

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF  
PORTFOLIO PLANNING**

**John Dewey High School - 4/17/12**

1 [START 290274.MP3]

2 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: ...at different times  
3 throughout the evening. If they wish to speak,  
4 we will do our best to accommodate them at the  
5 first opportune moment. Those who are here at  
6 the start of the public comment segment will be  
7 asked to speak first.

8 For tonight's joint public hearing, the  
9 format will include a presentation of the  
10 proposal, presentation by hearing participants,  
11 followed by public comment. Speakers should  
12 have already signed up at the table in the  
13 lobby. Public comments can be no longer than  
14 two minutes each. The time will be strictly  
15 followed and speakers will be informed when  
16 their designated time has ended. As stated  
17 before, there will be a question and answer  
18 period here this evening. We ask that you write  
19 your questions on the cards that are provided,  
20 and we will get to them after the public comment  
21 section of today's agenda.

22 If at the end of the hearing you still have  
23 questions, we encourage you to direct it to us  
24 by calling this number, and I am going to say  
25 the number now: 212-374-0208. That telephone

1 number is 212-374-0208. Or, you can send it to  
2 us via email to the following email address:  
3 D21proposals--all one word, P-R-O-P-O-S-A-L-S at  
4 schools--schools with an S at the end, dot NYC  
5 dot GOV.

6 Now I would like to introduce the panel,  
7 which has been assembled for this evening's  
8 joint public hearing. Stuart Handman  
9 [phonetic], Yoketing Bing [phonetic], Michael  
10 Drillenger [phonetic], Robert Kanyuk [phonetic],  
11 Marriette Faustin [phonetic], Monique Lindsay  
12 [phonetic], and - - Deputy Chancellor Sternberg  
13 [phonetic], and Deputy Chancellor Sternberg - -.

14 Now I would like to turn the program over to  
15 Deputy Chancellor Sternberg, who will present  
16 the proposal.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR STERNBERG: Thank you,  
18 Melissa. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.  
19 Again, my name is Marc Sternberg, I serve as the  
20 Deputy Chancellor with the Division of Portfolio  
21 Planning, and I am here to discuss the proposed-  
22 -the EIS that proposes the closure and reopening  
23 of a school on this campus to replace John Dewey  
24 High School.

25 Before I describe the proposal, I want to

1 spend a moment talking about, briefly, what I  
2 expect this evening to be about, and not to be  
3 about and I will start with the not. First I  
4 want to say that this is not--this evening is  
5 not a decision. This evening is not a moment in  
6 time where the Department, myself, and the other  
7 members of my team who are here this evening,  
8 Melissa and others, come to the school to  
9 convince those that disagree with the proposal  
10 that they are wrong, and that we are right.  
11 This evening is a hearing, and it is an  
12 opportunity for us to meet with you, to gather  
13 and receive your feedback on this proposal, and  
14 to address your questions, if we are able, and  
15 further, I would expect this evening we would  
16 hear passionate and deep affection for John  
17 Dewey High School, from adults, staff, - - from  
18 students and parents, who have a deep connection  
19 to the history of this school and to the work  
20 that has happened here. This is not my first  
21 time to John Dewey High School. I have been  
22 here to meet with your new school leader, to  
23 meet with members of the faculty, and at various  
24 points in my time as Deputy Chancellor, met with  
25 a very committed group of alum, the Alumni

1 Association of John Dewey High School, and I  
2 know from those conversations and those trips to  
3 the school and discussions - - that there is a  
4 long and deep connection to this school, and  
5 again, I expect to hear that this evening.

6 I will also frame the proposal that we are  
7 here to discuss as an effort by the Chancellor  
8 and the Department to honor those strengths, and  
9 we acknowledge that there are strengths here,  
10 and I will discuss some of them, and to build  
11 around them, the programs and the adults who are  
12 really doing good work in the new school, to  
13 build the new school around the essence of the  
14 current school, to bring in new structures, new  
15 programs, and new talent to this campus to serve  
16 students at a higher level.

17 So I want to just quickly jump through some  
18 technical notes here in my introduction and then  
19 we will speak to some of those strengths.

20 John Dewey High School is located here at 50  
21 Avenue X in Community School District 21 in  
22 Brooklyn and we are joined by president of CSE  
23 21, good to be with you again, members of the  
24 CSE as well as SLT.

25 On March 5, 2012, the New York City

1 Department of Education published a proposal to  
2 close John Dewey High School and open a new  
3 school, 21K415, if approved by the panel, and I  
4 will let everyone know, as Melissa will again  
5 later, that the panel will vote on this proposal  
6 next Thursday at - - High School, at 5:00 p.m.,  
7 and we hope many of you can join us.

8 By closing John Dewey High School and  
9 replacing it with this new school, the  
10 Department seeks to accelerate the gains, and to  
11 create rapidly a school environment that will  
12 prepare students for success in college, work,  
13 and life. The new school, again, will build on  
14 the strongest elements of the school that is  
15 proposed to close. I will discuss those  
16 shortly, and we will seek to incorporate those  
17 elements into the new school design.

18 Additionally, in conjunction with this EIS,  
19 the Department has submitted a school  
20 improvement grant application to the State  
21 Education Department, as we know, John Dewey  
22 High School was identified by the State  
23 Education Department as a persistently low  
24 achieving school in the context of the Federal  
25 School Improvement Grant Program. We submitted

1 that application to the state for their  
2 consideration, and if approved, the school would  
3 be eligible for up to 1.65 million dollars in  
4 Federal School Improvement Grant funds moving  
5 forward.

6 I mentioned that I spent time with the  
7 leaders here, we are pleased and excited about  
8 the work of interim acting principal Kathy  
9 Melvin [phonetic], who intends to be here, we  
10 believe that she is very much the right person  
11 to be the proposed leader of this proposed new  
12 school, and we invite commenters this evening,  
13 both on the panel and in public comment, to  
14 share with us thoughts about the qualities you  
15 all want to see in the proposed new school,  
16 including characteristics that you think are  
17 important as we move forward with the C-30  
18 process, and to confirm a principal for the new  
19 school.

20 Again, I want to acknowledge that there are  
21 many in this room, adults and students, who have  
22 a deep connection to this school, who feel that  
23 they have--that their children have been well-  
24 served here, we honor that, we stand by our  
25 proposal this evening, that the best opportunity

1 we have to accelerate gains and to serve  
2 students well in the long-term is to pursue the  
3 path that we have proposed - -

4 So I am going to spend a minute on some of  
5 the strengths that we see and some of the  
6 weaknesses at John Dewey that led us to our  
7 proposal.

8 Despite serious challenges, again, we do see  
9 strengths in this school, we see a graduation  
10 rate at John Dewey High School that has shown  
11 increases in recent years, rising from 55  
12 percent in 2007-2008, to 66 percent at the  
13 conclusion of last school year, 2010-2011.

14 [applause]

15 Further, we acknowledge that the six-year  
16 graduation rate for the school was 72 percent,  
17 higher than the 2007-2008 six-year graduation  
18 rate of 66 percent. We also acknowledge several  
19 programs in place at this school, including a  
20 bilingual Chinese program, are considered  
21 strengths, and we honor that and honor the  
22 strong work that many faculty members have put  
23 in for many years to build this and other strong  
24 programs here at the school.

25 Those things being said, we do see serious

1 challenges and concerns in John Dewey High  
2 School's performance data overall. We have  
3 received feedback from members of the New York  
4 State Board of Regents that have urged us to  
5 accelerate the piece of reform and change and  
6 progress in our persistent low achieving  
7 schools, and again, want to note that John Dewey  
8 has been named a persistent low achieving,  
9 specifically we find problematic the credit  
10 accumulation rates here at the school. As we  
11 all know, credit accumulation is an important  
12 indicator of student success. We know that  
13 students that fall behind early in high school  
14 often have the most trouble getting back on  
15 track. In 2010-2011, only 61 percent of second-  
16 year students at John Dewey High School earned  
17 at least 10 credits, placing this school in the  
18 bottom 19 percent of high schools city-wide.

19 We know that this school received only a  
20 developing rating on its most recent quality  
21 review, a quality review that cited serious  
22 concerns, including inadequate differentiation  
23 of instruction, to support individual student  
24 needs.

25 We know that members of the parent

1 community, student community, and faculty,  
2 have expressed deep concerns about safety here  
3 at John Dewey High School, that the school  
4 ranks--that the school, according to its  
5 environment survey among students, ranks at the  
6 very bottom of its peer group and in the bottom  
7 seven percent--sorry, bottom eight percent, of  
8 schools in terms of safety city-wide, and in the  
9 bottom five percent of schools in terms of  
10 safety in its peer group among members of the  
11 faculty.

12 And so it is the body of this data, again  
13 data that is drawn from the progress report,  
14 quantitative data, and qualitative data, from  
15 time spent by members of the Department of  
16 Education, and network staff, as represented in  
17 the quality review that lead us to our  
18 conclusion that the course of action we propose  
19 here is the right and best program for John  
20 Dewey High School.

21 Before we hear from other members of the  
22 panel, I want to quickly move to that, and then  
23 open to public comment. I see that we have been  
24 joined by Councilmember Recchia, who is here.  
25 Councilman.

1 I want to briefly discuss several elements  
2 of the work moving forward, two categories,  
3 roughly, one in enrollment and one of them the  
4 staffing process, an 18-D process that will  
5 oversee the staffing for the new school.

6 First of all, on enrollment, I want to be  
7 clear that all--I believe there have already  
8 been some questions about this--all current John  
9 Dewey High School students will have a  
10 guaranteed seat in the new school, this includes  
11 all current 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students  
12 as well as any 12th grade students who fail to  
13 accumulate the necessary regents and credit in  
14 their proper - - areas, by the conclusion of  
15 this school year.

16 That is also true for incoming 9th graders  
17 who have already applied to and matched to the  
18 new school. So, I want to be clear that all  
19 current students will be guaranteed a seat at  
20 the new school. There are protocols for  
21 students to seek alternative placement, and we  
22 have scheduled time to meet with parents who are  
23 interested in this process, but again we want to  
24 emphasize the point that students who are  
25 currently served at this school, as well as

1 rising 9th graders who have already matched,  
2 through the high school application process, to  
3 the school, will be guaranteed a seat in the new  
4 school being located here.

5         Additionally, I want to note that the  
6 Department does not anticipate any implications  
7 for the District 75 inclusion program currently  
8 housed here, that is P721K, at K540, we would  
9 expect that program to stay intact and not be  
10 affected in any negative way by the proposed  
11 closure and replacement of this school.

12         There have been some questions and comments  
13 about some of the programs in place already in  
14 the school and I want to speak about things, the  
15 experimental school, the health careers  
16 exploration program, the bilingual Chinese  
17 experimental school program, all of which are up  
18 and running and by all accounts are serving  
19 students well, so I want to again make a general  
20 point and comment specifically on enrollment  
21 practices for these programs. In general, what  
22 I will say again, is that the proposal to close  
23 and replace John Dewey is to build a new school  
24 around the assets, around the strengths, around  
25 many of the hardworking adults who we very much

1 hope will apply to engage and to continue to  
2 work in the new school proposed for this campus.

3 Specifically, the programs that I have  
4 listed, the experimental school program, the  
5 humanities and interdisciplinary - - the health  
6 careers exploration program, and health  
7 professionals interest area, the bilingual  
8 Chinese experimental school in the humanities,  
9 and interdisciplinary - -, we move to of course  
10 affirm to the school leadership team and the  
11 proposed new leader to make individual  
12 decisions, but by all accounts these are strong  
13 programs, we would hope and expect them to stay  
14 in place and we will continue to operate the  
15 current enrollment protocols for those programs  
16 if the new school is improved and if the SLT  
17 decides to carry those programs forward into the  
18 new school.

19 In regards to CTE programming, John Dewey  
20 High School currently offers CTE programming in  
21 the business management and business  
22 administration career cluster, in the IT  
23 information technology career cluster, it is the  
24 discretion of the planning team for the new  
25 school, the leader and the leadership team, and

1 the planning team that the proposed leader  
2 pulls together, to decide which elements of the  
3 current school will be carried forward into the  
4 new school and the staff--actually the staff - -  
5 will comment on enrollment vis-à-vis the ATD  
6 program, but again, acknowledge that some of  
7 these programs are strong, that there is  
8 interest for them, and it will be at the  
9 discretion of the planning team to decide what  
10 moves forward.

11 So finally, a few comments on the staffing  
12 plan for the new school. Many of you have heard  
13 the term "ATD," as it refers to the mission of  
14 our contract, the City's contract with the  
15 United Federation of Teachers. I want to state  
16 very clearly and explicitly, and I am sure I  
17 will repeat this later in the evening, that  
18 there is no quota of staff that must be removed  
19 as a result of this process. This process does  
20 not require a turnover of 87 percent of staff.  
21 Our explicit instruction to all leaders in this  
22 school and certainly to Ms. Melvin [phonetic]  
23 has been to abide by the spirit and - - of the  
24 ATD process, which is to engage in a process to  
25 develop criteria that will inform hiring and

1 many - - will come together that will include  
2 Ms. Melvin, as well as two delegates appointed  
3 by Chancellor Walkond [phonetic] and two  
4 delegates appointed by President - -, this  
5 committee of five, based here at this school,  
6 using the criteria developed by the school, and  
7 will make decisions on hiring on an individual  
8 basis, they should--the committee should  
9 endeavor to put together the strongest possible  
10 faculty they can, without attention to any quota  
11 or any set number of staff that should or must  
12 be removed from a school, and this is all  
13 pursuant to the - - ATD work contract.

14 Okay, Melissa, I think that concludes my  
15 summary and - -

16 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: Thank you. Now we will  
17 hear from the rest of the panel that has  
18 assembled. I just want to read everyone's name  
19 so you guys can just pass the mic down after you  
20 finish giving your comment or reading your  
21 statement. Following the panelists comments or  
22 statements, there will be a brief Q&A, I think  
23 the panel has a couple of questions, two or  
24 three questions, that they wanted Deputy  
25 Chancellor to answer, and then we will move into

1 public comment, and then we will move into the  
2 Q&A period.

3 Remember, there are comment or question  
4 cards outside the auditorium if you have a  
5 question this evening, if you could just write  
6 them down, we are collecting them and we will  
7 address them during the Q&A portion.

8 First we will hear from Stuart Handman, CEC  
9 21, followed by Yoketing Bing, also CEC 21,  
10 followed by Michael Drillenger, of the Alumni  
11 Association, then two members of the SLT, Robert  
12 Kanyuk, and Mariette Faustin, and Ms. Monique  
13 Lindsay will be our last speaker, she represents  
14 CCHS. Thank you.

15 MR. STUART HANDMAN: Good evening, I have a  
16 prepared statement I am going to read. This  
17 public forum has been convened by the Department  
18 of Education to close this school we are in,  
19 called John Dewey High School, reopen another  
20 under another name, and create a committee as  
21 per the UFT/DOE contract, to replace a number of  
22 teachers. One of my biggest problems with this  
23 is why, as a parent, should I believe that this  
24 process is going to put in a better staff than  
25 that presently there, and just for the record, I

1 think the staff at John Dewey High School  
2 right now is doing good, the graduation numbers  
3 show.

