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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING
Harlem Renaissance High School (TA)
- 3/28/12**

1 [START 286_459]

2 MS. LAURA FEIJON: And I will be your
3 moderator- facillator of this joint public
4 hearing. This is a joint public hearing of the
5 Department of Education Community Education
6 Council and the School Leadership Team to
7 discuss the proposed closure and replacement of
8 Harlem Renaissance High School. Tonight's
9 proceeding will be recorded and transcribed.
10 Before we begin this hearing, we ask that anyone
11 who wishes to speak during the public comment
12 portion of the evening sign up at the table in
13 the back of--the table outside. The signup will
14 be extended in order to ensure that everyone
15 here that wants to speak is able to put their
16 name out on the sign up sheet and have time to
17 speak. If you have a question you want to be
18 addressed during the question and answer portion
19 of the agenda, please write that question on the
20 index cards provided at the table where you
21 signed up or people will be passing around index
22 cards if you need them and then you can submit
23 them to that bottom tier or at the table outside
24 this door. Only people who have signed up to
25 speak will be able to participate in the public

1 comment portion of this meeting. At the
2 conclusion of that, the question and answer
3 section of the program will be by index cards.
4 So, if you do not want to speak but you do have
5 a question you want to ask, please write it on
6 an index card and give it to someone. All panel
7 participants were asked to be here no later than
8 5:30. Now that we have started, if a panel
9 participant arrives late, he or she will be
10 given time to speak at the first opportune
11 moment. We want to be respectful of everyone's
12 time. There also may be elected officials who
13 arrive at different times during the evening.
14 If they wish to speak, we will do our best to
15 accommodate them at the most opportune moment.
16 Those who were here at the start of the public
17 comment section will be asked to speak first.
18 Please look at the agenda. The format will
19 include a public presentation of the proposal
20 and presentations by the Panel participants
21 followed by the public comments. Speakers
22 should have already signed up at the sign in
23 table in the lobby. Public comments can be no
24 longer than two minutes each and the time will
25 be followed and speakers will be informed when

1 their designated time has ended. And that's
2 really accommodate the number of speakers that
3 we have and to be respectful of everyone's time.
4 There will be a question and answer period.
5 Members of the audience, if you have a question
6 and you want to write it on post card that was
7 supplied at the sign in table when you were
8 arrived this evening. While the public comments
9 are taking place, staff members will organize
10 the questions into categories and get them ready
11 for the question and answer period. Some
12 questions will be asked directly and others will
13 be batched under headings in order to avoid
14 repetitiveness. Even though individual
15 questions will not be addressed in the forum
16 tonight, the answers will be on the website
17 prior to the Panel meeting. So, any questions
18 that are not addressed here for some reason will
19 be on the website for you to get the required
20 answers. The Panel meeting will be April 26th
21 at Prospect Heights campus. So, that's the
22 Panel for Educational Policy meeting will be on
23 April 26 at the Prospect Heights campus. If at
24 the end of the hearing, you still have
25 questions, we encourage you to direct them to us

1 by calling the number at the bottom of your
 2 fact sheet or sending them to us via e-mail
 3 which is also at the bottom of your fact sheet.
 4 The e-mail address for those questions and the
 5 phone number for those questions are at the
 6 bottom of your fact sheet. I would now like to
 7 introduce the Panel which has been assembled for
 8 this evening's joint public hearing and Panel
 9 members will be speaking shortly. - -
 10 introduce yourselves.

11 FEMALE VOICE: Hi, I'm Danita Gibson, I'm
 12 the Deputy Chancellor.

13 MS. THERESA COCHRANE: Theresa Cochran CSES
 14 member.

15 MS. AJEE JOYNER: I'm Ajee Joyner, I'm SLT
 16 - - .

17 MR. MAURICE HORN: I'm Maurice Horn, I'm a
 18 senior member of the Committee Education Council
 19 for District 5.

20 MS. RUTH PERKINS: Ruth Perkins, SSE member
 21 - - treasurer.

22 MS. SONYA JONES: Sonya Jones, President of
 23 the Community Education Council for District 5.

24 MS. NAEEMAH DYE: Naeemah Dye, PA president
 25 and SLT member.

1 MS. FEIJON: I will now turn the program
2 over to Deputy Chancellor Gipson who will
3 present the proposal.

4 MS. DORITA GIBSON: Good evening, everyone.
5 Thank you, Dr. - - . Thank you for this
6 evening. I'm like to say a special thank you to
7 Principal Zimmerman for providing such a lovely
8 dinner for everyone. Very well appreciated.
9 And before I get started, I see a wonderful
10 community of people that have come together
11 today and I'd just like to acknowledge some
12 people that are in the room. We have the
13 district UFT, - - Clark. Thank you for being
14 here, sir. Dr. - - , UFT, - - thank you for
15 being here. I know that we have someone from
16 CSA, thanks for coming today. We have our - -
17 leader, Chris - - , thank you - - is here in
18 the front row and we have the chief executive
19 for - - . Thank you and I - - our district
20 family advocate. Thank you. It is very
21 apparent to me before I start that this is a
22 very close knit community. I saw it when I
23 drove up, I see it now here and when I speak to
24 your principal I can tell his dedication and his
25 love for this school. So, I thank everyone for

1 being here. This joint public hearing was
2 convened--oh, I'm sorry. Mr. - - council
3 member and Inez Dinkins are also here today. -
4 - , thank you. This joint public hearing was
5 convened to discuss the proposed closure and
6 replacement of Harlem Renaissance High School.
7 Before I present the proposal, I'd like to say a
8 few words and explain why we're here. By
9 closing Harlem Renaissance and replacing it a
10 new school, we are seeking to rapidly create a
11 high quality school environment that children
12 need to be prepared to proceed for college, work
13 and life. The new school will build on the
14 strongest elements of Harlem Renaissance and it
15 will also incorporate new elements in order to
16 create a rigorous culture for teaching and
17 learning. Students will have access to higher
18 quality educational options while they continue
19 to attend school in this very building. We
20 believe this process will ensure that all
21 students are set on a path for accomplishment.
22 I want to acknowledge the students and families
23 who feel your son or daughter is being well
24 served. Tonight, you will hear about the
25 success stories happening at Harlem Renaissance

1 and there are many success stories and we honor
2 them. But we also need to consider the many
3 students who started with your child in the
4 ninth grade and have not experienced the same
5 success. They deserve better. Harlem
6 Renaissance High School, it's a transfer school,
7 is located at 22 East 128th Street in Community
8 District Five in Manhattan. Transfer schools
9 are small high schools designed to re-engage
10 students who are behind in high school or who
11 are at the risk of dropping out. Harlem
12 Renaissance proudly serves students between the
13 ages of 17 and 21 who have attended another high
14 school for at least one year. On February 27,
15 2012, the New York City Department of Education
16 published a proposal to close Harlem Renaissance
17 High School and open a new school. By closing
18 Harlem Renaissance and opening a new school, the
19 DOE is seeking to improve student learning from
20 the levels currently seen at Harlem Renaissance.
21 As mentioned, Harlem Renaissance has some
22 positive elements that we believe are worth
23 preserving in the new school. For example,
24 Harlem Renaissance does appear to be having some
25 success in graduating students with

1 disabilities. The DOE will seek to preserve
2 Harlem Renaissance's effort to support these
3 students in the new school while implementing
4 new supports to assist other student populations
5 who continue to struggle at Harlem Renaissance,
6 especially the over age and under credited
7 students. However, based on recent data and
8 feedback from member of the New York State Board
9 of Regents and the pace of change in New York
10 City persistently lowest achieving schools, this
11 was not quick enough to meet the student's
12 needs. The DDOE has concluded that Harlem
13 Renaissance should be closed and replaced with a
14 new school with new programs and supports. The
15 new structure and programmatic elements that are
16 part of this proposal and ability to quickly
17 screen and hire staff to implement these
18 enhancements, will allow the DOE to address the
19 core problems that have led to poor performance.
20 For example, Harlem Renaissance was identified
21 as a PLA school, Persistently Lowest Achievement
22 school, in 2010-2011 because of the school's
23 graduation rates which have been below 60
24 percent for the previous three years. With the
25 school's graduation showing some increase in the

