

COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3

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Ilene Altschul District 3 Community Superintendent

COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 3 Joint CSD3 Presidents' Council / CEC3 Calendar Meeting (6:30 PM) Wednesday, March 30th, 2016

PS 185 / PS 208

(21 West 111th Street between 5th and Lenox Avenues)

Minutes

(Unanimously Approved by the Council Members present (8-0) at the May 25, 2016 Calendar Meeting)

Meeting Called to Order - 6:30 pm

Roll Call

Present: Kristen Berger, Joe Fiordaliso, Zoe Foundotos, Noah Gotbaum, PJ Joshi, Daniel Katz, Lucas Liu, Nan Mead, Vincent Orgera, Kimberly Watkins (10). A quorum was present **Excused Absence:** Theresa Hammonds

DOE Staff: Ilene Altschul, D 3 Superintendent; DJ Sheppard, D 3 Family Advocate

***** Approval of Minutes

1. February 24th, 2016 Calendar Meeting Minutes approved as amended by consensus of all those present at time

Superintendent's Report – Ilene Altschul, District 3 Superintendent

- i. Daisy Fontanez has been appointed as principal at M415 Wadleigh effective March 16th
- ii. 80% of all visits have been completed. 67/83 visits have been competed by Ms. Altschul and Cynthia Dickman, Assistant Superintendent PLF.
- iii. Kindergarten offers were mailed on March 14th and emailed on March 15th
- iv. Ms. Altschul reported that she met with the Principal Diversity Task Force approximately twice. 15 principals attended engaging on discussions on ways to increase diversity in elementary and middle schools. Purpose is to engage in strategies they might want to employ in increasing diversity in middle and elementary schools in the district.

CSD3 Presidents' Council Meeting (agenda on file)

Kajsa Reaves and Kerri Keiger, Co-Presidents, reporting

- i. Presidents' Council Co-President Kajsa Reaves, chaired: A quorum was not present. Meeting agenda was tabled.
- ii. Presidents' Council Treasurer Ira Mitchnick: Plea for dues to Presidents' Council. Requests PC Co-President K Keiger talk to liaison schools regarding the PC request for dues letter.
 - iii. Urge schools to hold PTA Spring elections. If delayed until fall, the DOE will run them because, in effect, the PTA no longer exists. PTA elections should be

If you have any questions, please call Karen Butler at the CEC 3 office @ 212-678-2782 or email CEC3 at CEC3@schools.nyc.gov

Anyone wishing to speak during the Public Comment Portion of the Calendar Meeting must sign in by 8:00pm.

scheduled first week of June to ensure time to handle any grievances that may come up

- a. There is an Election Forum April 19th, 9:30 AM at JOA
- iv. PC Member Jimmie Walker Title 1 Update: Copies of Title 1 Update, Section 1118 are available.

Monthly Topic: NYS Assessments (agenda on file)

Moderator: Daniel Katz, CEC3 Member

Panel Introduction and brief position statement on NYS testing and role it serves:

- Michele Cleary, 8th grade Teacher, M.S. 247, Dual Language Middle School, America Achieves, Opt-in: In favor of State tests but understands concerns regarding stress on students and teachers.
- **Ilene Altschul**, Superintendent, District 3: Believes testing is an important part of student's educational program and that all students should be tested.
- **Charmaine Dixon,** PTA President, PS203, D22, Bronx, NYC Opt-out, Change the Stakes. Believes in testing but what are they used for and the kind of tests given to our children. We opt-out to send a message.
- **Bianca Tanis,** Parent & Special Education Teacher, Founding Member, NY State Allies for Public Education. Opt-out. We do a disservice to children by focusing on test scores and accountability. Every child deserves equitable access to resources and resources that make students successful. These tests are serving no educational purpose as far as students.

Q: Please explain why schools and school districts test all students in English Language Arts and Math in every grade from 3rd to 8th and once in High School?

