



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

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January 22, 2018

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

Dear Chancellor Fariña,

Closing a beloved community school, or any portion of such school in one of New York City's neighborhoods is never an easy process. It shouldn't be an easy process. In the Harlem portion of Community School District 3, where Success Academy Charter Schools and other charters have bought their way into their "market share" via snazzy advertising, rigidity of behavioral standards, crisp uniforms and other optical illusions, public schools are fighting hard to survive. The Wadleigh Secondary School for The Performing Visual Arts is no exception.

Like other schools in the Department of Education's renewal school program, Wadleigh has struggled academically. Yet according to the renewal school benchmark portal, the Wadleigh middle school has met most of its markers for performance these last three years. Student attendance improved to 91.8%, within the benchmark range of 91.4-92.4%. Collaborative teaching marks reached 3.03, which meets the range set at 3.0-3.3. ELA proficiencies were also met according to the portal. Of the six benchmarks listed on the portal, Wadleigh met four of them, 67%, which is exactly the achievement level referenced by Superintendent Altschul as the required progress to remain in the renewal school program.

While the announcement to truncate its middle school and make Wadleigh a competitive performing arts high school appeals to decision makers at the New York City Department of Education, the District 3 superintendent, and a handful of elected officials, this decision does not represent the best interests of the Harlem community, parents at Wadleigh, and Community Education Council District 3.

For the additional reasons listed below and the unanswered questions attached, CEC3 calls on the Department of Education to immediately suspend this proposal for consideration for at least one year so that Wadleigh can continue to work towards improving academic standards and enrollment at the school, so that the Wadleigh community and Harlem parents can begin to heal, and so that CEC3 can work on building trust with the parents of our district who need the most support.

First, holding a secret meeting with a handful of chosen parents, asking them to keep the conversation to themselves, then referencing this contact point as engagement is NOT "community engagement." However, this is exactly the type of behavior that is all too common among school communities in District 3 where segregation and charter encroachment remains most persistent.

Everyone involved in the decision to add the Wadleigh middle school to the list of closures knows that community engagement did not occur before the proposal announcement. In June, the District 3 superintendent met one time with the Wadleigh SLT. According to parents in the room, she noted that the

closure was “just an idea.” From that meeting in June until late October, the “idea” of truncating the middle school was not mentioned to the Wadleigh community nor to members of CEC3. In the fall, frustrated parents, who were hearing rumors of a truncation, took it upon themselves to set up a meeting with the District 3 renewal schools representative. Much effort was spent trying to prevent a CEC liaison from attending this meeting (November 10) and, during the meeting, district staff professed to know nothing of the rumors of the truncation.

Moreover, during multiple CEC3 meetings in the fall, the District 3 superintendent indicated that the Wadleigh middle school might be considered for truncation for 2019, but that no such significant change proposal was imminent. And on December 18, 2017, in a meeting with the Wadleigh middle school students - not their parents - the truth was revealed. The Wadleigh community has been told that the District 3 superintendent fought the decision. Clearly she did not fight very hard. [In fact, at a recent CEC3 meeting, the District 3 superintendent voiced her support for the truncation.]

Second, there is clear evidence that Wadleigh IS improving, as per the benchmark metrics described at the beginning of this letter. Other performance outcomes are notable as well, despite the fact that the Department of Education failed to provide much needed substantive resources that would improve student outcomes. Following this letter is a table of unanswered questions that highlight such student outcomes, accountability and oversight, as well as a financial summary of Wadleigh’s funding.

Lastly, on Friday, January 12, 2018, an additional injustice was handed to the hard-working Wadleigh community, which is trying to save the middle school. The Department of Education has decided to delay the truncation vote of the Panel for Education Policy until the March 21 meeting. This untimely delay means that the Wadleigh community will be cast into further confusion about its future. Such a decision to delay the vote, means that, among other things, the already scheduled and promoted Joint Public Hearing won’t take place on February 12th, curtailing the momentum and passion so clearly on display at the meeting on January 10th. In addition, yet another month will pass for students and parents to figure out where they will be going to school next year. This delay is unacceptable, disrespectful, destructive, and abusive.