1 past three years, raising from 23 percent in
2 2008 to 2009 to 34 percent 2010 to 2011.
3 Unfortunately, this pace of improvement is very
4 slow. The school's 2010-2011 graduation rate
5 was still the third lowest of the 43 transfer
6 schools with graduation cores. The DOE believes
7 that with new programs and a push to improve
8 teacher quality, the new school could accelerate
9 this improvement in overall student outcomes.
10 Moreover, Harlem Renaissance is not adequately
11 preparing students for the rigors of college and
12 career. None of the students in the school's
13 2011 six year - - were prepared for college by
14 the end of their sixth year in high school. The
15 outcomes of the highest needs students at Harlem
16 Renaissance do not compare well to similar
17 students in other transfer high schools. Only
18 24 percent of students in the 2011 six year
19 graduate - - that entered the school with
20 fewer than 11 credits, graduated in six years.
21 This outcome is in the bottom 25 percent city-
22 wide for transfer schools. Harlem Renaissance
23 was rated underdeveloped in its most recent
24 quality review in 2010-2011. Harlem
25 Renaissance's 2010-2011 quality review cited a

1 number of serious concerns. Based on a
2 comprehensive review of the school and evidence
3 that additional supports were not getting the
4 job done, the DOE believes that closing Harlem
5 Renaissance and opening a new school will
6 address it's long standing performance struggles
7 and allow a new school to develop that will
8 better serve Harlem Renaissance students while
9 they continue to attend school in the very same
10 building. This process will ensure that all
11 students are set on a path for accomplishment.
12 In conjunction with this proposal as a way to
13 support additional school improvement, the DOE
14 submitted a - - application to State Ed to
15 implement the turnaround model at the new
16 school. If this school - - grant is approved,
17 this will make the new school eligible for up to
18 two million dollars in supplemental federal
19 funding. Before we meet the other members of
20 the Panel and move to public comment, I'd like
21 to briefly discuss the impact of this proposal
22 on current Harlem Renaissance students and
23 families if this is approved in the April 26
24 Panel meeting. All college students who have
25 not graduated before the start of the 2012-2013

1 school year will be guaranteed a seat and
2 automatically enrolled in the new school. All
3 incoming students who have been admitted to
4 Harlem Renaissance for a seat starting in
5 September 2012-2013 will automatically enrolled
6 in the new school. I thank you and I look
7 forward to answering your questions at the end
8 and getting comments. Dr. - - .

9 MS. FEIJON: Good evening, again. So, we're
10 going to start by introducing you to the
11 presenters. The first speaker is Sophia Rahim
12 [phonetic] from Councilman Dickin's office.

13 [Applause].

14 FEMALE VOICE: Move the microphone in the
15 center.

16 MS. FEIJON: My apologies. There's an
17 attendance sheet I believe going around. If you
18 want to sign up as a speaker outside, there's
19 still time to do that outside.

20 MS. ROPHIA RAHIM: Good evening. I'm going
21 to read a statement on behalf of council member
22 Inez Dickins who has been a long time supporter
23 of the school. It was her intention to be with
24 you all tonight but unfortunately, she had a
25 family emergency that she had to attend to at

1 the last minute and so, I'm going to read her
2 statement on her behalf. I also want to say
3 with all due respect - - Chancellor, you
4 mentioned that there are many success stories at
5 Harlem Renaissance but if you feel that your
6 child hasn't had that experience, you deserve
7 better. I would like to let you know that it
8 doesn't get any better than Harlem Renaissance--

9 [Applause]

10 -- - - dedicated administration. I had
11 the privilege of being on the e-mail list. The
12 faculty sent out emails saying this student had
13 a death in the family. Please treat them with
14 extra tenderness and kindness during this
15 period. You don't find that at other schools.
16 It doesn't get any better than Harlem
17 Renaissance.

18 [Applause]

19 I am here tonight to express my opposition
20 to the proposed implementation of the federal
21 turnaround model for Harlem Renaissance High
22 School. As you will hear repeatedly throughout
23 the evening, Harlem Renaissance has already
24 undergone its own transformation model resulting
25 in its - - receiving a B on their last report

1 card. The leadership of Principal - - ,
2 Assistant Principal Annette Edwards, and the
3 hard work of the teaching staff, the community
4 support and Street Corner Resources and the New
5 York City Mission Society have all contributed
6 an enormous amount of work to transform this
7 school and permit a true rebirth and powering
8 experience for their students. My office has
9 been involved with many of the programs here.
10 I, along with my staff, have been able to
11 witness the change in student achievement. My
12 staff volunteers to help seniors complete the
13 video expo project required for graduation. In
14 fact, if you watch the video Cassandra - -
15 did, you'll find - - of an interview I did
16 with her at the - - State of the City address.
17 On March 14 of this year, I hosted - - , also a
18 senior at Harlem Renaissance, to be city council
19 member for a day. She was chosen--she was
20 chosen because she exemplifies everything Harlem
21 Renaissance does for their students. - - came
22 from a school where she was unengaged in her
23 education but is now excelling academically, is
24 a peer mentor and a volunteer recorder for
25 Street Corner Resources radio show. I have also

1 set up several workshops on Internet - -
2 views for both the young women and young men at
3 the school. I have first hand knowledge of how
4 extraordinary Harlem Renaissance High School is
5 and I cannot accept any proposal that will undo
6 the magnificent work that happens here every day
7 for these students. My message to the
8 Department of Education is clear. I implore you
9 not to implement the proposed turnaround model.
10 Why re-invent the wheel when the wheel has been
11 fixed and works better than ever.

12 [Applause]

13 In addition, with regards to the proposed
14 renaming of the school, this is a proposal that
15 I cannot support. When a student first enters
16 this building, they are greeted with high
17 expectations and the understanding that it
18 doesn't matter how many times they messed up in
19 the past, how many times they cut school or got
20 into a fight. At Harlem Renaissance, students
21 have an opportunity to be reborn. They can
22 redirect their course and create positive
23 outcomes for their lives. The staff at Harlem
24 Renaissance are some of the most dedicated and
25 passionate teachers in the entire city and

1 students know that they will be supported
2 first and cheered on every step of the way. By
3 asking the school to abandon the name Harlem
4 Renaissance, you are asking them to abandon the
5 deeply rooted fabric of their mission. I hope
6 to - - for all of the voices of support heard
7 tonight and I will not stand in the way of true
8 progress for students of this school. I will
9 continue to stand with Harlem Renaissance and
10 will continue to support the great work that
11 happens in this school every day.

12 MS. FEIJON: Our next presenter is Sonya
13 Jones, President of CEC District 5, seated at
14 the desk.

15 MS. SONYA JONES: Good evening. The CEC
16 cannot and does not support proposed closing of
17 this school and we certainly cannot get behind
18 the renaming of the school. For us, a name is
19 important. What's in a name? It tells a story,
20 it defines and identifies. The Harlem
21 Renaissance was a cultural movement that spanned
22 the 1920s and 30s and successfully brought the
23 black experience clearly within the caucus of
24 American cultural history. The Harlem
25 Renaissance not only - - explosion of culture

1 but on a sociological level, redefined how
2 America and the world viewed the African-
3 American population. Fast forward, Harlem
4 Renaissance High School is one of approximately
5 40 transfer high schools within the city of New
6 York. It serves over 200 students between the
7 ages of 15 and 21. Harlem Renaissance was
8 designed and charged with re-engaging students
9 who had fallen behind in accumulating credits or
10 had previously dropped out. Harlem Renaissance
11 accepts and accommodates students who often face
12 significant challenges in pursuing their
13 education including parenting, gang and criminal
14 activities. This school was organized around
15 the concept of student's personal renaissance
16 which began during - - orientation with the
17 creation of My Renaissance Plan through their
18 graduation or their academic or personal
19 transformation is highlighted in the video
20 presentation. Despite a student's challenging
21 past, Harlem Renaissance is steadfast in
22 providing each student stability, hope and the
23 opportunity of transformation. Before their
24 voluntary turnaround and/or transformation in
25 2010, this school, Harlem Renaissance, received

1 a D on its progress report. However under the
2 tutelage of Principal - - , Harlem Renaissance
3 made significant improvement and earned a B on
4 their last progress report. Harlem Renaissance
5 has seen improvement in their graduation rates
6 and a passing grade on the Regents exam for
7 their students as well as credit accumulation.
8 Many of the students, unfortunately, in this
9 school, very rarely see or feel or know success.
10 Harlem Renaissance has shown them that level of
11 success and that cannot be ignored. We should be
12 celebrating--

13 [Applause]

14 --celebrating - - . The achievements of the
15 Harlem Renaissance student and school community
16 again should be embraced and celebrated not
17 dismissed and ignored. So, again I ask you,
18 what is a name? Simply put, it's a journey. To
19 ask Harlem Renaissance to change their name is
20 the equivalent of saying to them that they do
21 not nor did they ever exist. The school
22 community has worked too hard and has achieved
23 too much to say to them that they don't exist.
24 If this school cannot remain open, the Council
25 implores the Department of Education to allow

1 these students and this community to maintain
2 a sense of self and maintain their name which is
3 rich in cultural and historical meaning.