- a. B Tanis: So we can get a general snapshot and look at trends. We've had that kind of testing for years but over years tests have increased in length, they are now longer than SATs. Children of 8 years old are sitting for hours; not an appropriate challenge for young children. Parents would start opting in with more appropriate tests. One test. We've gotten far from that.
- b. C Dixon: Agrees with assessment but not this assessment. She is opting out her child. The 3rd 8th grade test is being used for the wrong reason to punish our children and punish our teachers. What does it tell us? If you ask to see the test, the questions are blacked out. Who is it for, what is it for?
- c. M Cleary: These tests are not perfect. Having a standardized way of seeing what happens amongst their peers, outside of classroom, is helpful. Agrees tests are not being used for instruction due to length, the tests are shorter but we don't know by how much. In order to get a fuller picture, one hour, one day isn't enough.
- d. I Altschul, D3 Superintendent: Assessment is part of student's educational core program. They provide an evaluation of student mastery, content and skills and whether they are on track to meet the standards and skills for college and career readiness. We want students to engage in these tests so we can assess them and assess the instructional programs in comparison to other student populations across the city.

Q: Students are ranked on the exams on a scale of 1 to 4 with 4 meaning students "excel" in the standards, 3 meaning students are "proficient", 2 meaning students are "partially proficient", and 1 meaning students are "well below proficient". Please explain the meaning of these levels and how they were determined?

- a. I Altschul, D3 Superintendent: Each level is determined by a ranking on how well the student has scored; it is to give parents an idea of where the student is falling and gives school an idea of whether student is meeting the standard and whether above or below. Ranking allows schools to focus on areas of need in student population. Students who fall below 1 or 2 are entitled to additional services.
- b. M Cleary: They provide a starting point at the beginning of the year but they are just one piece in terms of the puzzle.

- c. C Dixon: What does the 1 mean? How will it help the student's new teacher when they don't know why the student got a 1? I don't understand how the test or the number given is helping.
- d. B Tanis: NYS, in an attempt to identify what college readiness means aligned proficiencies to 1630 on SATS, what the top 3rd of college bound students in the nation get. The College Board itself considers 1550 as college ready. By design, many children will continue to fail these tests because we are aligning them to unrealistic expectations. They are norm reference tests; you're comparing children. A class of 20 students will be graded on where they fall, bottom, middle and top, no matter the score. A parent doesn't need to know where the child ranks but rather, how they are doing. These tests don't tell us whether the child has mastered the content but where they fall in reference to other children. We are not testing for whether a child has mastered the skill. In 2012 13% of students in poverty scored a 1; in 2013 it jumped to 44% for Common Core tests. The number tripled for students in poverty whom we deemed below standard. We are creating a crisis. Our graduation rate is projected to drop from 78% to 26% by 2022.

Q: Since tests were aligned to the Common Core State Standards, the percentage of students scoring in the proficient and highly proficient range have decreased significantly. Why is that so and are there significant changes that could impact that?

- a. B Tanis: We are aligning proficiency to a score on the SATS. The SATS are known to correlate to income, race, your parent's level of education. It is a benchmark that exacerbates the socio-economic gap. The achievement gap is growing; the rate of failure is growing disproportionately for income level and students of color. Inequities in the classroom must be addressed; we can't talk about test scores when we have 30 students in one class and 15 in another.
- b. C Dixon: Look at the problem, don't test it. Testing doesn't close the achievement gap. There are inequities in many schools. Title 1 funding is being cut. The problem is not testing continuously, it is funding, lower class sizes. Address the actual issue.
- c. M Cleary: Why the decrease in 3s and 4s? It started when these tests rolled out; students could answer questions on old tests without reading the passage but tests now are holding students to a higher level. Previous tests didn't hold students to a standard of critical thinking, that accounts for part of the drop. Tests won't close the achievement gap but it's important to have that information.
- d. I Altschul, D3 Superintendent: New Common Cores standards have been raised; there are higher expectations, more challenging questions resulting in lowered proficiency and highly proficient scores. School lessons have gotten more rigorous, curriculums are at a higher level; amount of writing across classrooms has increased. Tests are not the only measure to see if children are on track for college readiness. The State is looking at untimed testing and moving forward there will be more teachers involved in creations of tests.