4 [applause, cheers]

5 The school might need some help, I am sure  
6 every school staff at John Dewey is included in  
7 that, there are some areas and some staffers  
8 that could do better and maybe could be replace  
9 with better staffers, but I am wondering what  
10 there is to make me believe that this process is  
11 going to be able to do that.

12 For starters, I have a problem with the  
13 language in this contractual agreement that  
14 determines who will sit on this personnel  
15 committee. The UFT/DOE contract, and ATD,  
16 describes how a personnel committee will be  
17 established to replace a portion of this stuff  
18 based on seniority and a set of guidelines that  
19 the committee will create and of course adhering  
20 to all relevant and legal and contractual  
21 requirements, including a hiring of personnel  
22 holding the appropriate credentials. This  
23 committee, as per the UFT/DOE contract, shall  
24 consist, putting it simply, as Deputy Chancellor  
25 said, of two DOE appointees, two UFT appointees,

1 a principal or project director, and the  
2 following language, in which my opinion goes to  
3 the core of every problem that exists in the DOE  
4 now. The language says, "Where appropriate, a  
5 school planning committee representative, and  
6 finally, a parent." I ask you, where is it not  
7 appropriate for a parent whose children attend  
8 the school to at least be present to witness how  
9 the hiring is done?

10 [applause]

11 I felt this language was discriminatory  
12 against parents. Of course, since there is no  
13 industry without parents, and our children, how  
14 can even the suggestion of parent exclusion from  
15 this process be mentioned? I thought this was  
16 bad, until I read the Educational Impact  
17 Statement for John Dewey, where the following  
18 language is used: Personnel committee  
19 membership, at minimum, consists of two UFT  
20 reps, appointed by the UFT president, two reps  
21 appointed by the DOE superintendant, or the DOE  
22 Chancellor, and the principal of the new school.  
23 In the EIS statement, parents are not even  
24 mentioned. I cannot say what I am about to say  
25 with enough importance or emphasis: To exclude

1 parents from the personnel committee, created  
2 in any New York City DOE school, of course  
3 including John Dewey, is unconscionable. Why  
4 should I believe that the turnaround model, the  
5 personnel committee will be able to do a better  
6 job of hiring than the original hiring process  
7 used now to hire employees? And again, what I  
8 am about to say, I cannot say with enough  
9 emphasis: The problem is oversight and  
10 transparency. Hiring is done behind closed  
11 doors, in many cases without parents.

12 [applause]

13 And - - even in some cases, students should  
14 be witness to how all hiring is done. For  
15 students, this would be a part of the learning  
16 process in the real world, and for parents, this  
17 would be necessary for them to know who is going  
18 to be in the classroom with their children, and  
19 where they came from.

20 Putting it in a nutshell, I cannot believe  
21 that the personnel committee is going to do a  
22 better job than the existing hiring process. I  
23 don't have a lot of faith in either one. So at  
24 this point, I would just like to ask Deputy  
25 Chancellor Sternberg to include a parent on any

1 personnel committee in any turnaround school  
2 in the City of New York, so we can at least see  
3 how this process is done, and who is going to be  
4 in the rooms with our children.

5 [applause]

6 I am for John Dewey. John Dewey is a school  
7 that granted, has some issues that need to be  
8 addressed, and based on my short involvement in  
9 the process, have not been addressed. My key  
10 concern for John Dewey is the safety of the  
11 students and the staff. According to the 2010-  
12 2011 New York City DOE School Survey, only 77  
13 percent of the students reported feeling safe in  
14 the hallways, bathrooms, and locker rooms, and  
15 in addition, only 58 percent of teachers  
16 reported that discipline and order were reported  
17 at this school. This is in the bottom 25  
18 percent of high schools state-wide. It has come  
19 to my attention that more should be done to make  
20 sure everyone is safe, and even in light of  
21 this, the school reported to the Educational  
22 Impact Statement, in 2010-2011 school year, had  
23 an 89 percent attendance rate. This is pretty  
24 good, and it tells me that for whatever reason,  
25 kids are coming to school at John Dewey.

1 [applause]

2 Also, according to the EIS, the graduation  
3 rates for the 2008-2009 school year, to the  
4 2010-2011 school year, has gradually increased.  
5 For example, the six-year graduation rate has  
6 gone from 66 percent to 72 percent during those  
7 three years.

8 [applause]

9 A problem John Dewey has recently faced is  
10 another neighborhood school recently known as  
11 Lafayette [phonetic], was closed and  
12 restructured to several small schools. The  
13 redistribution of children left John Dewey  
14 servicing children who could not get accepted to  
15 one of the small schools from the former  
16 Lafayette High School. I have to tell you, what  
17 I am about to say, I have seen in other DOE  
18 schools. The warehousing of low performing  
19 students, many of whom have IEPs, with a  
20 disproportionate number of ELLs and special ed  
21 students, is a disaster, and it is not only  
22 happening in our district, it is happening  
23 throughout this city.

24 [applause]

25 I have personal experience with this. While

1 I am not alumni of John Dewey, changing the  
2 school's name will leave alumni with no history.  
3 New York City - - people in their lifetime  
4 should be able to associate with their alma  
5 matter in one way or another.

6 [applause]

7 John Dewey services a large percent of ELL  
8 students. It came to my attention recently, in  
9 my District, at a District leadership team  
10 meeting, that most Districts in the City of New  
11 York were being considered Districts in need of  
12 improvement, many of us know - - to a great  
13 degree, because of the ELL students and special  
14 education students. I think the testing  
15 mentality of the Department of Education does  
16 particular damage to these students and does not  
17 service them effectively.

18 [applause]

19 To be quite frank, the DOE has not shown me  
20 that anything they will do with regard to John  
21 Dewey in the turnaround model will make it a  
22 better school. They recently replaced the  
23 principal, which is always their right, but the  
24 timing of this leaves a lot to be desired,  
25 especially that a principal with more than three

1 years would be replaced in a turnaround model,  
2 once it became a turnaround school. If the DOE  
3 felt this could have helped, they did not have  
4 to wait until they proposed a turnaround model  
5 of this school.

6 [applause]

7 But since they did see fit to replace the  
8 principal, I would suggest giving the new  
9 principal a chance with the present staff, since  
10 the school has been showing steady improvement  
11 and the problems have been identified.

12 [applause]

13 I believe that they can address the problems  
14 without putting the school on the turnaround  
15 model. Also, this is not the proper response to  
16 a UFT/DOE disagreement with regard to teacher  
17 evaluation. Once again, I feel parent input, as  
18 part of the decision-making process, would help.  
19 The present hiring process was determined by the  
20 same people that are going to determine the  
21 hiring of the turnaround school. Why should I  
22 feel that they will do a better job? Just to  
23 quote, a Regents Chancellor, Meryll Tisch,  
24 "There is a fight going on here that has nothing  
25 to do with what is going on in the school," she

1       said. "It is a labor dispute between the  
2       labor and management, and has nothing to do with  
3       the kids." Dewey is presently an educational  
4       model that was contingent on the UFT and DOE  
5       reaching an agreement by this past January on a  
6       new teacher evaluation system which obviously  
7       they did not reach at this time.

8               As I said recently at a meeting in Brooklyn  
9       Borough Hall, hosted by Brooklyn Borough  
10       President, Marty Markowitz, this is the reason  
11       that we are all here. Now really--is this  
12       really your response to the needs of the  
13       children, or a response to a political process  
14       that they participated in, and in this case did  
15       not go the DOE's way?

16               In closing, as your Brooklyn Borough  
17       President appointee, and proud to be one of  
18       Marty Markowitz's appointees, John Dewey is like  
19       Brooklyn: Struggling, but making it. We need to  
20       support John Dewey and not undo the hard work  
21       that a lot of people have done.

22               [applause, cheers]

23               In closing, many pertinent things are going  
24       to be said tonight by many knowledgeable people.  
25       I hope that the Department of Education reps are

1 sensitive to what is being said and if  
2 something is reasonable is said to support  
3 leaving this school just the way it is, I hope  
4 you hear it. Many times, especially in key  
5 meetings, it is very evident to most people that  
6 are there, the decisions were already made, and  
7 no matter what is said, it doesn't matter. So I  
8 would ask the DOE, please listen to us, and pay  
9 attention. Thank you.

10 [applause]

11 MR. YOKETING BING: Good evening, everyone.  
12 My name is Yoketing Bing. I am the President of  
13 CEC 21.

14 [applause]

15 Thank you. I want to thank my good friend  
16 and fellow CEC member, Mr. Stuart Handman. He  
17 and the SLT of John Dewey organized all of this,  
18 and I couldn't sit--I couldn't put in words what  
19 he said any better, so - -

20 [applause]

21 There are basically a couple of comments I  
22 want to make but before I do that, I would like  
23 to introduce the CSE District 21, based on - -  
24 we were responsible for the SLT of John Dewey  
25 and put together this public forum for John

1 Dewey, and starting from my right, we have Ms.  
2 - - [applause], we have Ms. Linda Dalton  
3 [phonetic] [applause] - - we have Ms. - -  
4 [applause] - - from Brooklyn Borough President's  
5 Office, we have - - [applause], our first vice  
6 president, we have our student CEC member, Ms. -  
7 - [applause] and everyone knows Mr. Stuart  
8 Handman by now. [applause] We have--I'm sorry  
9 if I don't recognize you, but we have two  
10 notable guests in the auditorium. We have our  
11 councilman, Mr. Domenic Recchia.

12 [applause]

13 And from - - office, we have Mr. Mark - -.

14 [applause]

15 So without going into a long-winded speech,  
16 I implore the Department of Education, if you  
17 get anything out of these hearings, the State  
18 Education Department, even the national and the  
19 Federal Education Department, they insist upon  
20 friendly engagement as being one of the best  
21 components to have a successful education for  
22 our students, and schools, and I guess in Mr.  
23 Handman's speech, you know, there is a lot we  
24 would like the Department of Education to get  
25 out of all of this.

1           One person I would like to recognize, I  
2 would like to recognize Mr. - - he is from  
3 Manhattan High School, and he has given us a lot  
4 of help and insights into these areas. So thank  
5 you, everyone. Thank you for doing community,  
6 for showing up.

7           [applause, cheers]

8           Thank you very much.

9           MR. MICHAEL DRILLENGER: My name is Michael  
10 Drillenger, and I am currently the President of  
11 the John Dewey Alumni Association.

12          [applause]

13          I would first like to very much thank the  
14 CEC and the SLT for giving me the opportunity to  
15 sit up here with them, and I have been in  
16 discussions with what is happening with our  
17 school for a while, and to that I would very  
18 much like to thank Deputy Chancellor Sternberg,  
19 as well as the DOE, for including us in a very  
20 critical way. On behalf of JDAA, I truly  
21 appreciate the opportunity you have given us.

22          The mission of the JDAA is to bring the  
23 legacy of the original Dewey Experiment to  
24 today's students, faculty, and administration.  
25 The guiding principles of John Dewey the

1 philosopher, are still relevant today.

2 Students learn at their own pace. As John Dewey  
3 the man said, "Education is not something that  
4 can be forced upon children and youth from  
5 without, but is the growth of capacities with  
6 which human beings were endowed at birth."

7 We at the Alumni Association have worked  
8 closely with the faculty and the administration  
9 for the past three rocky years. I have seen the  
10 efforts of parents, teachers, students, and the  
11 dedicated staff here at Dewey. Dewey's numbers  
12 now exceed many schools that were never on the  
13 turnaround list.

14 [applause]

15 Dewey has had a bad rap. There was a period  
16 - - many students - - There were some  
17 unfortunate instances, some involving outsiders  
18 who were not Dewey students, that forced the  
19 former administration to do very drastic things  
20 like closing the campus. When I was a student  
21 here at Dewey, the campus was as much a center  
22 of education as the classrooms.

23 [applause]

24 Many classes were in fact conducted outside,  
25 especially on a day like today. The lockers

1 have been closed, this magnificent auditorium  
2 has been used to - -

3 The JDAA remembers how things were and we  
4 know many things can be again. We know the - -  
5 [applause]

6 Dewey students have gone on to great  
7 personal success. We know the guiding  
8 principles--we know that many of the guiding  
9 principles of the school were lost. The  
10 extended days - - the resource centers, which  
11 were a center of learning, are essentially non-  
12 existent. There were vibrant and vital programs  
13 right here on this stage in the arts. There  
14 were over eight student publications at any one  
15 time. Many of these are gone, but they could be  
16 back again. The Alumni Association stands ready  
17 to work with whomever is in charge to resurrect  
18 as much of the original vision as possible.

19 [applause]

20 What we still don't understand and we ask  
21 the DOE, why go through the costly expense to  
22 turnaround when, for example, the JDAA worked  
23 with staff and faculty to create a curriculum  
24 that had a great deal of buy-in but was never  
25 implemented by the prior administration, there

1 are many other programs that got lip service  
2 from the prior administration, and they are a  
3 little less, but the numbers that Dewey has been  
4 able to come back and show it is capable of  
5 doing with the staff that is currently here,  
6 both faculty and - - and the current  
7 administration, why should the expense of  
8 turnaround be entertained when that money could  
9 be put right back into the school just as it is,  
10 so that the--

11 [applause]

12 Thank you.

13 MR. ROBERT KANYUK: Robert Kanyuk, UFT  
14 Chapter Leader, member of the SLT. Thank you  
15 all for coming.

16 [applause]

17 I know - - but it is great to see so many  
18 who - - thank you. Bless you. Back in 2009, I  
19 took a real long, hard look at myself after my  
20 daughter spoke to me about wanting to come to  
21 this school, and I looked at her, she is 8-  
22 years-old, and at that time she was five, and I  
23 said, "No, I want better for you." And I was  
24 really proud of the conversation that we were  
25 having, but I was ashamed of--I am proud of what

1 I told my classroom, but when I see the  
2 overall changes that have been happening since  
3 2009, that was - - our lowest point. I knew  
4 being that person in the classroom wasn't good  
5 enough. We need, as teachers, as faculty  
6 members, as administrators, to stand up and to  
7 do something better for our school. I wrote my  
8 union speech that was basically a needs  
9 assessment, looking at what is good and what is  
10 bad about John Dewey High School, and asking for  
11 people to come together and improve this place.  
12 I won that election by 66 percent, that is a  
13 marked victory over my competitor there, and to  
14 me that showed the spirit and the heart of the  
15 Dewey faculty, of wanting to be involved in a  
16 process to improve a school regardless of  
17 support from administration. We are in the  
18 classroom, we live with this, we see this, we  
19 breathe it, we dream it at night, we take it  
20 home on the weekend, through the summer, we are  
21 up, still working, - -

22 [applause]

23 In January, or on January 26, 2010, the PLA  
24 statement came out and we realized, "Hey, we are  
25 being slated for closure." We had, at that

1 point, it was like four months to really get  
2 the plans together, we then formulated some  
3 teams at that point, doing needs assessment, got  
4 that, shifted everything drastically, and we  
5 were looking at, when they made the decision,  
6 really thinking it was a shoo-in for Dewey, to  
7 be a transformation. We were absolutely  
8 astounded and floored when it came out that we  
9 were still in a state of limbo and they chose I  
10 think it was other, around 26 schools, or - - I  
11 forget, for transformation, and then the - -  
12 Dewey closure, and my good friend Bob Desenna  
13 [phonetic] wrote--

14 [applause]

15 Bob is great. He wrote an obituary for John  
16 Dewey High School, and he spoke about the  
17 philosophy, and I called him up and I said, "No.  
18 Dewey is not dead. This is not over. We will  
19 fight this thing, tooth and nail, until we can't  
20 fight anymore."