4 MS. FEIJON: Thank you. The next presenter
5 is Nauman Dye - - from the School Leadership
6 Team also seated at the dais.

7 FEMALE VOICE: Yay!

8 MS. NEUMAH DYE: I'm a little bit nervous,
9 this is my first time. I am here as a SLT
10 member and parent association president but
11 first I'm a mother. My daughter came to this
12 school because she was going through something
13 within along her journey. She went down the
14 wrong path. When we found Harlem Renaissance,
15 it brought back the memories and the stories
16 that my family told me about Harlem and growing
17 up in Harlem and what Harlem meant to them and
18 the struggles that they've been through and
19 where they are today. Changing the name of
20 Harlem Renaissance would deeply change these
21 children. When I say to my daughter, you've
22 made your mistakes, tomorrow's a new day, like
23 everyone said, you'll be reborn, what happens
24 when a family divorce and you move on to a new
25 family. Do you say to a child, you have to

1 change you last name because you have a new
2 step father? No. This is who you are, we made
3 who you are. We got you to grow and develop but
4 we still love you and you can hold on to your
5 identity. The other point I have is about the
6 teachers here. We came here originally from
7 Nassau County and there I felt like I had a
8 family. There's people here who care about my
9 daughter. If she's out of line, whether it be
10 socially or academically, I know that they'll
11 give me a call because it takes a village and
12 they're on the same journey with me. When I
13 came to New York City and in the other schools,
14 I didn't feel that. But here at Harlem
15 Renaissance I know if - - out of line, they'll
16 give me a call because - - , I love you. But
17 - - I feel like they had my back and my number
18 one priority is my children and their education
19 but also their social well being and raising
20 good decent human beings what we need today.

21 MS. FEIJON: Thank you. The next speaker is
22 Ruth Perkins from the School Leadership Team
23 also seated at the dais.

24 [Applause]

25 MS. RUTH PERKINS: Good evening everyone.

1 My name is Ruth Perkins - - here. My
2 daughter came to Harlem Renaissance not
3 necessarily because she was doing bad but we
4 were looking for a change, a small community.
5 And when we came here, we met the - -
6 coordinator and I felt welcome. I felt this a
7 place that my daughter could grow and just the
8 name alone inspired the whole concept that this
9 is a place where my daughter could be on a
10 journey to what we--the goal we set for her. And
11 again, referring back to a need, I say what my
12 name is to my colleague, my family, my friends.
13 They both say who I am, they know who I am.
14 When we say Harlem Renaissance to our kids in a
15 community, they understand that it means, that
16 it's a journey, that it's a people that have
17 overcome and we want to see it for our kids.
18 And again, to change the name, Harlem
19 Renaissance, would change significantly the
20 character of the school. And so, we're hoping
21 that the Board of Ed will hear us and leave
22 Harlem Renaissance what it is, a school where
23 children could come and grow and be on their
24 journey towards college and their future.

25 [Applause].

1 MS. FEIJON: Thank you. The next speaker
2 is Ajee Joyner, student of the School Leadership
3 Team here seated at the dais.

4 MS. AJEE JOYNER: Good evening. My name is
5 Ajee Joyner. Good evening, my name is Harlem
6 Renaissance. I want to share why this name is
7 so important to me and other students here.
8 Everyone comes into the school with their own
9 personal story as to why they are here. No
10 matter what their story is, good or bad, every
11 student wants to change something in their life.
12 The staff here have always instilled that
13 Renaissance is a rebirth. This led me to think
14 about what the word rebirth meant. The first
15 place to look to figure out what a word means is
16 the dictionary. So, I went on line with the
17 computers here in the school and I used the
18 Webster dictionary on the Internet to find what
19 the definition of rebirth meant. I found that
20 the word rebirth meant revival or renaissance.
21 The example that the dictionary used with the
22 word rebirth was - - . This means that the
23 word renaissance in our school name actually
24 represents the rebirth of learning for our
25 students. - - . For myself and many other

1 students at Harlem Renaissance, this school
2 has given us a rebirth in our learning and our
3 educational goals. From the moment I walked
4 through the doors, the theme of experiencing
5 your own personal renaissance is constantly
6 reinforced. One of the factors that play into
7 our name is our Renaissance Plan. It's created
8 when we first get to school in orientation.
9 Being in the school since September, everywhere
10 I turn, I think of the renaissance I experienced
11 to get where I am. I can see that my friends in
12 the school really appreciate the fact that every
13 staff member reminds them on a regular basis
14 that we can become whatever we want if we allow
15 ourselves to reborn in our learning and
16 educational - - . Changing our name is only
17 going to change the mindsets of the incoming
18 student. I want every student to receive the
19 community and the family oriented curriculum
20 that they have here. When you - - for the
21 possibility of change, students will react
22 accordingly. - - to the name and the meaning
23 of being reborn with education, this - -
24 renaissance has become a way of life. Taking
25 away the name is stripping incoming students and

1 the students that are here of the effect of
2 our rebirthing process. Keep our name, keep our
3 progress and keep our students on the right
4 path. I'm an example of a walking renaissance.

5 [Applause]

6 MS. FEIJON: Thank you. I'd like to ask
7 Juan - - who is the CCHS of High School - -
8 Education Council representative to come to the
9 microphone and say a few words. Thank you.

10 MALE VOICE: Can you hear me all right?
11 Good, okay. My name is - - , CCHS means City-
12 Wide Council of High Schools. I'm the Manhattan
13 representative and I'm happy to be here because
14 - - voice of parents of public high schools in
15 Manhattan and their children. But I really want
16 to speak to you as a parent, right, because I'm
17 a parent of a child, a daughter who attends
18 Legacy High School, a school that's been
19 attacked by the Department of Education, all
20 right. They use our children as expendable
21 pawns, all right. This is what happened because
22 they want to make change, all right. Let me not
23 get too deep into that. Let's talk about what's
24 going on right here, right now. There's no need
25 to change the name of this school at all.

1 [Applause]

2 - - that's evidence that what the DOE is
3 doing is wrong and unjust, okay. So, why is it
4 happening? Okay, the Bloomberg administration
5 needs an excuse so that he can say well, the
6 name changed and then it's improving, right?
7 The school is doing much better just like Legacy
8 High School. It was improving, doing much
9 better, yet they're phasing it out, giving it a
10 new name, okay, so, that the mayor can say see,
11 I'm going a great job. Our schools are getting
12 better and he wants the credit. No, the credit
13 belongs to you, the students, the teachers,
14 administration of this school.

15 [Applause]

16 - - I want to say 'cause there's a lot of
17 people here that do want to speak, all right.
18 And I just want to share just a few words from
19 Marva Collins, a brilliant educator, great
20 writer and I'm just going to read two lines of a
21 long writ that she has. Based on my
22 recollection, let us not hold up our children to
23 the world and demand solutions. Let us become
24 the solutions, okay. And I'm speaking parents,
25 fathers, mothers, guardians, the point I'm

1 making, we need to unite because right now the
2 Department of Education, the only formidable foe
3 that they will ever have are parents united,
4 okay. They will be afraid of us, okay. The
5 second thing I want to say and I'll be done
6 here. I'm remembering the words of Dr. - - ;
7 he was a minister in Germany during the Nazi
8 regime. He was murdered by Hitler but he said--
9 he said that the test of the morality of the
10 society is what it does for its children and the
11 DOE has failed miserably. Let's stick together,
12 let's fight and go forward because these are our
13 children, it's their future, all right. I'm an
14 old man, my boy's 19. I hope that, you know,
15 like her and your children that they will become
16 what we want them to become and we have to make
17 the difference. Thank you so much.

18 [Applause]

19 MS. FEIJON: Thank you. Our next speaker is
20 - - Dye from the School Leadership Team, not
21 sitting at the dais but welcome to come up and
22 say a few words of presentation.

23 MR. DYE: Can y'all here me?

24 FEMALE VOICE: Yes.

25 MR. DYE: - - comfortable here. While

1 coming up in life, I learned to deal with the
2 facts. Not opinions, facts. And the facts here
3 today--

4 FEMALE VOICE: Little bit louder.

5 MALE VOICE: Louder please.

6 MR. DYE: And the facts here today is that
7 the school has made a tremendous change for our
8 kids. - - have made a tremendous change.
9 That's my wife up there, you know, fighting for
10 our kids because - - an embracement of family
11 there that's in this school. The school is like
12 a - - and any good - - , you want to fight
13 for that - - . You want to keep it together.
14 - - to bring in newcomers is because somebody
15 have an opinion saying that it's not good as
16 them. Don't close down the school.

