



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

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November 30, 2018

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
New York State Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Mayor Bill DeBlasio
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Governor Cuomo and Mayor De Blasio,

Congratulations on your collaborative effort for the Amazon headquarters decision. The magnitude of this development touches many facets of life for New Yorkers, both in our great city and around the state. As we get closer to the important 2019 legislative session in Albany, the children and families of the Upper West Side and Lower Harlem ask that you employ this same sense of collaboration and urgency on the following five important issues:

1. School Nursing Shortage
2. Charter Schools Moratorium
3. High School Admissions
4. Parent Involvement and Empowerment
5. Budget Sources and Transparency

1. School Nursing Shortage

New York City schools has reached a crisis point when it comes to the healthcare of our students. In District 3 alone, every day, a handful of schools will operate without a nurse onsite. At the October Community Education Council District 3 ("CEC3") Calendar meeting, DOH Assistant Commissioner Dr. Roger Platt presented the dire reality to parents, related to several factors. Most importantly, the vocation has a dearth of qualified professionals. There simply aren't enough nurses. Additionally, two separate unions, which means different pay scales, benefits, etc. translate to an unsustainable employment platform within the school system. Our children deserve to have schools staffed by full time nurses. Our government must therefore endeavor to fast-track the people we need, and we believe that a tuition-free nursing degree, coupled with a reciprocal 5-year employment commitment to our school system is a practical solution that would have an immediate impact.

2. Charter Schools Moratorium

The time has come to halt, completely, the encroachment of charter schools in our already saturated public school system. The data is clear; our nearly two decade long experiment in school choice and competition has resulted in no real gains in NAEP scores for NYC, the only consistent measure of academic skills that has been present throughout this time period. In District 3, we applaud the work so far of Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza and his team's approach to the Harlem/El Barrio project in upper Manhattan. This body of work that involves a variety of stakeholders has the best chance of moving forward if we further acknowledge the futility

of governing two completely separate school systems in Upper Manhattan, as well as the rest of the city. Any further expansion or creation of charter schools in District 3 will certainly doom the Harlem/El Barrio project to failure.

Zoom into a map of this small geographic space that spans districts 3-6, you will see more than 100 schools in a space that should really be home to about half that number, because half are charter schools. The SUNY Charter School Institute meets on December 8, and we urge you to instruct them to take no actions other than renewals of schools which are actually up for renewal in June 2019. We also ask that you begin to help the community work together, not as two separate school systems, as a requirement for all charter school renewals moving forward.

3. High School Admissions

A large percentage of District 3 students get into Specialized High Schools each year. One of the main reasons for this relates to the high caliber of students who attend District 3 middle schools. Another reason is that there are few rigorous college-ready high schools open to District 3 students due to District 2 priority. A variety of solutions are on the table, and CEC3 strongly believes that NYC students deserve a chance to excel at all levels of public education. We are open to policy changes that impact students around the city, provided that consequences do not negatively impact students who currently demonstrate academic excellence.

We believe that stakeholders must be included in the process of forming solutions and timelines. Providing ample seats to all college-bound 8th graders is of utmost importance, however, the proposed changes as they have been communicated so far will leave hundreds of District 3 families without viable options. In addition to eliminating the District 2 priority high schools, we ask that you either open a new high school in District 3 and/or increase the number of Specialized High Schools.

4. Parent Involvement and Empowerment

Parent leaders work hand in hand with school leaders, across the city and state. New Yorkers thrive on the impact that they make, whether it's at a high tech start up, Wall Street, a Broadway stage, the local garden, or their child's school. Public school parents make up a significant percentage of NYC's overall population, and those of us who invest heavily in volunteerism, do so because we know that so many needs go unmet. Whether the focus is equity, enrollment, testing, or resources, parent leaders of the Community Education Councils, President's Councils, Parent Associations, and School Leadership Teams take on jobs that require significant time and resources. As a result, many parents are simply unable to help. And as we see in our gatherings of leaders around the city, this is one of the key inequities that fosters the segregation of our city schools.

We'd like to propose that our city and state governments take the lead in our country to incentivize and reward the hard work of parents who contribute vital time and energy to the improvement of our civil discourse. A multitude of options could be considered: stipends for childcare, partnerships with service providers and cultural institutions, free and reduced price transportation, SUNY or CUNY college credits, etc. By working to help parents, New Yorkers will be better able to help future generations.

5. Budget Sources and Transparency

Last week, the Manhattan Field Support office presented the Contract for Excellent funding overview to District 3. Many parents, including a number of our council members, confuse this presentation with Fair Student Funding, and are generally over-burdened by the complexity of understanding money coming into our schools. A number of issues have heightened our awareness of the inefficiencies and obfuscation of financial flows to our schools. First, a new kindergarten teacher worked for nearly two months before he ever got paid due to a debate over whose budget would source his salary. Second, changes in the middle school admissions process in District 3 triggered the need for a variety of resource allocations which at present, remain elusive to parent and school leaders. NYC schools need a streamlined, transparent approach to operating our public educational institutions, and we believe that a project to overhaul this system must begin immediately.

CEC3 believes that local stakeholders must have a greater say in working with the New York City DOE to govern their own schools, and that such governance should come without significant interference from the political climate in Albany. The complexity of the structure has proven time and again to hinder, not help, the 1.1 million students of the local school system. We urge you to collaborate on these five important issues so

that we can do our work productively. New Yorkers took our values with us to the ballot box this fall, and we are thrilled to know that the 2019 legislative session will begin with strong leadership and a progressive agenda. Amazon chose New York City, at least in part, because it forged a partnership with both the city and the state. If we can do it for the richest company in the world, we have to find solutions for the biggest potential pipeline for their workforce.

As a Community Education Council that has been noted for its leadership, positive impact, and effectiveness, we would be pleased to assist moving forward. We thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Community Education Council, District 3

cc DOE Chancellor Richard A. Carranza
DOE District 3 Superintendent Ilene Altschul
DOE Executive Superintendent, Manhattan, Marisol Rosales
Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
NYSED Commissioner MaryEllen Elia
Board of Regents Chancellor Betty A Rosa
NYC Public Advocate Letitia James
NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer
NYS Regents Member, 1st District, Nan Eileen Mead
Panel for Educational Policy Member, Michael Kraft
City Council Member Helen Rosenthal
City Council Member Bill Perkins
City Council Member Mark Levine
State Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal
State Assembly Member Daniel J. O'Donnell
State Assembly Member Inez Dickens
State Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried
State Assembly Member Robert J. Rodriguez
State Senator Brian Benjamin
State Senator Marisol Alcantara
State Senator Brad Hoylman
State Senator Jose M. Serrano
State Senator-elect Robert Jackson
U.S. Congressman Jerrold L. Nadler
U.S. Congressman Adriano Espaillat
Community Board 7 Chair Roberta Semer
Community Board 10 Cicely Harris