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

**Phase out and new school replacement
for Lucretia Mott (Q215) - 1/20/12**

1 [START RECORDING]

2 MS. JENNY SOLEMAN: Good evening. My name
3 is Jenny Soleman and I will be acting as the
4 facilitator for the evening's joint public
5 hearing. This is a joint public hearing of the
6 Department of Education Community Education - -
7 27 and the School Leadership Team to discuss the
8 proposal to phase out and replace PS 215
9 Lucretia Mott. Please note that this evening's
10 proceedings will be recorded and transcribed.

11 So before we begin here I just want to run
12 through the agenda for the evening. Anyone who
13 wishes to speak during the public comment
14 portion of the meeting please make your way to
15 the back where you can sign up on the public
16 comment list. We'll keep that open for 15 more
17 minutes and I'll let you know when that closed
18 just to give you a quick reminder. And also if
19 you have a question that you would like to post
20 to the department this evening during the
21 hearing there's note cards also available where
22 you sign in to speak and you can submit those to
23 any volunteer or staff. And if we're unable to
24 answer them during the question and answer
25 portion of the hearing we will make sure that

1 they're all included in the analysis [phonetic]
2 of public comment which is published on our
3 website and provided to the panel members prior
4 to the votes. And that panel meeting will take
5 place on February 9th.

6 If any elected officials join us over the
7 course of the evening and may wish to speak we
8 will make an attempt to accommodate them. And
9 we have our panel members all assembled. I
10 would also like to say after the formal
11 presentation by the chancellor we'll have
12 presentations by the other member of the panel
13 and when we will move in to the public comment
14 portion. Each person who signs up will be given
15 two minutes to speak and we would ask that
16 they're all respectful of each other and our
17 neighbors and try and keep to that two-minute
18 limit. We'll have someone here in the front,
19 this young lady will be letting you know when
20 you've got to 30 seconds and then when that two
21 minutes has elapsed [phonetic]. And then once
22 we move off the speaker list, as I said, we'll
23 move to the question and answer period.

24 If at the end of the hearing you have
25 additional questions that you still want

1 answered we would suggest that you contact us
2 either by phone or email; both of these are
3 listed on the fact sheets. And just to put them
4 in the record for you it's D27 proposals, D, the
5 number 2, the number 7 proposals
6 @Schools.NYC.gov and the phone number is 212-
7 374-7621.

8 So I would now like to introduce the panel
9 that's been assembled starting all the way to
10 the right we have a new member, I apologize I
11 didn't see who's joined us, Cheryl Levy
12 [phonetic] from the SLT. Please, I apologize.
13 Also joining us representing the CEC we have Dr.
14 Cora Ann Griffin [phonetic]. We have Donna
15 Hamilton, Hamlet, I apologize, Hamlet,
16 representing the SLT, Gina Davis [phonetic] with
17 the CEC as well, Michelle Lloyd-Bay our
18 superintendent, Principal Susan Hoffman
19 [phonetic] and our Chancellor Dennis Wolcott.
20 So I will turn that program over to the
21 chancellor who will be a presentation of the
22 proposal.

23 CHANCELLOR DENNIS WOLCOTT: Thank you Jenny
24 and good evening to all of you. Normally we
25 have either deputy chancellors and others

1 representing the chancellor at these hearings
2 but I thought it's extremely important that I
3 also participate as well. So it's my chance to
4 come out to Far Rockaway to be the presiding
5 person representing myself, quite frankly.

6 So this joint public hearing was convened
7 and discussed proposed phase out and replacement
8 of Lucretia Mott PS 215. The decision to phase
9 out a school is not an easy one. We do not take
10 these decisions lightly. We examined many
11 factors and data before we proposed a course of
12 action. We also reach out to families and
13 community members.

14 Before I present PS 215 proposal I'd like to
15 say a few words about why we are here. All of
16 us - - our schools provide high quality
17 education to the students but [phonetic] we must
18 hold all of our schools to the same standards of
19 excellence because every child in every city and
20 [phonetic] this city deserves the very best
21 possible education. When a school isn't getting
22 the job done we have the responsibility to take
23 action to assure its - - students don't fall
24 even further behind and the new students will
25 have better options.

1 PS 215 is located at 535 Briar Place in Far
2 Rockaway in community school district 27 in the
3 borough of queens. It currently serves students
4 in grades kindergarten through five and offers a
5 pre-kindergarten program as well.

6 On December 12th, 2011 the New York City
7 Department of Education published proposals to
8 phase out and [phonetic] replace 215 based on
9 longstanding performance struggles. PS 215's
10 performance data indicates the school must close
11 [phonetic] and confirms the DOE's assessment
12 that the school lacks the capacity to turnaround
13 quickly to better support students' needs. For
14 example PS 215 earned an overall app [phonetic]
15 on its grade, on its 2010 - - progress report
16 including an F grade for student progress and D
17 grades for student performance in a school
18 environment.

19 In 2010-2011 the majority of PS 215 students
20 remained grade level in English and math; in
21 2010-2011 only 22 percent of the students were
22 performing on grade level in English and only 34
23 percent of the students were performing on grade
24 level in math. PS 215 was not adequately
25 helping students to make progress as

1 demonstrated by the fact that PS 215 was in the
2 bottom 9 percent of the elementary schools
3 citywide in terms of learning growth in English
4 and the bottom 19 percent in terms of learning
5 growth in math. If these results persist PS 215
6 students will fall further behind their peers in
7 other schools.

8 Based on these evaluations the DOE conducted
9 a comprehensive review of the school to
10 determine which performance [phonetic] and
11 interventions would best benefit its students
12 and the community. The DOE also consulted
13 superintendents and other experienced educators
14 who have worked closed with the school and held
15 community meetings with parents and school staff
16 to solicit feedback.

17 Based on this comprehensive review and the
18 evidence that additional supports were not
19 working the DOE believed that only the most
20 serious intervention, the gradual phase out and
21 eventual closure of the school will address its
22 longstanding performance struggles and allow the
23 new school options to develop that [phonetic]
24 they will better serve future students and the
25 broader community.