17 MS. FEIJON: Thank you. We have now
18 concluded the formal presentations. I ask that
19 we begin to line up for public comments. I will
20 be calling about five people at a time that can
21 line up at the center microphone for the public
22 comment. Please be reminded that for this
23 portion of the program there is a two minute
24 limit on each public presentation, to be
25 respectful of everyone's time and the number of

1 people that are here tonight to really speak.
2 - - . The first five speakers, number one
3 through five, number one is Rosalee David,
4 number two is Chantel Diaz, number three is
5 Martita Arroyo, number four Quantasia Steven,
6 number five Ashley Truesdale.

7 FEMALE VOICE: Good evening. The New York
8 City of Education's latest attempt to close 33
9 schools are already in the process of - -
10 program. The political maneuver that is not
11 rooted in sound education - - . Rather it
12 began as a ploy designed to avoid negotiations
13 with the TFA and UFT over - - principal and
14 teacher evaluation systems. - - was to follow
15 a turnaround model of now that does not require
16 principal and teacher evaluation. It allows the
17 city to close and immediately reopen schools
18 under new names. What else could we do about
19 this? Fifty percent of the teachers would be
20 new while fifty percent of the former teachers
21 would be cut in excess - - . There's nothing
22 educationally sound about this intervention
23 plan. It is being introduced for cynical
24 reasons, not to help children. It will not
25 contribute to the development of sound principal

1 and teacher evaluation systems. Furthermore,
2 in removing half the staff in these schools and
3 recruiting replacements in the other school, the
4 DOE will destabilize schools throughout the
5 system one after another like dominoes. While
6 these human costs are the most important ones,
7 there are fiscal costs too. Removing 1800
8 teachers and forcing them into the ATR pool,
9 where they will work as substitutes at full
10 salary will cost the city approximately \$180
11 million annually. Thank you. I - - .

12 MS. CHANTEL DIAZ: Good evening, my name is
13 Chantel Diaz, I'm a parent here. My son has
14 come from different schools and he didn't like
15 nothing from them. - - signed up, spoke with
16 the staff, administration, sat down, told us how
17 their program works. I'm glad to say my son
18 definitely likes it here. He's a senior, it's
19 working. I don't see why they have to continue
20 closing these schools when they're showing
21 improvement, okay. Invest the money that you're
22 going to try to give to a new school to fail
23 because there's no guarantee the new school
24 structure is going to pass, and invest it back
25 into this community.

1 [Applause]

2 We deserve this school, the staff is
3 amazing. They do here. - - it does work and
4 especially for teen-agers. I really hope that
5 Harlem Renaissance does not get closed and the
6 staff does not go away. We'll be doing an
7 injustice to our kids.

8 [Applause]

9 MS. MATITA ARROYO: Hi, I'm Matita Arroyo .
10 My daughter also was doing bad in other schools
11 and she was getting 15, 20s and being--and got a
12 lot of friends, you know, - - friends nothing,
13 just that the school wasn't good for her. So,
14 as soon I came in this door, my daughter too,
15 she said, Ma, I think this is it. This is the
16 school that I think I'm going to make it. And
17 you know what? My daughter and this school is
18 number one for me and my daughter and my kids,
19 okay.

20 [Applause].

21 - - for me, okay?

22 [Applause].

23 MS. FEIJON: Number four please. I'm sorry,
24 number four is Quantisia Steven--Quantasia.

25 MS. QUANTASIA STEVEN: Hello, I'm Quantasia

1 Steven. This is my second year in Harlem
2 Renaissance--can y'all hear me--I'm just saying
3 like, I'm a little nervous. I'm sorry.

4 FEMALE VOICE: Take your time.

5 MS. STEVENS: I really grew like, I really
6 grew in this school. In my old school, I was
7 really slacking like, I would get bad grades, I
8 was being low in like the 30s - - . Soon as I
9 came here, my grades went up - - I had a lot
10 of support from all the staff. They really
11 supported me. I had low self-esteem about
12 myself that I was not going to go here at all.
13 Now, it's my junior year, I'll be graduating by
14 June 11th, - - .

15 [Applause]

16 MS. FEIJON: Thank you.

17 MS. ASHLEY TRUESDALE: Hello, I'm Ashley
18 Truesdale and when I first came to Harlem
19 Renaissance I asked my teachers - - . I asked
20 them why is it called Harlem Renaissance and
21 they explained to me the system that you have
22 your own personal renaissance here and the
23 renaissance - - and I see every student here
24 has their own rebirth and I think you should
25 keep school because that's what it stands for.

1 They're rebirthing good citizens and good
2 students and good people. And so, you should
3 keep the name.

4 MS. FEIJON: And now for speakers six to
5 ten, would you please come and line up at the
6 microphone? Number six, Pat Crispino, number
7 seven, Francicsa Villar, number eight, Hayou
8 Cinton, number nine, Gwen Garrett Joly, number
9 ten, I want to say it right--Ajee Joyner.

10 FEMALE VOICE: First can I ask a question?
11 Is there going to be a question period at some
12 point?

13 MS. FEIJON: I already explained you can
14 write questions and we will answer them. We'll
15 group them together and answer individually or
16 as groups. We will answer questions--if
17 questions come up during your presentation,
18 we'll jot them down and answer at the end.

19 FEMALE VOICE: Thank you.

20 MS. PAT CRISPINO: In addition--

21 MS. FEIJON: I'm sorry, Pat. There are index
22 cards in the back, if you'd like to write them
23 down.

24 MS. CRISPINO: In addition, there's still an
25 attendance sheet - - the principal said, he

1 wanted an attendance sheet. So, can we make
2 sure that he gets that sheet and your name gets
3 on it? Thank you. I've been a teacher for 24
4 years; I'm in my 25th year. In my previous
5 school, I was there for 24 years and I'm happy
6 to say the other day when I came here for a
7 meeting, I ran into one of my previous students
8 who's now registered here. In the other school,
9 we tried to get her to go to class. We weren't
10 successful. We couldn't reach her. But they
11 reached her here.

12 [Applause].

13 I don't know that I can't do this without
14 getting choked up. When I saw that young lady
15 and she smiled at me and said, Ms. I really like
16 it here! I'm going fast and I'm going to
17 graduate on time.

18 [Applause]

19 You would have thought I gave birth to her I
20 was so proud. Harlem Renaissance community like
21 our sister transfer school take the kids that
22 other schools don't want because these students
23 lower their stats. I also want to correct some
24 information that came from the dais. This
25 school doesn't take 17 year and under credited.

1 It takes 14 to 21. That's a big difference.
2 The maturity level of a 14-year old is quite
3 different from a 17-year old. So, when they
4 take in a 14-year old who's already under
5 credited they have their work cut out for them,
6 okay? So, I need that to be part of the record.
7 I confirmed it with the principal so, that I'm
8 not providing wrong information but that's
9 something you need to take into consideration in
10 the decision that you--that is before you about
11 this school. I also want to tell you that I had
12 the opportunity to meet Meryl Tish who is the
13 chancellor of the Board of Regents. We had a
14 meeting with her to explain to her how transfer
15 schools work and that they should not be judged
16 like other high schools. I happy to say on
17 February 13, 2012, the Board of Regents voted on
18 a waiver request. I'm sorry I'm not based in
19 the whole process but it's coming. They now
20 understand that a transfer school like Harlem
21 Renaissance gets rated and punished based on the
22 students that they are more than willing to
23 accept.

24 [Applause]

25 Now, when they have been able to help these

1 young people to achieve. An example of this
2 is student - - Harlem Renaissance at the age
3 of 17 with only ten credits and averaged about
4 16 attendance days in his past two years of high
5 school. But in one year at Harlem Renaissance
6 his or her attendance - - 85 days of
7 attendance and earned 14 credits. Sounds great,
8 right? They have done more with that child from
9 the point the child came into Harlem Renaissance
10 then what that child achieved in their previous
11 school. The problem with the current rating
12 system is the fact that the student is still
13 behind in credits and that's held against Harlem
14 Renaissance. The call this - - . They compare
15 where he is and where he should be and if he is
16 not where he should be, that is held against the
17 - - school he's registered which would be
18 Harlem Renaissance. - - the issue. A
19 transfer student will be given credit for what
20 they have done not what should have been done.

21 [Applause]

22 The problem is the waiver will not be affect
23 in time to save Harlem Renaissance. We need you
24 to do that.

25 MS. FEIJON: Thank you. - - seven,

1 Francisca Villar.

2 MS. FRANCICSA VILLAR: Hello, can everyone
3 hear me? - - we were chanting outside saying
4 - - Save Harlem Renaissance this afternoon so,
5 bear with me. This is my first year teaching
6 ever. I just graduated last year and I - -
7 schools and I interviewed at the - - school to
8 be the science teacher. When I came here, I
9 fell in love with the school. I fell in love
10 with the school and the administration. I'm
11 crying because I was one of these kids five
12 years ago. The DOE failed me ten years ago and
13 I - - as a teacher. I didn't have the
14 opportunity to have an alternate high school. I
15 had to take my GED - - college work on my own.
16 Nobody taught me.

