time again, it was challenged by those people in
24 power.

1
2 So, I'm not so enthusiastic to rush to form all
3 consortium schools, because I fear the Department of
4 Ed is going to try to gobble them up and if they
5 gobble them up, they'll eat them. These are special
6 schools, they require special teachers, special
7 school leaders. Only certain schools have the
8 ability to change over. It's a totally different
9 method of instruction and I think what they do is
10 absolutely wonderful, but I think we have to be
11 careful that we don't rush to try to make every
12 school a consortium school, because that would not be
13 a great idea.

14 And lastly, the Board of Regents, the Board of
15 Regents is moving towards a two-year study, what they
16 call graduation measures. And whether or not they
17 keep the Regents is the end of the process. All the
18 44 credits, the proper credits, is the curriculum,
19 the proper curriculum. Are we teaching kids so they
20 can be good college students and good employees?
21 When the Blue-Ribbon panel is being started, they're
22 going to be people from the private sector. Do the
23 current graduates have the skills to work in this new
24 age, jobs are very different.

25

1
2 So, I think it has to be done very carefully.
3 There are going to be meetings in every borough and
4 before the Blue-Ribbon Commission starts and we have
5 to go step by step, because we don't know where the
6 end is going to be. And I always say that one size
7 fits all, fits no one. There is no reason why there
8 has to be one system for everybody. Some schools can
9 go one direction, some schools can go on a different
10 direction. In New York City, I think we should have
11 pilots, lots of pilots, trying out something. There
12 are wonderful schools that have stayed under the
13 radar.

14 There's Manhattan Day and Night Comprehensive
15 High School. It's a great high school; nobody knows
16 about it. When I spoke with the principal and I
17 said, do you want to spread it throughout the city,
18 he said, absolutely not. What we do is great, I'm
19 afraid that if we try to spread it, they'll destroy
20 it.

21 So, we could have many different models because
22 we have so many different types of kids and in fact,
23 in the closing, I'll give you a job and I think is
24 totally appropriate. I think instead of the current
25 32 school districts, there should be 51 school

1
2 districts and they should be [inaudible 4:32:50] with
3 City Council Members. Every City Council Member
4 should have schools which they own because then, they
5 could really work with those schools and what happens
6 in different part of the city is going to be
7 different because kids are different, and parents are
8 different, and the city is different. I thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: As long as the members
10 don't draw the districts right. Very powerful and
11 also just to be clear, I am certainly not suggesting
12 that every school become a consortium but my
13 goodness, they are doing some great things that I am
14 jealous, I didn't know about when I was teaching that
15 we could have applied.

16 Another small thing they do which I am so proud
17 of. They have a whole event around celebrating
18 students. I call it marching to the mailbox to
19 celebrate their college application. I love that,
20 they celebrate these types of occasions. And so, for
21 us, I was always taught share best practices and I'd
22 love to learn more.

23 So, thank you so much for your great words,
24 appreciate it. Next, sorry.

1
2 MIKE I'm Mike McQuillan and I'm proud to
3 represent -

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Is the mic on? Is the
5 microphone on? Make sure that the red light, yeah,
6 thank you.

7 MIKE MCQUILLAN: I'm Mike McQuillan, thank you,
8 I'm still Mike McQuillan and I'm proud to represent
9 Leaders High School in your district, in your
10 consortium and I've come here from teaching 18 years
11 of history in Brooklyn High Schools to support your
12 initiative and to share why that matters to those who
13 don't know it.

14 In 1863 Abraham Lincoln traveled for six hours by
15 stagecoach, horse back and railroad train to speak
16 for just three minutes. I've devoted a third of my
17 lifetime to do the same and I hope that you will
18 remember me like you remember him.

19 22 out of 50, 22 out of 50, just get that right
20 on the Regents multiple choice in history and then
21 put together 3 decent essays, no worries. You'll
22 pass that history Regents. An assistant principal
23 where I launched my 18-year career, told me that I
24 should say that to students. It was a mandate not a
25 suggestion.

1
2 She went around to us, to our department
3 distributing lists of all the recycled history
4 questions, your treaty of Rasi and others and she
5 came into classrooms to evaluate us and whether we
6 were drilling those kids until they internalized.
7 God, they probably thought about it at night. And it
8 educates to mediocrity, those aren't my words, Jewels
9 Henry, an anthropologist at Washington University
10 said that ten years before I studied there in the
11 70's but it's still true in much of our system.

12 It makes fertile minds dull; it make kids afraid;
13 it makes them settle for just getting by and it
14 teaches them to temporarily memorize facts but not to
15 know how to analyze anything.

16 You know, and I do, because I taught my last four
17 years at Leaders that we can do much more and we
18 already know how to do it. Performance assessment I
19 won't repeat what's been said in those generic
20 definitions, but I will say for Tina Grant, one of my
21 students came back and said, Mr. Mike, my classmates
22 freaked out in college when I was a freshman when the
23 professor said 20-page paper folks. I was nervous,
24 but then I remembered, I did that already.

25

1
2 Students not only do that, but in doing that,
3 they teach us to track the evolution of their
4 thinking, to monitor how they learn to persevere to
5 help them overcome obstacles, to form opinions, to
6 write a scholarly paper, to learn the difference
7 between a legitimate and illegitimate sort citation.
8 And to learn how not to just speak out in public, as
9 I have the privilege to do but how to debate it. How
10 to respect but refute opposition, how to work out a
11 consensus. Those are things that make great human
12 beings, but that's not what most of our system
13 teaches.