Q: Changes have been made to the tests and testing conditions since last year's administration. Please explain what those changes are and how they impact the substance of testing for this year's students. How are students on IEPs and ELLs impacted?

- a. I Altschul, D3 Superintendent: There has been a decrease in the number of test questions. In 3 8, there is one less reading passage and reduced number of questions in math as well as untimed testing. It allows for more opportunity to demonstrate their understanding and work at their own pace. Other changes, greater teacher involvement in question development. Albany 2015, teachers gathered to evaluate and select questions for upcoming test and will continue to do that. There is also a new test vendor. How does it impact IEP AND ELLs? They will still get modifications and under new changes, tests will be untimed.
- b. M Cleary: Eliminating the time limit on test is the most important change.
- c. C Dixon: What does the untimed test look like? How will child or teacher know when it's done? Who defines what "working productively" means? The tests are shorter by what, removal of one paragraph? This is not a quick fix, we need true solutions.

- d. B Tanis: Look at Common Core Task Force and read closely. State still committed to a proscriptive ratio of informational non-fiction tests to fiction tests for young children. The task force does not mention the math standards. Rather than fixing test we are giving the child more time. NYS has an obligation to give these tests and change takes time but we are disrupting entire days of instruction for 6 days out of the school year. The changes are not enough.
- Q: Some high schools and middle schools make use of state test results in their admissions criteria and application process. What should parents know about testing and middle school/high school admissions in NYC? Respond from general to specific.
 - a. C Dixon: No one wants to sabotage their children or schools, Call, visit, and ask the schools you are interested in, what are their policies? How do they handle children that don't have scores? Children from out of state, or come from private schools? Look at child as an entire child, not as a number. Well-rounded education, well-rounded children.
 - b. I Altschul, D3 Superintendent: State tests cannot be rated more than 50% for any admission policy In NYC, 30% of high schools look at state test scores as one of the multiple measures for admissions. Approximately. 36% look at middle school state test scores as one of multiple measures they take into account. Can't speak to high schools but four District 3 middle schools take into account state test scores as one of their measures. It is not the sole measure. If child applies without state test scores, other areas are weighted heavier.
- Q: Different people at different levels of the education system from Albany to the NYC DOE have suggested different potential consequences for schools and school districts if 95% of students do not take the state tests. In your best judgement, what consequences are possible under current law if test refusal decreases the percentage of students tested in a school below 95%?
 - a. I Altschul, D3 Superintendent (*reading from FAQ doc*): If less than 95% of a schools' group or one or more of its sub-groups of students fails to take the math or ELA assessments the school is designated having failed to make adequate yearly progress, which is their AYP. This leads to the following: After 3 years of missing AYP for the same sub-group, a school can be identified as local assistance plan school (a lapsed school); considered a school not in good standing and generally subject to additional reporting and self-review requirements. They are not eligible to be considered Reward Schools status, schools that demonstrate high performance or high status relative to other schools in the state.
 - b. M Cleary: No opt-out students in her school. She understands and supports need for data about students.
 - c. C Dixon: Has not heard of one school that has lost funding from not meeting the 95%, the AYP is no longer in effect to her understanding. Part of the threat to parents to force them to opt-in is that schools will lose funding; it is suicide, if a school already owes money and then loses money.
 - d. B Tanis: NYS has a waiver and that waiver was renewed in 2015. In that waiver, participation is no longer a factor in which schools are identified as a Focus or Priority school. However, if a school does not meet AYP, they cannot lose the designation. There is no state mechanism for withholding Title 1 money. The Federal government has said that if a school does not meet the 95% mark, they can withhold Title1 money. Chancellor Tisch and Federal government have never withheld a dime. This is money that goes to neediest students. We had a 20% opt-out rate last year; we are not going to meet that 95% this year.

Public Comment

- 1. Arlene Hellerman: Her experience is that MS54 will not adjust their rubric for students without State test scores.
 - a. Ms. Altschul will look into it.