17 [Applause]

18 MS. VILLAR: So, when I came to this school
19 I promised myself and my students that I was not
20 going to fail them and I was going to do
21 everything possible to make them come to this
22 school and learn science. I wish you could come
23 to this school during PM school, after hours and
24 come into my chemistry class. I have 21
25 students that stay here after school to learn

1 chemistry. Show me anywhere in New York City
2 where that's happening - - Harlem Renaissance
3 and that's because it's dedication of the staff,
4 the administration and the students in the
5 school. We want the two million dollars, don't
6 get us wrong. We need the two million dollars
7 but give it to us as Harlem Renaissance because
8 we deserve it.

9 [Applause].

10 MS. FEIJON: Thank you. Number eight.

11 MS. HAYOU CINTON: My name is Hayou and I'm
12 a student here. Before coming to this school I
13 was like, I failed high school period. Like, I
14 didn't go for two years straight. - - this is
15 supposed to be my - - . And coming here
16 tonight, it's just the vibe. You teachers are
17 like giving me the same vibe. You - - the same
18 vibe. When I come to the school and I see
19 Harlem renaissance on the door - - . I feel
20 proud of myself every time I'm saying that I go
21 to the Harlem Renaissance, even if it's a - -
22 school, even if it's not a recognized school, I
23 don't care. I don't think it's - - period on
24 what - - think.

25 [Applause]

1 FEMALE VOICE: Hi good evening, my name is
2 - - and I have been a teacher here at Harlem
3 Renaissance since the opening of the school in
4 2004. And I have also served as the - - leader
5 from 2004, until December in 2011. I have
6 worked in alternative schools since 1979.

7 [Laughter]

8 FEMALE VOICE: In 2011, our Superintendent
9 network leadership team to give us an update on
10 our status. We were told, among other things
11 that the DOE would provide \$300 Thousand to be
12 used to customize a school improvement plan to
13 improve student outcomes. We will be working
14 through the summer on this plan. We were also
15 told that if we do not show improvement, that
16 our school would be considered for phase out
17 during the 2012/13 school year. And by the way,
18 we did not get that money for the Fall Semester.
19 So went September, October and November without
20 getting that money. Three months into the
21 school year, and we didn't have it. So, when we
22 started the programs, the network said that they
23 provided teacher training, operational support,
24 and support for the schools' leadership. So
25 what's confusing to me is that no evaluation has

1 been done as to whether any of these things
2 have had an impact on student income, outcome,
3 excuse me. How do you know if any of these
4 things are working unless a formal evaluation is
5 done? Has anyone examined the strengths as well
6 as any weaknesses? From what I can see, there
7 has been improvements to the outcome. A
8 decision will be made in a few months, and
9 there's still two to three months left to the
10 school year. We have the junior regents coming
11 up, and I know that we'll have a very good
12 graduating class in June. So shouldn't you at
13 least wait until the end of the summer before
14 you make a decision? Our school went from a D
15 to a C to a B. We're doing better. If my
16 daughter came home with a report card and she
17 went from a D to a C to a B, I'd be taking her
18 out to diner, taking her shopping. We'd be
19 celebrating. I wouldn't say don't go to school
20 anymore, because you're getting better.

21 [Applause]

22 FEMALE VOICE: I know that the plan is to
23 replace Harlem Renaissance with another - -
24 school. So many people are probably thinking
25 what's the difference? There will still be a

1 school here to work with this population of
2 kids. But please don't underestimate the value
3 of the relationships that have been formed
4 between the staff and the students here.

5 FEMALE VOICE: That's right.

6 FEMALE VOICE: For many of our kids,
7 important bonds have been formed, bonds that
8 will probably last a lifetime. For many of our
9 kids, these unique relationships have helped
10 them be successful. If you replace half of the
11 teaching staff, important bonds will be broken,
12 and many of our kids will have to start over.
13 I'm sure if you ask any kid in this room, why do
14 you come to school? Oh, because I don't want
15 Ms. So and So to be mad at me. Oh, I want to do
16 well for Ms. So and So. Oh, I want--

17 FEMALE VOICE: [Interposing] Excuse me Ms.
18 - - two minutes - - assigned - - that all the
19 time.

20 FEMALE VOICE: Okay, this school is an
21 integral part of the community, which I assure
22 is something that has not been considered.
23 Don't let our students down. Don't let the
24 community down, thank you.

25 [Applause]

1 MS. LAURA FEIJOO: Okay - - move. - - is
2 number 10. So we're going to move between 11
3 and 15. Number 11 is Sophia Carter. Number 12
4 is Amy Arundell. Number 13 is Tezhane Steward.
5 Number 14 is Alastor Bah. And number 15 is
6 Joshua Ortiz. Sir, I apologize if I pronounce
7 name, Ortiz.

8 FEMALE VOICE: - - yours and they'll
9 understand.

10 MS. FEIJOO: I know. I go through this all
11 the time. I'm doing the best I can between the
12 handwriting and the pronunciations. I apologize
13 if I have pronounced your name incorrectly. If
14 you can please, when you step up - - pronounce
15 it properly. I'd appreciate that for the
16 record, so that we do have your name. So number
17 11, Sofia Carter.

18 MS. SOFIA CARTER: Yes.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. CARTER: It is very important to me to
21 be here today. I actually skipped out of work
22 so that I could come here. My son has been
23 going to the school downtown, and he is not
24 doing well. Everything I did, he wasn't
25 succeeding. He didn't like the school. He

1 didn't go to any classes, not even gym. And I
2 decided to find a new school. And since he got
3 here, and the last report card he showed me,
4 just, it was amazing. I've never seen a report
5 card like that. He's 80s and 90s and he's
6 really - - . And he's even talking about
7 college, which was never in his - - before. And
8 I'm so, I don't, I don't want to cry, but I'm so
9 happy, and so thankful for all the staff, the -
10 - of the students, everyone that helped to
11 encourage my son. I'm a single parent and I
12 think when I talk to him it goes from one ear
13 and come out. Now he comes home, we sit down,
14 we talk about his homework; we talk about his
15 goals, and I'm very excited. And I really wish
16 that this school could stay around, not for him,
17 but for all the students, and probably more
18 students that are to come. You know, I think we
19 need it. We really need this - - and I wanted
20 to - - .

21 [Applause]

22 MS. CARTER: Thank you.

23 MS. FEIJOO: Speaker number 12, Amy
24 Arundell.

25 MS. AMY ARUNDELL: Good evening, my name is

1 Amy Arundell. I'm a special rep. at United
2 Federation of Teachers, and I work - - teach.
3 And I come here to stand in solidarity - - , to
4 stand in solidarity with the students, the
5 community, the staff - - . These are cynical
6 times, and the closure of this school is an
7 example of that cynicism. This is a political
8 decision on the part of the Mayor of this city,
9 and it's a shame. It's a shame. And we're here
10 to say that the metrics that matter, students,
11 their successes, this school is a successful
12 school. This is not a failing school. And its
13 closure in any type or any form is unacceptable,
14 a special game in the contest of the political
15 environment that this closure is happening now.
16 'Cause if we think for a moment, the Principal
17 and the committee that might have to staff the
18 so-called new school, the sham of a new school,
19 they are going to have to make a decision. Do
20 they hire back more than 50% and lose millions
21 of dollars? What kinds of decision is that to
22 put in the hands of educators? That is a
23 disgrace. It's a shame. And it should not be
24 allowed to happen. And we are standing here to
25 say that we do not support anything that's part

1 - - this man is doing to this school or any of
2 the other 32 schools. We're going to do
3 everything in our power to fight against this
4 close, and we ask the people here who represent
5 the Department of Ed. to have courage and to
6 report what you hear here tonight.

7 [Applause]

8 MS. ARUNDELL: - - to pretend like he is
9 doing something in the best interest of the
10 people in this room because clearly, any kinds
11 of change to this school, this school community,
12 is not in the best interest of the people who
13 are here. So please be brave, and join us in
14 standing up to the Mayor, because he is the one.
15 He is the one who has made this decision.

16 [Applause]

17 MS. FEIJOO: Thank you, - - .

18 MS. TYEZHANE STEWARD: Hi, hello, okay, so
19 I'm a new student here, and when nobody didn't
20 give me a chance, I came to Harlem Renaissance,
21 and Harlem Renaissance gave me a chance. The
22 teachers were very open and they were ready to
23 work with me. I have just recently adjusted to
24 the school, and I am pretty sure all of the new
25 students are really fitting into it now, and

1 it's not right for you to just up and come and
2 change everything.