14 The system as a whole, and I respectfully say,
15 the testimony of the DOE representatives proved it,
16 has the swiss cheese as a metaphor. There are
17 pockets in visionary teaching, but that's not yet the
18 reality. But as you've pointed out so well, and
19 thank you for staying so late, when so many of your
20 colleagues have left. We know what to do, we know
21 how to do it and we know the impact it has and so do
22 the kids and their parents and isn't that what
23 lifelong learning and making democracy real is all
24 about? Thank you.

1
2 LORI GUMMOW: Hi, thank you for the opportunity
3 to testify today. My name is Lori Gummow and I am a
4 retired New York City Department of Education Special
5 Educator.

6 Special Education Constructor at Hunter College
7 and the parent of a student with disabilities and for
8 my spoken testimony, I'm going to focus on my role as
9 a parent.

10 My son received early intervention services from
11 the age of six weeks due to his premature birth and
12 special education services beginning at age 3 and
13 continuing through high school. In the 8th grade, he
14 refused standardized testing and did not participate
15 in the PSAT or SAT in high school. He attended
16 Edward R. Murrow High School in their screen studio
17 theater program. Received set services, or resource
18 room, passed all of his course and earned the
19 required 44 credits for a diploma.

20 He earned a special theater award at his
21 graduation in 2018, however, due to math learning
22 disability, he was not able to pass the algebra or
23 geometry regents exam with a 65. He received a 56, a
24 55 and a 46; yet he passed both of the courses.

1
2 My son also legitimately threatened suicide in
3 the 8th grade when he couldn't understand his math
4 homework. The big kitchen knife was in his hands and
5 I share this with his permission. As a result of not
6 being able to pass a math regents exam with a score
7 of 65, he received a local diploma. He also earned a
8 special regents endorsement for theater yet didn't
9 receive it with his diploma because he didn't earn a
10 regents diploma.

11 Because of his failure, "New York State deemed
12 him not college ready based on their so-called
13 standardized tests and regents exams." Let me
14 rephrase that, he did not receive a regents diploma
15 because of his score on one exam.

16 A single test, on a single day, in a 15-year
17 public school career determined that he was not
18 college ready. There is something very, very wrong
19 with that. This was the algebra regents exam that
20 the year previously had been reworked to reflect the
21 common core standards and had a 92 percent failure
22 rate for students with disabilities. This was the
23 year that students did not have the option of taking
24 the old and the new exam and have the highest score
25 count.

1
2 And so, after all of the special education
3 services of occupational and physical therapy, after
4 all of the successful inclusion classrooms, and team
5 teaching, after all of the excellent professional
6 development his teachers received. After all of the
7 expenses of providing these supports and services,
8 and most of all, after all of his dedication and hard
9 work to pass all of his classes, he did not receive a
10 regents diploma because of one test.

11 And because he did not receive a regents diploma,
12 he was not eligible to attend a public SUNY or CUNY
13 four-year college. One test on one day, out of the
14 2,700 days he attended New York City public schools
15 was the deciding factor. This should have been a
16 special education success story. There needs to be
17 alternative and multiple measures of evaluating our
18 students progress toward graduation.

19 All of the intense focus on testing and linking
20 test scores to stringent graduation requirements is
21 taking its toll on many of our students with mild
22 disabilities.

23 While my son worked very hard to pass his
24 academic courses, his talents lay in performing arts.
25 He was a member of the To Die Youth Theater Resident

1
2 Ensemble, a drama desk award winning youth theater
3 for seven years. He performed in nine musicals of
4 Tada. This past July, he received a national youth
5 arts award for outstanding supporting performance in
6 a musical for his performance in Tada's original
7 musical, Geniuses.

8 My son also performed in the Murrow production of
9 A Few Good Men while in high school. Fortunately,
10 for my son, there is a happy ending. My son is
11 currently a successful sophomore at Dean College in
12 Franklin Massachusetts. Dean is a test optional
13 college, meaning they do not require SAT or ACT
14 scores. They do require a high school diploma and
15 because they're in Massachusetts, do not care what
16 type of diploma he earned. They don't care about
17 scores on Regents exams.

18 A high school diploma is a high school diploma.
19 He loves being a college student; Dean provides
20 excellent support services for him including academic
21 coaching and tutoring and based on his college
22 audition, my son receives a \$20,000 a year
23 scholarship for performing arts in theater and will
24 be performing in a second college production next
25

1
2 month while carrying a full load of 16 credits. He
3 is not taking any remedial courses either.

4 He is successful despite New York trying to beat
5 him down and calling him a failure and he will be
6 joining Anthony Ramos in a couple of years; you will
7 see him.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Alright, and I'm proud to
9 call your son a fellow Murrow High School.

10 LORI GUMMOW: Go Murrow.

11 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Alright, go Murrow, thank
12 you. Thank you so much, powerful stuff, thanks.

13 MICHAEL ROFFMAN: Hi, my name is Michael Roffman
14 and I am the founder and Executive Director of Adult
15 School Research and Design.

16 We are a non-profit organization for a lot of
17 schools across the city. Most of the schools we work
18 with are transfer schools, which are schools serving
19 kids who had struggled in the past, been chronically
20 absent in the past. Some of them are consortium
21 schools, some of them you've heard from today. Many
22 of them are not.

23 And there are there points, I feel like, you
24 know, you've already heard a lot of points today and
25 so, my three points, maybe I'm repeating some of the

1
2 things you've heard. But I want to just note three
3 things.