21 [applause]

22 By fighting, it was - - it was endless time  
23 on cell phones, where our children, holding them  
24 in our laps, and we are working, networking with  
25 people, we decided to form a group called the

1 Friends of Dewey. The Friends of Dewey was  
2 made up of many of the people you are seeing  
3 here in this auditorium, supporting our school,  
4 - - was amazing, Janelle Hines [phonetic],  
5 Jonathan Velosky [phonetic] with the teacher's  
6 center, Elsie Chan [phonetic] who I haven't seen  
7 in a while, but came back to be here today.

8 [applause]

9 Also - - superintendant and former  
10 principal, it wasn't about UFT/DOE, it was about  
11 making this school the best possible school,  
12 taking it from grassroots effort, to make it  
13 better. Parents, students, Megan Hester  
14 [phonetic] from the Annenberg Institute, we even  
15 got - - to come into this school on several  
16 occasions to work with us and formulate a plan,  
17 to look at data, and of course we had - -  
18 council for unity, all trying to--which I  
19 realized now--creating an EPO, even though we  
20 didn't know what an EPO was, because the former  
21 leadership wasn't doing it for us. And we put  
22 together, actually I am ahead of my - - During  
23 that time we put together a plan, called a  
24 Proposal for Transformation, Amy Horowitz  
25 [phonetic] met with us on October 18, 2010, and

1 she said, "You guys really need to demonstrate  
2 your capacity to improve." And I thought to  
3 myself, "That is easy, that is what we have been  
4 working on for about five months now, I have  
5 been emailing the plans to her - -." I invited  
6 Amy to the Friends of Dewey. She never got back  
7 to me. I am going to invite you, I want you to  
8 get back to me, because the DOE can't do it  
9 without us. They can get rid of us, but then  
10 there are still teachers there, and if you are  
11 not working with the new teachers, you are just  
12 going to get rid of them again, so what is the  
13 point?

14 [applause]

15 And so, on October 20th I emailed Chancellor  
16 Klein [phonetic], Neal Stern [phonetic],  
17 Horowitz - - an invitation to meet with us and  
18 the proposal of transformation for Dewey and I -  
19 - 12-page document that I will not read into the  
20 record or we will all fall asleep here, but they  
21 met with us, they kicked it down to Don  
22 O'Connors [phonetic], the - - leader, and - - we  
23 were scheduled to go for about 40 minutes, we  
24 did about an hour and a half, but I was  
25 impressed with that, because they didn't

1       seemingly at that point just say, "Okay, let's  
2       do the perfunctory meeting with this guy shoved  
3       on us and listen to what he has to hear," they  
4       went a good hour and a half, hour and 40  
5       minutes. So I went through, but nothing ever  
6       happened with those plans. You can do it, but  
7       when it comes to the support, when does it come  
8       around? Finally we got the additional school  
9       improvement grant for \$300,000, we started  
10      seeing networking cluster people coming in and  
11      at that point we said, "Okay, they are here,  
12      great. Let's work with them." Then the  
13      decision was made, "We are going to have an  
14      EPO." What is an EPO? Who knows, we will  
15      figure it out. We met - - welcome, our friends  
16      will work with us, let's move forward with this  
17      school. And we have been doing so. We have  
18      been doing so pretty well for this year.

19             The main point that I think I want to make  
20      is your data, and I am looking at the last  
21      progress report, in comparison to the seven  
22      schools that were taken off the list, and in all  
23      of the major categories, Dewey beats all of the  
24      seven schools, hands down.

25             [applause, cheers]

1           When you look at attendance records, John  
2 Dewey High School is number one at 89.1 percent.

3           [applause]

4           The schools below us, FDR, Brooklyn School  
5 for Global Studies, - - they are all over the  
6 place, but they got taken off, and I am not  
7 saying that to put them down, but I am saying,  
8 as Amy Horowitz said, demonstrate the capacity,  
9 and we have.

10          [applause]

11          Graduation rates, four-year, four-year  
12 graduation rates, John Dewey, in regard to these  
13 seven schools that were taken off the list,  
14 number one. We demonstrated up from last year.

15          [applause]

16          Six-year graduation rates? Guess who is  
17 number one? John Dewey High School, 72 percent.  
18 Next category, percent of - - students earning  
19 10 credits or more, here Brooklyn School for  
20 Global Studies beat us by one-tenth of a  
21 percent, they got 68.3, we got 68.2. - -

22          [applause]

23          Average - - rate for remaining Regents, I  
24 don't even know what that category means, but we  
25 are number one.

1 [applause, cheers]

2 College prep - - number one. College  
3 readiness index, now this is the most important  
4 thing for me. I don't care where my son goes or  
5 where my daughter goes, but they are going to a  
6 school that prepares them to do very well in  
7 college and John Dewey High School prepares our  
8 studies to succeed in college. They don't - -  
9 there is a dedicated staff that pushes them, it  
10 is not just about let me pass students, let me  
11 get data, it is, "I care about these kids, let  
12 me prepare them to have the life they want to  
13 have," and we do it every day.

14 [applause, cheers]

15 Thank you. I'm not done. Now, the other  
16 schools, they got taken off the list because  
17 they got As and they got Bs. We got Cs because  
18 we got - - because of the surveys that we filled  
19 out accurately and honestly about our concerns  
20 about safety in the halls. We spoke to the  
21 administration over and over and over about  
22 implementing programs for managing the halls,  
23 better utilization of the resource services, we  
24 got - - Finally, we have we a new principal and  
25 the conversation I had with her two days before

1 the break, while meeting in the hall, was in  
2 regard to my - - said, "Am I imagining this? Do  
3 you hear that?" And I go, "What are you talking  
4 about?" And he goes, "I don't hear noise from  
5 the halls, it is a miracle." And I got really  
6 angry. I cursed a lot. I am not going to say  
7 what I said, but I will paraphrase it. "That is  
8 no miracle. That is leadership. If we would  
9 have had the DOE listen to us years ago, had the  
10 changes made to control the environment, the  
11 environmental part of the survey, the atmosphere  
12 in the school, safety issues, we would have been  
13 A or B and not in this situation. This is a  
14 fantastic step." - -

15 [applause, cheers]

16 MS. MARIETTE FAUSTIN: My name is Mariette  
17 Faustin. I am a member of the School Leadership  
18 Team, and a parent who has a daughter at John  
19 Dewey. She is a junior.

20 [applause]

21 I support the education that John Dewey is  
22 giving to my daughter. I also support the  
23 teachers here, who work tirelessly to prepare  
24 our students for college. I do not support the  
25 turnaround law. The turnaround law has no

1 research base. The Educational Impact  
2 Statement shows that it will cost the city more  
3 money to let go of these teachers and hire new  
4 ones, according to some data it would cost the  
5 city 60 million dollars to let go of these  
6 teachers and re-hire 800 new ones. As a - -  
7 immigrant, I care very much about education.  
8 One of the most important things to me, coming  
9 to this country, was education. Some people  
10 talk about buying a house or money, these things  
11 are all good, but for me, education was the best  
12 thing, and I got an education here, because my  
13 grandmother always said, "You can decorate your  
14 body all you want, but once you talk, people  
15 listen, and they see who you are, and you carry  
16 that education with you everywhere." And as a  
17 parent, I make sure that my children have the  
18 best education, and I will work to make sure  
19 that they get it, and I will not stand here and  
20 speak of John Dewey if I did not believe that  
21 John Dewey is educating my daughter.

22 [cheers, applause]

23 When I hear the principal and the  
24 superintendant say they will - - the programs  
25 and keep the ones that are working, I feel that

1 in this building we have had experience with  
2 programming - - and no consideration was given  
3 to the parents, they were not asked, they just  
4 went ahead and closed it, and we know what that  
5 is like. And for this reason, we really worry  
6 about that. What does that mean? Are parents  
7 going to be informed? Or is it going to be done  
8 behind closed doors? This sounds like, to me,  
9 like we design the curriculum to suit, not the  
10 student, but turnaround strategy.

11 [applause]

12 The existing programs at John Dewey work.  
13 My daughter has benefited greatly from these  
14 programs. The teachers here help her so much.  
15 They push her to take advanced classes, classes  
16 that she herself didn't really want to take, Mr.  
17 - - was another one saying, "Come on, you can do  
18 it, you can do it," I will tell you, children do  
19 not always want to go ahead and challenge  
20 themselves. They want to just do - - and that  
21 is it. I personally am sure these teachers work  
22 hard with my daughter and push her to take  
23 challenging classes. Now she is taking two math  
24 classes that normally she would not have done,  
25 and she is trying.

1 I already talked about how I was upset  
2 about the resource center that was closed, but I  
3 think letting go of these teachers who have  
4 worked so hard the last three years to prepare  
5 these students would be really a slap in the  
6 face. It is as if you are saying, "You know,  
7 you have worked real hard for the past three  
8 years, now we need to kick you out, because now  
9 we are making progress." I think there is a  
10 better way to help them. If they need  
11 professional development, help them. So - - do  
12 even better. So - - benefit - -

13 [applause, cheers]

14 I am not saying John Dewey is the greatest  
15 school, but it is a good school.

16 [applause]

17 We have consistent graduation rates for the  
18 past three years, and last year's graduation  
19 rate was at 68 percent, and another important  
20 indicator, many 9th graders - - struggle because  
21 they are not ready to take on the challenging  
22 course here at John Dewey. As a result, steps  
23 were taken to address their development needs,  
24 and today the number of 9th graders with 10  
25 credits or more went up from 45 percent to 78

1 percent. That is a 70 percent increase since  
2 the 2007-2008. If this is not progress, I do  
3 not know what is. I can't imagine any better  
4 progress - -

5 This is the greatest predictor of - - and -  
6 - I know what that means. In addition, of these  
7 10th graders, who have received instruction in a  
8 more structured environment where they work  
9 towards the completion of the course work that  
10 they needed, and this is where they earn the  
11 credit needed, this is a - - success. This is  
12 John Dewey success. There is something for  
13 everyone at John Dewey, if you are - - excited  
14 about learning, and you have - - you can begin  
15 to take advanced placement classes all year  
16 long. You do not have to wait until you are in  
17 your third year or fourth year, you can take the  
18 - - there are also advanced classes - -

19 U.S. News and World Report - - John Dewey -  
20 - rated John Dewey as one of the top five - -  
21 out of 18,797 high schools. If this is not  
22 progress, I do not know what is.

23 Newsweek rated John Dewey in the top six of  
24 the best high schools in America, for 2007,  
25 2009, and 2010. It is because of this - -

1 school staff challenges students to advance  
2 placement because - - and tests, only six  
3 percent, 1,600 of all the public schools in the  
4 U.S. made the list, and John Dewey was one of  
5 them.

6 [applause]

7 Let's face it: the problem at John Dewey is  
8 not the programs, as it was stated. It was the  
9 leadership at John Dewey that presented a  
10 problem. - - changes that could have been made  
11 four years ago, - - to address the needs of the  
12 struggling students. Perhaps it would have made  
13 a difference. There is no way of knowing what  
14 the DOE would have done. The three years of  
15 consistent progress and college readiness,  
16 however, are - - John Dewey has what it takes to  
17 prepare students for college.

18 This is the charge that I am talking about.  
19 As a parent, I don't think about letter grades  
20 or C or D or F, when I want to send my child to  
21 school, I ask around - - now, if I were to ask  
22 of these 23 schools, this is our college  
23 readiness charge, which school, without looking  
24 at the name, which school would you likely put  
25 your student in there? - -

1 [cheers, applause]

2 It is not about a letter C or letter A or  
3 letter F, if you have a letter A and you are at  
4 the bottom here, you have - - I'm sorry.

5 [applause]

6 Alright, let me continue. I want to say  
7 that there is always a reason why things happen.  
8 Some people could have believed that turnaround  
9 - - around eight years ago, seven or five, or  
10 even four, not even close. - - research on how  
11 the city does with schools - - researched  
12 reform, school reform, a new marketplace, this  
13 is a powerful article of - - and let me tell  
14 you, if you read it, you will just be falling  
15 off your chair. So what happens is that small  
16 school initiative that the DOE had, - - to deal  
17 with the problem of failing schools, but in the  
18 process of trying to deal with this problem,  
19 they have created small schools and closed large  
20 schools, but the building that created those  
21 small schools, they could only accommodate one-  
22 third of the population of that large school.  
23 Sometimes half of that population. So what  
24 ended up happening in September, after that  
25 school was closed, in September the children

1 from these - - made their way to a - - school  
2 like John Dewey, so in other words, it is  
3 helping the small school at the expense of the  
4 larger school. This is at the core of the  
5 problem with John Dewey and many other schools.  
6 This is what is at the core, and I have done a  
7 lot of research. These are the causes.

8 So I am going to continue. Okay, okay. The  
9 last thing that I want to say is that it is not  
10 - - we want the principal - - but leadership was  
11 booted and now we have leadership. But the  
12 problem is there is a lack of trust in the  
13 approach that the DOE is taking with regards to  
14 servicing our students. We have new leadership  
15 now, so let the leadership work, let - -  
16 teachers who have worked so hard for the past  
17 three years to help their school. Give them new  
18 professional developments so that they can help  
19 their students. If you don't do that, - - you  
20 will make the parents' frustration to set in,  
21 and the vote of no confidence that John Dewey  
22 received for the past few years will repeat  
23 itself. Please, give John Dewey a chance. It  
24 is - -, please give it a chance. Thank you.

25 [cheers, applause]

1 MS. MONIQUE LINDSAY: Let's give - - a  
2 hand, y'all. I am a member of the Citywide  
3 Council on High Schools. I represent Brooklyn's  
4 6th district, this is one, I also have a child  
5 that goes to William A. Grady high school, that  
6 just came off the list. But I am still here,  
7 because all schools are our schools as parents.  
8 So I would like to say good evening to everyone,  
9 thank you for coming out. I would like to say  
10 thank you for John Dewey for allowing us to come  
11 here, and allowing me participate.

12 So, two weeks after the 44th anniversary of  
13 the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., we find  
14 ourselves still in the struggles of the right to  
15 a great public education for all our sons and  
16 daughters, because they deserve it, without a  
17 threat of school closing, phase out, co-  
18 location, and turnaround.

19 [applause]

20 We are here today to stand firm to our  
21 commitment, as parents, to educating our  
22 children. We stand in unity, we stand strong,  
23 and we stand tall. We say enough is enough.  
24 Not on our watch. And definitely on the backs  
25 of our children. We will not--

1 [applause]

2 We will not--excuse me--they will not be  
3 held hostage as anyone's political cause. We  
4 demand justice for all students, and we demand  
5 all students have the opportunity to be college  
6 and career ready, even those students who cannot  
7 see the whole picture yet, as - - because we  
8 know in time they will come around to see what  
9 is needed for them to graduate and go on.