3 [Applause]

4 MS. FEIJOO: Thank you - - .

5 MS. ALSATOR BAH: I am also a new student,
6 and I've been to, like this is my third school
7 now, and I've never felt so much better about
8 like learning than I do here. And the teachers
9 are phenomenal. Like, you're, if, you're going
10 change, I don't agree with changing the school,
11 or the name or anything, but if you do, do not
12 fire any of the teachers. They are the best
13 staff we can ever have.

14 [Applause]

15 MS. BAH: Three schools I've been to, but
16 none of them had a staff like this. They are
17 willing to stay after school. They're willing
18 to do anything - - to get education in. The
19 most we can ask out of the - - is - - .

20 [Applause]

21 MS. FEIJOO: - - .

22 MR. JOSHUA ORTIZ: Hi, my name is Joshua
23 Ortiz.

24 [Laughter]

25 MR. ORTIZ: - - changing Harlem Renaissance

1 is like changing my name, which you did.

2 [Laughter]

3 MR. ORTIZ: - - the school system failed me
4 not once, not twice, three times. And I came
5 into this school the fourth time, and they
6 applauded me. I came in and I felt like this
7 was a home. The teachers here are wonderful.
8 I've committed a bond with them. But changing
9 the school name, changing the school at all
10 would just, it would just fail. It wouldn't
11 work at all, so don't change the name. That's
12 just dumb.

13 [Applause]

14 MS. FEIJOO: Thank you, I will now call
15 speakers 16 through 20. And I will try my best
16 to pronounce them correctly. - - . Number 16,
17 Syrhae - - , Mc Eachin; number 17, Dwayne
18 Clark; number 18, Lisa Barrow; number 19
19 Hassaraton Camara; number 20, Amy Arundall - -
20 spoke.

21 FEMALE VOICE: Okay, - - .

22 FEMALE VOICE: Yes please, - - .

23 MS. SYRHAE MCEACHIN: Hello, so my name is
24 Syrahe McEachin, and I'm a student here. But
25 honestly, I feel like when I walked in this

1 school in - - . You know, like, I'm not so
2 open to meeting new people a lot, so I can't
3 open up to people a lot because I'm a - -
4 student. So I feel like when I first came here,
5 I was like okay, it's cool in here and
6 everything, but as soon as you get into your
7 first, I say disagreement with your one teacher,
8 I feel like it teaches you a lesson about the
9 whole staff in this building, because as soon as
10 we get into our arguments or disobeys, or
11 whatever the case may be, they make sure you sit
12 down and you understand what you're debating
13 about, where they'll talk to you like, not like
14 you're a child, but like you're one of them on
15 their level.

16 FEMALE VOICE: Yes.

17 MS. MCEACHIN: Because adults, they talk
18 down to kids a lot and we don't appreciate it.
19 That's why we up-rise. That's why we don't
20 listen, because you all talk down to us. But at
21 this school, they - - because it's like
22 everybody in here, I could go to any teacher.
23 Not one school have I been to, that I could go
24 to any teacher and talk to them, and know that
25 they going to help me. They help you outside of

1 school, even with extra subjects they are not
2 supposed to help you with, they help you. You
3 know, and that will hurt my heart dearly if you
4 were to close this school. There's no need to
5 close this school, because I feel that Principal
6 Zeimer, as soon as he came in here, you know
7 what we do. Every day, no every week, we get a
8 report card to show that, our progress, and if
9 you get the most highest report card in your
10 class, and get a - - , he takes you out to
11 lunch. What Principal you know takes you out to
12 lunch?

13 [Applause]

14 MS. MCEACHIN: - - and then he tells you you
15 can have what you want. You're like, have what
16 you want.

17 [Laughter]

18 MS. MCEACHIN: You don't know what to do.
19 But it makes you excited about coming to school,
20 because everyday, you know, that's something to
21 look forward to, and that's something to push
22 for. And I don't think you should close this
23 school.

24 [Applause]

25 MS. FEIJOO: Thank you, - - .

1 MR. DWAYNE CLARK: Good evening, my name
2 is Dwayne Clark from the United Federation of
3 Teachers. Before I begin the - - is very
4 challenging for me to follow.

5 [Laughter]

6 MR. CLARK: But one of the things that I'm
7 going to say, I'm representing my boss - - might
8 have their own representative here from United
9 Federation of Teachers as well. So I'm - -
10 speaking for me, Dwayne Clark, the UFT district
11 rep. for community school district five - - .
12 So that means that Harlem Renaissance is part of
13 my whole map of what I represent for the United
14 Federation of Teachers as far as schools are
15 concerned. So constantly, I'm dealing with
16 these - - collocation, all these public hearings
17 for closing schools, 'cause this is what happens
18 constantly with the community school district
19 five. It is self-serving. It's a slap in the
20 face. It's a slap in the face to the community,
21 and it's a slap in the face of whom we represent
22 to our children. That's what it's about. This
23 young lady was so eloquent in what she was
24 saying about what this school represents to her,
25 and that's what we should be, as adults,

1 listening to, the children. If the children
2 say the school is providing the needs of what
3 they want, who are we to turn around and say
4 that it's not up to snuff?

5 FEMALE VOICE: Right.

6 [Applause]

7 MR. CLARK: We are not like - - that
8 treatment, but we do, because supposedly,
9 politically based on numbers and stats and all
10 of this other stuff, - - dope issues, which has
11 nothing to do, I see that sign, that has nothing
12 to do with children issues. And that's the
13 point of the fact that I'm trying to make,
14 because I'm tired of this. I'm tired of dealing
15 with all of the constant upheaval within this
16 community, with just a lot of respect for the
17 people in this community and their voice. And
18 that's something that we at the, the UFT is
19 very, very, very strong in - - the communities,
20 the parents, the students, because we know your
21 voice is the real voice. You're telling what we
22 call the truth, otherwise what we hear when we
23 hear stories that - - mixed messages, it kind of
24 slant it. This is what we cannot go through
25 anymore. We have to put a stop to this. Harlem

1 Renaissance, I applaud you today, because you
2 know what, your number here say it all.

3 [Applause]

4 MR. CLARK: Because - - that means that - -
5 support - - and the community. Now this is
6 something the Department of Education--

7 MS. FEIJOO: [Interposing] Excuse me Mr. - -
8 . If you can bring it to a conclusion, we
9 would appreciate it - - .

10 MR. CLARK: I will appreciate it - - . I
11 still have 30 seconds. It is very important for
12 the community to recognize, and in particular,
13 the Department of Education, that this is just
14 very vital to the community. They are imploring
15 to you to not change the name of the school, and
16 really, in a nutshell, don't even change
17 anything. We - - thank you for - - . - -
18 department, let them continue, because that's
19 the problem in this district. People make
20 progress, but then you cut them off at the
21 knees. We need to stop that.

22 MS. FEIJOO: Thank you Sir.

23 [Applause]

24 MS. FEIJOO: - - Lisa Barrow, if you'd like
25 to speak, number 18, Lisa Barrow. Okay, number

1 19.

2 MS. HASSARATON CAMARA: Hi everyone. My
3 name is Hassaraton. I - - in this school, and I
4 think the - - this school because I think they
5 have to be built - - . I didn't go to school
6 for two weeks after I, before I came here. So
7 since I came here they are all helping me, and
8 the teachers is the best teachers I have had - -
9 thank you. I - - to - - and - - Harlem
10 Renaissance - - Harlem Renaissance. I say
11 because if you change this name, that means
12 you're not helping me to change, to get my
13 future, because this school, and this name, with
14 these teachers, I think I - - , because I think
15 they are the best I ever had in, in the United
16 States.

17 [Applause]

18 MALE VOICE: Hi, my name is - - .

19 [Applause]

20 MS. FEIJOO: - - that's fine. Could you
21 just announce your name, because I - - was - - .

22 FEMALE VOICE: No, that was my mistake. I
23 was next.

24 MS. FEIJOO: Okay, I, so just announce your
25 name, since I didn't hear it announced.

1 MALE VOICE: My name is - - .

2 MS. FEIJOO: Thank you.

3 MALE VOICE: I'd like to thank, first
4 everybody here for coming and supporting - - .

5 [Applause]

6 MALE VOICE: We'll fight for Harlem
7 Renaissance, and - - here are now a part of
8 Harlem Renaissance - - .

9 FEMALE VOICE: Thank you.

10 MALE VOICE: Right, I want to start off by
11 saying, why did, why change - - Harlem
12 Renaissance. My old school, I wasn't the best
13 student. I wasn't one of the top five. I
14 wasn't always paying attention in class.
15 Honestly, I - - . I'm not going to say as soon
16 as I came to Harlem Renaissance I started
17 passing with A's. I was a B, but I wasn't
18 passing like that - - . I had to sit down with
19 Ms. White [phonetic] and Ms. Rhonda [phonetic].
20 It - - something that I really need to change
21 and sit down, and think about what I want to do
22 with my future. In my old school, when my
23 report card used to come up I stayed home. I
24 used to run home - - my report card - - wasn't -
25 - .