Before this course of engagement causes any more damage to the Harlem community, CEC3 calls upon the Department of Education to suspend, for at least one year, the plans to truncate the Wadleigh middle school and to work closely with CEC3 and the Wadleigh community to develop a plan for the Wadleigh Secondary School for Performing Visual Arts to “rise up” from the Renewal School program. Changes in leadership and programming may be needed, and we welcome the effort to bring in outside entities for assistance. However, this is NOT the time to amputate a major source of enrollment for the high school. Cultivating a performing arts high school at Wadleigh is already underway - let’s work together to make it happen.

Sincerely,

Community Education Council 3

CC: Mayor Bill DeBlasio
U.S. Congressman Adriano Espaillat
Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, New York State Education Department
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Regents Vice Chancellor T. Andrew Brown
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Michael Mulgrew, United Federation of Teachers
District 3 Superintendent Ilene Altschul
Daisy Fontanez, Principal, Wadleigh Secondary School of Performing Visual Arts
Gigs Taylor-Stephenson, President, Wadleigh Parent Association
Vanessa Leung, Panel for Educational Policy
Michael Kraft, Panel for Educational Policy
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Gary Linnen, Panel for Educational Policy
Stephanie Soto, Panel for Educational Policy
Ben Shuldiner, Panel for Educational Policy
D. Miguelina Zorilla-Aristy, Panel for Educational Policy

Unanswered Questions about Wadleigh and the Closure of Its Middle School Grades

Note: this list has been accumulating since December 18, 2017 with NO response from the Superintendent other than to reference that “central” is planning to create an FAQ. The left column refers to general topic areas: DOE Accountability, Wadleigh resources, student outcomes, enrollment, truncation announcement, transition plan, and community engagement.

Type	Question/Concern
DOE Accountability	Who is responsible for the student outcome improvements on tests? State test scores denote 0 proficient, yet according to the 2016-17 Quality Review, 86% have passing grades in their core subjects. Their "comparison group" ranks with 82% Per the QR, the *Comparison Group is made up of students from other schools across the city who were the most similar to the students at this school, based on their incoming test scores, disability status, English Language Learner status, economic need, and over-age status How can this be explained?
DOE Accountability	At the Jan 17, 2018 District Leadership Team meeting, Superintendent Altschul announced that Renewal Schools need to meet 67% of their benchmarks. When asked for more detail about this, she explained that they must meet FOUR of their SIX benchmarks. The Wadleigh middle school met this standard and PS149 (the other Renewal School in District 3) did NOT. Why is Wadleigh being punished but PS149 gets another year to improve?
DOE Accountability	The Renewal School website includes a list of FIVE Key Elements of the Plan, the fifth stating that the program is, “bringing increased oversight and accountability including strict goals and clear consequences for schools that do not meet them.” Where, when and how were the consequences conveyed to members of the Wadleigh community? They had NOT been conveyed to the CEC3 until a discussion at the Jan 17, 2018 CEC3 meeting about reaching 67% of benchmarks.
DOE Accountability	After learning about the existence of the benchmark pages for Renewal Schools, CEC3 asked Wadleigh PTA President if these data had been shared with her, and they had not. Why does the Wadleigh community NOT have information related to their student performance outcomes and consequences?
DOE Accountability	According to the truncation announcement, the DOE is truncating the middle school at Wadleigh because of its low math test scores. However, there is NO benchmark associated with math performance. In addition, there are NO math funding allocations. If the closure is derived from math data, why was this school not given a math marker and why no funds for math performance?
DOE Accountability	Who will explain the inappropriate behavior or breaches of protocol by DOE employees. We heard first-hand accounts of families who had been told at the Enrollment Center that they should not enroll in Wadleigh because it was a "bad" or "terrible" school. These are families that persisted, and enrolled their children despite the deliberate attempt to discourage them. How many did NOT choose to enroll when they realized the DOE did not support this school? Whether this employee did this on his own, or was directed by someone else. It should disqualify "low enrollment" as a reason for closing the school, especially given the fact that a DOE employee was disciplined for this behavior.
DOE Accountability	When was Wadleigh leadership notified that Wadleigh MS might be truncated and what metrics was DOE using to evaluate the truncation?