4 The first is that having worked with many city
5 schools and with many offices of the Department of
6 Education, the Regents exams are often treated as if
7 they're some how sacred. And something that I've
8 often said to principals is to not confuse precision
9 with meaning. I think that because we have tests
10 that can produce exact numbers, we treat them as if
11 that means something and sometimes it's hard to tell
12 what they do.

13 I think also going with that, is the thought that
14 because they're designed by somebody who's outside of
15 the schools, they're given more credence when as
16 we've been hearing today, that's often in many ways
17 undermines students.

18 The second point that I think is important to
19 know is that there is a lot of studies out there
20 from, I'll just go to employers that say that what
21 they need from students are not the skills that
22 standardized tests assess but they are actually the
23 skills to problem solve, to collaborate, to adapt,
24 that we were hearing in different ways from
25 consortium schools, but that also are what employers

1
2 look for and there's this disconnect between what is
3 assessed by the state and what they need.

4 For the last 13 years, I've been working as I
5 said, with schools that serve this population of
6 underserved students and I will note that the vast
7 majority of those students are Black and Latino
8 students, often from low income neighborhoods.
9 They're students who have been bullied; they are
10 students who are earning the money for their family.
11 They are students who face many, many hardships and
12 when you ask the ones who have succeeded despite
13 those challenges, what skills they developed in their
14 schools, they talk about the same ones that employers
15 talk about. They talk about being able to adapt,
16 becoming lifelong learners. They do not talk about
17 the skills and knowledge that are on Regents exams.

18 The third thing that I will note, that again,
19 we've been hearing today is that, while assessing
20 learning is important, there are other ways to do it
21 that are being used in schools in various ways. And
22 as Ann had said before, the assessment system you
23 create influences the culture of the schools that
24 grow in the system.

1
2 And so, if we can think of new ways to assess and
3 to support schools, we help foster different kinds of
4 cultures in schools.

5 I feel like so much of what I'm saying has
6 already been said, so I won't say much more about
7 that. Let me just see if I need to add anything
8 else.

9 The one other thing that I will just note because
10 it hasn't been noted as much today, is that my sense
11 of the regents being treated as sacred is that you
12 take a test that hasn't in many ways changed much
13 from what it looked like 50 years ago. And right
14 there, it changes but, in many ways, it looks a lot
15 the same. There is this consolidation that we're
16 going to test math, science, social studies. We're
17 going to have these sets of multiple choice and open-
18 ended questions and in a time when now, the way
19 people access knowledge is so different in our
20 society that we are continuing to test knowledge as
21 if we're in a place before internet and computers.

22 And even though a lot of the things we talk about
23 in consortium schools are the kind of thinking that I
24 would like to believe went on in Ancient Greece, it's
25 also the kind of thinking that you need to be able to

1
2 do to look at all this information that's thrown at
3 us in our current society. The kids need to be able
4 to navigate and helping them to have the skills to
5 navigate that is something that we are not accessing
6 at all in our schools and we do a disservice to kids
7 who have struggled and then experience the anxiety of
8 tests that actually don't matter for their futures.

9 So, hopefully we find ways to rethink that and I
10 appreciate you giving me the opportunity to talk and
11 to bring people together to think about this. Thank
12 you.

13 KEMALA KARMEN: Hi there, my name is Kemala
14 Karmen and I am a cofounder of NYC Opt-Out which is a
15 no budget totally grassroots organization.

16 I'm also on the steering committee for New York
17 State Allies for Public Education of which NYC Opt-
18 Out is a constituent member. But as Lori said, I'm
19 mostly going to be talking from my position as a
20 parent of children in the system.

21 So, the email I received about this hearing
22 announced that it would be called, Breaking Testing
23 Culture. So, one of the first things we might want
24 to ask ourselves is, what would our schools need to
25 successfully break that culture? And unfortunately,

1
2 I don't have to think very hard to answer this
3 question because both of my children have attended
4 non test centric schools from Pre-k all the way
5 through high school.

6 I realize that our families experience is
7 extremely rare in the public schools in New York City
8 or even those of the state, or the country as a
9 whole. But it also means that if we want to break
10 testing culture, we don't have to scabble about for
11 some illusive key to solving this problem. We
12 already have a handful of schools including the
13 consortium schools, but not limited to them, that
14 service models.

15 So, how is it that these schools have been
16 liberated from testing culture when most schools have
17 not? It's a combination of state regulation and
18 parent voice and the NYCDOE can contrary to first
19 impressions or whatever it said earlier today; both
20 of these necessary prerequisites. Let's start with
21 the state. So, you've heard a lot about the
22 consortium. My children from 6th grade on attended a
23 consortium school. One is still there and as you
24 heard that in leu of the regents, they conduct
25 original research or analysis on topics of their

1
2 choice. The only thing I would add – I'm going to
3 skip some of what I had written about that earlier,
4 because the only thing I would add to what was
5 already said about that. What this also does is help
6 children identify and connect their interests.

7 So, for example, my older daughter did her – she,
8 you will be able to tell that she has an interest in
9 public health because she did her history PBAT on
10 government regulation of the opioid industry. She
11 did her math PBAT using derivatives to calculate
12 disease outbreak using actual data sets of
13 vaccination rates in New York City public schools.
14 She did her science PBAT on 24/7 exposure to Wi-Fi.

15 So, doing all these things you know, really
16 helped her see the connection, into disciplinary
17 connections between things. They're not like
18 separate, like, this is math, and this is science.
19 You know, she could make those connections and this
20 is a little mama bragging, but I will say that my
21 daughter won a first award in the New York City
22 Science and Engineering Fair for the project that was
23 based on her PBAT and you know, there are kids at all
24 of the specialized schools or whatever, she got a
25 first.