10 Now is the time to show us the proof that  
11 the turnaround works. Oh, we know the answer.  
12 There is no proof.

13 [applause]

14 We, as parents, as parent leaders and  
15 representatives for our children are insisting  
16 that Mayor Bloomberg turn around and let our  
17 children go. And let our schools go. And by  
18 the way, is Mayor Bloomberg in the audience,  
19 because I can't see him?

20 I will leave you with the words of an old  
21 negro spiritual. It goes like this: We are not  
22 going to let nobody turn us around. We are not  
23 going to let nobody turn us around. Turn us  
24 around, turn us around.

25 Please everyone, I beg you, remember we need

1 to rock the vote. We cannot have these mayors  
2 dictating what happens in our schools or to our  
3 children. And I also would like to say, as a  
4 member of the Citywide Council on High School,  
5 we demand that the Department of Education  
6 abandon this turnaround plan, and give  
7 meaningful support to struggling schools.  
8 Closing them, turning them around, co-locating  
9 them, and all that other nonsense does not work.  
10 Thank you.

11 [cheers, applause]

12 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: We have now concluded  
13 the formal presentation and we are going to move  
14 to the public comment portion on tonight's  
15 agenda. I would like to--the councilman stepped  
16 out for a second, but Mr. Stewart [phonetic]  
17 from the--the Borough Rep for the UFT.

18 [applause]

19 MR. HOWARD STEWART: Thank you. I am glad  
20 to speak. I am Howard Stewart, the Brooklyn  
21 Borough rep of the UFT. I want to thank the CEC  
22 for your statement, we are with you 100 percent,  
23 UFT will ensure, to the best of our ability,  
24 that - -

25 [applause]

1           Thank you very much. - - One of the  
2 things that you said, - - what the schools do  
3 here and the reason why we are here. We are not  
4 here because anything is wrong with John Dewey  
5 High School. John Dewey High School is  
6 improving. We are here because UFT and the DOE  
7 didn't agree on an agreement on teacher  
8 evaluation. You and I were on the same  
9 committee - - You wanted the Chancellor to make  
10 final decisions whether a teacher should be  
11 ineffective, and UFT said it should be appealed-  
12 -you guys walked out, we didn't have an  
13 agreement. So what did we do? We went to the  
14 city, we went to the governor, and we made a  
15 deal with the governor, and we had a deal on the  
16 future of - - So we had to go around you because  
17 you guys wanted it, so what did you do, the  
18 mayor called you to do something, - - so what  
19 did you do? You said, "That's it, these schools  
20 are going to turnaround, we are going to show  
21 them." And we are here because of the policies  
22 of the - - for the last 10 years. Ten years  
23 destroying public education in this city. Ten  
24 years.

25           [cheers, applause]

1 All these policies - - and in Brooklyn,  
2 let me tell you what you have done in Brooklyn.  
3 The high schools of Brooklyn, you have decimated  
4 them. Decimated. But let me give you a list of  
5 them, in 2002-2003 you closed - -, in 2003-2004,  
6 you closed - - and in 2004-2005, you closed  
7 Jefferson. In 2007-2008, you closed Tillman,  
8 South Shores, and Lafayette. In 2008-2009, you  
9 closed - -. In 2010-2011 you closed - - and we  
10 sued you, and we won.

11 [cheers, applause]

12 This year, - - that is why we are here,  
13 because you destabilized the big high schools,  
14 the high schools that did everything. And the  
15 small schools you put in to replace these  
16 schools did not allow special ed children or ELL  
17 children in them, and so - - two blocks from  
18 here, two blocks, you can walk in two minutes,  
19 two minutes, when you closed Lafayette, you  
20 destabilized John Dewey High School.

21 [cheers, applause]

22 Absolutely. - - Department of Education.  
23 Thank you.

24 [cheers, applause]

25 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: Thank you. - -

1 Mercedez Qualls [phonetic] representing CSA.

2 MS. MERCEDEZ QUALLS: Good evening, ladies  
3 and gentlemen. I stand before you as a member  
4 of the Council of Supervisors and  
5 Administrators. I also stand before you as a  
6 product of the public education system. Both as  
7 a student and parent of two sons who attended  
8 public school and as a retired high school  
9 principal. My oldest son is now a teacher at  
10 Grover Cleveland High School and like you, he is  
11 fighting for the right to teach the students  
12 that he so cares about.

13 [applause]

14 And so, in support of the John Dewey  
15 community of learners and teachers, I read the  
16 statement from Ernest Belkin [phonetic].

17 The New York City Department of Education's  
18 latest attempt to close 26 schools, which were  
19 already in the process of three year reform  
20 programs, is a political maneuver that is not  
21 rooted in sound educational practices.

22 [applause]

23 It is a ploy designed to avoid negotiations  
24 with the CSA and UFT over new principal and  
25 teacher evaluation systems. The motivation

1 behind that ploy was to follow a turnaround  
2 model, a model that does not recall principal or  
3 teacher evaluations, and allows the city to  
4 close and reopen schools under new names.

5       What else would be new about it? Fifty  
6 percent of the teachers would be new, while 50  
7 percent of the former teachers would be - -  
8 willy nilly. There is nothing educationally  
9 sound about this intervention. It is being  
10 introduced for cyclical reasons, not--I repeat,  
11 not to help children. It will not contribute to  
12 the development of sound principal and teacher  
13 evaluation systems.

14       Furthermore, in moving half the staff of  
15 these schools and recruiting replacements from  
16 other schools, the Department of Education will  
17 disable our schools throughout the system, one  
18 after the other, like dominos. While these  
19 human costs are the most important ones, there  
20 are fiscal costs as the parent said earlier.  
21 Removing 1800 teachers and tossing them into the  
22 ATR--and that is Absent Teacher Reserve, where  
23 they will work as substitutes at full salary,  
24 will cost the city approximately 188 million  
25 annually.

1 Ladies and gentlemen, fight for your  
2 school. We support you.

3 [cheers, applause]

4 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: Councilman Recchia?  
5 Okay, Mark Trager [phonetic], representing  
6 assembly member Colton [phonetic].

7 [applause]

8 MR. MARK TRAGER: Good evening. It is a  
9 very hard act to follow after the great comments  
10 from the panel. My name is Mark Trager, I am  
11 here tonight on behalf of Assembly Member  
12 William Colton, who is Albany.

13 Education is very dear to all our hearts,  
14 that is why we are all here. I have to say or  
15 me, this is déjà vu, because we were very much  
16 involved in the efforts to try to improve  
17 Lafayette High School some years ago. I recall  
18 there was a meeting just like this--not a CEC  
19 meeting--but a meeting called for by the DOE,  
20 where they asked the community to come in and to  
21 provide suggestions as to what the future of  
22 Lafayette should look like. And I remember,  
23 over 400 people from the community came down to  
24 that meeting and speaker after speaker came down  
25 requesting a school that really reflects the

1 needs of the community, an international one,  
2 and one after another came, even staff from the  
3 school spoke in support of such a school. One  
4 of the staff actually had a proposal for such a  
5 school. Broad community support. And the DOE  
6 nodded their heads and they all said, "thank you  
7 for your comments," and of course, that school  
8 was not chosen, and that is the pattern,  
9 unfortunately, with the Department of Education.  
10 That there is always meaningful input from the  
11 community, from parents, from vital stakeholders  
12 in education, and for some reason, they are  
13 always shunned.

14 I would like to mention that - - Colton is a  
15 co-sponsor to legislation in Albany that would  
16 require CEC approval before there is any closure  
17 or turnaround of any - -

18 [applause]

19 And I am just unclear about the expectations  
20 of this turnaround problem. They say that they  
21 want to possibly remove half the staff, up to  
22 half the staff. They want to change the name of  
23 the school. But how does that improve student  
24 outcomes? Does that change the needs of our  
25 students?

1 AUDIENCE: No.

2 MR. MARK TRAGER: Does that magically make  
3 all the IEPs disappear?

4 AUDIENCE: No.

5 MR. MARK TRAGER: Will all of our English  
6 Language Learners suddenly speak English  
7 beautifully within a day?

8 AUDIENCE: No.

9 MR. MARK TRAGER: They need support. They  
10 need support. This plan has the potential, and  
11 it will lead to a very divisive culture in the  
12 school, and if we really think about this, if  
13 you are a teacher, you have a student that is  
14 struggling and needs extra help, do you say,  
15 "John, maybe you should change your name to  
16 Billy."

17 [cheers, applause]

18 MR. MARK TRAGER: Should you tell him to  
19 maybe move half the people in his household?  
20 These are our kids. These are our kids, and  
21 they are students, I know there are teachers  
22 providing accommodations for our kids. And our  
23 schools need the same accommodations. What John  
24 Dewey really needs is more professional  
25 development support. Not closure. It needs

1 more funding for our kids and our staff, not  
2 closure. It needs more community input, not  
3 closure.

4 [applause]

5 We stand ready with the community, with the  
6 parents, with the staff, to truly, truly work to  
7 improve this school. These are our kids and  
8 they are worth fighting for, and we are not  
9 going to quit or turn around, we will be there,  
10 John Dewey. Thank you.

11 [cheers, applause]

12 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: Thank you.

13 MR. DOMENIC RECCHIA: Thank you. Good  
14 evening, and I want to thank the CEC and the  
15 representatives for the support you are giving  
16 John Dewey High School, and the alumni.

17 This school, at one time, was the rising  
18 star of New York City. Unfortunately, when new  
19 mayors come in, they don't like to support  
20 things that were working, they want to put their  
21 names on programs that are successful and this  
22 problem - - didn't just start now, it started in  
23 the 1990s, when John Dewey, little by little,  
24 began eating away at the programs at John Dewey  
25 High School, they weren't supporting the high

1 school the way it was supported when I went to  
2 school here.

3 [applause]

4 MR. DOMENIC RECCHIA: So little by little we  
5 lost independent studies, they lost the great  
6 programs that they had, and this school was so  
7 successful, I could go down the list of very  
8 famous people that have made it because of John  
9 Dewey.

10 [applause]

11 MR. DOMENIC RECCHIA: We have a number of  
12 judges, successful businessmen, but now we have  
13 to move forward. And unfortunately, when I got  
14 elected here as a city council member, from 2005  
15 on, when I saw things were getting really bad at  
16 John Dewey, I wrote letters, had meetings with  
17 the DOE, begging for change at John Dewey, and  
18 begging that the leadership had to go. And  
19 people looked at me, sent me nasty letters, but  
20 it was the truth. It was the truth that the  
21 teachers were at John Dewey are what make John  
22 Dewey a great school.

23 [applause]

24 MR. DOMENIC RECCHIA: I have to say that it  
25 wasn't up until a few weeks ago that the

1 principal was removed, and it took many, many  
2 years. It is sad. Because many years--children  
3 will never be able to get their lives back. The  
4 damage that this principal did will scorn  
5 students for the rest of their life. And I take  
6 responsibility for part of that. I tried to get  
7 the principal removed. To see programs and to  
8 see the way he was - - he had a problem with the  
9 back lockers, the way he resolved it was he  
10 cemented them up. Dance program. How do you  
11 get rid of a dance program at John Dewey, which  
12 at one time was the rising art school from  
13 musical instruments to dance talent? How do you  
14 get rid of dance at John Dewey, when you have  
15 the best dance groups? It is amazing. The  
16 dance teacher was pushed out by the assistant  
17 principal and the principal. It was a disgrace.  
18 This has to stop. John Dewey was great because  
19 it brought everyone together, from all over.  
20 Whether you were bright, or you were in a  
21 vocational program, we had shops, we had a  
22 garage here at John Dewey High School. We could  
23 teach auto mechanics. You know someday,  
24 carpenters and electricians are going to make  
25 more money than lawyers and doctors. These are

1 talents that we need to bring back, bring  
2 back, set the best technology labs out there.  
3 Let's bring back the school. Let's bring back  
4 the arts, we have a beautiful stage. Some  
5 schools don't even have auditoriums like this.  
6 This is what this school needs to be brought  
7 back to. I am glad to see that the Alumni  
8 Association is at the table, where they got  
9 locked out by the prior principal.

10 How do you lock out an alumni association?  
11 We had an alumni that year, everyone came down  
12 to John Dewey and people were asking questions,  
13 "Where is the band? Where is the dance band?"  
14 They saw lockers being cemented up. It was  
15 amazing. We have to take back those fences  
16 outside. Those kids are not animals, they  
17 should not be locked up.

18 [cheers, applause]

19 The should be - - this campus and - - with  
20 each other. You are impounding schools with  
21 darkness - - instead they are locked up in a  
22 cage. It doesn't have to be this way. So we  
23 all have to unite together and I am asking  
24 Deputy Chancellor Sternberg, I want to thank you  
25 for taking out the principal, I know this is

1 tough, but I want you to work with the  
2 community, have more parents involved on the  
3 leadership team and in the hiring, make them  
4 have a little voice, a better voice, a stronger  
5 voice, and in addition to that, I really think  
6 that there was damage done to the school. We  
7 should keep the staff and give the staff an  
8 opportunity to work with the new principal and  
9 let's see where we can go before we decide about  
10 moving staff members.

11 [applause]

12 We - - debt for two million dollars. This  
13 school should not be blamed, or this new  
14 principal should not be carrying this baggage of  
15 the debt for two million dollars. They didn't  
16 cause this, the prior principal caused this.  
17 The students at John Dewey shouldn't suffer  
18 because of this. The state is giving us more  
19 money than we expected in the budget, as you  
20 know, the financing - - city council. I think  
21 we have to figure out a - - how to keep the  
22 extended day, and figure out how this school  
23 should not be held liable for this two million  
24 dollars that they are holding in debt. It is  
25 very important. We have to support the new

1 principal. I am all for it. The change in  
2 the school, I am asking that the John Dewey name  
3 be kept, or whatever the new name is. I believe  
4 that whatever, Blank school at John Dewey or the  
5 John Dewey School for Performance Arts, whatever  
6 you decide, okay? I want to work with the  
7 parents, work with the students, work with the  
8 teachers, to make John Dewey the best learning  
9 institution it possibly can be. Deputy  
10 Chancellor Sternberg, we need your help. I want  
11 you to work with us, not against us. I want  
12 Chancellor Dennis Wolcock [phonetic] to come  
13 down here, and see for himself what a wonderful  
14 school this is, and what a wonderful school it  
15 could be, and how wonderful the staff is, here  
16 at John Dewey.

17 The past--no one can rewrite the past, it is  
18 history. We have to move forward. We have to  
19 keep the extended day, just like - - people find  
20 the money for that, we should find the money to  
21 keep the extended day here at John Dewey. We  
22 want to work with you, I will help you, I am  
23 willing to put money up to the school, I have  
24 always given the school money, but I think it is  
25 time that we really need to figure out what

1 direction we are going and you have groups  
2 here, people at other schools would die for, and  
3 I think there are many programs that we should  
4 move back.