DOE Accountability	The expansion of Success Academy Harlem 4 will allow it to expand to high school grades. Of course they want to remain in the building that they share with Wadleigh. What assurances will the DOE offer that this will not happen?
DOE Accountability	Can the District 3 Office move to Harlem/Wadleigh? so that Harlem schools be given the level of attention that they need to make substantial improvements in the next five years.
DOE Accountability	A lot of questions have arisen in looking at Wadleigh funding and expenses since joining the Renewal Schools program (see Wadleigh Resources questions below). Who should be held accountable for decisions made or not made at this school?
DOE Accountability	Both Assistant Principals resigned after the 2015-2016 year, and the entire math department resigned after the 2015-2016 year. What information can be given about these incidents?
Wadleigh Resources	Why did Wadleigh not hire a full time librarian after it's long-time librarian retired?
Wadleigh Resources	What happened to the math team for the middle school that caused them to all leave the school at the end of the 2015-16 year?
Wadleigh Resources	What is the difference between a math teacher and a math coach?
Wadleigh Resources	In FY's 2015-2017, there appear to be 5 math (4 gen ed and 1 ICT) teachers but it is not clear how many teach middle school grades. How many service 6-8 grade?
Wadleigh Resources	The Galaxy funding reports detail NO Renewal School funding for math coaching. Please explain in detail who was hired to help middle schoolers in math and how many hours they spent at the school each week last school year.
Wadleigh Resources	Do coaches refer to persons that were working directly with students, or to professional development for teachers? Please document who they were, the time periods and hours they were in place. Since the renewal plan is for 3 years, please reference dates where personnel, courses, or interventions were taken over these three years in order to move math proficiency in the right direction. In previous meetings, parents have expressed that there was NOT consistency of instruction in the math department, and that almost the entire department left at one point. Hiring one "master math instructor", no matter how wonderful they are, cannot count as a consistent 3-year plan to bring up math scores. Since a major reason for truncation is the lack of proficiency shown in math and English scores, it is extremely important to make all the renewal measures public, in detail.
Wadleigh Resources	Wadleigh expenses show alterations in the leadership structure that include the loss of one Assistant Principal from FY 2015 to 2016 and the addition of a Principal salary in FY 2017. Is there a second Principal? If so, who is this person?
Wadleigh Resources	Wadleigh employed a dean and a parent coordinator as late as FY 2015 but the dean position has not been filled since that year. Why?
Wadleigh Resources	Wadleigh expenses show 6 teachers employed in the math department for FY's 2015, 2016, and 2017 with an increase to 10 members of this team for FY 2018. Why did this staffing increase not happen earlier if math performance was a high priority?
Wadleigh Resources	Wadleigh's OTPS (operational) expenses ballooned from \$264K in FY 2015 to \$558K in FY2017, a 110% increase. With a dwindling enrollment, why did basic expenses increase so much?
Renewal School Funding	D3 Budget rep Matthew Manner attended the October 25, 2017 meeting and presented that Renewal Schools receive the majority of Contract for Excellence Funds. However, in D3, approx 10% of district funds were sent to our two renewal schools. Why is this?

Renewal School Funding	On the budget information that follows, renewal funding lines are bolded. These line items need to be explained in detail as to how they relate to specific goals for achievement in math, English and other areas. For example, one of the bold line items reads "RS IEP Para". Our understanding is that a Para is assigned due to IEP requirements for a particular child, and funding for that service is mandated by the special education reform laws. If a Para is part of an IEP, it would be funded whether or not this school is in Renewal Status---how is any student's Para counted as renewal funding?
Student Outcomes	Wadleigh was announced as successfully coming off of the NYSED Priority List for academic performance. Coupled with its 86% passing Core Courses standard, it seems that Wadleigh is making improvements, so why punish it now?
Student Outcomes	How many students who graduated from Wadleigh to attend college. Is there anyway to show a correlation between the students who graduated from Wadleigh middle school and high school who then went on to college. When are students turning their grades around to get into college. Is it possible that some of the students are benefiting from the smaller learning community and the difference in results is not recognized until they are in high school?
Student Outcomes	According to NYSED, Wadleigh 8th grader performance on the state science tests include 0% level 1's, 33% level 2's, 67% level 3's and 0% level 4's. Why is this data not highlighted as a success story for the school? The DOE story about the middle school has cruelly subjected children to accusations of stupidity because of their math test scores, when clearly they can achieve.
Enrollment	In June 2017, the parent coordinator confirmed that there were 57 incoming 6th graders. The final class number settled at 37 students and multiple students indicated that they were steered to other schools. Why?
Enrollment	Despite the known information that students interested in Wadleigh were steered away from Wadleigh, the current 6th grade class represents an increase from the 2016-17 year of 85% growth. How is this not an applicable variable for allowing Wadleigh to keep moving forward?
Enrollment	If truncations, mergers and closures are based on enrollment numbers why has the DOE not assisted the school with marketing?
Enrollment	The DOE expressed interest in Wadleigh growing as a high school, but middle school grades feed the school. How else would the high school grow when the DOE doesn't help promote any school?
Enrollment	Superintendent indicated to CEC members that Wadleigh 6th graders do not audition. Based on the comments from the 6th graders at the community meeting, auditions are definitely held. In fact, auditions are a major part of their recruiting experience. Why does the Superintendent not know this?
Enrollment	At the CEC3 meeting on Jan 17, 2018, Superintendent Altschul publicly acknowledged that a DOE employee was "disciplined" for deliberately steering students away from Wadleigh. Why was the DOE not trying to bolster Wadleigh's enrollment, especially given the importance that enrollment played in the decision to close the middle school?
Truncation Announcement	According to the Superintendent, the DOE instructed her to wait until the day of the announcement, Dec 18, to inform CEC3 and parents at Wadleigh. The Principal was informed the day before, and the Superintendent was informed on Dec 13. Students were informed first. A letter was sent home and phone calls were made to parents at night on Dec 18. The SLT was NOT informed ahead of the announcement.