1 PS 215 is currently the only school located
2 in building Q215. In a separate education
3 impact statement which is known as an EIS also
4 posted on the [phonetic] 2011 the DOE has
5 proposed to open and co-locate a new elementary
6 school, 27 Q 362 in Q 215 which will serve
7 students in a kindergarten through fifth grade
8 when it reaches its full scale in 2015 through
9 '16. The new school is also expected to offer a
10 pre-K program as well.

11 This new elementary school will give
12 priority to students residing in PS 215 zone. 27
13 Q 362 will be co-located in Q 215 with PS 215 as
14 PS 215 phases out and 27 Q 362 phases in.

15 Before we move on to the public comment
16 section of this meeting I would like to briefly
17 discuss the impact of this proposal on the
18 current PS 215 students and families if it is
19 approved. If this proposal is approved PS 215
20 will be phased out gradually over the next
21 several years and will no longer admit pre-
22 kindergarten, kindergarten, grade one or grade
23 two students at the end of this school year.

24 Currently kindergarten and first-grade
25 students would remain at PS 215 until the end of

1 this school year and then would be assigned to
2 PS 362, the new elementary school that would
3 open next September in the same building where
4 PS 215 is located. Current second, third,
5 fourth grade students at PS 215 would continue
6 to be enrolled as PS 215. They will be
7 supported at PS 215 as they progress towards
8 completion of elementary school and transition
9 to middle school.

10 Current fifth grade students, to meet
11 promotional [phonetic] requirements at the end
12 of this year will continue to his or hers own
13 middle school which - - PS 215 students is IS 53
14 Brian Piccolo or Village Academy. PS 215 will
15 close after June 2015 at the end of the 2014-
16 2015 school year when the school is scheduled to
17 close; any PS 215 students who do not meet
18 promotional standards will be supported in the
19 transitioning to PS 362.

20 Thank you. We look forward to hearing your
21 comments and questions and now back to Jenny
22 Soleman who will facilitate the public comment
23 portion of the agenda. Jenny?

24 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you chancellor. So we
25 have a couple of folks on the panel who'd also

1 like to speak. I believe Dr. Cora Ann Griffin
2 will make a statement on behalf of the CDC.

3 MS. CORA ANN GRIFFIN: Good evening, ladies
4 and gents [phonetic]. The CEC - - this evening
5 to state that we agree with our parents. We
6 understand your needs because your needs are our
7 needs. We are your voice. PS 215 is our
8 school. [Applause]. Now - - anyone who is not
9 a part of this community, that is divorced from
10 understanding our needs to come and give the
11 statistics.

12 It's quite easy for them to run us down with
13 the numbers. But they're looking through tunnel
14 vision. We have a local - - and it started with
15 225; it went to be [phonetic] channeled; it is
16 now here at 215. [Applause]. I'm not here to
17 hoot or to holler, I am here to demand that our
18 children get the education, not that the mayor
19 has - - , not the education that the chancellor
20 has established, not the education that even the
21 administrator has established. But what is - -
22 our children from our - - ? Period. If the
23 school is not working then change the
24 administration. If the school is not working -
25 - going on with the teachers. Maybe it's the

1 curriculum. Our - - children with learning, -
2 - English language learners, are they getting
3 what they need? I have received so many
4 complaints and I'm really--listen, I'm a fellow
5 educator; I understand how difficult it can be
6 to manage a building and to have children
7 understand and to learn and so forth. I
8 understand that in certain areas you need
9 children to memorize and know their
10 multiplication and everything else. But I'm
11 telling you what: the children are not robots.
12 And what we have begun to do is make children to
13 learn to pass state exams when we are at the
14 bottom pole to other countries. It is not just
15 supersede [phonetic], it's across New York City
16 we are demanding that our children receive the
17 right to learn and to learn properly [phonetic].
18 - - told you all before and I will tell you all
19 again: you are the most important stakeholders
20 in your children's lives. You have to
21 understand when they [phonetic] come before the
22 paper you have to know what's on that paper. I
23 have too many people, too many parents at 215
24 that still don't understand the IEP. - - find
25 that disappointing. I have too many parents

1 that are crying out that their voices were not
2 heard and turned to the Department of Education
3 and saying, "Listen, if they [phonetic] need
4 help I'll give you my resume. I'll come in and
5 I'll help you put it together," because closing
6 out the schools are sending messages to our
7 children. Children want to know why - - don't
8 want me [phonetic] at my school anymore. I'm
9 not smart enough.

10 I have parents saying and believing that
11 their children will never to scholars or kappa
12 [phonetic] because they feel that the education
13 that they are receiving is not good enough.
14 Well we will stand up and we will do whatever it
15 takes to make sure that this community right
16 here for Rockaway which we feel a lot of people
17 have forgotten about we will not be quiet from
18 this day forth - - . [Applause]. My - - and I
19 say my parents 'cause you all belong to me, you
20 cannot wait 'til they tell you what school is
21 going to phased out or closed - - . Start
22 coming into the schools. When they have that C
23 grade in 2008-2009 you should have been here.
24 You should have said, "Wait a minute, what's
25 going on with my school?"

1 Don't you let it happen again. Start
2 being educated because you are the first
3 educators for your children. You are the ones
4 who demand. You pay taxes. Don't let nobody
5 tell you what they're going to do with your
6 money. I told [phonetic] before if the
7 politicians are not working for you don't you
8 vote them in. Because now you come in on the
9 back end of things trying to make a miracle
10 happen.

11 Our children have been cheated for years in
12 this school with resources being pushed out of
13 this school. It has not been fair. Mark this
14 day and understand that we will not allow this
15 to happen in our community ever again. It - - .
16 And right behind that they closed the school
17 because you know they do this: they set up this
18 panel and we all look real concerned [phonetic]
19 up here, but in the back of their minds they
20 understand what they want to do anyway. And - -
21 . I'm that type of person. Okay?