1
2 God, that went quick. So, anyway, I want to get
3 to the next part. So, I want to say, while the state
4 controls how many schools are in the consortium, as
5 Council Member Treyger said, I might ask, what is the
6 city doing to use its muscle, since we have a
7 majority of the state's students to push for either
8 expanding the consortium or in other ways securing
9 regents waivers for the city students.

10 Also, waivers only exist for the high school
11 grades, in part, because standardized testing in
12 grades 3 through 8 is federally mandated. Here is
13 where parent voice comes in.

14 My children were able to attend elementary and
15 middle schools that did zero test prep, because the
16 parents in those schools overwhelmingly rejected high
17 stakes testing, in favor of more holistic teacher
18 created assessments.

19 How did they do this? They opted out of the
20 state tests. Are these parents just out liars. I
21 would say no. They were able to organize because
22 administrators at these schools did not try to hold
23 them back. It seems that there are very few of these
24 administrators, why?

1
2 Does the DOE punish, or reward principals based
3 on the test scores of their students? Are
4 superintendents similarly incentivized or
5 disincentivized regarding the test scores of the
6 schools in their charge?

7 At NYC Opt-Out the majority of the calls that
8 come into our hotline are from parents saying that
9 principals are trying to coerce them into taking the
10 tests. They threaten summer school or grade
11 retention. This is wrong but not really that
12 surprising. When NYCDOE to the extent that addresses
13 Opt-Out at all, I would contest what Linda Chen said
14 earlier today about the availability of Opt-Out
15 information.

16 States that parents who want to opt out should
17 meet with the principal. If opt out is a right,
18 which as state education commissioner and the
19 Chancellor of the Board of Regents have affirmed, why
20 do parents need to meet with the principal? If not,
21 so that the principal can try to dissuade them from
22 their purpose.

23 People shouldn't need to ask permission to
24 exercise what is an acknowledged right. A policy
25 like meet the principal intimidates many parents,

1
2 especially those who don't speak English or who's own
3 experiences of school were traumatic or who merely
4 can't come in during school hours.

5 NYCDOE should emulate what some other school
6 districts do. Backpack home a form where parents can
7 simple check off yes, my student will take this test
8 or no, my student will not take this assessment.

9 And in closing, I just wanted to say, I also want
10 to thank you for holding these hearing but I'm also -
11 I want to ask you, what can the City Council actually
12 really do though to push DOE to do these things?
13 Because under Mayoral control, they can do whatever
14 they want and it's so disenfranchising as a parent to
15 hear somebody who's an elected representative of the
16 people and you know, I was at the meeting where the
17 Council unanimously passed the Parents Bill of Rights
18 to have an opt out provision and be distributed
19 yearly. That was in 2015, it's never happened.

20 Because they don't have to abide by what the City
21 Council says.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: So, I appreciate that. A
23 couple things. Actually, I might have been the only
24 member of the City Council. I could be wrong, that
25 testified at the state hearing. Not to give the

1
2 Mayor a full blanket power during our Mayoral
3 control. I believe in checks and balance and I
4 believe that parents, communities, local officials
5 should have a way to help shape our system.

6 So, also, I will say that it was this City
7 Council and I'm very proud of this Committee in
8 particular that actually educated law makers about
9 fair student funding. Because that was sort of like
10 a - Leaders in New York State, I don't want to
11 embarrass some people, did not even know what fair
12 student funding was. But made the charge that our
13 budgets were not transparent in schools.

14 And thanks to our great staff here in the City
15 Council, which is extraordinary, we brought up to the
16 state a copy of a school allocation memo to show them
17 where they could find fair student funding.

18 So, here is your transparency, now, pay us your
19 CFE money. So, we have the ability to advocate to
20 agitate. We have the ability to hold folks
21 accountable. And I hear you, I was not one of the
22 city officials that praised Albany on their budget.
23 There was a net cut of \$25 million to our school
24 system and that's with a Blue waive.

1
2 So, there is still a lot of work to do up in
3 Albany. There is no question about it. We will
4 continue to be a platform for parent, for students,
5 educators in our school communities and the purpose
6 today in breaking the testing culture, why I wanted
7 to hear from consortium schools is because it'
8 important as you pointed out, if we're breaking
9 something what are we saying we're moving towards?
10 What is the world beyond testing? And the fact that
11 this world has been an existence for decades, is
12 really an indictment on the school system for not
13 telling us about this and teaching me. I was a
14 teacher during the time of consortium. No one talked
15 to me about this. Even in my teaching preparatory
16 work, I would have loved to have learned about
17 multiple ways, effective ways to gauge proficiency
18 and mastery of content. Even in my teacher training
19 it was test driven.

20 So, it's an entire culture that extends both into
21 our school system and even in the way we're preparing
22 future teachers and school leaders.

23 So, I thank you and we hear you. There is much
24 more work to do, but we have shown the ability to
25 make change here in the City Council.

1
2 And, I'm sorry, my apologies, the very patient
3 and extraordinary New York City Civil Liberties
4 Union, please.

5 Thank you, thanks so much for letting me join
6 this panel. I'm actually, at six o'clock have
7 another meeting I'm hosting on Gifted and Talented.
8 So, it's all a huge day about segregation and all of
9 these things.

10 JOANNA MILLER: So, I won't take a ton of your
11 time, but thank you so much. My name is Joanna
12 Miller, I am the Director of the Education Policy
13 Center at the New York Civil Liberties Union.