1 [Laughter]

2 MALE VOICE: But now, I come home and
3 actually show my mother my report card - -.

4 [Applause]

5 MALE VOICE: Uh, yeah, you know me. This
6 school is full of - - who were thrown out by
7 their old school, I mean by the old school and
8 forgotten, the old school as they would say.
9 This school has taken students and made change.
10 This school is full of nothing but outcasts as
11 you can say, but they - - to be changed. And
12 everybody in this school is pretty much passing.
13 It's not the high number as other high schools
14 you would have, like 85 to 60% who is passing,
15 but we're doing our best. And it's pretty hard
16 to change a person like that if they're so used
17 to being - - one. I can - - say that Ms. Gopaul
18 [phonetic], who I gave a hard time, in two
19 semesters - - in her class, and she rode it out
20 and still - - about it. And I think about that.
21 But we also talk about the, we're always talking
22 about the changes in the school, but - - goes
23 outside of the school. Ms. Ayesha [phonetic],
24 she goes out and - - about street violence and
25 crime that are going on. Today, we went into

1 the back in the play ground, back here, the
2 little playground. We went back, went back in
3 there for a Trevyon Martin who was still
4 employed. We all have - - at - - moment in
5 time. That is something that shows that we're
6 also for the community, other than the students
7 in the school.

8 [Applause]

9 MS. FEIJOO: I'm going to announce speakers
10 21 to 25. Number one, Kathleen Gold Paugh;
11 number 22, Elonora Demekins; number 23, Mwanza
12 Dye, I don't know if you want to speak again;
13 number 24 is Ronnie Ross; and number 25 is Dr.
14 Gholsons. 21 - - .

15 MS. KATHLEEN GOLD PAUGH: - - name. You got
16 it right. I speak all day so I will keep this
17 brief. I have worked in education since 1974.
18 I - - . I am a - - teacher. And I have - - and
19 left and - - and left. But I came back again
20 recently because I wanted joy in my life. And
21 everyday here is joyful, and every day here is a
22 struggle. Most of the struggling comes because
23 of the, can I say the - - ? Because of the
24 debris that falls on my head from the Department
25 of Education. Yes, some of my students give me

1 a rough time - - . But it is the greed. I
2 sometimes question, why did you hire me, if you
3 don't think I can do the job? - - , lots of
4 women in education, why did you hire me if you
5 don't think I can do the job? - - me at age 60
6 with a lifetime of experience. I'm sure - - my
7 students, if they are constantly hearing, oh,
8 you can't do the job. You're not good enough.
9 Oh - - okay, I'm going to give you the name to
10 self-esteem people. We're not looking at the
11 fact that they've gone from a C, excuse me, a D
12 to a C to a B. You keep moving the target, but
13 you know what, we still keep hitting it.

14 FEMALE VOICE: Yes.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. GOLD PAUGH: - - . There are some
17 things I don't understand. This is political,
18 and this is about money. So why are we even
19 spending all of this money on a name change?
20 How many thousands and thousands of dollars are
21 we going to have to spend on new signs - - new -
22 - ? And all - - your - - that goes along with
23 that. The Department of Education seems to me
24 that one size fits all. But you know what, one
25 size fits nobody very well. And I would like it

1 to be recognized that we are doing a job here
2 for our students. Why does everybody have to
3 graduate in four years? Is that the magic
4 number? If it takes somebody to have the
5 growth, and it takes them five years to grow and
6 become a better person, then please, give them
7 five years. Give them six years. They got till
8 21 and they're out the door, thank you.

9 [Applause]

10 MS.ELNORA DEMEKINS: Hi, good evening
11 everyone. I would like to thank you for being
12 here tonight to hear our concerns about the DOE
13 plan to change the name of the school. I am
14 here on behalf of the Hunter College Liberty
15 Partnership Program. We are still - - program -
16 - . Our students are - - two years. And we've
17 been partnering with hundreds of schools for the
18 past six years now, for the past six years. - -
19 the last one year and a half, under the
20 leadership of - - and the - - staff and the
21 teachers that have been working here, we have
22 made this, a great transformation that cannot be
23 expressed in a few words, or even a letter.
24 From, as most of our students, I wont really - -
25 . They are not - - top circles. We know that

1 - - environmental factors that play a critical
2 role - - of disrupting a student's education. -
3 - - our students - - consistency and the
4 building of trust. Over the past two years, a
5 number of special events, including the - - have
6 had a very positive impact on most of the
7 students and the community. - - the name - - .
8 It's - - with this - -. Therefore, our
9 transition to a new name will disrupt students -
10 - and - - the positive contribution we have
11 shared in our community. The name Harlem
12 Renaissance is the perfect fit for the school.
13 It - - our location. It reflects the school's
14 primary mission, to give every student a second
15 chance. To the students at Harlem Renaissance
16 High School, I - - to the word Renaissance - - .
17 They were asked to write down stories and - -
18 transformation and - - based on that
19 transformation. And - - the teacher when we - -
20 to go back to the stories and make sure that
21 each student has - - . And - - pride and
22 dedication to follow up with - - .

23 MS. FEIJOO: Just about at two minutes. If
24 you can - - .

25 MS. DEMEKINS: Changing the name of the

1 school will certainly be a setback for the
2 students and family, and Hunter College Liberty
3 Partnership Program strongly opposes a name
4 change. - - opportunity and - - services to our
5 students and family which are pretty much needed
6 for our kids, thank you.

7 [Applause]

8 MS. FEIJOO: Mr. Dye is number 23, but he
9 spoke already. I'm not sure if he wants to
10 speak again. He seems to have stepped out. All
11 right, number 24, Ronnie Ross.

12 MR. RONNIE ROSS: Good evening ladies and
13 gentlemen. First I want to say, not only is
14 there a bond with the students and the staff
15 here at Harlem Renaissance. There is also a
16 bond with the parents also. I mean, my son
17 transferred here about two years ago from a
18 friend who recommended he come here, a friend
19 who graduated from here, and even though my son
20 was not doing as well as he should, this school
21 calls me, and informs me every step of the way
22 when my son make mistakes and do wrong. And
23 when I get on my son and talk to him, he always
24 say, dad, the school is on me, they on me, they
25 one me. They wont let me rest. And you know

1 what I tell him, not only is the school on
2 you, they want you to get an education, and they
3 want you to be a young man, you man's society.
4 That's why I think this school should stay where
5 it's at.

6 FEMALE VOICE: Yes.

7 MR. ROSS: Thank you.

8 [Applause]

9 MS. FEIJOO: Number 25 is Dr. Gholsons.

10 DR. GHOLSONS: First I'd like to thank all
11 of the students that spoke. - - .

12 [Applause]

13 DR. GHOLSONS: - - and - - . Unfortunately,
14 we have not developed forums on which this
15 exchange can take place, unless it's a crisis.
16 That is wrong. The adults that are involved in
17 DOE - - need to - - what is obviously an
18 orchestrated demise of successful conditions for
19 urban youth.

20 [Applause]

21 DR. GHOLSONS: Young people only represent
22 the problems and the issues and the business
23 that adults did not take care of, and complete
24 before they die in the process. And if we
25 don't, if we don't remember anything else, we

1 have to remember that. Because these attacks
2 are sending all the wrong signals to young
3 people, all the wrong signals to parents. You
4 cannot tell children they are dysfunctional.
5 Something is wrong with you. You cannot tell
6 parents something is wrong with you. Something
7 is wrong with your child. And you cannot tell a
8 community you cannot produce success. You
9 cannot orchestrate closing schools that are
10 demonstrating success. That is what is afoot.
11 When Harlem was designated to be gentrified,
12 that's when the managerial tool came into place
13 to close schools.