Truncation Announcement	Why did the PEP decision get pushed to March 21, just a few weeks from middle school acceptance letters going out? What information has been provided to the Wadleigh community about this PEP delay? When will the new public hearing be scheduled?
Truncation Announcement	Parents, parent leaders and the community all agree that the children should NOT have been notified first "because they could read the letter that was being sent home". A letter could have been mailed home with the proposal and a meeting date for parent questions. SLT and PTA leaders could have been contacted to determine the best way to inform parents first, and then children. Both of these items bring the professionalism and protocol of DOE employees into question, should warrant a shakeup and investigation, and should disqualify this proposal from a vote. The DOE needs to be accountable to those it is supposed to serve.
Transition Plan	Where would the current 6th and 7th graders go if the PEP votes to truncate the school?
Transition Plan	What specific resources will students at Wadleigh receive between now and August so when they begin at the new school, they succeed?
Community Engagement	How many times did the Superintendent visit Wadleigh during the years of the Renewal Program? What happens during these visits? Is a report submitted to the Renewal Schools office and/or the Superintendent's supervisor? If so, how can we see these reports?
Community Engagement	An SLT member reported at the 1/10 meeting that the Superintendent attended a meeting in June to discuss the middle school truncation. This meeting was NOT attended by a CEC3 member nor reported to the council. Why? What exactly was discussed at this meeting? Why were the attendees asked to keep this part of the discussion secret?
Community Engagement	At the PS185/208 community meeting, the Superintendent indicated the "community meeting" was for questions only. It was explained that the difference is that the community meeting is where questions were asked and that a hearing is when public comment was offered. Some PS208 students and community members were prohibited from speaking because of this distinction. Why did the 1/10 Wadleigh community meeting format change?
Community Engagement	On Nov 13, a member of the District 3 staff sent an email with the subject: Wadleigh closure in relation to a meeting that had been called at Wadleigh on Nov 10. The CEC3 liaison attended this meeting at the request of the PTA President and District staff indicated to the parents in the room that they did not know of any plan to truncate or close Wadleigh. Why were parents misinformed?

Galaxy Funding for Wadleigh for the last four years. If nearly \$600 million was spent on fewer than 100 schools, why was Wadleigh awarded approximately \$2.2 million? Fundamental math divides \$600 million into approximately \$6 million per school over the life of the program.

Allocation Category	FY 2018	FY 2017	FY 2016	FY 2015
21st Century 62		64,532	71,198	72,095
AIDP	64,200	64,200	64,200	60,000
AIDP Renewal				6,000
Contract for Excellence FY 09 HS	202,001	202,001	202,001	202,001
TL 09 C4E CTT HS				35,869
Funds Pub Schl 30 - NYC Mentoring Program		829		
IDEA RS IEP Para	33,091	25,787	12,492	14,164
NYS STVP General Voucher				15,308
NYS STVP Software Voucher				15,130
OASAS Sub Abuse OTPS	500	500	1,500	
PSAL Snack and Bev Sponsor 80160	525			525
Priority/Focus Parent Engagement Schools			2,379	2,898
SAPIS Renewal Schools	82,483	75,977	42,828	
Self Sustaining 60			525	
Rollover TI Cor 91 PS Pch Svc Loc Trvl				13,072
Rollover TI Correct 91 Supp and Matls				900
Sequester Aid IDEA RS IEP Paras	3,536	4,355	1,335	2,833
Sequester/2010 Census Title I SWP	7,663	8,975	10,305	17,193
Title I 1003a Summer	16,979	39,036	16,979	
Title I Priority/Focus SWP	51,972	65,833	89,503	107,848