14 From our point of view, testing and the testing
15 culture in New York City is an urgent civil rights
16 issue and we haven't heard it talked about very much
17 today. So, that's what I'm going to focus on.

18 The testing culture in New York City has created
19 and fortified the deep segregation, racial
20 segregation that we have in our system and I think
21 without - well, everyone's having a conversation
22 about segregation and here you're having a
23 conversation about testing and I think that those
24 things have to come together if we're going to talk
25 about how this system tracks and segregates and

1
2 separates children from the age of four throughout
3 their career.

4 I think we have to talk about how when the stakes
5 are high, people who have the means will game the
6 system. There was a New York Times investigation a
7 couple months ago that almost 50 percent of the kids
8 who have extra time on the SHSAT are White and
9 students who have extra time are far more likely to
10 get an offer.

11 I'm not saying those people are cheating, but I'm
12 saying when the stakes are high, people will find a
13 way to get an edge and that's just the name of the
14 game, right, that's the whole game. And I think we
15 need to really be looking at those kinds of things,
16 if anything, to me, that percentage actually just
17 shows how arbitrary the time limit is at all and how
18 arbitrary the test is at all.

19 That just given a little extra time, you're going
20 to do that much better. It doesn't change how much
21 you know or how well you think, it's just giving a
22 little extra time and I think that really just shows
23 a lot of the arbitrariness in the system.

24 From the New York Civil Liberties Union point of
25 view, we are very invested in school climate and

1
2 culture. That keeps kids engaged, that supports
3 teachers in classroom management, and you can't get
4 that with testing culture and the people have named
5 that already.

6 But I'll just say, in District 8 in the Bronx,
7 the superintendent has started offering an enriched
8 curriculum to every student. Essentially, gifted and
9 talented curriculum for every kid and the curriculum
10 was designed by an education professor and she said
11 that the primary tenants were engagement and
12 enjoyment.

13 Because you can't do deep inquiry-based learning
14 if you hate what you're doing and if you don't want
15 to be in that classroom and I think when we talk
16 about the suspension crisis, we have - when kids are
17 dropping out because they can't pass tests. When
18 kids can't sit in their seat, can't pay attention and
19 teachers don't know how to manage the classroom, I
20 don't see how that could be disconnected from a
21 testing culture and from losing that inquiry-based
22 learning.

23 The last point I'll just make, and some people
24 have mentioned it, but I just want to put a finer
25 point is about narrowing of the curriculum. At the

1
2 Civil Liberties Union, we are super invested in kids
3 getting adequate access to a lot of subjects that
4 just aren't tested. To arts education, to sex
5 education, which we know is not getting taught
6 because it isn't being tested. In a very perverse
7 incentive, you know, Washington DC actually created a
8 standardized test for sex ed in order to ensure that
9 they would teach it.

10 So, that just shows you where we've come, and I
11 think it's essential that kids are learning these
12 things. Civics, phys ed, arts and not, in fact, as
13 you said, every kid has giftedness and every kid has
14 needs and a more individualized system that doesn't
15 rely always on tests, could allow us to meet those
16 needs and you could be super gifted in music and
17 really need a boost in English. And that doesn't
18 mean that you have to be segregated out and labeled
19 into one bucket or the other.

20 So, I think I made my point. Thank you so much
21 for letting me testify. I really appreciate it and
22 there's a lot more studious kind of sounding things
23 in the written testimony.

24 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You were spot on, thank you
25 and I would touch upon it, but you're right, we need

1
2 to make the connection. This is about dismantling
3 inequity in all forms in our school system. There is
4 no question about it, and I have received so much –
5 first of all, all this support from educators and
6 school communities but also, there's critics out
7 there that are just questioning like the PBATS and
8 questioning the alternative.

9 I strongly encourage people to read. Like, you
10 know, read the report from the ESTAG, read the
11 report. Like read about the PBAT, it's actually far
12 more sophisticated than any regents exam. It's
13 really meaningful. It's not watering down anything.

14 I mentioned before about my memories of students
15 memorizing dates and names in the Barron's Regent's
16 Review Book, that was painful, that's not learning.
17 Or the flashcards that they would constantly create,
18 peer the greats beard, westernization. I'm not sure
19 if they could define westernization, just – they have
20 a matching game just to memorize if they see a
21 certain thing, On the Regents, that's not learning
22 folks. I know I'm singing to the choir here but to
23 the public, that's not learning.

24 And so, thank you, thank you, thank you. I
25 appreciate you all here, appreciate it so much. And

1 the last panel and the patient and brave panel.

2 Tamara, Kate, Jennifer, Susan and Dermot.

3
4 Alright, so, whenever folks are ready, you may
5 begin.

6 TAMARA GAYER: I'm happy to start. Hi, my name
7 is Tamara Gayer[SP?] and I am a parent of a fourth
8 grader and I want to talk about the standardized test
9 in 3rd to 8th grade, which haven't been discussed very
10 widely today.

11 My son is not an English Language learner. He
12 doesn't have any IEP. He is maybe what you would
13 call the classical, general education kid. And I
14 have to say that my first encounter with the effects
15 of standardized testing actually happened when he was
16 in kindergarten.

17 Kindergarten as I experienced it as a child, was
18 that year of play. Where they introduce you to the
19 classroom, they introduce you to socialization. In
20 my sons case was what they were pounding over and
21 over was the necessity to learn how to read. Over
22 and over, learn how to read and learn how to write.
23 There was no time for play and all these kind of
24 things in a school which really claims not to do very
25

1
2 much test prep. In a year where they're still very
3 far away from testing.