22 But I tell you what. If your voice
23 continues and if we stand together and we make
24 sure that our schools are up to par. We make
25 sure the homework is done, we make sure that

1 they receive homework, that the schools have
2 the technicals that they need, that everything -
3 - if any school - - they will not be able to do
4 it again. Make them accountable for your
5 children.

6 I know - - take the mic but I will say this
7 to you: The CEC is here; we expect to see you
8 at the meeting. We expect that our voice be
9 won. It has no - - barrier, it has no finance
10 barrier; we are here together. This is our
11 community. Our community. And our children
12 will learn because they're going to remember Far
13 Rockaway. They may not remember it now, they
14 may - - but let me tell you from this night make
15 sure that they know that Far Rockaway exists and
16 we are not going down without a fight.

17 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you Cora [phonetic]. I
18 just want to let you know that the speaker sign
19 up list has closed. You can still submit
20 questions though. If questions come to mind
21 please make your way to the back or - - have a
22 question let us know and we'll have someone pick
23 it up.

24 Our next presentation is for Donna Hamlet
25 from the SLT.

1 MS. DONNA HAMLET: Good evening. Thank
2 you for coming tonight. Thank you for coming
3 out to - - Chancellor Wolcott. Okay my question
4 to you is why would you leave the administration
5 in this school building if the school is phased
6 out for the third, fourth and fifth grades?
7 That's it's - - . Why would you continue to
8 leave [phonetic] them to - - if we failed for
9 three years? Why would you put - - another
10 school? Why don't we just have another
11 principal? Why do we have two principals in one
12 school instead of just taking that principal out
13 and putting a new principal in?

14 MR. WOLCOTT: It's me again. I just want to
15 just so folks understand we're in the question
16 and answer portion and it's my understanding
17 that the way the format works - - just don't
18 respond to - - question. But I don't want
19 people to think that I'm going to ignore
20 everyone if they pose a question to me directly.
21 Otherwise I think people need to - - respond to
22 your question specifically. That - - responding
23 to what the future will hold because - - . It's
24 just the process we entail [phonetic] for
25 phasing out schools in general, not just with

1 this particular school. So we do a gradual
2 phase out of the grades and then the inclusion
3 of grades for the new school. So we build up
4 and then phase down. So we don't totally
5 disrupt the school. So that's one part of your
6 question.

7 And what we found - - , not all but the
8 majority of schools that have been phased out
9 they performed at a higher level because they
10 still maintain their - - funding formula. And
11 then we also have special networks, - - for the
12 high school but special networks that work with
13 the schools in addressing specific issues of
14 transitions as schools are phasing out.

15 So again, it's not commenting [phonetic] on
16 your current principal or the administration; we
17 work that along once a decision is reached and a
18 decision hasn't been reached yet. And then two
19 - - the answer to the second part of your
20 question.

21 What we found is that most schools that
22 phase in they have performed or outperformed
23 better than the schools that have phased out.
24 So we've seen not all cased -- so I want to make
25 sure - - both - - . [Crosstalk] this is not a

1 panel meeting so we're not going to - - .
2 This is bad for the children, that's why I want
3 to just answer her question specifically but not
4 get into the back and forth because otherwise I
5 think that - - answer the question. So that's
6 just my quick answer to your question.

7 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you. I just want to
8 have another announcement about translation
9 quickly before we move on.

10 TRANSLATOR: [Speaking Spanish].

11 MS. SOLEMAN: So I believe we have complete
12 our presentations from the panel. I do also
13 want to say we've been joined by a
14 representative from Representative Gregory
15 Meek's [phonetic] office; Joseph Edward
16 [phonetic] is here this evening, representing
17 [phonetic] - - this moment. And then also we've
18 been joined by Dimico Gergoski from the - - for
19 Education Policy who's in the back. And we're
20 going to open up public comment now so Dimico
21 Gergoski if you want to move down and sort of
22 get it started. So I'm just going to remind
23 folks that we have a list of people who have
24 signed up. Each person will be getting two
25 minutes to speak. We're going to keep the time

1 down here in front and the young lady will let
2 you know - - . So once Dmitro speaks then I'll
3 call up the first five speakers. Thanks so
4 much.

5 MR. DIMICO GERGOSKI: Good evening. Can you
6 hear me? Hello? All right, thank you all for
7 coming out tonight to be part of this process.
8 Let me introduce myself. My name is Dimico
9 Gergoski. I am the Queens [phonetic] rep on the
10 Panel for Education Policy. I've had the honor
11 and privilege to serve the Borough of Queens and
12 the borough president now nearly four years. I
13 do want to thank you for being part of this
14 process. I do want to thank the chancellor for
15 being here tonight, for the principal for her
16 leadership of this school, and I want to
17 acknowledge the teachers in this room because
18 without you our children will be lost. It is
19 your dedication and service that makes this a
20 special place for our kids. And I thank and the
21 majority of parents I speak to thank you for
22 your service. In spite of some negative
23 questions we've got lately ignore that rhetoric
24 and do your jobs. You do a wonderful job and I
25 appreciate it, and our parents appreciate it.

1 Thank you. [Applause].

2 I've been communicating with your CEC
3 president and I will be meeting her next week to
4 discuss the proposal that's before us. During
5 my four years I've had dozens of these proposals
6 before me. Some I approved, some I thought were
7 good and then there were some that I didn't, not
8 because I don't believe phasing out a school is
9 an option, but that shouldn't be the only
10 option. There should be other choices put forth
11 first to see what works.

12 I don't know much about this school right
13 now or the proposal; I am here tonight to listen
14 to you - - have my conversations so that we can
15 make a decision. I do thank you again for this
16 time and thank you for coming out tonight and
17 being part of the process, and I hope to be
18 speaking with you soon. You - - . Thank you.
19 [Applause].