5 I want to thank the Alumni Association for  
6 being active and I want to thank - - of the  
7 Council for Community, that is one program that  
8 should be expanded in this school, because that  
9 is where it started here, at John Dewey High  
10 School, it is a great--

11 [applause]

12 I am here to listen to what people have to  
13 say, I am here to support the teachers, I am  
14 here to make sure that John Dewey once again  
15 will rise again, because this is a great  
16 learning institution and it is a place for all  
17 students to learn for the future.

18 Thank you very much.

19 [applause]

20 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: We are going to move  
21 into public comment. You received numbers when  
22 you signed up. I ask now if you could line up  
23 along the wall right here, and enter the - - and  
24 you can speak right at that microphone. Numbers  
25 one through 10, if you could line up now.

1 MS. SHARI WEISS: My name is Shari Weiss,  
2 and I am a teacher teaching here, handicapped at  
3 John Dewey High School. I have worked for the  
4 DOE for 18 years, the last 12 here at John Dewey  
5 High School.

6 In 2008, Dewey was placed on the PLA list,  
7 following a drop in our four-year graduation  
8 rate. We needed to make changes to meet the  
9 needs of our students and we did. In spite of  
10 these challenges, our graduation rate increased  
11 steadily since 2008. Our ELL graduation rate is  
12 consistently higher, above the city's average,  
13 specifically 20 points higher than the city  
14 average in 2010.

15 [cheers, applause]

16 We are also preparing our students for  
17 college. Our New York City College Preparatory  
18 Index is significantly higher than the city-wide  
19 average. Dewey's college readiness index far  
20 supersedes the city-wide average. Our school  
21 offers students 16 AP classes, which allow them  
22 to earn college credits while still in high  
23 school. It is very hard to understand why our  
24 school is still being targeted for turnaround  
25 when our averages are higher than the city's

1 average.

2 At a public hearing, at which members of the  
3 state assembly criticized the closing plans last  
4 Wednesday, Chancellor Wolcox [phonetic] said,  
5 and I am quoting from the New York Times school  
6 website, he said, "Reopening the schools and  
7 replacing some of the teaching staff would lead  
8 to higher graduation rates and more students who  
9 are prepared for college and the workplace."

10 I ask respectfully, we have already improved  
11 those areas, what more does the Department of  
12 Education want from John Dewey High School?

13 I could go on and on about the many programs  
14 our school offers our students, such as our  
15 award winning robotics team, our - - Café run by  
16 our - - students, our - - Okay. I was just cut  
17 off.

18 MR. BRYAN HALL: Hi, my name is Bryan Hall,  
19 I am a teacher here at John Dewey High School.  
20 When I read the EIS statement, it just turned my  
21 stomach because of how it twisted a  
22 fundamentally flawed document. It is  
23 unnecessary - - bring no benefits to this school  
24 and it will only cause harm and disruption.  
25 From page 10 of the document it says that for

1 the new school, the mission of the new school  
2 is to prepare students for college and careers.  
3 You just heard that John Dewey High School does  
4 that better than most schools in this city. It  
5 says on pages 12 through 15, the different  
6 programs it will ensure here, those programs are  
7 already here and active. Our robotics program,  
8 our - - program, our career readiness, our  
9 culinary arts program, all of these programs  
10 that are - - are here already. The only two  
11 additions are the visual and media arts, from  
12 which we already offer some courses, and the  
13 theater arts and dance, and it says that by 2013  
14 this new plan will bring those programs to John  
15 Dewey.

16 Last year our school leadership team spend a  
17 daily meeting mapping out a plan and by either  
18 2012 or 2013 we already planned for those. If  
19 you would let us do it, we already provide every  
20 element that is in this plan. The only thing in  
21 this plan that is not already provided for or  
22 planned at John Dewey High School is removing  
23 teachers. The only thing that will change is  
24 teachers will be removed with no proof that they  
25 will be replaced with better teachers, and there

1 will be harm to our students, there will be  
2 disruption to our process, and as you heard  
3 tonight already, there will be numerous costs.

4 In addition to this, the statement on pages  
5 4 and 5 says why this plan should be brought in,  
6 because we are not sufficiently improving, you  
7 heard statistics, you have seen statistics that  
8 show we have significantly improved. Twenty-one  
9 percent increase in graduation rate in three  
10 years, the city average is only a 14 percent  
11 increase in the past three years. We are  
12 improving faster than the rest of the city, how  
13 is that not sufficient? Thank you.

14 [applause]

15 MR. CHRISTOPHER YOTES: Hello, my name is  
16 Christopher Yotes [phonetic], I am a 10th grader  
17 at John Dewey High School and I am not one of  
18 those students that is in the AP classes, I am  
19 not one of those students that gets - - all the  
20 time, in fact, I am a CTT student, and I can't  
21 picture a better school for me than John Dewey  
22 High School because this school not only--it is  
23 not just a school that gives me an education, it  
24 is a school that makes me want to learn, a  
25 school that gives me a family, it is one of

1 those schools that I can go to and know that  
2 there are people that look after me.

3 For instance, there are some teachers, and I  
4 will give names, like Mr. Staheli [phonetic],  
5 Mr. Doyle [phonetic], Mr. Haver [phonetic], Ms.  
6 Rosnick [phonetic], Ms. Lee, they are just some  
7 of the teachers that give me not only  
8 educational things, not only academics,  
9 academical skills, but life skills, skills that  
10 I can take out into the world and learn to use  
11 everyday. And some of my concerns are that me  
12 being a 10th grader and having 11th grader  
13 friends that--what if they are like, next year,  
14 if the teachers who are here now aren't here,  
15 who is going to recommend them for colleges.  
16 The people that know them, if they aren't here,  
17 how are they going to get the people to  
18 recommend them?

19 And who am I going to connect with? If I  
20 get new teachers, the relationships that I have  
21 built up over the past few years aren't going  
22 to--they are just going to disappear.

23 Another thing I am worried about is clubs, a  
24 lot of clubs have the same connections with  
25 their advisors as the students do, so without

1 club advisors, who is going to be in charge of  
2 the clubs that make Dewey Dewey?

3 [applause]

4 MR. ANTHONY BISHOP: Hello, my name is  
5 Anthony Bishop. I had a speech, but it is way  
6 too long and parts of it wouldn't make sense if  
7 I didn't finish it, so I am just going to say  
8 what I think. Pretty much I have been here for  
9 about a year and 3/4ths and I have had teachers  
10 throughout his lifetime, or throughout this high  
11 school career, - - and my previous - - best  
12 friends and he has - - and every teacher he just  
13 mentioned pretty much helped us throughout our  
14 whole high school career, especially - - I had  
15 hard times, I hate authority especially - - high  
16 school, she helped through all of it, and so did  
17 all of my other teachers.

18 One thing--I came here and I looked at all  
19 the choices I had in clubs and academics and all  
20 the program ideas they had, I came here  
21 expecting everything. I got almost everything I  
22 wanted and pretty much I couldn't expect more  
23 but I got more. There is still about a year and  
24 a half for me to go. I really could not - -  
25 when I first came here - - this school has seen

1 hard times apparently, this school has  
2 probably seen a lot worse than I think, but the  
3 teachers don't deserve to be shut down, they  
4 have worked their hard-earned time here. Pretty  
5 much - - pretty much - - I don't think a - -  
6 yeah, before I go, I just want to say from - -  
7 turnaround, you don't have cart blanche or any  
8 kind of immunity to things, when you shut down  
9 the schools or turnaround or fire the teachers,  
10 you are going to have a lot of angry teachers,  
11 students, parents, and probably other people,  
12 and they are going to look for somebody to yell  
13 at, and it is going to be you.

14 [cheers, applause]

15 MR. CHRISTIAN REYES: I am going to start  
16 off with my name. My name is Christian Reyes  
17 [phonetic] and I am 15-years-old and I am a  
18 sophomore at this school. When I walked into  
19 high school I was expecting nothing to change  
20 about myself, I was expecting everything to  
21 remain exactly the same, just as it was in  
22 middle school. I was one of those people that  
23 said, "Nothing will ever change," but sure  
24 enough, high school did change me, and it  
25 changed me for the better, I think.

1 I walked into this school not expecting  
2 anything, actually, and I came on in the middle  
3 of 9th grade in the robotics team, and I wasn't  
4 quite sure how it happened, but it turned out  
5 pretty successful and it made me very interested  
6 into robotics, and because of this school and  
7 the way that it was, I became just that much  
8 more interested in school. I walked into this  
9 school and became interested in a subject which  
10 I actually hated before, and that was history,  
11 and now I love history, I can't get enough of  
12 it. I walked into my math class and I actually  
13 liked it, because in 9th grade I had a teacher  
14 who would spend his entire lunch break with me  
15 just talking about math, history and math, - -  
16 math, solving math, everything that he could,  
17 because he just cared that much, and I feel that  
18 if this school would shut down, all of these  
19 experiences would be meaningless, because if you  
20 obviously have staff that is dedicated and  
21 previously, as was said before, that if the  
22 staff here is working, obviously doing its job,  
23 why are you going to bother trying to shut us  
24 down? Why even bother trying to fire all of the  
25 staff? You said that what we were doing was

1 working, so if something is not working, don't  
2 try to fix it with a problem that probably won't  
3 be fixed for a little while, so you think that  
4 by shutting everybody down it is going to work?  
5 It is not.

6 You are just going to have a bigger problem  
7 with new people and are new to the problem, so  
8 what, you are going to have a new set of  
9 thinkers to think about an old problem? It  
10 doesn't make any sense.

11 [cheers, applause]

12 MS. MARTINA HOOKER: Hi, my name is Martina  
13 Hooker [phonetic], and I have been teaching at  
14 Dewey for 12 years, just over two years ago, in  
15 January of 2010, Dewey was placed on the PLA  
16 list, Persistently Low Achieving, because our  
17 graduation rate in 2009 was very low. It was  
18 57.4 percent. We were worried about the  
19 possibility of our school being closed, we knew  
20 we had to work hard to better serve our  
21 students, and we did. By the end of that school  
22 year, just six months after being put on the  
23 list, we got our graduation rate up to 63  
24 percent and the following year, in 2001, we made  
25 it up to 65.9, our graduation rate went up 8.5

1 percentage points in two years. Both those  
2 years were above the city average, pretty good,  
3 right?

4 [cheers]

5 And there's more. Here are the statistics  
6 for the number of freshman students who earn the  
7 required 10 or more credits: 2009 was low, it  
8 was 56.7 percent, but in 2011, we made it to  
9 78.2, that is over a 20 percent increase, way to  
10 go, Dewey. I look at our college readiness  
11 rate, it is 8.5 percent higher than the city  
12 average.

13 Now, with statistics like that, why are you  
14 closing a school? And there is more. We made a  
15 lot of this progress without Federal School  
16 Improvement Grant money. The SIG money we got  
17 in February 2011, just over one year ago, and we  
18 started putting it to good use right away. We  
19 set up camps, held Saturday school, and this  
20 fall we hired a dance teacher, got our dance  
21 program back, set up Schedule, our online  
22 assessment management system, and this February  
23 we started to use SIG money to fund after school  
24 programs for tutoring and clubs. These changes  
25 and improvements have helped boost up morale and

1 school spirit and we are finally starting to  
2 recover from last year's articles in the press  
3 that reported Dewey to be a school that would  
4 most probably close. There was a more positive  
5 feeling at Dewey, the feeling of hope, and this  
6 hope fueled us forward as we continued to work  
7 towards improving. And I had more, but oh well.  
8 Thank you.

9 [applause]

10 KAREN: Good evening, I am a former student  
11 from John Dewey High School and my daughter goes  
12 to this school. All the - - and it was taken  
13 away from them because of budget cuts. All I  
14 ask simply is give John Dewey back what they  
15 originally had. Don't take nothing away, take  
16 the money that you are going to spend for the  
17 turnaround, maybe let's add teachers, maybe go  
18 through extra programs for the teachers to  
19 improve maybe their social skills towards the  
20 students, and give them back what they lost. I  
21 would not like to go to a job interview where  
22 somebody said, "Oh, what school did you go to?"  
23 "Oh, the - - ." They are going to be like, "What  
24 is that?" I want to be proud and say, "I went  
25 to John Dewey High School."

1 [applause]

2 I want my child in this school to experience  
3 what I experienced, and have the programs that  
4 she wanted to go, when she wanted - - all gone.  
5 Her and her fellow students are struggling  
6 because the DOE or budget cuts cut them. All I  
7 am saying is take that money that you are going  
8 to spend in the turnover and give it back to  
9 Dewey. Show them that as former students, other  
10 parents that have students and say, "Dewey  
11 stands for college prep classes, they have a  
12 wonderful campus," open up the case, like  
13 everybody is saying, give them what they had,  
14 bring back the resource rooms, that they lost  
15 not too long ago. And the auditorium. Give  
16 them back what they originally had before. Give  
17 them back their history. Give them back  
18 everything that all the past students and  
19 current students should experience. That is all  
20 I want to say.

21 [applause]

22 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: Numbers 11 through 20,  
23 line up along the wall, 11 through 20, line up  
24 right along the wall. We are going to get  
25 started in a second. I noticed many of you have

1 written statements and so if you want to  
2 submit them to us after you finish, you can feel  
3 free to submit them, after you finish reading,  
4 feel free to submit them to us right behind  
5 here, and we will submit them to the - - .  
6 Please proceed.

7 MS. TERRI BRENNAN: My name is Terri  
8 Brennan, I am a member of the Class of 1981. -  
9 - my years at Dewey are pretty memorable. - -  
10 And over the years I heard that the school had  
11 changed. It is not our school anymore. There  
12 have been a lot of alumni - - years ago. And  
13 yeah, a lot has changed. There is also a lot  
14 that has not changed. There is still unique  
15 courses here that you can't get at any other  
16 high school. Students here are still better  
17 prepared for college and - - than any other high  
18 school - -

19 There are countless teachers who care as  
20 much as the teachers I had 30 year ago and the  
21 bonds between the students and teachers are just  
22 as strong as they ever were.

23 So what I have seen in recent years is  
24 classes have been cut, a lot of things have been  
25 lost due to budget cuts and policy changes, as

1 many people here have detailed, but despite  
2 this, the school's resilience and everyone that  
3 is working really hard to make changes, and - -

4 I kind of take a positive attitude, or try  
5 to, because I have to believe that people in  
6 public education really do care about the  
7 education of kids, so I have to assume that  
8 people at the DOE, somewhere, care about this,  
9 and all schools and at this school. So I am  
10 asking you to act on that. Please listen to the  
11 students and the parents who love this school.  
12 Please respect the teachers who have worked so  
13 hard to - - And please don't turn your backs on  
14 the legacy and the history.

15 [applause]

16 Great works of art are not thrown away, they  
17 are lovingly restored. This is what this school  
18 deserves. That could be your legacy. Thank you.