Title I Priority/Focus SWP Parent Education	14,484	17,487		
Title I Renewal School Teacher Leadership		38,275		
Title I SWP	178,513	213,682	237,894	289,814
Title I SWP Parent Involvement	1,803	2,158		
Title I SWP Translation Services	1,829	1,929	1,973	2,184
Title III LEP				11,200
TL 09 C4E CTT HS	35,541	35,643	35,711	
TL Arts Studio HS		4,000	6,000	6,000
TL Blueprint Assistance HS	294,261	281,311	282,650	313,822
TL CB Per Session Per Diem Prep				5,815
TL CFES RIS Itinerant (Partial Funding)				14,070
TL Children First Network Support HS				16,000
TL CB School Staff	37,940	26,213	23,575	
TL CFES Renewal Assistant Principals			120,730	24,496
TL CFES Open Schools Support Staff	43,882			
TL CFES RS Open Schools IEP Paras	20,363			
TL City Council Member Items		5,000	5,000	6,000
TL Computer Maintenance HS	17,056	12,589	9,839	10,234
TL Core Curriculum Support	143	286	1,238	114
TL Data Specialist		1,844	1,757	1,657
TL E&E Advanced Placement for All HS	29,415	7,773		

TL E&E AP for All Support HS	17,401			
TL Fair Student Funding HS	2,505,176	2,705,366	2,650,058	2,811,983
TL FSF Post-IEP Support HS		500		1,000
TL Funds Over Formula HS	137,646	166,564	166,564	166,564
TL High School Screened Arts Program	1,464	4,944	3,792	3,160
TL MOSL	1,500		1,500	1,500
TL Network Support Fees				34,000
TL NYSTL Hardware HS				4,959
TL NYC Mentoring OTPS	150	100		
TL NYC Mentoring PS	2,400	2,300		
TL NYSTL Library Books HS	1,808	2,178	2,583	3,112
TL NYSTL Software HS		2,150		4,424
TL NYSTL Textbooks HS	16,456	19,037	5,865	27,592
TL One-Time Allocations HS			164	
TL OTPS for PSAL HS	795	795	795	832
TL Parent Coordinator HS	41,792	41,579	40,402	39,792
TL Parent Coordinator OTPS HS	500	500	500	500
TL Periodic Assessment		1,500		
TL Regents Distributed Scoring				417
TL Renewal ELT HS	196,317	176,733	170,437	
TL Sabbaticals				66,185
TL SE Transitional Funding HS				45,219
TL RS IEP Para	54,752	75,662	23,397	20,330

TL RS IEP Teacher HS	84,574	80,646	75,996	74,540
TL RS Mandated Counseling Shared	56,385	74,700	79,990	85,653
TL RS Mandated Speech Shared	90,166	80,394	78,378	73,065
TL RS Occupational Therapist PS Shared	72,148	68,920	67,584	62,282
TL RS Speech Sixth Period Coverage	5,707	4,596		
TL Strong Schools Strong Communities HS	16,000	16,000	16,000	
TL Summer in the City Renewal School HS	26,558	45	8,484	
TL Summer in the City Shared	788	918		1,297
TL Temporary Shortfall 6 pd Shortage Coverage		24,848		
TL Temporary Shortfall Per Diem	37,069	30,000	30,000	
TL Temporary Shortfall Per Session-OTPS	118,138	60,000	69,000	
TL Temporary Shortfall Teachers	165,692	371,509	296,696	
TL Time and Attendance HS			875	1,531
TL Translation Services	1,074	1,133	1,151	716
TL Vision for School Improvement	19,097	19,097	18,796	
Total	4,809,733	5,232,929	5,050,619	4,797,895
Renewal Funding (bolded)	669,090	499,215	667,824	346,366
Renewal Funding (bolded) Total	2,182,495			