20 MS. SOLEMAN: Okay so I'm going to call up
21 the first five names and I apologize in advance
22 if I mispronounce them. But if it sounds like
23 your name and you know you have numbers one
24 through five please join us here in the aisle.
25 So Tara Almeta, Phyllis Boulegna, Anna Perez,

1 Ron Sosa [phonetic] and Ingrid Iona
2 [phonetic]. And if you would - - . Thank you.

3 MS. TARA ALMETA: My name is Tara Almeta. I
4 am a member of this community. I was born and
5 raised in Rockaway, graduated 215 and I'm doing
6 internship here as well as [phonetic] the
7 afterschool program. And I just need parents to
8 know one thing, that it's the resources that are
9 - - last and if they want you to think that your
10 kids have a learning disability to come into
11 special education needing resources from that
12 department that the DOE can [phonetic] give you
13 the proper resources that - - . Okay? It's
14 upsetting now to see that this is what it comes
15 down to to have all people [phonetic] . And
16 it's a shame. And not for nothing, yes it went
17 to a C but at one point with - - it was an A.
18 So it's not - - it's the resources that were
19 taken away from her.

20 So people need to stop pointing their
21 fingers at a certain - - and look at the - -
22 that took away the finances for this school.

23 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you so much. President
24 Bolegna?

25 MR. PHYLLIS BOULEGNA: Good evening.

1 Phyllis Boulegna, Queens CSA director. I have
2 a statement from CSA that I'd like to read.

3 The DOE has scheduled 25 more schools for
4 phase out and closure and said that the new
5 schools opened under Mayor Bloomberg are better
6 than those that you place [phonetic]. Yet in
7 the latest round of closing 11 schools were
8 opened during this mayor's administration.
9 Ironically some of the mayor's new schools are
10 usually among those that are closed and become
11 part of the vicious cycle of failure. The New
12 York City public school system is not a place
13 for experimentation where we open and close
14 schools for students who have already been
15 traumatized by the previous school closes.

16 Then there is the tragedy of all the young
17 people who have not been saved even briefly by
18 the city's new school safety net but have been
19 turned away from new schools for reasons of poor
20 academic achievement or for other reasons and
21 sent to be warehoused in other low-performing
22 schools that will probably be closed too.

23 This is a losing strategy for turning around
24 low-performing schools which are invariably
25 attended by children of color from economically

1 disadvantaged communities. The end game of
2 this strategy is to eliminate schools that the
3 administration has had at least a decade to fix
4 and to improve its data by creating new schools
5 that won't have their own data for as long as
6 four years.

7 The fact is that closure is the divisional
8 failure by city hall. The Bloomberg
9 administration needs to take more
10 responsibility, not less, for schools that are
11 not doing well, rather than turning them over to
12 private entities like EPOs [phonetic] or closing
13 them and washing their hands to deep-rooted
14 problems that it has been unsuccessful in
15 remedying. Thank you.

16 MS. ANNA PEREZ: Good evening I'm - -
17 representing all the Spanish ladies - - here.
18 [Applause]. I apologize for me - - ; I don't
19 speak a very good English - - but tonight I just
20 want to say that - - what happens to this school
21 but I'm one of those proud parents because my -
22 - at this school all the time and if you want -
23 - this school has done a good - - . [Applause].

24 I don't blame the teachers, I don't blame
25 the principal, I don't blame the parents. I

1 blame none of you. - - that's not fair.

2 Listen, Michael Bloomberg and the Department of
3 Education you're not dealing with kids; you are
4 dealing with our creator [phonetic] and he has
5 the last word. And when you ask for mercy
6 you're not going to get it because what you reap
7 [phonetic] you shall receive [phonetic]. Thank
8 you.

9 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you so much. The next
10 speaker on our list--sorry, but we do - - this
11 microphone a little bit. The next speaker I
12 believe is Rock [phonetic] Sosa. Is Rock Sosa
13 still here? Edith Iola? Edith Iola? Ingrid
14 Malendez [phonetic]? Ingrid Malendez? Sharon
15 Portal [phonetic]? Sharon Portal? If you would
16 just introduce yourselves. If you would just
17 introduce yourself, thank you so much.

18 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Good evening. I'm - - .
19 I've lived in this neighborhood 35 years. I'm
20 yelling. Can you hear me now? Okay. Two of my
21 children - - , now my grandchildren. This - -
22 about 215 being a big deal [phonetic] - - I am
23 deeply concerned. I am concerned that the
24 children are being - - the DOE - - grade. - - .
25 If the teachers were failing there would be a

1 sign of fire [phonetic]. Don't our children
2 deserve the same? Who can speak of the
3 children. I do. Anybody else? Unfortunately
4 the children are just casualties of the war on
5 education of [phonetic] the masses. This is a
6 war. This is not just about 215, this is about
7 all of the State of New York. - - schools was a
8 battle won by the DOE for a moment. They too
9 are failing, some of them closing.

10 Words are powerful but actions have more
11 power. So I urge, I strongly urge the DOE to
12 stop the clock on the closing of 215. They need
13 to reinvest in this school and its children.
14 Schools do not fail by themselves; they fail
15 when resources are siphoned off to pet projects.
16 But who ultimately fails our students? I close
17 by saying if this were someone on the DOE's
18 child or grandchild what would you do?

19 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you so much. So I'm
20 going to read the names I read through once more
21 just to make sure. Is Rock Sosa, Edith Iola,
22 Ingrid Malendez--this is Ingrid. Wonderful.
23 Thank you so much.

24 MR. ROCK SOSA: Good evening. My opinion is
25 that the school is not - - . It's not the

1 teachers either. I believe it's the
2 administration that needs to be fixed. My son
3 entered this school in 2008; he did not learn
4 anything, even though I spoke with the
5 administration. Thank you.

6 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you so much. So I'm
7 going to call up the next group of speakers:
8 Tony [phonetic] Sy [phonetic], Yaniqua Rickats
9 [phonetic], oh, we've been going--oh, all of a
10 sudden my microphone is much better. We've been
11 joined by Councilman Sanders; thank you so much
12 sir for joining us this evening. Okay so Tony,
13 you're here? Oh please do approach the mic,
14 sir. He's not--Tony?