- 2. Cordell Cleare (announced in absentia): Saturday morning, 10 AM, Sen. Perkins is holding a meeting at the Adam Clayton Powell Building to show parents what their options are regarding opt-out.
- 3. Charlotte Cohen: Her daughter goes to PS199 and is a terrible test taker. She feels harassed and would like to opt-out but doesn't want to put her child in that predicament. She's looking to WESS but fears if she opts out, her daughter will not get in. System is flawed; the tests are not about the children.
- 4. Steve Evangelista, Harlem Link Charter School: Wife wants to opt-out, he doesn't but no one is articulating an alternative. He, and people he has spoken with, think the test is poorly used but there doesn't seem to be another way to evaluate how educational programs are going. What conversations are happening among the leaders of the opt-out movement to articulate an alternative vision?
 - a. B Tanis: We need to develop a framework of what every school should have, come up with a baseline of what every child should have and go from there. The conversation is not happening with legislators. Why are we just talking about test scores, we need to say that every school should have reasonable class sizes, a fully staffed library with a librarian, a full-time social worker, unstructured play, experiential learning, field trips. project based learning, basics which many schools don't have. Once we ensure that every child has an equitable classroom and educational opportunity, then we can look at test scores
 - b. C Dixon: The reality is, that doesn't make money. Everyone doesn't learn the same way and teachers have to move along whether or not the child has grasped the concept. Children are being robbed of the joy of learning. 33 children in a classroom.
 - c. M Cleary: Completely in agreement. She teaches at a Title 1 school, 97% are socioeconomically disadvantaged. Population needs supports that don't exist in her school but exist in other schools, but that doesn't mean it can replace assessments. She is pro computer adaptive assessments.
- 5. Member PJ Joshi, Speaking on behalf of parents of Special Ed students: Special Ed students have been tested by schools on how they learn and have been given a lot of assessments. The problem is, these are Common Core tests and a simple addition problem becomes convoluted. Her son can do math, he does the math in his head but his way is not being shown on the Common Core test. Common Core doesn't show ability. It is a flawed system. In 2013 NYS was not based on Common Core. Special Ed students should not be tested in this way. Let's make sure specialized students are given the right tools and the right tests that accurately measure their academic achievement.
- 6. Audrey Sher: Ilene Altschul has said there are four middle schools in D3 that use the test scores. What are those schools and how many schools are there in the district? Can a child take the test and not have it factored in? How do we deal with a child who doesn't test well but knows the material? These tests are being used for things that don't take that in to account.
 - a. I Altschul, D3 Superintendent: There are eight K-8 in D3 and 12 middle schools or middle secondary schools. Of the schools that use the State test as part of their admission criteria, there are four: Computer School, Mott Hall II, MS 54 Booker T. Washington and WESS. They also have interview process because they do want to get to know the whole child. Most D3 schools are screened schools or limited screened schools but part of that screening process is not about score, it is about making sure the child is interested in their school. Middle Schools want to select the students that want to go to them. If student sits for the test it is part of their record and cannot be discounted.
- 7. Member N Gotbaum: He has a special needs 6th grader whom he's opted out because he would need double time, 18 hours. It is abuse! System is saying he has to do this. There is no such

thing as an opt-out. DOE is saying you can have as much time as you want, his son would either sit there for hours, or get up and go. The argument for testing is, we need to know where these kids are relative to other kids and as an assessment mechanism. In 2009 DOE said that 80% of the kids, 75% in the City, were proficient, at or above. In 2010 they changed cut scores, saying 50% are now proficient. Then we got new tests and now 20% are proficient. How can we, as parents, trust the DOE when we've been told 3 different times that our kids are three different places and that all three times the tests are valid?