14 [Applause]

15 DR. GHOLSONS: - - not. And we can no longer
16 participate, we can no longer participate in
17 activity which is contradictory to the success
18 and value of the people who have always lived in
19 Harlem. It has to stop. The renaming of the
20 school is not frivolous. It is not a
21 technicality. It is being done because it
22 states Harlem Renaissance High School. And the
23 school has demonstrated success. Harlem Success
24 Academies, even though I have problems with them
25 too, Harlem is being taken out of their name as

1 well as it goes on to be duplicated and
2 processed around the city. To the
3 administrators and the faculty of this school,
4 please continue to take care of business. It is
5 obvious, it is obvious that you're doing
6 something right. And to the parents and the
7 community members, I am a community member. I'm
8 here, and let me stand to the side for one
9 second, and state that Community Board Nine
10 offers its support to the parents, students and
11 administration of this school, that it not be
12 closed, the name not be changed, and outsiders
13 do not come and mess with the success - -
14 Harlem.

15 MS. FEIJOO: - - .

16 DR. GHOLSONS: Right, number 23 told me I
17 could take their time. No, I'm just kidding.

18 [Laughter]

19 DR. GHOLSONS: Everything that we do in
20 terms of how we spend money, how we develop
21 curriculums, has to demonstrate to these young
22 people that they are first and foremost being
23 invested in for the future. We want the young
24 people to be at the front door, seeking
25 information and being motivated, not coming

1 through the back door or the back window. If
2 - - the managerial style, which is being put
3 upon this community and other communities around
4 the city, in particular those communities of
5 color--

6 FEMALE VOICE: [INTERPOSING] That's right.

7 DR. GHOLSONS: --we will find ourselves
8 involved in the displacement of huge populations
9 of people who live in urban areas, and who will
10 find the - - and dehumanizing of our young. No
11 parent, I said no parent is going to allow
12 people to destroy the spirit and the self-
13 confidence of their children - - .

14 [Applause]

15 MS. FEIJOO: Number 26 - - . Number 26 is
16 Linda Quinones. Number 27 is Bethany Veal. And
17 Number 28 is Symone - - .

18 MALE VOICE: Morrison.

19 MS. FEIJOO: Sorry.

20 [Background Noise]

21 MS. FEIJOO: Number 26.

22 MS. LINDA QUIONES: Hi, my name is Linda
23 Quinones. I'm a parent of one of the students
24 in this school, and this forum took me by
25 surprise because I was signing the name - - was

1 just - - to hear the, you know, the attendance
2 sheet. But I'm up here now and I really, what I
3 have to say was already said. - - was telling
4 me, come up to the meeting. Do the best you
5 can. I'm a voice. I don't know what's CLD, or
6 whatever the, you know, program is all about,
7 but I'm willing to stand to be the voice. My
8 child came here at the age of 14, and I was
9 praying that they accepted him, and I - - of
10 students - - he wasn't the best thing at the
11 beginning, because at 14, you know, he was
12 really confused. He wanted to - - . And so, we
13 did work with him. I'm very happy. He's still
14 - - a little, but he's all serious - - with
15 himself and he does give Mr. Gray [phonetic] a
16 little challenge. - - but he comes and he is
17 more serious than he was when he was 14. And
18 I'm all for the students and the parents and
19 everything that has to get done to defend the
20 children. I don't know where the - - or what's
21 the - - but - - . But I'm going to pray. We
22 all have to pray, okay. This is an act of the
23 Lord.

24 MALE VOICE: Amen.

25 MS. QUINONES: - - not just - - the men, you

1 know. Man is always saying what he wants to
2 say, you know. God - - so we got to do a little
3 bit of that. And my son has been through that,
4 and he - - 'cause he likes his school though he
5 doesn't say. It's the only program that they
6 put up with him, and have gave him back his, his
7 sense of being a student. He wasn't a forgotten
8 one. And he really felt awful about it, because
9 his brothers and sisters are not top notch, but
10 they are in college, and he feels less than, and
11 this program has made him feel like he is a
12 student again, so - - .

13 [Applause]

14 MS. FEIJOO: - - number 27, Bethany Veal,
15 Bethany Veal. Number 28, Symone - - .

16 MS. SYMONE MORRISON: - - Symone - - . I'm
17 the PTA president - - which is now - - the
18 school - - . - - we're also facing our own co-
19 location proposal that was just - - last week.
20 But the struggle is never over, and that's what
21 I want kids here to understand. You must keep
22 up the fight. You must - - . If someone come
23 to you to see you today standing up for
24 something that is right, when society has always
25 put a stigma on that. Walking into Harlem

1 Renaissance, the - - begins. - - means that
2 Harlem Renaissance should not ever - - anything,
3 and that is truly disgraceful. To use funds,
4 for instance, to the top, is more like - - us to
5 the bottom, and the mismanagement of those
6 funds, to just close schools to rename them to
7 get these funds is disgraceful.

8 [Applause]

9 MS. MORRISON: I cannot wait for these
10 puppet strings to be cut. I cannot wait for
11 people in the DOE to start doing what they are
12 paid to do. Encourage schools who are doing
13 fantastic work, and helping schools that are
14 struggling.

15 MALE VOICE: She's right.

16 MS. MORRISON: Politics has no place in the
17 classroom at all. Speaking as a mother, when I
18 named my son, I was very proud of that name.
19 These children are proud of this school's name.
20 To say that you want to rename it, you are
21 telling us that Harlem Renaissance as a history
22 does not matter. You are saying a lot to this
23 community, and this community is not going to
24 keep quiet.

25 FEMALE VOICE: Right.

1 MS. MORRISON: Thank you very much.

2 [Applause]

3 MS. FEIJOO: - - here is Lisa Barrow or
4 Bethany Veal is here - - would like to come up
5 and speak, okay. We will now begin the question
6 and answer period. Remember, there will be some
7 individual questions and others that have been
8 bucketed into categories that will have a
9 representative questions asked. Any questions
10 not answered here tonight will be answered on
11 the website. If you have additional questions
12 at the conclusion of tonight's proceedings, we
13 ask that you direct them to us via the phone
14 number, or the email address at the bottom of
15 the fact sheet. I will now turn the question
16 and answer period over to Deputy Chancellor, Dr.
17 Dorita Gibson to go through the questions, thank
18 you.

19 [Background Noise]

20 Dr. Dorita Gibson: Thanks Dr. Feijoo.
21 There is a lot of emotion in the room tonight,
22 and a lot of compassion. I heard everything you
23 have said, particularly what the students have
24 said, many success stories. And I commend you
25 on your work. I commend you coming to this

1 school and taking charge of your education.
2 That's a very important thing, and you should be
3 well commended for that. Thanks for sharing
4 with us. We have two questions from the - -
5 I'll answer. But please make sure that you
6 visit our website if there are additional
7 questions that may come up there as well. The
8 first question is, "Why does this school cannot
9 start a better school someplace else?" Now,
10 good question, and - - to ensure that all
11 students have access to high quality schools,
12 the DOE annually reviews the performance of all
13 citywide schools. We look at them; we make
14 decisions and it is never an easy decision to
15 come out to a school community and have this
16 kind of a conversation. However, schools that
17 are persistently under - - achieving list, that
18 came up - - the state - - special attention
19 during this review, specifically the for PLA
20 schools, the department looks at whether one of
21 the federally approved intervention models can
22 adequately entrust the school's needs, or
23 whether another intervention is more
24 appropriate. And at this time, we're looking at
25 a different intervention. The next question is,

1 "Why close a school with a B grade and a good
2 Principal?" Commend and applaud improvements of
3 the school and success of other students who
4 have spoken today. While the school is working
5 for many, the attendance has steadily declined
6 over the last four years, 5% between '09, '10,
7 the 10 and 11 school years. And while the 6th
8 grade graduation rate increases, it's notable
9 those transfers will remain on the bottom of the
10 25th percentile of transfer schools. This is
11 about preserving the positive aspects of Harlem
12 Renaissance, by allowing them - - much faster
13 pace of improvement for the current students.
14 That's the end of the questions. We only have
15 to, I, I, once again, I thank you for coming and
16 sharing your experiences with us this evening,
17 and - - .

18 [Background Noise]

19 MS. FEIJOO: We have heard many significant
20 comments this evening. And as Dr. Gibson said,
21 we are listening to every single one of them.
22 We are listening to every single one of them,
23 and they will be recorded and transcribed. We
24 appreciate your feedback, your contributions to
25 this hearing. This information will be shared

1 with the panel on educations policy, which
2 will have its hearing on April 26th at - -
3 Campus. Please use the phone number and email
4 address at the bottom of your fact sheet if you
5 have additional questions. Thank you all for
6 coming. This joint public hearing is officially
7 closed, thank you.

8 MALE VOICE: Thank you everybody.

9 [END 286_459]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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

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6 Signature *Mausha G. Brandt*

7 Date: April 3rd, 2011.
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C E R T I F I C A T E

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6 Signature *Cecilia Kelly*

7 Date: April 3rd, 2011.
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