15 MR. DERMIT SMITH: Thank you everybody. Can
16 everybody hear me? I'm going to speak to you
17 because most of these people up here are not
18 going to speak to you. My name is Dermit Smith
19 and I'm from the United Federation of Teachers.
20 First of all thank you to every single one of
21 you for filling this auditorium. You are an
22 amazing bunch of people for coming out today.

23 Tonight you are going to hear many eloquent
24 speakers speak about this school and defend this
25 school as they should because it is a phenomenal

1 school. What I want to do is I want to just
2 step outside this school for a moment and give
3 you a more global picture because for ten years
4 we've have a mayor in the City of New York, a
5 billionaire mayor who doesn't care about one
6 single person in this auditorium or one child in
7 this school or any other school in this city.
8 For ten years we have had an education disaster
9 under his leadership and it's time that it stops
10 right now.

11 For ten years he has said he was going to
12 help schools and make schools better. Yesterday
13 I was in on a city council hearing when they
14 worked out the amount of money Michael Bloomberg
15 has put into the educational system in his ten
16 years in office. It's over a trillion dollars.
17 A trillion dollars and we're still closing
18 schools? The guy needs to be fired.

19 This year there is going to be over 50
20 schools closed. Over 50 fifty schools closed by
21 a mayor who's had ten years to fix this system.
22 This system is broken because of him? And we're
23 going to ask every single one of you to get
24 together over the next couple of weeks and let's
25 make a statement that enough is enough is

1 enough. Enough is enough. Enough is enough.
2 Enough is enough. Enough is enough. Stand up
3 for your schools everybody and say no to Michael
4 Bloomberg and everybody else in tweed who has
5 turned their back on your children. Thank you
6 very much.

7 MS. SOLEMAN: Go ahead, sir. Please just
8 introduce yourself when you start.

9 AUDIENCE MEMBER: First I want to say good
10 evening parents, teachers and welcome - - who
11 can't attend. Sorry, I want to say thank you
12 all for being here. I want to make my voice,
13 let it be known that I'm a proud parent of my
14 son, Surash - - and who attended a school from
15 pre-K all the way to fifth grade. And I want to
16 say the teachers are phenomenal, they did a
17 great job, the teachers are phenomenal. I think
18 you all deserve an A-plus. I think being a
19 resident in 1973 I watched all the changes and I
20 have to say that Rockaway is upcoming and we're
21 always going to stay here and hold our ground
22 like everybody stay [phonetic] in the same
23 community.

24 But I want to say that it's not the teachers
25 that change it's the administration that change.

1 If they give them tools and give them the
2 equipment I'm pretty sure we could do much
3 better than having a low grade.

4 Also I want to say one more thing: that my
5 son also want to make a comment in regarding the
6 teachers and staff and he's doing a great job.
7 I want to say thank you all and Mr. Wolcott
8 please having consideration. The teachers are
9 phenomenal; I think they're doing an excellent
10 job. Please keep the school open and keep the
11 life [phonetic] in Far Rockaway this is an
12 upcoming neighborhood. The changes are going to
13 be made and all - - is going to be done and with
14 the proud parents and supportive group we all
15 can do it as together and unity [phonetic] is to
16 be one. Okay.

17 MR. SURASH G.: My names is Surash Ahadio
18 [phonetic]; I have been in this schools since
19 pre-kindergarten all the way through fifth
20 grade. And I experienced that all the teachers
21 were great and helpful and helped me with every
22 subject and other kids. And even though you
23 guys get low grades for the like past couple
24 months I say that this school earned an A plus
25 because all the teachers are helpful and helped

1 every student with the state test.

2 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you much. Thank you so
3 much. So the next speaker is Yaniqua Rickats.

4 MS. YANIQUA RICKATS: Hello, hello. Okay
5 good evening to each and every one. My name is
6 Yaniqua Rickats, and my principal right there,
7 she's a great woman. She's a great principal.
8 I am a mother of four boys go to this school as
9 a matter of fact my oldest child came here, 25
10 years old and I'm telling you PS 215 is one of
11 the best schools from the teachers, from the
12 principal because I saw with my own eyes the
13 things that this principal did. I am not going
14 to another school and see what she has done.
15 She love these kids, she let them feel welcome
16 and feel at home all through these - - .

17 And let me tell you something: my boys are
18 getting fours on their tests. Low grades I'm
19 not going to talk about that because my kids do
20 their work and it takes the good teachers in PS
21 215 to do this. These teachers work with the
22 students. They do their best and never come in
23 with a problem [phonetic] and if I do she solve
24 them. And you know why this school should stay
25 open because it's not every school in Rockaway

1 is like PS 215. I'm a parent I'm going to
2 speak up [phonetic] I love PS 215. My kids
3 adore their teachers and the principal and right
4 now I think what the mayor is doing, Bloomberg
5 is making a wrong decision because our kids need
6 PS 215.

7 MS. SOLEMAN: I'm going to call the next set
8 of speakers: Don Kizenski, Jose Castilla, Kelly
9 Ann Maroni, Justina Maddox and Johnny Gresham.

10 MS. MARONI: Hi good evening. My name is
11 Mrs. Maroni. I'm currently a fourth grade
12 teacher here at PS 215. I've been a teacher at
13 PS 215 for the last 11-1/2 years. Prior to 215
14 I was a teacher in private school in the
15 Rockaways for 10 years. I'm the proud mother of
16 two elementary school-age girls, one in second
17 and one in fourth grade. I was born in the
18 Rockaways and during my childhood years I
19 actually lived right here in Far Rockaway.

