



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

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MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday June 27, 2016, 10 am

PS 242, 134 West 122nd Street

Attendance: Ninty-six (96) people, as per sign-in. Additionally there were four D3 principals, three D3 staff members including Superintendent Altschul, four CEC 3 members and three members of the media.

Introductory remarks were provided by Kristen Berger, CEC 3 Middle School Committee Chair.

The chair noted that along with interest in middle school diversity the CEC Middle School committee is currently working with district administration and school parent coordinators/guidance counselors to coordinate the publication of tour dates for middle schools during the fall of 2016 for the 2017-18 admissions cycle.

Overview of Middle School target concept was provided by District Superintendent Ilene Altschul.

The Superintendent reiterated that this idea is still very early in its formation. The Superintendent is working with the D3 Principal’s Diversity Taskforce and the Office of Student Enrollment to develop policy to provide greater diversity in District 3 middle schools ensuring greater equity and access for students across the district.

The Principal’s Diversity Taskforce and Superintendent are exploring implementing a target for students with Low Economic Status (LES) for all district three middle schools. The superintendent has been holding a principals diversity taskforce of between 10-16 principals on a regular basis since the New Year. They have been discussing a thirty percent LES target but await further data to finalize a target percentage. They are currently asking for data on: the percentage of LES students who apply to each school, the percentage that are accepted and the percentage that actually enroll. During the application process to date, principals have not had access to this data and it is possible that that may be one of the barriers to creating diverse schools.

All applicants would still go through the same screening process to apply to individual middle schools.

There is no hard date yet for the implementation of such targets but if they are to be implemented for the 2017-18 school year the superintendent recognizes the need to get the information out to applicants and families in time for the Middle School fair (September 27, 2016). The fair date has been set by the Middle Schools Admissions Office.

The Superintendent noted that in response to the last Middle School Committee meeting the district has moved the Middle Schools Principals Forum to September 20, 2016 so that it occurs ahead of the Middle School Fair.

The superintendent clarified that the potential low economic status (LES) target is independent of the Special Education target that was put in place during the last admissions cycle (for 2016-17 school year admissions). The Special Education target was implemented city-wide and each district put in targets that reflect the district average. In the case of District 3, it is a nineteen (19) percent target for students with a disability at all middle schools. The students that qualify as Special Education in this case are students with an IEP who are not in a general education setting receiving related services.

The superintendent listened to parents and community members and welcomes input.

PARENT FEEDBACK

Twenty-one (21) parents spoke in two minute public comment slots. All but two speakers were parents with children at: PS9, PS 87, PS 166 and PS 199.

There was general support for addressing diversity in district middle schools. There was consensus in recognizing the lack of diversity in current middle schools and the benefits of greater diversity for all students. Although the goal of the taskforce was considered laudable parents had many questions about implementation and potential unintended consequences.

Areas of concern:

- **Timing of implementation.** Many parents felt that the current idea is being rushed into practice. Parents see a need for more time to fine tune the target idea and give parents more opportunity to participate in the decision making process.
- **Greater information.** Many parents felt the need for far more information about potential use of targets or other mechanisms to increase diversity in district schools.
- **Concern about how schools will meet the needs of a more academically diverse student population.** How can schools ensure that students have the academic supports they need whilst making sure all students are academically challenged?
- **Concern about limiting seats at most sought after schools.** A number of parents raised concern that there will be less seats available to students who are not Low Economic Status at the most sought after schools in the district.

- **Impacts on admission standards.** There is a need for more information as to how admissions standards will be applied to all applicants and concern that targets may lower admissions standards at some schools.
- **Middle School v Elementary School.** Parents raised concern that the lack of diversity in district middle schools reflects the lack of diversity and equitable academic background in district elementary schools. Some concluded that it would be more appropriate to address diversity at the elementary school level first.

Community Education Council 3 thanks PS 242 and principal Desjardin for hosting this meeting.

Further comment or concern can be submitted to the Community Education Council,
CEC3@schools.nyc.gov