19 [applause, cheers]

20 MR. BRETT GREEN: Good evening students,  
21 parents, and teachers, panel. My name is Brett  
22 Green, and while I am not a teacher here at John  
23 Dewey High School, I do indeed truly feel your  
24 anguish, as I most certainly share the - - with  
25 you in at least two very obvious ways: first and

1 foremost, I am a graduate of John Dewey High  
2 School, Class of 1978. And second, though no  
3 less important, is that I am a teacher at Grover  
4 Cleveland High School in Queens. Grover  
5 Cleveland, like John Dewey, is also on the  
6 city's PLA list of failing schools slated for  
7 closure. My question for the panel is this--how  
8 does one effectively - - and convey all of the  
9 wonderful memories John Dewey High School still  
10 holds, and all of the cherished experiences  
11 realized over a 15 year career at Grover  
12 Cleveland High School as well, in a matter of  
13 two minutes? I trust my appearance before you  
14 is indicative of highly effective response to -  
15 - that said, closing these schools, both of  
16 which I have so proudly been affiliated with, is  
17 not just wrong, it is diabolical.

18 [cheers, applause]

19 For it is statistical fact that most of the  
20 schools slated for closure are located in - -  
21 closing our schools and replacing dedicated and  
22 experienced teachers with those neither  
23 possessing these essentials, nor equipped with  
24 working knowledge regarding the specific needs  
25 of our diverse student population constitutes

1 behavior which may potentially construed as  
2 criminal, Deputy Chancellor. Let's be honest  
3 for a moment, we all know that this hoopla  
4 regarding teacher evaluations as a tool to  
5 implement improvement in education is something  
6 else entirely. That would be the privatization  
7 of public education as well as the elimination  
8 of unions, and public pension systems. - - one  
9 last effort before our school is to appear in  
10 front of the panel for the vote on April 26th,  
11 please do not close our schools. Save our  
12 school. Save our school. Save our school.

13 [cheers and chants]

14 MS. DENISE HAGARI: Good evening, my name is  
15 Denise Hagari [phonetic], I have been teaching  
16 at John Dewey for 28 years. A total of 31 years  
17 in the system. Recently the DOE--

18 [applause]

19 Thank you. - - an ineffective leader for  
20 John Dewey High School and replaced him. For  
21 the 10 years he was in duty, teachers were  
22 frustrated when our suggestions for improving  
23 student performance were rebuffed. I have been  
24 teaching at Dewey since 1984 and I have seen  
25 principals come and go, and I know the

1 difference a strong leader can make in a  
2 school. In the short time with our new  
3 principal, Ms. Melvin [phonetic] has been here,  
4 positive changes have already begun. Along with  
5 the help of the instituted student achievement,  
6 teachers for the first time in a long time are  
7 feeling the possibility of getting Dewey back on  
8 track.

9 In September, we were told that Dewey and  
10 the ISA would work together for three years to  
11 improve student performance. Therefore, it is  
12 hasty of the DOE to not give Ms. Melvin and the  
13 ISA a chance to work with Dewey teachers and  
14 give them an opportunity to show their talents.  
15 I believe that with the guidance of a strong  
16 leader, along with the collaboration of the ISA,  
17 Dewey can once again be a great school.

18 [applause]

19 MS. ELIZABETH BOUISS: I am going to adjust  
20 this. Hello, one of my students had to leave  
21 early to study for a test, and she yielded her  
22 time to me as well, so I might go just a tiny  
23 bit over, please allow me that.

24 My name is Elizabeth Bouiss [phonetic] and I  
25 am a teacher and a school leadership team member

1 of John Dewey High School. Many people are  
2 scared to speak right now for fear of  
3 repercussions, but that does not make sense to  
4 me in a democracy. I want to move forward with  
5 Dewey in whatever configuration it assumes, but  
6 I honestly, in my heart, believe that we do not  
7 deserve the drastic turnaround model proposed by  
8 the DOE. I do not believe that it is best for  
9 John Dewey High School.

10 [applause]

11 I am here to ask you to look at our data,  
12 the data you cited is often old, and I am asking  
13 you to give Dewey a chance to succeed with our  
14 new leadership. Is this a meaningful public  
15 process or is this a done deal?

16 I hope you answer that. As soon as Dewey  
17 was identified as a PLA school, we began working  
18 together to make a viable plan for our school.  
19 We looked hard at our shortcomings and closely  
20 at our many, many successes. We surveyed our  
21 students to get their input, and we met with  
22 school educational advisors and each other and  
23 we wrote an extensive projected plan which - -

24 We looked at what needed to be changed and  
25 then we worked together as a school leadership

1 team to come up with a revitalized plan for  
2 Dewey and that is the DOE approved CEP or  
3 Comprehensive Educational Plan. That is also  
4 the plan that the EIS is using for the new  
5 school. But what is missing is the teachers,  
6 the very heart and soul and the people who came  
7 up with the plan to implement it. Those of us  
8 who built those programs, who came up with the  
9 ideas for those programs. I am asking that you  
10 reconsider this draconian turnaround model that  
11 has never been tried and stick with the tried  
12 and true staff that has shown continued  
13 improvement. You can only look at those  
14 statistics to see that our freshman credit  
15 accumulation is 21 percent up, our graduation  
16 rate is above the city-wide average, and our  
17 college readiness is so far above the city-wide  
18 average, it is—you know, it is almost  
19 embarrassing to think that you would close a  
20 school with that.

21 Now, I know, I am a teacher and I want to  
22 work with Dewey - - but I am hoping that I have  
23 whistleblowers protection, because I believe in  
24 this school and I - -

25 [cheers, applause]

1           MALE VOICE: - - United Federation of  
2 Teachers, and I am a proud teacher, Social  
3 Studies teacher, I have been teaching high  
4 school for 25 years, I am a union leader, and I  
5 want to talk to my brothers and sisters, the  
6 teachers that are in the trenches every single  
7 day, and honestly - - as well, not people who  
8 pretend to be educators who worked one or two  
9 years, then became principals and went on to  
10 positions where they dominated - - and tell  
11 teachers who really understand what is going on  
12 in the trenches what it is all about.

13           I love to talk to teachers, because unlike  
14 most other union leaders, most other union  
15 leaders in other fields, the workers want to be  
16 protected from the work, because the work is not  
17 - - but when I go into a school the teachers  
18 want to do the work, they want more work, they  
19 just don't want nonsense work, the data analysis  
20 and all the crap that has been pushed forth by  
21 all these so-called reformers, and so my hats  
22 are off to you, my comrades, and I just want to  
23 tell you something as a history teacher, that  
24 all the greatest crimes of history were  
25 committed by reformers, and the people who were

1 taking us forward, they sleep very well at  
2 night, because no matter what abomination they  
3 bring about, no matter how much suffering is  
4 brought forth by their policies, it is okay  
5 because in the end there is going to be a golden  
6 shining future, and you hear the same thing from  
7 these people up here, okay? "Don't worry, we'll  
8 close Dewey, we can firewall over 100 years of  
9 educational excellence, over traditions, over  
10 teachers, over students, you name it, because  
11 someday, there is going to be this bright,  
12 shining future." But we are teachers in the  
13 classroom and we don't believe in this Polyanna  
14 nonsense. We take the kids - - all of them, not  
15 50 percent, not 75 percent, but all of them, and  
16 we make it work, and so that is why I don't give  
17 a damn about - - and you know who I am talking  
18 about. The true believers. - - people in the  
19 classroom, my hat is off to you.

20 [cheers, applause]

21 MS. JANELLA MINDS: My name is Janella Minds  
22 [phonetic], I am - - United Federation of  
23 Teachers, and I am here tonight to just echo  
24 speaker after speaker after speaker who has laid  
25 out for you a compelling argument as to why this

1 proposal makes absolutely no sense.

2 This proposal, as laid out, is nothing more  
3 than a political ploy, we are all clear about  
4 that, right? We are all clear that this is  
5 about a collective bargaining agreement that  
6 wasn't made in December, that this is about  
7 perhaps-perhaps, this is about holding a group  
8 of people hostage vis-à-vis the casualties are  
9 the students who have relationships with these  
10 educators in this building. These people who  
11 have committed themselves to these young people  
12 who in the absence of effective leadership, in  
13 the absence of real support by the DOE, in the  
14 absence of any real resources, have picked this  
15 school up, have moved this graduation rate above  
16 the city-wide average, and I hope every speaker  
17 says that over and over and over again tonight.  
18 Let's be clear.

19 [applause]

20 It's - - the statistics used by the PLA list  
21 are old, they are old, and where we stand right  
22 now, this group of people, these students and  
23 these educators work together to lift Dewey up.  
24 Is there work still to be done? Absolutely.  
25 And with new leadership this group of people has

1 said they are committed to doing that work.  
2 So we are asking you to be courageous, right?  
3 We are asking you to be courageous and to stand  
4 up and to say no against this proposal to close  
5 Dewey High School, the data doesn't support this  
6 proposal. It is a bad idea, we are asking you  
7 to stand up and to throw this proposal away, but  
8 to really give support to these students and  
9 these educators and this school community.

10 [cheers, applause]

11 MR. TONY GABALLE: Hello, my name is Tony  
12 Gaballe [phonetic]. I am here as a citizen of  
13 the city, a community member of this great city  
14 I care deeply about and its future, the city  
15 which our billionaire businessman Bloomberg  
16 insists on treating as a business, but in fact  
17 it is a community. I care about it, I have a  
18 kid in high school at Brooklyn Tech, and I have  
19 a very close friend who is a faculty member here  
20 at John Dewey.

21 I grew up in the Vietnam era, and one of the  
22 greatest, clearest, most horrifying and  
23 terrifying statements that was made during that  
24 war that explained a lot about why our policies  
25 failed is we have to burn the village to save

1 it, and that is what I am hearing here  
2 tonight, that is what I am hearing from the DOE,  
3 that is what I am hearing from the PEP that is  
4 what I hear from Chancellor - -. We have to  
5 burn the village - - it doesn't make any sense  
6 then and it doesn't make sense now.

7 Assuming you were hearing the up to date  
8 statistics on the performance of this school,  
9 you know that Dewey is improving and that we  
10 have to burn the village in order to save it.  
11 We have heard that the turnaround model is  
12 unproven, we know that the small and charter  
13 school method doesn't work, it works no matter,  
14 if as well as the current traditional public  
15 school model. We know that teacher firings  
16 don't make sense, we know that changing the name  
17 of the school - - doesn't make any sense, and  
18 yet we have to burn the village in order to save  
19 it.

20 The management style that led this closing  
21 is the worst of our times in government and  
22 business, the lack of transparency, the  
23 unresponsiveness, the dishonestly in the  
24 process, the lack of accountability to the  
25 community, the lack of fairness to the teachers

1 and the staff and the students, no strong case  
2 has been made for the closing of this school  
3 except that we have to burn the village in order  
4 to save it.

5 Mr. Sternberg, I am asking you to wait out  
6 and listen to the current statistics, not the  
7 three year old statistics, what is going on now  
8 and don't associate yourselves with the failed  
9 policies of this mayor and this chancellor and  
10 this PEP. In order to truly move forward we  
11 have to take what is here and use it wisely and  
12 well. Thank you.

13 [applause]

14 MS. SHATAYA WATFORD: Hi, my name is Shataya  
15 Watford [phonetic] and I am a Senior here at  
16 John Dewey High School. I just want to begin by  
17 saying that John Dewey was an American  
18 Philosopher who had strong - - about education.  
19 Our school was named after him, because we  
20 believe in his ideas. Generations of hard work  
21 and dedication would be lost if the school loses  
22 its name.

23 My high school story began during my  
24 freshman year where credits were not earned. My  
25 high school story will conclude with a Senior

1 year equipped with AP classes, a position on  
2 the school leadership team, and treasurer of a  
3 student organization. I was a bad student here  
4 and I just want everybody's attention for a  
5 second so you can realize that Dewey is  
6 successful at everything we do. I just want you  
7 to know that I--this is my family, they helped me  
8 through so much and I just want you to  
9 understand that, and I am sorry...

10 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: Take your time.

11 MS. SHATAYA WATFORD: Thank you. Yeah.

12 Now, I started out as a Freshman with two and a  
13 half credits, when I left my Freshman year. I  
14 have, what, 45--I have more credits than I need  
15 to graduate, and I just want you to know that.

16 [applause]

17 That even with still that, I am still doing,  
18 I am still pushing forward, I am taking AP  
19 psychology, taking all these higher level,  
20 getting ready for college, and I just want you  
21 to know that Dewey is the reason for that--the  
22 teachers, the staff, everyone here is the reason  
23 for that. I just want you to see that, this is  
24 a positive environment and we are making  
25 changes. Thank you.

1 [applause]

2 MS. ALFONSO GIORDANO: Good evening panel,  
3 Deputy Chancellor, former Alumni, and - -. My  
4 name is Alfonso Giordano [phonetic], alumni and  
5 graduated in 1998. I am proud to be part of the  
6 Dewey family, and I wish you say no to closing  
7 Dewey. Thank you.

8 [applause]

9 MARIE: Good evening. My name is Marie - -  
10 and I am lab specialist for the physical science  
11 program. When I came to Dewey, I was told that  
12 this was as good as it gets, and it was. We  
13 were the 2004-2005 National High School. We had  
14 fabulous programs, great kids, and wonderful  
15 teachers. Then Mayor Bloomberg came along, took  
16 over our schools, we were sent children who did  
17 not want to be here. And we were over-crowded.  
18 We have people now determining our lives and  
19 livelihood who have little or no experience in  
20 the classroom. We were never a failing school,  
21 we met every single benchmark that was given to  
22 us, yet all our efforts seem to be - -

23 The teachers work hard in - - this has got  
24 to stop. We want our schools - - put back on a  
25 restart program, give us money to continue our

1 programs and progress which we have made, and  
2 let our school, John Dewey, once again be that  
3 school that was as good as it gets.

4 [applause]

5 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: Thank you. We are  
6 going to take a 5 to 10 minute break, so it is  
7 now 8:30, we will reconvene at 8:40. Thank you.

8 [break]

9 Numbers 21 through 30, if you could line up  
10 along the wall right here, 21 through 30. Okay,  
11 number 21?

12 MR. DERRICK FLORES: Hello, my name is  
13 Derrick Flores [phonetic] and I am a Senior at  
14 John Dewey High School. I have been here for  
15 four years and I can say I like this place, I  
16 really do. I started off as an ISS student, and  
17 as I continued on I made my way to CTT and now I  
18 am a mainstream student. The teachers here  
19 really encouraged me to push myself and I really  
20 did, and I am about to graduate and hopefully  
21 with an - - diploma, and--

22 [cheers, applause]

23 And - - Albany, and - - college credit, I  
24 have like signed up and everything, so all I  
25 have got to do is just graduate, that is it, off

1 to college. I love this place, the people  
2 here are family, and yeah. Yeah, just everyone  
3 here is like really good, like they all do their  
4 job, they all really help out. I love the  
5 teachers. I really do. The only thing that is  
6 sad is I want to be able to come back here after  
7 I graduate and find all my teachers here, - -  
8 new teachers that just came in, I want to be  
9 able to come back to John Dewey High School and  
10 not some new school.

11 [applause]

12 I don't really have much else to say other  
13 than I really like this school and it is a great  
14 school.

15 [applause]

16 MALE VOICE: Good evening parents, students,  
17 representatives, and members of our community.  
18 My name is - -. With only three years  
19 experience in this high school, I have  
20 experienced - - I was able-it was my pleasure to  
21 be invited to have this opportunity and was able  
22 to take advantage of all the things that this  
23 school offered. This makes me stand here today,  
24 loud and proud, to make a general statement  
25 pertaining to the closing of our school.