20 I'm very dedicated to the children and the
21 parents of 215. I love teaching at 215 and I'm
22 very concerned for the children and the
23 community. Over the past several years the
24 class sizes in 215 have increased dramastically
25 [phonetic]. In 2007 and 2008 when we received a

1 letter grade of an A Mrs. Hockney [phonetic]
2 was our leader and many of the teachers were
3 here and are still here. There was
4 approximately 19 students in my fourth grade
5 class. We had an afterschool program as well as
6 a Saturday program. We had a full-time math
7 coach and two full-time reading coaches.
8 Classroom teachers were assisted with several
9 AIS staff members, that is Academic Intervention
10 Services, otherwise known as reading
11 specialists. We also had a - - status math
12 teacher. This is a part-time teacher who is
13 available to take small groups of children out
14 of our classrooms for extra math support.

15 We also have the help of two full-time
16 guidance teachers. If there was a child in
17 crisis in your classroom you wouldn't hesitate
18 to call down to their office for their help. We
19 were all equipped with textbooks, workbooks,
20 paper, pencils and a copy machine. The library
21 on the main floor was available several times a
22 week for open access. Open access allows the
23 children to go and choose books on their reading
24 level.

25 This school has full-time technology

1 teacher. She was very competent in helping
2 the students, the teachers and the
3 administration on any type of technology issue.
4 She taught the students the basic fundamentals
5 and navigation on the computer, something they
6 need today.

7 As the recent years passed by we began to
8 see our staff members, all the staff member
9 cutbacks. We lost our afterschool program as
10 well as our Saturday support programs. We went
11 from two reading coaches to one. Our AIS staff
12 members even all became our classroom teachers.
13 Class sizes have increased drastically. Many of
14 the everyday supplies that we took for granted
15 every single day are very low in supply.
16 Workbooks do not even get ordered anymore and
17 necessities such as pencils, chart paper are in
18 low supply. The copy machine that we use is no
19 longer available. If we need copies for our
20 children we need to go outside the building,
21 Staples and Office Max.

22 We now have only one guidance teacher. She
23 can no longer assist the children with the
24 children in crisis because she has [phonetic]
25 the only mandated student. Her workload is so

1 full that she barely has enough time to handle
2 her caseloads.

3 We have two full-time ESL teachers but over
4 the past couple of years our only ESL teacher
5 has taken on the overwhelming task of teaching
6 all of our ESL students. Midway through last
7 year another ESL teacher was finally hired yet
8 having two ESL teachers still doesn't satisfy
9 our needs.

10 So as you can see the budget cuts
11 implemented against PS 215 by Mayor Bloomberg
12 has had a tremendous detrimental effect on our
13 school and our community. On the behalf of the
14 staff please come out on February 9th. Please be
15 there.

16 MS. DAWN KIZENSKI: Hi I'm Dawn Kizenski,
17 I'm doing this off the cuff but you know what?
18 I love PS 215, I've been working here since 2001
19 and if Mayor Bloomberg thinks he's rectifying
20 something all he is is looking in front of his
21 computer and looking at numbers. This is the
22 real deal. The teachers love the children and
23 in 2001 we had a lot more afterschool programs
24 and because the numbers went down we're not
25 given the resources and you're just looking at

1 the numbers and Mayor Bloomberg does not see
2 what's really going on.

3 Love and a rapport are built with the
4 children, the children trust us, and how are you
5 thinking about the children? They're in a
6 nurturing environment and you're taking away
7 everything that they know when the teachers are
8 working diligently, the children are working
9 diligently but who's helping us? This is not
10 helping us, this is hurting the children, this
11 is hurting the teachers.

12 So I think that it took you how long to try
13 to rectify the situation? If there's a problem
14 you're going to wait how many years? This is
15 not a fix and it's not even proven to work. So
16 we love our children, the parents, the teachers,
17 the children, there's a rapport. I think you
18 really better think this is out if you really
19 love the children in Far Rockaway - - because
20 this is really apathetic, this is ridiculous and
21 this does not need to happen. Thank you.

22 MALE VOICE 1: Jose Castillo is still here?
23 Jose. If you would just introduce yourself.

24 MS. JUSTINA MADDOX: Hi, my name is Justina
25 Maddox, I have two children who go to this

1 school, - - and - - . I love this school I
2 just - - Rockaway five years but - - . But as
3 far as this school goes my kids deserve an
4 education and this school is the one that's
5 giving it to them. And I am so much in love
6 with the teaching staff; the principal's doing a
7 good job but she needs a lot of more support.
8 They took away a lot of support from our kids
9 that they shouldn't have done. They really
10 don't have so much afterschools and a lot of
11 them they help. My student are in special ed
12 and they need more support and I really would
13 appreciate if they look into that as well. Thank
14 you.

15 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you so much. Mr.
16 Castillo?

17 MR. JOSE CASTILLO: My name's Jose Castillo
18 and I just wanted to say that to lose this
19 school is a very regrettable. This is a
20 community resource, there's so much that the
21 school provides from workshops to help parents
22 find assistance such as job preparedness,
23 nutrition et cetera. To turn it into a chapter
24 school is just--it's not good because first of
25 all the fourth and fifth graders who are going

1 to be left behind they're really like left
2 behind on a sinking ship because the resources
3 that are going to be provided to the charter
4 school are not going to be given to them so that
5 our children, whoever is in the fourth and the
6 fifth grade are not going to benefit from
7 whatever the charter schools are going to bring
8 in.

9 Also it's hurting my child; it's not helping
10 me. Why are you going to prevent members of the
11 community from using the school and bring the
12 children from other communities who benefit at
13 our expense? I mean just the cost to get the
14 children to the schools and just the other
15 benefits as well.

16 This also came very suddenly because it was
17 just in November that we were given warnings
18 that if the grades don't improve that the school
19 was going to be changed to a charter school.
20 How can we turn it around in one month from
21 November to December we were told it was going
22 to be turned into a charter school. I just
23 don't think that's proper. We need that money.
24 We can use it to better help our children here,
25 not to give it away.

1 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you, sir. We're going
2 to call the next group of speakers. We have
3 Johnny Gresham, Edward Williams, Mary Peterson,
4 Audrey Evans. Mr. Gresham?