- a. I Altschul, D3 Superintendent: They've changed the assessment. What you are comparing is not the same. The tests are no longer used for promotion criteria or teacher evaluation. We want to gather information around what students do and do not know. The purpose of the assessment is twofold; to look at an item of skills analysis or see the where child might be struggling, so we can identify those gaps and support the child, or, as a grade, perhaps there was something that wasn't taught well because the entire grade didn't do well on it. They do provide a lot of information. The DOE wants to do what's best for children but you have to make the decision on what's right for your child.
- b. B Tanis: She has sat with a special needs child (taking the test) double-time, 3 hours 3 days in a row. It was brutal. It was abuse and it's continuing.
- c. C Dixon: Recently the Chancellor said that in only two cases she agrees with opting out, one case was a special needs child and the other an ELL student. The new Regents Chancellor said that if she were a parent at this time she would opt her children out, special needs or not.
- 8. Fred Smith: Consider: Betty Rosa, new Chancellor of Regents was asked about opting out her children. She responded that if she had children, she would support them opting out. She is the top educational policy maker in NYS. Why is there a gag order on teachers and everyone else in the school system talking about the exam, or even advising parents on making an informed judgement? The DOE does not make that information explicit to parents. The so-called changes are not all that they're supposed to be.
- 9. Arlene Hellerman: What if the assessment were just used for assessment rather than achievement or getting into middle school? Why wouldn't a Regent's exam, which is specific to what NYS says a student should know in a given subject, be used as an assessment? There is a national trend that we've done too much of this, why is Schools Chancellor Farina getting even more rigid?
 - a. I Altschul, D3 Superintendent: Chancellor Farina encourages meaningful conversation about the assessments. It's not that she's more rigid, just that the assessments are important to the child's educational program. There is information to be gained from assessments. There is a moratorium on state tests being attached to teacher ratings. Most D3 schools don't give Regents exams until high school. In 8th grade, algebra might be the only Regents exam. We want teachers to be using formative and summative assessments to know each student. We are not trying to talk parents out of opting out. Principals are encouraged to meet with parents considering opting out to engage in conversation so parents can make an informed decision. We encourage principals to have this discussion with parents. MS54 can choose to do what they want regarding assessment.
 - b. M Cleary: Passing a Regents exam is more high stakes that these 8th grade tests. Parents believe Regents aren't used for college admissions but they are used. At this point tests are being used as just assessment for assessment. If Special Ed student gets a 1, that doesn't mean they go to summer school, they have modified admission criteria.
 - c. B Tanis: The test scores are being used to identify which schools go into Receivership. Every test tells you what it is measuring for. Parents should look at test questions (*on Engage NY*) and see if they measure the standard for which they are testing. She does

not think so. As an educator, she does not find tests useful as scores do not come in until June.

- 10. PC Member K Keiger: Feels her second grade child is taught how to perform on these tests so that the school will get the rating it needs. She doesn't mind the tests, she minds teaching to the test; it is significantly limiting the education the kids are getting. 3rd graders are worried; principals are worried that if they don't score well school will be punished. She thinks taking the test once a year and using it as an assessment is fine but doesn't understand why tests are used to the extent that they are used.
 - a. I Altschul D3 Superintendent: We have encouraged D3 principals not to be participating in hours of test prep. Looking for learning to be authentic and embedded that they feel confident to take these tests. Tutoring, particularly for a Title 1 school is important but should take away from class time. We want to keep schools competitive.

*** President's Report** - held for next Council Calendar meeting

Old Business

- 1. School Choice Forum Wrap-Up
 - i. Zoning Committee met on 21st March to wrap up School Choice Forum.
 - ii. Great turnout, more than 100 people at PS 145 on March 1st and 140 on March 15th at PS 87. Large proportion of parents from host schools at either of two events.
 - iii. After the sessions Zoning Committee met to discuss lingering questions. They comprised a list of questions to be answered. They don't have answers yet but Council has been given all the questions. Thoughts on moving forward from here? There is a timeline if proceeding with Zoning 2017 that is in the report, thinking ahead from Oct. 31st to the first week in November for a potential vote on a rezoning that would implement partially in 2017, and partially in 2018.
 - iv. Timeline, working back: Look at submitting a final proposal to the DOE the latter half of Oct., Public Hearings through the beginning of October, Zoning Committee meetings through September, June one meeting, Office of District Planning will attend Zoning Committee meeting May 5th as discussion on Controlled Choice on a district wide level continues.

Caveat: Last year, it wasn't until the latter part of September that a proposal for the rezoning plan from was officially submitted. Additional information gotten from Office of District Planning is, we may not rezone for 2017. Waitlist for 199 is small and waiting for reopening of Riverside Center in 2018 may be next best option. Zoning Committee believes strongly that we need to rezone in 2017. Overcrowding at 199 is untenable although waitlist is small. Need to proceed with 2017 rezoning.

