

COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

154 West 93rd Street New York, New York 10025 - Room 204 Tel (212) 678-2782 Fax (212) 678-2804 Email: CEC3@schools.nyc.gov



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Council Members: Lisa Byrd Naveed Hasan Michael McCarthy Deirdre Garrett Scott | **Christine Loughlin**
Assietou Sow Eric Wright Teddy Tawil, Student Member | *District 3 Community Superintendent*

December 3, 2019

Honorable Shelley B. Mayer
New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building, Room 509
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Mayer,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your legislative work around the Foundation Aid formula and how our public schools are able to best serve the students of New York State.

As plaintiff participants of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, District 3's Community Education Council has been deeply involved and remains committed to resourcing our public schools sufficiently and equitably. The original court case demonstrated that this was not happening. Despite a second court case, many public schools remain improperly and inequitably resourced. The make-up of District 3 highlights these disparities in large part due to its district-wide diversity yet distinctly segregated schools.

Over the last five years, CEC3 and the District Superintendent worked tirelessly in our efforts to repair institutional injustice via enrollment practices. The Upper West Side elementary school rezoning and the Middle School Diversity Initiative represent community based leadership around the future of public schools in District 3. Evidence of progress takes time, but initial success is starting to shift populations and boost enrollment numbers at many affected schools.

Resulting enrollment boosts have improved funding, which in turn helps provide services and results in performance gains. The trajectory moves forward positively.

However, in the northern part of District 3, where disparities are most acutely felt, and where traditional schools compete with nearly a dozen charter schools, per student funding is simply not working. Though this major problem with funding is more centered around the larger, Fair Student Funding model, Foundation Aid's formula is linked via its overall goal of allocating money where it is most needed. However, the reality at many schools highlights the shortcomings of this complicated mechanism.

First and foremost is the formula itself, which has never been fully computed and funded, based on the legal case that mandated it. Regardless of specific nuances with the formula's variables, weights, and time tables, we urge you to comply with the legal Campaign for Fiscal Equity case.

Second, many changes are needed to ensure that the formula computes relevant allocations to public schools. The use of antiquated economic data, 2000 census information, and other factors are not the specialty of our stakeholder group. We trust that informed analysts and advisors are making recommendations that will help evolve this part of the budgetary process. We support this work and thank you for advancing this issue.

Additionally, school budgets are exceedingly confusing, so much so that few parent advocates have the capacity to speak intelligently about them. In New York City, where the official school district is subdivided in 36 smaller units, stakeholders are multiple steps removed from funding streams. This makes advocacy more challenging.

District 3's Contract for Excellence funding presentation represents an excellent example of how difficult it is to advocate for the funds that we know schools need. Last month, the NYC DOE presented CEC3 with its 2019-2020 funding streams, which include a summary of the total received by the city, \$531 million, \$183 million of which folds into the Fair Student Funding, leaving \$348 million for school allocations.



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This figure then is spliced among the concepts of “maintenance of effort,” “targeted allocations,” and “discretionary allocations.” A few slides later, the District 3 breakdown shows various amounts for the reduction of class size, teacher and principal quality initiatives, and “time on task,” which includes tutoring, summer school and after school.

Remembering that this Contracts for Excellence presentation outlines just a fraction of total funding for District 3’s 30 schools, CEC3 members attempted to make sense, for example, of how \$1.1 million was allocated for “dedicated instruction” not that we really even understand what that is. A separate line item exists for tutors, and District 3 received no funds for that.

A stakeholder analysis of the public funding site for any particular school deepens the frustration because the presented breakdowns for CEC3 are categorized all together in one C4E (Contracts for Excellence) allocation. The following table represents the allocations provided to District 3 schools:

PS242	\$80,981
PS/IS76	\$132,361
PS185	\$115,509
PS180	\$96,238
PS149	\$166,303
PS241	\$98,083
FDAII	\$60,338
Wadleigh	\$167,253
Mott Hall II	\$18,705
PS165	\$188,957
West Prep	\$39,349
PS145	\$176,229
West Side Col	\$25,214
PS75	\$105,838
PS163	\$67,632
Lafayette	\$55,574
Com Action	\$65,773
MSC	\$36,233
PS84	\$108,468
PS166	\$38,336
PS9	\$28,972
Center	\$17,242
PS87	\$38,947
Anderson	\$19,763

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Computer	\$22,895
DLMS	\$68,476
PS199	\$41,847
PS452	\$0
PS191	\$287,713
WESS	\$0
Total	\$2,369,229

Despite repeated requests to gain a better understanding of how these targeted funds are helping our schools most in need, no additional explanations are provided to the community. Operational budget teams work with school principals and superintendents on how to manage the funds that stream into the school but positively affecting the bottom line remains an elusive exercise.

In addition, CEC3 members and parent leaders remain concerned that Foundation Aid funds are not really getting to the schools that need the funds the most.

Finally, enrollment changes that take place during the school year are a significant factor in geographic areas that educate children with disproportionately high needs. Any funding algorithm that ties money to individual students, to enrollment numbers, must include provisions for the movement of such funds when students are forced to move from one public school to another. As an example, PS76 enrolled more than 20 students since the school year began, with six students transferring into the school just in the month of November. This Harlem D3 school serves 405 students. Ninety-five percent of the population qualifies for free and reduced price lunch. Twenty-six percent of students live in temporary housing or are homeless. Enrolling students who must transfer schools in November is a hardship. Funds are a necessity if we are to serve the needs of this community.

Thank you again for your leadership on this issue. We would be pleased to participate in additional community work in this important body of work.

Respectfully,

Community Education Council, District 3 (CEC3)