5 MR. JOHNNY GRESHAM: First of all I'd like
6 to start by saying 215 got the best teachers in
7 Far Rockaway. Know that. Know that. - -
8 administration, I went as far as I could go,
9 everybody that I could tell anything about the
10 administration that I didn't like I took it to
11 them. They did nothing. My question is to you,
12 chancellor why you never came to Far Rockaway
13 before? I'd like an answer please. - - being
14 I'm not gonna get an answer. They say you was
15 gonna say that anyway 'cause you just as bad as
16 your boss. That's - - . I came to get my point
17 across: my son loves his school, he loves every
18 teacher he ever had in this place. I was the
19 PTA president here so don't nobody tell me what
20 goes on in this building. I know myself. The
21 teachers - - say we have the best teachers in
22 Far Rockaway. They can't do it by theyselves.

23 Chancellor you said you can't answer my
24 question but I am looking forward to you
25 answering that question why our school has to

1 fail three years in a row before you make an
2 appearance?

3 Ms. Banks [phonetic] this question is
4 directed to you: we sat down and talked quite a
5 few times. I let you know the things that were
6 going on that were not correct. Things never
7 changed; it went on. My biggest problem with
8 the administration is the parents don't feel
9 welcome in the building. This has been like
10 this--this has not been something that's brand
11 new. This has been going on for years.

12 MS. SOLEMAN: If you could wrap up; if you
13 could come to a close with your comment.

14 MR. GRESHAM: Okay. Make a long story short
15 I blame all the politicians, all of the - - the
16 Board of Education and I blame the administrator
17 in this building. The head of the administrator
18 in this building is Mrs. Hoffman [phonetic]. I
19 blame her. I dealt with her so I know don't
20 nobody tell me nothing. I blame you three, the
21 chancellor, Ms. Bank, Ms. Hoffman and Mr.
22 Bloomberg. I blame all of you all for this
23 school being the way it is right now 'cause we
24 shouldn't be here right now. It shouldn't have
25 been failing three years before somebody decide

1 something got to be done.

2 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you, sir.

3 MR. GRESHAM: - - needs to know. I know
4 people that - - you all know people if this
5 building closes or they bring another school
6 into the building we gonna boycott outside. You
7 all might not like it but if I have to I call
8 the newspeople and we'll stand outside every
9 day.

10 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you sir.

11 MR. GRESHAM: Thank you sir.

12 MS. SOLEMAN: - - Edward Williams. Mr.
13 Williams?

14 DR. EDWARD WILLIAMS: My name is Dr. Edward
15 Williams, I'm the president of the Far Rockaway
16 NAACP branch [phonetic] and I would like to
17 start off by getting a little clarification.
18 Mr. Chancellor I believe in your initial
19 presentation you mentioned that schools that are
20 phased in have demonstrated to have been doing
21 quite well as opposed to schools being phased
22 out and I don't know that you said it in those
23 words but my point being is this, that it is
24 records to show that the mayor's school between
25 10 to 20 that were phased in to schools being

1 phased out are now on the list to be closed as
2 well. So my question becomes what is the
3 advantage of this whole phase in phase out
4 process if the results are worse than the
5 results you got that help you determine that
6 you're going to close out these schools.

7 Second to that is over the last four years
8 this school have progressively gone from an A to
9 an F. But the staff and the leadership team
10 that was in place when it was greater than A is
11 still here today. So that will clearly indicate
12 that resources that were needed to provide the
13 services that these children needed and these
14 parents needed to enhance their academic level
15 were either short change or no change.

16 Now we stand very strongly and our position
17 of the justification for reorganizing this
18 school because we have nothing that indicates
19 there was an effort to do anything to try to
20 save this school.

21 MS. SOLEMAN: Sir if you could wrap up.

22 DR. WILLIAMS: My wrap up is very clear:
23 don't close this school.

24 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you sir. Our next
25 speaker is Mary Stevenson, followed by Audrey

1 Evans, followed by Pierre Dupree and then
2 we'll have a representative from Senator Malcolm
3 Smith's office Paul Nicholas. Ms. Stevenson?

4 MS. MARY STEVENSON: Good evening, everyone.
5 I am Mary Stevenson. I have three children that
6 graduated from here and I have two more children
7 that will be graduating pretty soon. I just
8 want to say that it hurts and it's sad that when
9 it comes to making decisions the top and the
10 head get to say what they want but nobody comes
11 to the parents and see how we feel about it.
12 These children love PS 215. Ms. Hoffman came
13 here every day when she had a cast on her foot
14 and walked through this school every day, never
15 staying home even when there was things going
16 on. They come to your house, they go find the
17 kids that leave the building.

18 We have a wonderful staff here and it hurts
19 to my heart that every time something happen
20 it's the minorities that take the back end of
21 this. And it has to stop. The major and
22 everybody that's making these decision got to
23 stop. It's not about ya'll, it's about our
24 future. And if you telling us this is how our
25 future gonna be what do you tell these babies?

1 When people are hungry [phonetic] - - 215
2 knocks on your door and bring you a package and
3 they make sure that you have something to eat.
4 If you close this school down what are ya'll
5 gonna do? What are ya'll going to do? Ask the
6 mayor what is he going to do? Stop sitting up
7 there and come down here and see what we need.
8 Ask us questions before ya'll make these
9 decisions. It's sad that we live in this
10 community and we can't even get nothing done.
11 Every time we come to these meeting nothing gets
12 done. Ya'll have to stop because when you mess
13 with a child a angry parent is coming. And the
14 bible says when you mess with his little ones
15 you might as well take a rope and put it around
16 your neck and jump in the river because God is
17 coming.

18 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you ma'am. Our next
19 speaker is Audrey Evans.

20 MS. AUDREY EVANS: Good evening everybody.
21 My name is Audrey Evans and I'm a - - parent to
22 215. Let me tell you something about this
23 school. I'm - - every day. I had a son William
24 that was in Ms. Brown's class and let me tell
25 you about Ms. Brown.