- v. After pullback on rezoning in December, the ODP was looking at a broader rezoning; it is their understanding that this rezoning cycle would include a greater number of schools. Council should be focusing on 5 K classes at PS 199, it is significantly overcrowded, and the Blue Book Working Group has reduced capacity of the building so that it is 141% above capacity. 199 has experienced no attrition in the upper grades, 3-5.
- vi. Council discussion ensues over whether rezoning impacts overcrowding. No consensus is reached other than CEC should drive the process for rezoning
- vii. Member K Berger suggests looking at competing policies, i.e. D13 and D1 Socio-Economic Integration Grants..
- 2. High School Admission Workshop
 - i. Member Z Foundotos and Member N Mead, met with Ayisha Irfan of MBP Brewer's office and Michael Kraft, CCHS Manhattan Liaison re forming a task

force for Manhattan CECs to discuss high school admissions from a middle school perspective. First meeting is May 13^{th} . There will be a High School Articulation Workshop at PS180, May 14^{th} , 10 - 12N. It is aimed at 7^{th} graders.

- 3. DRAFT Resolution Calling upon PEP to Revise Certain Sections of CR A-101 Admissions
 - i. Member N Mead took Council's suggestions re additions and revisions to the Draft Resolution and all suggestions are accounted for in present draft. Upon discussion Council made additional changes and additions. Another pass is suggested and the new draft revision will be presented at Council meeting of April 11th.

New Business

- 1. PS145 Temporary Boiler
 - i. SCA and Con Ed would like to build a gas meter regulator in front of the main office. The community is concerned that it will block windows and create an eyesore and create a potentially hazardous situation for the building occupants. Mark Diller suggests the CB7 District Manager could be helpful in consultation. Regulator should go on roof of the building or around the corner.
- 2. DOE has put up a website where they have published all of the water quality issues in schools. Member Fiordaliso has resources and electives which he will add.

* School Liaison Reports

1. 859 Special Music School, L Liu reporting: Letter addressing HVAC issue was sent off with help of MBP G Brewer and Assembly Member L Rosenthal. The engineer visited and they are waiting on final report to have next meeting to discuss what next. SCA has been paying more attention to this topic, hopefully good news before next 2 weeks.

Committee Reports

- 1. Diversity, N Mead, Chair: reporting: Tomorrow's meeting pushed out to 4/8 at 9am. Flyer will be coming.
- 2. Health and Wellness: T Hammonds, Chair: Absent.
- 3. High School Admissions: Z Foundotos, Chair reported earlier.
- 4. Middle School, K Berger, Chair reporting: Met last week, 2 attendees. Another Middle School meeting to be held next month.
- 5. Multi-Lingual, L Liu, Chair, reporting: Parents in Russian Dual Language Program have a meeting set-up with Superintendent Altschul 4/8. They trying to shift gears to A101 which doesn't allow people to get involved in their own schools.
- 6. Zoning: K Watkins, Chair, reported earlier.

Public Comment

- 1. Woman: From the task force perspective, the question of segregation, diversity, overcrowding, under-utilization are joined problems and should be addressed together. Member K Watkins reached out to Michael Alves for more information regarding Controlled Choice and if his responses are not satisfactory, we can go back and ask for more information.
- 2. Mark Diller: There is a finite limit to the certainty or specificity from which you can get answers to some of these questions. It is up to the CEC and others in the community who will define the importance of a variety of factors in testing and utilization to establish the weight or levers to accomplish the goals that we, as a community feel it is important to accomplish. There is some likelihood that whatever version of Controlled Choice CEC comes up with, it will still be imperfect.

***** Meeting Adjourned at 9:25 P.M.

CEC3 Action Items

1. N Mead will present Re-Revised Draft Resolution Calling Upon PEP to Revise Certain Sections of CR A-101 Admission CEC3 Calendar Meeting of 4/11/16

Superintendent Action Items

1. Superintendent will give N Mead Socio-Economic Integration Grant particulars