4 So, this was really, really sad for me because I
5 remember my kindergarten teacher and I still love
6 her, she is my sort of shining star. And my child
7 was not ready to learn how to read. The next year,
8 in first grade, about three months in, when he was
9 ready, he learned it in about 10 minutes.

10 By the time he got to 3rd grade, the year for
11 testing, he was way above whatever the expectation
12 for that year is, but if you asked him, he would
13 still that he hated reading because of the way it was
14 drilled into him in kindergarten.

15 He is a kid who in second grade, you'd ask him
16 what he wants to learn that year, he would say I want
17 to learn division. By the middle of 3rd grade and I
18 have to practice this by saying that in 3rd grade we
19 had a heartbreakingly amazing teachers, one of the
20 many very, very dedicated and creative teachers who
21 you know, because of the way common core and testing
22 is structured, really had very limited input into
23 what she could vary in her classroom. So, by the
24 middle of 3rd grade, he was already saying, I hate
25 math.

1
2 I looked around and saw many of his friends. He
3 comes from a house, which is you know, basically,
4 like a lower middle-class house, but he is very
5 supported in education. Not all of his friends have
6 that advantage.

7 So, if I looked at my kid and I heard him and
8 some of his friends who run the gamut of New York
9 City saying, school is jail. And their only in 3rd
10 grade, these are 8- and 9-year old's. we're not even
11 talking about some of the difficult situations we've
12 heard about high school and middle school and all of
13 those things. The effect of standardized testing
14 starts from the first day of school and if we're
15 looking not only to create people with skills for the
16 future, but just the basic thing, of we want kids who
17 find the joy in inquiry.

18 Because those will make happier and better
19 individuals in the future. We are losing that on the
20 first day of school and that is way before they get
21 to the regents or any of this kind of stuff.

22 So, that's mostly what I wanted to say. Thank
23 you very much for allowing that opportunity.

24

25

1
2 SUSAN HORWITZ: Hi, my name is Susan Horwitz; I'm
3 the supervising attorney of the Education Law Project
4 at the Legal Aid Society Civil Practice.

5 But today, I want to talk to you as a parent, as
6 several of us have done. I have two boys, now young
7 men, 18 and 20 years old with vastly different high
8 school experiences. The 18-year-old went to East
9 Side Community High School, amazing 6-12 PBAT school.
10 I'm not going to say anything else about that because
11 it's all been said already. Incredible experience
12 for him but just numbers wise, by the time he
13 finished 12th grade, he had done accounted between 50
14 and 60 roundtables, or PBAT style presentations of
15 work. He is now a freshman at Temple University, and
16 he said the other day, mom, my history class is just
17 like Ben's class last year.

18 So, really phenomenal, I love the whole program,
19 but to me and I sort of talked about him because he
20 always gets left out in our family because my other
21 son who's 20, is really smart, really, really
22 learning disabled and from the time he walked into a
23 school house for pre-k, we knew this kid, he
24 shouldn't have to go to school. He has been in
25 public, private special ed, nonpublic and now back to

1
2 high school and is now at 20 finishing the last few
3 credits of what's required for high school diploma.

4 What we haven't heard about much today is the new
5 superintendent determination option that thank the
6 lord above, the New York State Regents adopted,
7 because my son was not going to get a high school
8 diploma. He is severely, severely learning disabled
9 in all areas, but if you need somebody to come over
10 and you know, rearrange your furniture, fix stuff in
11 your house, get you onto a boat ride somewhere, he is
12 this incredibly resourceful. His superpowers
13 networking and sort of understanding social
14 situations and to think about the fact that because
15 of his learning disabilities, he wasn't going to be
16 able to get a high school diploma, it was just
17 devastating for us.

18 You know, and he is the kid who at the Harbor
19 School has volunteered for every activity. Has done
20 so many work base learning internships that he maxed
21 out and they couldn't give him another one. I really
22 wanted him to come with me today, but he was busy
23 working on one of the charter sail boats as a deck
24 hand.

1
2 All he wants to do is work. Everybody doesn't
3 want to go to college. I totally appreciate that
4 when we look at how schools perform, the focus is 90
5 percent of the time on high school acceptance rates,
6 - sorry, on college acceptance rates and on college
7 readiness. I have a kid who has zero interest, nor
8 does he need to have any interest in going to
9 college. Which is a lot to be said for the kid of a
10 lawyer and you know, a guy with an engineering
11 degree, but we have to remember that as much as we
12 all have become very anti sort of technical track
13 training.

14 If my son had had the option when he started high
15 school of just - even middle school, of like going
16 toward this non regents and more technical program, I
17 will tell you we would have saved two years of him
18 being out of school because of major mental health
19 stuff that was in great part due to knowing that he
20 couldn't do what the other kids were doing.

21 And so, what I really urge you is to remember
22 that there is this huge population of kids; kids with
23 and without disabilities who don't have access to the
24 kind of program that we've been lucky enough to find
25 for him and to open up this option of SEDO's local

1
2 diploma, superintendents determination for kids who
3 just want to get out there and work and incidentally,
4 he is going to have a much easier time finding a job
5 than my college kid is going to have.

6 So, thank you again for holding this hearing.

7 JENNIFER GABREY: Hi, I am Jennifer Gabrey, I am
8 also a parent of a child who just entered pre-k, but
9 I am not here to talk to you about him.