1           John Dewey once said, "Education is not  
2 preparation for life, education is life itself."  
3 This doesn't only show the importance of  
4 education itself but also speaks to the - - that  
5 the process of learning is an essential part of  
6 life, however - - students and faculty members  
7 are - - changes for our school are unnecessary.  
8 Can the DOE assure that - - do they realize that  
9 the school and programs - - both efficiency and  
10 productivity. How do they know that changes to  
11 not just Dewey but also other schools will turn  
12 out well?

13           The main objectives of the DOE should be  
14 focused on how to make the school stronger and  
15 more - - instead of breaking everything down and  
16 starting it all over again. You may not know,  
17 but we know, that - - in which teachers,  
18 students, and all graduates of the school come  
19 in - - work and provide - - we know the best  
20 improvement that - - as students who are - -  
21 programs such as Academic Finance, CSI, and  
22 programs in which we are ranked as the top five  
23 percent in the nation and much more. Hopefully  
24 you can see our - - caring, ambitious students,  
25 - - school. Thanks.

1 [applause]

2 MR. ROBINSKY GUNIERIE: Hello. My name is  
3 Robinsky, I am 19-years-old, I have an IEP, so I  
4 am stupid.

5 [groans]

6 Aw, thank you for all the sympathy. Thank  
7 you. Well, basically John Dewey helped me to  
8 graduate last year and I started six credits  
9 this year, or possibly graduating, right now I  
10 am 30 credits, and I know that is pretty low, so  
11 OFS really helped me out during this, why are  
12 there no art classes? I am sorry, I am - - why  
13 are there no art classes? I can't learn how to  
14 play guitar anymore, I can't learn about the  
15 Beatles, I can't learn about Sergeant Pepper, I  
16 can't learn about the Dark Side of the Moon, I  
17 can't learn about - -. Why are there no more  
18 art classes anymore? Don't talk, I'm talking.  
19 Don't talk. That's mean.

20 [cheers, applause]

21 MALE VOICE: - -

22 MR. ROBINSKY GUINIERIE: Oh, thank you. I'm  
23 sorry, I'm sorry. - - the auto shop, there is  
24 enough room in there, it just used for - - that  
25 is about it. Taking away our teachers, that is

1 not going to help. Colonizing us, that is not  
2 going to help. You are no better than Britain,  
3 you are no better than Russia, - - find that  
4 out, don't be communists. Thank you.

5 [cheers]

6 MS. ELSIE CHAN: Don't be a communist, be an  
7 advocate for John Dewey High School. My name is  
8 Elise Chan [phonetic] and I am one of the  
9 original 70 members of the faculty, chosen among  
10 800 to open the most successful educational-  
11 public educational program in New York City, the  
12 country, and the world.

13 [cheers, applause]

14 I am, we are, and the city is what it is,  
15 because of John Dewey High School. Many of you  
16 may not know that we were the birthplace of  
17 Edward R. Murrow High School, Murray [phonetic]  
18 High School where I was the Principal that is  
19 now being destabilized, that was one of the U.S.  
20 News and World Report, the top in the country.  
21 - - I can name it was the - - went out, not only  
22 came to the president and the board of  
23 education, principals, superintendants, and I  
24 sat on the Deputy Chancellor's - -.

25 So I know what a political situation it is

1 now and you know as well, from hearing the  
2 wonderful scores, problematic in years past, but  
3 how they are thriving. So I direct my remarks  
4 to you.

5 This is your opportunity to become an  
6 educational leader, Deputy Chancellor. It is  
7 not working. I worked, I was a principal of a -  
8 -, as an assistant superintendent, I went into  
9 the schools for co-location. They don't work.  
10 Take the mantle. Think now. You can revise,  
11 resuscitate, and bring back the large schools.  
12 It is a university like Yale is, the small  
13 schools will never have an academic quality that  
14 a school like this has. Look what these  
15 students - - I promise you and I - - to you.  
16 You are hearing a lot. I was at District 15  
17 with you. And I saw it closed, too. I tell you  
18 that if you take this, yes, if you take our  
19 challenge you will have the faculty, all of us,  
20 who understand what education - - is, students  
21 who have won Tonys, Emmys, Grammys, who are on  
22 PBS, you have never seen a high school like  
23 that, so I don't know what your educational  
24 background is, but we are educators. Give us  
25 this chance, in a win-win to sit at the table

1 together, because I know people here that my  
2 reputation hopefully is there, that will sit and  
3 talk to you, and show you how, you in your  
4 tenure as Deputy Chancellor can - - John Dewey  
5 High School.

6 [cheers, applause]

7 MALE VOICE: Good evening. - - high crime  
8 rate, this is the summer before I started John  
9 Dewey High School, - -. Yet every day, I sat on  
10 two trains and a bus to come to a safe haven,  
11 where I could think out of the norm, I could  
12 succeed, I could fail. When I heard about this  
13 meeting in this room, I know this room very  
14 well, I performed that stage for the first time  
15 in my life. I had to be here. And all I say is  
16 that we didn't give up on New York City, don't  
17 give up on John Dewey High School. I am John  
18 Dewey High School.

19 [cheers, applause]

20 THOMAS: Good evening. My name is Thomas -  
21 -. I am a graduate, I graduated from John Dewey  
22 High School in 1997. I have been teaching at  
23 John Dewey High School since 2003. This is a  
24 great school. This school made me, for better  
25 or worse, but this school did make me. It is

1 because of this school that I did want to go  
2 to college and become a teacher, and actually  
3 teach what some of the members who were my  
4 teachers, now they are my colleagues, this  
5 school is not a failing school. If it is still  
6 a persistently failing school, then you should  
7 have closed us years ago. We have turned it  
8 around, our grades, our percentage, everything  
9 has increased. The only thing that we kept  
10 asking was a change in leadership for the last  
11 few years, which never happened until only a few  
12 weeks ago.

13 I am only asking now, I am begging you, you  
14 gave us a new principal only three weeks ago,  
15 she has ideas and she knows what she wants to  
16 do. Give us a chance to work with her and turn  
17 this school around, there is no point to just  
18 put a new leader in and then just close us, it  
19 makes no sense. Thank you.

20 [applause]

21 MR. JOHN CORDORA: Hi, I'm John Cordora  
22 [phonetic], I am a sophomore at John Dewey High  
23 School. I want to thank everyone here for the  
24 big support and John Dewey High School - - Also,  
25 I want to continue by saying that what will

1       happen in turnaround is that the teachers will  
2       be removed, meaning that all the teachers that I  
3       have been looking up to in my personal problems,  
4       they will be gone, where would they be?  
5       Secondly, I also wanted to say that the  
6       turnaround has no—in the past, it is new. There  
7       is no evidence that it will change the school or  
8       improve the graduation rate, and as tedious as  
9       this sounds, we already have an improving  
10      graduation rate, city-wide college readiness  
11      average that exceeds the 21.5, what else do you  
12      want? I mean, what else do you want for the  
13      school to get off that list? That is really  
14      ridiculous that the school is still on the list.

15           Also, I want to say that this school gives  
16      me a second chance, I am not the smartest  
17      student, I know that. But this school has  
18      helped me progress and thanks to this school, I  
19      have passed many classes that I think that in  
20      junior high school I would have been - -

21           Also, it would be sad if the school is  
22      destroyed and in the middle of my high school  
23      career, when I graduate what will people say,  
24      that I graduated from the high school of  
25      performing arts, it just doesn't sound right as

1 people have stated before. I want to graduate  
2 and say proudly that I graduated from John Dewey  
3 High School.

4 [cheers, applause]

5 Finally, I would like to conclude this by  
6 saying that it would be sad if this agenda that  
7 you are trying for, if it goes forward, that  
8 future generations will not be able to  
9 experience the John Dewey High School experience  
10 that I have experienced, that I would have never  
11 experienced in another high school. I think you  
12 should re-think your decision and just go  
13 somewhere else, because this school is  
14 definitely not up for closure. Thank you very  
15 much.

16 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: Thank you. - - 31  
17 through 41, 31 through 41.

18 MR. HAROLD KRAMER: Good evening, everyone.  
19 My name is Harold Kramer [phonetic] Class of  
20 1975, I am a member of the Board of the John  
21 Dewey Alumni Association and also former  
22 President.

23 I brought with me this video that I was  
24 hoping I could show. It is a speech by Dr.  
25 Joshua Segal [phonetic] who appeared here at the

1 40th anniversary - - party that we threw a  
2 couple of years back. Joshua Segal spoke about  
3 the founding principals of Dewey and he likened  
4 the problems that we are having today—poor  
5 graduation rates, academic problems, all the  
6 things people complain about today, they were  
7 complaining about 40 years ago, and John Dewey  
8 High School was formed by the Board of Education  
9 to deal with those very problems. They came up  
10 with what they called a Dewey model, which was  
11 independent study, the students were responsible  
12 for their own education, they learned at their  
13 own pace, and unfortunately the Dewey model has  
14 been stripped away from this school over the  
15 years and it really needs to be reinstated, that  
16 is what this school needs, it doesn't need a new  
17 name, it doesn't need new teachers, it needs the  
18 original vision that was brought here and  
19 started in 1969 and should be continued. The  
20 Dewey model works, it works at Edward R. Murrow  
21 High School, it could work here, this school has  
22 the potential to be great, it is great, despite  
23 all the problems that it is having, and I think  
24 that Dewey needs another shot. I think it needs  
25 another chance. Thank you very much.

1 [applause]

2 MS. CARLENE FAUSTIN: Hello. My name is  
3 Carlene Faustin [phonetic]. I am a Junior at  
4 John Dewey High School. I could stand here and  
5 tell you like all the great things about John  
6 Dewey High School and everything that everybody  
7 else has already told you, but you have already  
8 heard it. I just want to say that John Dewey is  
9 a good school, like everybody has said. Also,  
10 why would you close down a school that obviously  
11 has shown alumni, has shown student support,  
12 like the students here want to learn. Why?  
13 Because the teachers make—they enforce it into  
14 us, not forcibly, but they make us want it, so  
15 why would students, alumni and teachers be here  
16 if Dewey isn't successful or it wasn't  
17 successful? And why are you taking away my high  
18 school experience along with all the other  
19 students of John Dewey High School? If we are  
20 making progress, then I don't understand why  
21 shut it down, it doesn't make sense. Give it a  
22 new name but the students are the same and the  
23 staff isn't, like how am I supposed to get  
24 recommendations for college and go on to be  
25 great and if I want to come back to Dewey, how

1 could I do that? I can't do that if Dewey  
2 isn't Dewey, and I just want to say that I hope  
3 you change your decision because your decision  
4 is affecting every single student in this  
5 school's future. We are the future. You guys  
6 are the present but we are the future, we are  
7 what matters, so you guys should be caring about  
8 what we are learning and you should be putting  
9 money into us, not wasting it by calling it  
10 something else and reconstructing it. That  
11 doesn't make sense. So I just want to say,  
12 before you leave here tonight, just know that  
13 everybody here and more people that were not  
14 able to come love this school and we want to  
15 come in September and be able to say, "We are  
16 coming to John Dewey High School," it makes more  
17 sense like that. So thank you.

18 [applause]

19 FEMALE VOICE: Hello. First off I want to  
20 start by saying that I am a parent and this  
21 entire ordeal has drained me. Not just  
22 emotionally but physically as well, because we  
23 have been going to - - and we have been getting  
24 together, and we have just dealing with all of  
25 this politics but no one has explained anyone to

1 the parents, not from the beginning, up until  
2 this point, we have been getting filled in here  
3 and there, we are listening to what is being  
4 said, we are reading all this different  
5 material, but no one has really clued us in as  
6 to what it is going to boil down to, because our  
7 children—and I am a parent, I feel, have been  
8 used by this whole process. This isn't even  
9 about our children. This is about people who  
10 want to have politics or politricks or whatever  
11 you want to call it, to make decisions where all  
12 you have to do is sit down like adults and hash  
13 it out and figure out what you really wanted to  
14 do. If you didn't feel the teachers were  
15 efficient or effective, they could have taken a  
16 whole other process to monitor how things were  
17 being done.

18       Personally, from my standpoint, from what I  
19 have seen at this school, the teachers have been  
20 very effective and they have worked with the  
21 children - - I don't know if that will change  
22 much of anything, but I know from what I have  
23 seen when my daughter has had issues, they have  
24 been very much involved and a part of the  
25 process as far as getting things fixed. And as

1 far as changing the name on the school, to  
2 me, you can change the name but if you put a  
3 dress on a pig, it is still a pig

4 [applause]

5 MS. DARLENE ROSA: My name is Darlene Rosa  
6 [phonetic] and I am a sophomore and I would like  
7 to say—why? What is the point of closing a  
8 school that is doing great? It is just like  
9 firing a policeman who is capturing all the  
10 criminals on the streets. I am a member of the  
11 softball team and a number of us here would like  
12 to say that I love John Dewey High School, my  
13 family members have been here, and the only  
14 reason I came here, in spite of the fact that  
15 this is a great school, is because I heard the  
16 teachers help you, the teachers are amazing, and  
17 everything is beautiful about this school, so  
18 why not come here? Why close it?

19 MS. RACHEL SANCHEZ: Hi, I'm Rachel Sanchez,  
20 [phonetic] I am only a Freshman, so I came to  
21 this school not knowing what I was getting  
22 myself into. But I am going to be straight up  
23 with you. I am a Freshman, I am a part of the  
24 softball team, I am co-captain, and a Freshman  
25 pitcher.

1 [applause]

2 I have been bouncing around school to school  
3 and not graduating with my class, making new  
4 friends, this is my first year back in Brooklyn.  
5 I noticed that John Dewey is - - I have so many  
6 friends, I mean, the softball team, we just  
7 learned how to be a team, and now I want to walk  
8 into this school being a part of John Dewey and  
9 I want to walk out graduating from John Dewey,  
10 not from some other name or school.

11 [applause]

12 Now my problem is, why are you changing the  
13 school, like new teachers and everything, this  
14 is the first school that I can actually trust  
15 these teachers. This is the first school that  
16 they actually helped me. I mean, I am not a  
17 straight-A student, but I am passing and that is  
18 all I care about. I am a Freshman and I know  
19 that I am going to have 10 credits at the end of  
20 this year. So I am proud of that.

21 [applause]

22 I am just saying, just don't do it, because  
23 you are not helping yourself, you are just  
24 making a bad name for yourself, just changing  
25 the school, in my opinion.

1 [applause]

2 FEMALE VOICE: My name is - - and I am a  
3 Sophomore and changing John Dewey won't change  
4 anything, it is just going to be-it is not going  
5 to make anything better, the teachers here, they  
6 help you, like Ms. - - she helps me, she looks  
7 out for me, Ms. Altman, all my teachers-all my  
8 old teachers, all my new teachers, getting them  
9 out of the school isn't going to make anything  
10 better, changing the name isn't going to make  
11 anything better, what you are doing is wrong.

