



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

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February 15, 2019

Mr. Joseph Belluck
Member of the Board of Trustees
Chairman of the Charter School Committee
The State University of New York
State University Plaza
353 Broadway
Albany, NY 12246

Dear Mr. Belluck,

The members of Community Education Council, District 3 ("CEC 3"), which represents Manhattan's Upper West Side and lower Harlem ("District 3"), respectfully request that you reject KIPP Beyond Charter School's ("KIPP") application to establish a 5th – 8th grade charter middle school in District 3. Approval of this application would directly undermine two initiatives recently approved by CEC 3 after a lengthy and thoughtful stakeholder engagement process that informed our policy analysis, deliberation, and final determination of a course of action most beneficial to our students and families in our mission to provide equitable educational opportunities in our district: District 3's Middle School Plan, and the New York City Department of Education's ("NY DOE") Harlem/El Barrio Visioning Project. Furthermore, to protect the stability of enrollment at all our current schools, members of CEC 3 call for a moratorium on the expansion, extension or creation of any new charter schools into District 3 until such time as the results of District 3's new middle school admissions program and the NY DOE's Harlem/El Barrio Visioning Project have completed each of their stated objectives.

District 3's Middle School Plan

The first cohort of students participating in District 3's Middle School Plan just completed their applications and will be matriculating to District 3 middle schools in September 2019. Roughly three years ago, CEC 3 recognized the necessity to discuss the lack of diversity at many of District 3's middle schools. The Middle School Committee of CEC 3 worked tirelessly to engage District 3 stakeholders and held countless meetings to discuss proposals to reinvent the middle school admissions process in District 3. In 2018, the NY DOE enacted a middle school admissions plan at the recommendation of CEC 3 which is meant to address the lack of diversity at District 3 Middle Schools (the "D3 Middle School Plan"). In essence, each middle school will be required to provide twenty-five percent of its offers to children that qualify for free or reduced price lunch and are academically lower-performing.

CEC 3 would like to point out some troubling aspects of KIPP's application – performance statistics and other data is misrepresented, and does not accurately reflect a true need for an additional middle school in our district. CEC 3's analysis of marketing materials presented to District 3 families shows that the data KIPP includes regarding school integration and the achievement gap in District 3 is outdated, accumulated before the start of the D3 Middle School Plan. Furthermore, the majority of District 3 middle schools remain under-enrolled and the D3 Middle School Plan will provide for a rebalancing of enrollment at these schools. The KIPP proposal submitted to the SUNY Charter School Institute presents itself as a modest-sized school of

451 students with a negligible impact on D3 schools. However, in the D3 middle school landscape, this is a significant size – of the existing 17 schools that serve Middle School grades, only one has a current enrollment larger than that: MS 54 at 869 Students. Mott Hall II (429 Students) and Computer School (403 Students) are significantly smaller, and currently rank at 2nd and 3rd in terms of enrollment

KIPP's application also indicates that their proposed middle school will intake students starting at 5th grade, with an expected enrollment of 95. With the exception of the Center School, no middle schools in District 3 have 5th grade enrollment. At the outset, Center School's enrollment of about 60 students in the 5th grade may seem to be a modest number. However, it is a significant concern for our elementary school leadership, presenting challenges in effective programming and sustainability. More than doubling the number of students leaving our elementary schools after 4th grade would create a destabilizing effect on the entire district.

NY DOE Harlem/El Barrio Visioning Project

In addition to the D3 Middle School Plan, the New York City Department of Education has recently proposed its Harlem/El Barrio Visioning Project. One of the stated goals of this project is to make sure that all public school students in the Harlem and El Barrio neighborhoods have equitable access to educational opportunities. In order to fully measure the quality of educational opportunities that students in these neighborhoods are receiving, the Department of Education must provide that the current status not be changed or impacted by the addition of any new schools. These communities need to be able to fairly assess what resources are available to help improve their neighborhood public schools without the added burden of having resources allocated to additional charter schools.

At the present time, the Harlem portion of District 3 ("District 3 Harlem") already contains 7 charter schools and 6 public elementary schools all crammed into the equivalent of approximately 2 school zones located on the Upper West Side. In this small geographic region, District 3 Harlem currently has 12 schools that are enrolling kindergarten children. As a result, according to DOE retention data from 2016, more than 300 kindergarten students residing in District 3 Harlem were enrolled in 61 different schools. This is simply unacceptable. The oversaturation of available seats in District 3 Harlem makes it impossible to sufficiently enroll students in the public schools in order to allow them to thrive and be successful. D3 Harlem public schools simply cannot survive if more charter schools are allowed to open or expand in District 3. Furthermore, District 3 middle schools will be negatively impacted if KIPP or any new charter middle school is approved at this time.

The members of CEC 3, parents and advocates for public education in District 3, believe that all efforts must be made to ensure that the expansion, creation or extension of any charter school must be scrutinized to prevent undue burden on long-standing public schools. As such, CEC 3 renews its call for a moratorium on the extension, expansion or creation of any charter school in District 3 so that the D3 Middle School Plan and Harlem/El Barrio Visioning Project have an opportunity to succeed, and we request that you reject KIPP Beyond Charter School's application to establish a 5th – 8th grader charter middle school in District 3.

Respectfully,
Members of the Community Education Council for District 3

CC: Governor Andrew Cuomo
Mayor Bill DeBlasio
DOE Chancellor Richard A. Carranza
DOE Executive Superintendent, Manhattan, Marisol Rosales
DOE District 3 Superintendent Ilene Altschul
Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
NYSED Commissioner MaryEllen Elia
Board of Regents Chancellor Betty A Rosa

NYC Acting Public Advocate Corey Johnson
NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer
NYS Regents Member, 1st District, Nan Eileen Mead
Panel for Educational Policy Member, Michael Kraft
City Council Member Mark Trayger, Chair, Committee on Education
City Council Member Helen Rosenthal
City Council Member Bill Perkins
City Council Member Mark Levine
State Assembly Member Michael Benedetto, Chair, Standing Committee on Education
State Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal
State Assembly Member Daniel J. O'Donnell
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