



The Public Advocate
for the City of New York

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Ms. Carmen Farina
Chancellor
N.Y.C Department of Education
52 Chambers St., New York, NY, 10007

Dear Chancellor Farina:

I am writing you to express my concern regarding the Department of Education recent proposal to consolidate P.S. 185 and P.S. 208. Currently these two schools are co-located on the public school campus at West 111th street between Fifth Ave and Lenox Ave. PS185 serves approximately 240 children in its four grades. The consolidation proposal calls for the school to ultimately enroll 500 or more students from Pre-K to grade 5. While my office understands that declining enrollment at P.S.208 denies students the robust education necessary for the transition into middle school and the possible need for consolidation, we question and are disappointed by the lack of a transparent process.

It is clear that DOE followed the Chancellors Reg A-190, a New York State law that gives the chancellor authority to recommend to the Panel on Education Policy to close or make significant changes to schools, but was not done was to engage parents and the community who will be most impacted by this decision. Once again DOE engaged in top down decision making and left the community out of the conversation. My office is left to try answer questions that DOE has not addressed. For instance why is it that highly valued principal, Ms. Green who has a Ph.D. and seniority being asked to leave? Will there be a new C 30 process? How were decisions made? The lack of a transparent dialogue by DOE perpetuates the community and the CEC belief that it is not supported and their trust has been violated.

I am recommending that the DOE meet with the community and the CEC as soon as possible. The PEP vote should be postponed until CEC3 and the parents from P.S 185 and P.S 208 build consensus and the DOE share their decision making process. Parent and community buy in are essential for a successful and thriving school.

I want to thank for your consideration regarding this matter and I am available to talk further.

Sincerely,

Letitia James
Public Advocate for the City of New York