12 [applause]

13 MR. JIM GORDON: Hi, my name is Jim Gordon,  
14 I am from the - - my wife is a teacher in  
15 District 79. I would like to, without taking  
16 any time off of my time ask some of the people  
17 from the school leadership team to come up here  
18 with the posters that they have prepared that  
19 have shown the statistics that people have been  
20 talking about here, because I would like you to  
21 look at these statistics and think about them as  
22 you are determined to close this school. You  
23 say you want to turn it around but it has  
24 already been turned around and here you have it,  
25 you can see.

1           Okay, thank you. Thank you.

2           First of all, what I have to say is I  
3 basically have two things to say to Deputy  
4 Chancellor Sternberg, one is, this study you did  
5 is garbage. The second thing I have to say is  
6 you get all these students up here to say they  
7 are proud to be with John Dewey, they want to  
8 graduate from John Dewey and you want to have  
9 them graduate from 21K415. To hell with that.  
10 Now look, it is heartbreaking to hear students,  
11 teachers, parents, pour their hearts out  
12 explaining why they are opposed to your plan to  
13 close the school. They site all these  
14 statistics, your statistics, to show that they  
15 have already turned things around. But I have  
16 been to several of these hearings and one thing  
17 is clear from the onset, the people who are  
18 making those decisions don't care about what we  
19 think, they don't care about what you think,  
20 their decision has already been made, the  
21 Mayor's Panel on Educational Policy is a bunch  
22 of puppets and they have never turned down the  
23 policy proposal by the Mayor and they are going  
24 to do so again this time, but the fact of the  
25 matter is, if we took a vote here, I am into the

1 30s in terms of the speakers, not one speaker  
2 has supported this proposal. The fact is that  
3 everybody here is against it, but we won't get  
4 to vote, there is only one vote that counts, and  
5 everybody here knows who it is, it is Mayor  
6 Bloomberg, that is the only vote that counts,  
7 and that is called dictatorship.

8 Now, who should be making these kinds of  
9 decisions are the students, and the teachers,  
10 and the parents, and the staff and the community  
11 of John Dewey, and if they decided to turn it  
12 around, then we turn it around. And if they  
13 decide not, if they decide they want to keep  
14 their school, named after one of the most  
15 important educators in the history of our  
16 country, then it should be kept and the  
17 Department of Education and the mayor should  
18 keep the hell out, they have no business in it.

19 [cheers, applause]

20 Now, there is no point in talking truth to  
21 power. They know the truth. What we have to  
22 talk to power is power, and that is to mobilize  
23 our own power. Why did you get a new principal  
24 here? Because 2,000 students walked out. You  
25 have here a - - student body, furthermore, you

1 are right next to the - - of the mass transit  
2 authority. You want power? That is power.  
3 They shut the city down in 2005, Dewey teachers  
4 - - now is the time to ask them to support you  
5 in mobilizing ourselves this coming Thursday,  
6 there is going to be a demonstration at the  
7 Department of Education Headquarters in downtown  
8 Manhattan, to protest closing the schools. You  
9 should all be there, you should get your  
10 friends, your students, and everything and be  
11 there and parents, and family come, and when the  
12 - - meets, even though the decision is already  
13 made, there should be hundreds of people there  
14 to come out to support Dewey, to support the - -  
15 high school to support all these schools that  
16 are being shut down in this, and we can stop  
17 this wrecking operation, and I have to say it is  
18 - - it is not just Bloomberg, it is coming from  
19 Obama, it is coming from all of the politicians  
20 who represent Wall Street and - - but we - -

21 Thank you.

22 [cheers, applause]

23 FEMALE VOICE: Hi, I am a parent of two  
24 students that attend John Dewey High School. I  
25 have one in 10th grade, one in 11th grade, - -

1 without the teachers here at this school  
2 showing and pushing and telling them they can,  
3 they can, they can, they wouldn't be where they  
4 are right now. I would like to say a comment  
5 that my daughter said to me, "Mommy, he is not  
6 even listening, because he is texting on his  
7 Blackberry."

8 [applause]

9 He was writing. I watched him. This  
10 speaker, anyway, what I want to say to the  
11 students here is this: Recognize you have the  
12 power, recognize what the truth is. The truth  
13 is every single one of you—it doesn't matter  
14 what they say over here, it matters what comes  
15 from your heart, what is in your mind, what you  
16 need to do. And that is to come to school every  
17 day, sit in your class and learn, stay focused,  
18 and graduate on time. That is an intellectual.

19 [applause]

20 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: - - we will now begin.  
21 We will now begin the - - We will now begin the  
22 Q&A hearing. Remember, there will be some  
23 individual questions and others that have been  
24 bucketed into categories, we will have the  
25 representative questions asked. Any question

1 that is not answered here tonight will be  
2 answered on the website. If you have additional  
3 questions at the conclusion of tonight's  
4 proceedings, we ask you to direct them to us by  
5 calling this number: 212-374-0208. Again, the  
6 telephone number is 212-374-0208. Or you can  
7 send them to us via email at D21proposals—that  
8 is all one word—proposals P-R-O-P-O-S-A-L-S, at  
9 schools with an S on the end, dot NYC dot GOV.

10 I will now turn the program over to Deputy  
11 Chancellor Sternberg.

12 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR STERNBERG: Thank you,  
13 Melissa. I want to thank everyone for your  
14 thoughtful comments, with - - validation, I  
15 assure you that I have been listening intently,  
16 and I have been to quite a few hearings in the  
17 amount of two years of service as Deputy  
18 Chancellor and can assure you this has been one  
19 of the more thoughtful ones where I heard from,  
20 as I expected to, heard from members of the  
21 faculty, students, parents, alum, and very, very  
22 impressive alumni community here, and the Alumni  
23 Association is to be credited for that, I  
24 certainly applaud your stewardship of the legacy  
25 of this school and your commitment to the

1 future. - - And I can assure you that I have  
2 a lot of new information to take back into our  
3 decision making process. One of the questions-I  
4 will work my way through a small number of  
5 questions that were submitted formally and will  
6 attempt to address some of the questions that  
7 were asked in comment and explain some of our  
8 thinking, but one of the questions asked whether  
9 a decision has been made already and whether  
10 this evening's comments are of any consequence.  
11 There is only one answer to this, which is that  
12 no decisions have been made, no decisions are  
13 final, and we very much intend to take comments  
14 made this evening, those submitted, into the  
15 written comments submitted and those offered  
16 formally and informally, by everyone, into our  
17 decision making process - -

18 I want to acknowledge the comments on behalf  
19 of the new principal, Ms. Melvin and certainly  
20 pleased to hear that she has hit the ground  
21 running here. We are pleased with her impact  
22 already and have very high expectations that she  
23 will lead this school and the proposed new  
24 school to continued improvement, along with the  
25 education - - student achievement which is

1 represented here this evening and again want  
2 to acknowledge that - - with myself and of  
3 course my career as a principal and as a  
4 teacher.

5 So we have a lot to consider as we move  
6 forward in our process and I want to pledge to  
7 you that we will take the comments made this  
8 evening into account.

9 One of the questions asked, "Why is the  
10 Department closing our school based on 2009  
11 graduation data?"

12 This echoes one of the primary themes of the  
13 evening, why a turnaround for this school, why  
14 this why now, I think that is—we got I think six  
15 note cards, five of the note cards were asking  
16 this question. A lot of the comments this  
17 evening asked the same.

18 I want to walk through our thinking and I  
19 want to offer you how we understand the data  
20 that we see and put into this question. First  
21 of all, this school has been designated by the  
22 state as a Persistent Low Achieving School. So  
23 it is in a family of schools that is on a state  
24 and federal watch list, and part of the school  
25 improving grant program which urges us—demands

1 that we take action. The appeal - - status  
2 is essentially the same as - - status in prior -  
3 - state accountability and this is not an  
4 optional activity for us, but as the Department  
5 of Education we are required to take action.

6 Now, we understand and appreciate the data  
7 that was presented on the boards in the back of  
8 the room and the graduation rate, this is part  
9 of the - - 67 percent graduation rate, a  
10 graduation rate that has improved pretty  
11 dramatically in recent years and we acknowledge  
12 that. Both four years and six-year graduation  
13 rates. And the college readiness data that  
14 shows promise.

15 So to set context here for how we analyze  
16 this data, I want to spend a few minutes, about  
17 30 seconds, talking about our - - construct, and  
18 how we evaluate school performance. So a few  
19 key themes: first, John Dewey High School is  
20 evaluated against a peer group of schools so 39  
21 other schools that serve very similar need  
22 profiles, so it is not evaluated against a - -  
23 Brooklyn Tech or - -. It is not - - the highest  
24 performing student set in the city, nor is it  
25 evaluated against the lowest performing peer

1 index in the city, it is evaluated against 39  
2 other schools that serve the most similar  
3 student demographic, and the reality of the data  
4 in the student demographic data, we see  
5 advocated for students here at - - this school  
6 is in a middle peer group. It ensures a large  
7 number of ELLS, we acknowledge that, it actually  
8 serves a smaller number of CTT students, a  
9 smaller number of students with IEPs, than is  
10 the city average or the district average, and so  
11 when we evaluate the 67 or 66 percent graduation  
12 rate, it is certainly important that we see  
13 improvements but we have to evaluate that and  
14 what the progress report does is it evaluates  
15 that against the performance of the 39 other  
16 schools in the peer group and what we see in the  
17 data is that while there have been gains, the 66  
18 percent graduation rate is in fact the lowest  
19 graduation rate of the peer group so of those 39  
20 other schools, of the 39 other schools, against  
21 which John Dewey's performance is judged, the 39  
22 other schools serving the same student  
23 demographic - - with the same pupil funding and  
24 the same supports, John Dewey's graduation rate,  
25 yes, while above the city-wide average, and

1 while improved, is significantly lower than  
2 the next lowest high school graduation rate.

3 We also know, we see in the school's data in  
4 the progress report and otherwise, several  
5 important trends that we find troubling. We  
6 spoke earlier about credit accumulation, for  
7 first, second, and third year students, the  
8 school is in the bottom 20 percent in its peer  
9 group and in fact for second year students, the  
10 bottom five percent of schools. We see serious  
11 concerns about safety as stressed by parents,  
12 students, and faculty, and some of those  
13 concerns have been voiced this evening.

14 We also see concerns in student demand and  
15 perseverance of students, and one of--we heard  
16 from some very well-served and committed  
17 students this evening, some of whom were on the  
18 softball team, one of whom was wearing a Star  
19 Wars shirt that I found very compelling, but as  
20 we look at the student data at the school we see  
21 several trends: First, we see a precipitous  
22 decline in demand for the school. A 62 percent  
23 decline in enrollment over five years in the 9th  
24 grade class, and an overall 32 percent decline  
25 in enrollment in this school over the last five

1 years, reflecting a decline in parent and  
2 student demand for the school.

3 Last year's graduating class, the class of  
4 2011, started in 2008, September of 2008 with  
5 1,901 students, and graduated with 448 students.  
6 The class of 2012, the current seniors, started  
7 as a 9th grade program of 967 students, and at  
8 the conclusion of their Junior year, was down to  
9 451 students. And so what we have seen over the  
10 last five years is a migration of students out  
11 of the school that suggests a decline in parent  
12 and student satisfaction with the services  
13 rendered here.

14 And so it is the body of that data that sets  
15 the context of how we understand the 66 percent  
16 graduation rate, and informs the decisions that  
17 we propose for the panel for next week.

18 We have heard from the Alumni Association  
19 and others about many of the core elements of  
20 the school that - - and that are central to the  
21 school's original design, so extended day, - - a  
22 long list of them, resource rooms and theater  
23 and dance and arts, all the things that  
24 according to our conversations over the last  
25 several months and to a lot of - - spoke this

1 evening, made this school such a special  
2 place for so long. It is our view that the best  
3 way to enable the re-creation of these  
4 structures that again we support that are  
5 representative of the EIS, that are part of the  
6 vision for the future of this campus, that the  
7 best way to enable the re-creation of these  
8 structures is to turnaround, is through, more  
9 precisely, the proposed closure and reopening of  
10 a school and that with the new school the new  
11 structures, the new programming, and the staff  
12 that absolutely must--I am going to talk more  
13 about the staffing process responding to the  
14 question here, that absolutely must preserve the  
15 elements that are here that are working, that  
16 absolutely must recruit and retain a high  
17 performing faculty and there are clearly many  
18 here, and taking from the original vision of  
19 John Dewey High School and making sure that  
20 those structures are in place in the new school  
21 that will live on this campus.

22 There was a question specifically about the  
23 EPO and whether the EPO - - achievement will  
24 continue to work with Dewey in turnaround and  
25 the answer is yes, ISA will continue to work

1 with the school to implement this reform  
2 model, and get - - pleased by the positive  
3 comments this evening about their impact on the  
4 campus, their relationship with the  
5 administration here, noted to be a committed  
6 organization - - and supports, and pleased to be  
7 clear in answering this question that they will  
8 maintain the relationship with the school.

9 The final question I have here is about the  
10 Chinese Bilingual Program if it is not continued  
11 in the new school, students transfer to another  
12 school--there is a process for students and  
13 first of all, all students are guaranteed a seat  
14 here, as I described earlier. There is a  
15 process for students to seek alternative  
16 placement if that is what they desire to do. We  
17 expect that the Bilingual Program will be  
18 maintained and I spoke with the - - members  
19 earlier who had that question, that has been  
20 identified as a very important strength of the  
21 school that is serving the community well, so we  
22 expect those teams to be maintained and again  
23 our hope is that the new school will be built  
24 around programs like that, - - items for  
25 students.

1 I guess I will make one final point here,  
2 although it wasn't a specific question, I want  
3 to just reiterate that the EETD process, which  
4 is governed by a contract, will be in effect  
5 here in that - - we heard the comment about--I  
6 believe the parent there, we will take that  
7 request under consideration. We, the criteria  
8 that will govern the hiring decisions will be  
9 developed here at this school. The committee,  
10 with the principal, the school, and two  
11 committee members, each appointed by the  
12 Chancellor, - - UFT, will make decisions on all  
13 pedagogy hiring, there is no quota, there is no  
14 magic number of staff that need to be hired, the  
15 charge to that committee is to instruct the best  
16 possible faculty and - - talent - -

17 So again, to the CEC, to the Alumni  
18 Association, to many committee members of this  
19 community, I want to thank you for your  
20 thoughtful comments this evening, and we look  
21 forward to continuing the conversation.

22 [applause]

23 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: Thank you. We heard  
24 many comments this evening. We appreciate your  
25 feedback and contributions to tonight's hearing.

1 The information will be shared with the Panel  
2 on Education Policy which will have its hearing  
3 on April 26th at the Prospect Heights Campus to  
4 vote on this proposal. Please use the phone  
5 number and email address provided earlier if you  
6 have any other questions or concerns.

7 Thank you all for coming, travel home  
8 safely, this joint public hearing is officially  
9 adjourned.

10 [END 290274.MP3]

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

1  
2           The prior proceedings were transcribed from  
3 audio files and have been transcribed to the  
4 best of my ability.

5  
6  
7           Signature: 

8  
9           Date: April 20, 2012  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25