10 I am here to talk to you because I teach at
11 Hunter College and I'm here to talk to you about the
12 students that I see in front of me and how they've
13 been prepared or not to be in college. I teach in
14 the department of understudies and political science.

15 So, I want to just reflect for a moment Council
16 Member Treyger on what you just said about the ways
17 in which you, your own teaching preparation and was
18 sort of test driven.

19 One of the things I think about when I reflect
20 upon the things that we've heard today is that what
21 we know, many of us know in the room, is that the
22 preponderance of evidence and research on high stakes
23 standardized testing shows us that we shouldn't be
24 doing what we're doing. Right, and that there is
25 this massive gap between all of that research and the

1
2 ways in which we are learning. And luckily one of
3 the things that I do know about Hunters School of Ed
4 is that we are not teaching teachers currently for
5 the most part, to do that. But then what we have is
6 teachers having this kind of like melancholy where
7 they in fact learn particular kinds of things about
8 pedagogy, but then going to school and don't get to
9 practice them. And that right, is one of the
10 problems.

11 If I had more time, right, this is not a hearing
12 focused on higher ed, I would talk about things like
13 student achievement and the issues tied to the GRE or
14 other things.

15 Among the different things that I think is under
16 focused on in some of the hearing material that I've
17 heard today is the problems and limitations with the
18 AP exam and I would want to see that sort of like
19 lifted up in some of the modes of analysis here.

20 Because this is a terrible test. All of the tests
21 are really terrible, and the pedagogy are terrible.

22 College professors which that we had time
23 machines on a regular basis, and we could go back and
24 fix the things in the past. Right, what we see are
25 fragmented modes of knowledge, we see things that are

1 identified in the literature as lower level learning
2 and that researchers identify those things as coming
3 from high stakes testing. We see students struggle
4 with argumentation with higher level modes of
5 analysis, with collaborative and extemporaneous work
6 and the verbal participation.
7

8 Right, the things that would make them successful
9 as college students, that they are not being prepared
10 for in regimes of high stakes testing. They are
11 taught to identify, regurgitate, toss away that
12 knowledge, rather than internalize those things as
13 concepts.

14 Those are the things that high stakes testing
15 emphasizes. Students do not have that kind of
16 relationship to knowledge assimilation and having
17 taught well, before 3rd through 8th grade testing came
18 in and now seeing students come in who have been part
19 of 3rd through 8th grade testing, I can tell you that
20 I see that difference.

21 We have to trust teachers, right, when we talk
22 about – one of the things that hasn't gotten raised
23 today that I just want to say, I am a teacher who
24 gets to have extraordinary freedom in assessment and
25 gets to do rigorous assessment.

1
2 One of the things that really, really bothers me
3 when parents say, well, what choice do we have. I
4 have to be able to know how my students are doing.
5 As if there are not modes of assessment that everyone
6 agrees are here right, are more rigorous and that we
7 are failing to communicate. Right, that those are
8 more rigorous forms of assessment, better modes of
9 assessment, rather than the fake modes of assessment
10 that we currently have. But that part of what it
11 means is trusting teachers, supporting teachers to do
12 that work and that's what we have to do.

13 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Next, sir.

14 DERMOT MIRY: Chairman Treyger and all the City
15 Council Members and members of the audience. My name
16 is Dermot Miry, I am an educator, I am a certified
17 school counselor and also a chapter leader.

18 As a member of the moment of Rank and File
19 Educators, the social justice caucus of the UFT, the
20 time is right to end high stakes testing period.

21 It must be stated that our caucus has been at the
22 forefront for years as allies of the opt out
23 movement, numerous social justice grants movements
24 and people of good moral conscience, educating
25

1
2 parents, communities about the evils of high stakes
3 testing.

4 The demands of testing have placed so many
5 stressors on our teachers, students, and their
6 families. Students are labeled bad; students are
7 labeled failing because of low test scores.

8 Schools that are closed are being truncated
9 because of low test scores. Personally, I have been
10 at PB meetings for many years fighting former
11 Chancellor Farina trying to make a difference.
12 Trying to make the argument that tests fail our
13 students but finally we have a listener in you.
14 Chairman Treyger, you have been an educator and law
15 maker, it makes a difference. We have crossed paths
16 so many times on a social justice trails in New York
17 City and I hope this is the one that will elevate the
18 voice of students.

19 Students do not even have a voice in a
20 conversation about testing which is really sad.
21 Middle, elementary school students, the amount of
22 time they have to be spending doing this testing,
23 it's too stressing.

24 Psychologically, there is research that shows
25 that over testing affects students' self-esteem when

1
2 they fail, and it takes years to reverse this
3 psychological harm. So, I am here today to speak of
4 that role as social justice advocate.

5 I must say my colleague confident and lieutenant
6 gubernatorial and green party candidate and a member
7 of [INAUDIBLE 5:36:43], she has testified before
8 congress about the effects of high stakes testing and
9 I urge you to watch this testimony and enter it into
10 the record as well. In 2015, she testified in front
11 of congress about effects, the harm done to our
12 students and the students across New York City and
13 around the country and I also encourage you Chairman
14 to enter the transcript in the record. The video
15 speaks of thousands of colleagues around the country.

16 In closing there is so much to say, but I must
17 reiterate that high stakes testing is profit driven.
18 It means children who have had a bad test day. It
19 does not take into account that Black and Brown
20 students especially are victims of systemic
21 oppression and racist motives in a testing frenzy to
22 elevate those who don't have the money to pay for
23 test prep and these test prep factories and then you
24 blame the have nots. I join with my ally Professor
25 Chen Haze from Leeman College and declare that in

1
2 testing they use artificial intelligence to have
3 students to the test and invest in teacher driven
4 authentic assessments for students.

