



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

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October 5, 2017

Chancellor Carmen Fariña
New York City Department of Education
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10001

Dear Chancellor Fariña,

Thank you for convening New York City officials, school leaders and concerned parents with Mayor De Blasio on Monday, October 2nd in Harlem. New York City Public Schools safety has improved a great deal, but the Bronx incident last week tells us that we need to do better. We applaud the work the Department of Education is doing, but we ask that parent leaders be more involved in the development of standards of practice around the city.

We understand that multiple programs and measures were described as in place or are set to increase or launch as a result of the tragedy. However, we parent leaders are frequently not made aware of programs taking place until or unless significant incidents occur. As was requested by District 3 leader Susan Crowson, from the High School President’s Council, a reference guide of all on-going programs and measures would be helpful as stakeholders continue to grapple with the consequences of this tragic incident and the prevention of others in the future.

Parent awareness of the above programs and measures is a productive first step. Second, is to involve parent leaders in the development of standards of practice around the city. In your remarks, monthly safety meetings and school safety committees came up several times. As per Chancellor’s Regulation A-414, parent leaders, must be included, but routinely we are not. We ask for your continued support for the significance of these meetings and a renewed sense of urgency for parent leaders. We thank you for your commitment to include school safety on the agenda at the next ECC meeting on October 14 and look forward to a productive conversation on this topic moving forward.

Safety Data Reporting Compliance

We remain alarmed by the complete disregard for compliance of safety data submissions by charter schools. Charter schools are shielded from full transparency because they report incidents to their authorizers. However, this information is not translated into the VADIR data reporting document, which is the only data that parents are able to access.

Charter schools MUST be held to the same accountability standards as community public schools, and we ask that you initiate discussions with state officials and authorizers in terms of this frustration, particularly where it concerns the safety of students in co-located schools in District 3 and around New York City.

Safety Data Processing and Transparency

Finally, never has there been a better time to completely overhaul the processing and access to school safety data. Reporting of incidents on school grounds into the OORS system in real time is a vital step, but as was

against a school enrollment denominator that renders smaller schools more susceptible to the critical eye. In addition, we know that by the time an incident is categorized into VADIR, a soft plastic ball could be labeled an assault weapon. The data are simply not reliable. Moreover, the data are not available until a year after incidents take place.

This is simply unacceptable! Parents will be better partners in the city-wide effort to keep all of our children safe if they are educated about incidents and made aware of situations going on in their schools. We believe that online access to redacted data, via the DOE student portal - or perhaps a downloadable application - is a vehicle for transparency that is long overdue.

It was only two years ago that District 3 was mired in the confusion of poor incident reporting and a lack of oversight on data submissions in OORS, that led to the mistaken labeling of PS191 as a Persistently Dangerous School. As bright as the Riverside School's future now looks, it teetered at the edge of disaster in the fall of 2015. CEC3 members, along with myriad District 3 stakeholders, spent countless hours learning about these two reporting systems and called for full disclosure of data in our efforts to support PS191. We would be honored to assist as our schools open a new chapter in this area of school operations, so please do not hesitate to call on us if you desire our participation.

Thank you again for hosting this meeting, and we look forward to next steps as we all work to ensure that our children stay safe in our public schools.

Respectfully,

Community Education Council 3

cc: Mayor Bill DeBlasio
District 3 Superintendent Ilene Altschul
U.S. Congressman Adriano Espaillat
U.S. Congressman Jerry Nadler
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