5 So, and I'll just close by saying, just run the
6 testing corporations and the consultants out of town.
7 Thanks.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Thank you, thank you very
9 much, I appreciate that. Professor, just quick,
10 thank you for your great testimony.

11 DERMOT MIRY: I'm not a professor, I'm a teacher.

12 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: No, no, I know, and I
13 appreciate your testimony. I'm just asking the
14 professor a quick question from Hunter college.

15 I have some concerns as well about how they are
16 administering the APA exams. If you could share,
17 just kind of go deeper on your concerns with the AP
18 exam, I'm curious to kind of share notes.

19 PROFESSOR: Sure, I in fact, have been wanting to
20 - I tried to convince one of my colleagues here who
21 teaches US history to come. He feels that he
22 describes the AP history tests as having scorched his
23 field and I have wanted to write with him.

24 I mean, one of the things I think about a lot is
25 for example, in the way that I was describing

1
2 students relationships and concepts. Teaching like
3 political science and I teach antidiscrimination
4 work, is one of the things I do. I find for example
5 that students do not know or cannot remember when the
6 US Civil War is, and I sometimes will sort of assess
7 who is taking the AP history exam.

8 And so, I have students who have gotten a four or
9 a five on the test and cannot tell me when the Civil
10 War happened. And that is because of that sort of
11 disposability. Those same students can sometimes
12 explain to me what hegemony is and a critic of
13 hegemony.

14 So, part of what that shows - right, I mean, I
15 think you understand what that means about knowledge
16 and learning and about the flaws of - I mean I
17 remember from my own experience right, and my own AB
18 history class a very long time ago. Having my own AB
19 history tell me, if it were my child, I would not be
20 having my child sit in this class because I love
21 history.

22 Right, and I don't want this for you because I
23 love history and then I remember the feeling of going
24 to college and having history class and being like,
25

1
2 oh, okay, I get it now. And I mean I love history
3 also. I think you do to.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: You know, you're spot on,
5 just my quick reflection on this is that before I
6 left teaching to serve in the City Council, they had
7 asked me to start working on curriculum for an AP
8 government course and I just immediately realized and
9 recognized that it's not magic that happens in there,
10 they just give you a bunch of stuff to read and they
11 tell you to read it very fast and they move on very
12 quickly. And there is not time to just unpack and
13 debrief and have – and Cook mentioned a discussion to
14 kind of discuss concepts, big ideas. How does this
15 connect to the real world. It's just here is a bunch
16 of text, read it fast, move on, next.

17 That is not learning, that is not learning,
18 especially if we have students – I will close this
19 hearing also by sharing a personal story from my
20 teaching days.

21 I had a student in 12th grade, who 7:30 in the
22 morning class, that's tough. I had assigned a
23 government assignment. They had to respond to
24 Washington's Fair Well Address. It was common core
25 line, all the good rubric stuff, but the student

1
2 shared with me, Mr. Treyger, I'm going to try but I'd
3 rather not do this assignment. Can I instead bake
4 you a loaf a bread?

5 That was a fascinating request, one that I did
6 not expect, and I said to him, well, I'm always open
7 to trying bread, but why don't you give me a draft, I
8 will work with you on this. And he really did not
9 want to do the assignment and I kind of found out
10 that he also would sometimes come in late to the
11 class very tired.

12 I found out that he was working at a bakery
13 overnight. One of those bakeries that have nighttime
14 hours because they do delivery routes to restaurants
15 and diners around the city and he would work there to
16 support his single mom and younger siblings and he
17 would come to school, but he would come to school
18 very tired and late. And he brought in some of the
19 bread that he baked actually, and I have to - as
20 someone who likes to cook when I have time at home,
21 it was some of the best, if not the best I've ever
22 had in my life. And this is a child that we also
23 labeled as underperforming and struggling. He was
24 extraordinary. The question I ask myself is that how
25 was the student able to go through all these years to

1
2 get to the 12th grade and have difficulty for
3 example, forming like a thesis statement and topic
4 sentences in an essay.

5 Like, when did the system kind of stop and say,
6 wait a minute, let's help assist the child. And how
7 did we miss on all the amazing talents that he does
8 have?

9 So, that's what kind of drives me as well in
10 addition to what I observed. Even with folks pushing
11 gifted and talented. Look, every child in my view
12 has gifts and talents. There's no magical curriculum
13 there folks. It's not like some magical fairy dust
14 sprinkles in the class. It's just, they give you a
15 lot of stuff to read, move fast pace, move on to the
16 next.

17 We have to ask ourselves. I think I could speak
18 for folks in this room but does the system, does the
19 DOE actually value learning? We have to really keep
20 emphasizing that question.

21 UNIDENTIFIED: Obviously not.

22 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Right, they don't value
23 learning and that's the fundamental issue here.
24 There are other agenda's and interests at play. And
25 so, I really thank all of you. The educators and

1
2 also quick note, I am a proud CUNY graduate. I love
3 my CUNY experience. I love my professors who helped
4 me with pedagogy. I wish I had more pedagogy quite
5 frankly in college, sometimes it was more content,
6 but I am so grateful to our professors, educators, to
7 our parents, to our school communities. You give me
8 hope that we will effectuate change and I am with you
9 every step of the way and I think we can close by
10 just saying, all of our children are extraordinary,
11 let's build a system around them. And, thank you
12 very much and this hearing is adjourned. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date April 1, 2018