1 Ms. Brown is, excuse my language, is a
2 damned good speech teacher to the - - because
3 she teached them from time to time, she makes
4 sure when the works gots to get done the work
5 gots to get done.

6 What I want to know: Bloomberg wants to
7 close the schools down, fire [phonetic]
8 department down. What do you want to do that
9 for? - - still burns; how you gonna put the
10 fire out? When it's time for these kids to get
11 educated where is the money that Bloomberg's
12 sitting on? Where is the computers that they
13 need? Where is the paper that they need, the
14 pencils - - ? Why nobody's not speaking up for
15 - - that? Why the children have to suffer?
16 Children come to school every day at 7:30, be
17 sitting up there in the cold and why should we
18 have to suffer to make them realize that our
19 children should not have to suffer because
20 they're here to get educated.

21 You're not gonna be - -, you're not - - and
22 let somebody else do the job - - .

23 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you, ma'am. Our next
24 speaker is Pierre Dupree. Pierre Dupree.

25 MARK: My name is Mark. Yes, I'm from the

1 National Action Network and - - wants to know
2 what's going on over here. I just have a quick
3 thing to say: no justice. No justice? What do
4 we want? When do we want it? We gonna get it.
5 We out here.

6 MS. SOLEMAN: Pierre Dupree? Carolina
7 Morgan, she's here? Great. And then Ona
8 Nobiaro [phonetic]--there's a lot of vowels and
9 a consonant, I apologize. And Okiba Edelman.
10 Go ahead, sir.

11 MR. PIERRE DUPREE: Good evening everyone.
12 My name is Mr. Dupree. I've been here for--this
13 is my eleventh year now. And most of it is
14 spent teaching fifth grade.

15 Five years ago - - an A school. Our grades
16 started to go down. It's very simple if you go
17 the math: general ed budget goes down, grade
18 goes down. We used to have 10 AIS teachers
19 about two years ago we haven't have any. But
20 the AIS teachers used to come in, take some of
21 your children out to work with.

22 So now that's allowed the classroom teachers
23 more time, more individual time for your
24 children. So now we don't have that anymore.
25 So if you sit in the classroom with 25, 30 kids

1 and you have to give each and every one of
2 those special children time it's nearly
3 impossible 'cause you - - see what they need,
4 it's, "Okay, I'll get back to you." By the time
5 you do get back to them it's not too late but
6 still it could be better. It could have been
7 better. And that's the problem we are having.
8 It's not the teachers, it's not the
9 administration, it's the general ed budget.

10 The DOE will tell you that it is not lower,
11 they have not lowered the budget; it's all about
12 numbers. I took a statistics class and the
13 first day of class teacher said to me - - there
14 are three types of lies: lies, a bigger lie and
15 then statistics. So you can - - numbers any
16 which way you want to make it look like
17 something else. So if the general ed budget
18 goes up grade will go up. It's very simple. Do
19 the math.

20 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you sir. If you would
21 just introduce yourself. Thank you.

22 MS. CAROLINA MAJORTA: Good evening
23 everybody. My name is Carolina Majorta
24 [phonetic] and I graduated from PS 215 and now
25 I'm in college. That says a lot. - - why are

1 they closing this school down? Why? We don't
2 have no money for these children to get their
3 education. That's all we need. Why do you need
4 to close this school for? What's the point? We
5 need more programs. These kids needs a better
6 future for this community for us to rise. These
7 are - - the future. There's no point for them
8 to close the school, so you guys close the
9 school, open another school for what? To do the
10 same thing, for us to come back here when I have
11 my children? There's no point to this. We need
12 programs, we need more money for our schools.
13 Michael Bloomberg, he wants to come face us - -
14 close down the school. - - . My niece and
15 nephew came from this school. I know all of
16 them. I know my principal, she was there with
17 me. I have an ESO teacher, she provided me - -
18 and learn how to read. My--English is my second
19 language, all right? She right there, see look.
20 She is a good teacher. - - money for our school
21 that's all we ask: money for our schools.
22 Don't close the schools down. We have the best
23 teachers around. Do not do that; you are making
24 a big mistake to our community. Please don't -
25 - .

1 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you so much. The next
2 speaker is speaker for 23 [phonetic]. The next
3 speaker is Okila [phonetic] Edelman. Is Okila
4 Edelman still here? Okila? Okila or Ona
5 [phonetic]? Sir? Sir, excuse me.

6 MR. OKILA EDLEMAN: - - speak as loud as I
7 can. I come from - - over here - - this
8 neighborhood. I was raised here about seven
9 blocks away. I now live five blocks away. I -
10 - . The reason why I - - when traditionally
11 we're sitting down and having dinner is because
12 - - need to take a stand. - - because my school
13 is maybe one or two steps behind and I'm here to
14 show support for - - because - - tragedy going
15 on. The tragedy is that - - as a teacher - -
16 given \$120 next year to buy supplies, staplers,
17 staples, stuff that I need to do my job, not
18 stuff that I'm going to take home to play with
19 my kids. Stuff that I need, services for people
20 - - the service, the tools of my profession.
21 This year - - taken [phonetic] away from me, - -
22 .

23 So I go out and spend my own money but
24 that's just personal and I'm not going to talk
25 about that any further. We've had - - numbers

1 on the past five years - - . So there's
2 people that are educating their children,
3 there's people that are - - children - - they
4 need. So this isn't about test scores, it's
5 people who are - - difference to help those
6 scores rise, to bring those kids - - to the next
7 level - - as well. And - - . - - my principal,
8 Ms. Shapiro.

9 Ms. Shapiro - - speak for Ms. Shapiro, she's
10 a very strong person and - - very in your face
11 type of person. She's - - her blood, soul,
12 heart into everything she does. Some people
13 like her some people don't but she's strong and
14 she - - . And I'm here as a teacher as PS 205
15 [phonetic] because I see the patterns happening
16 and I'm very scared. I'm not scared for myself
17 because you know what? I can probably find a
18 job somewhere else. I'll move to another state
19 - - . I'm not - - ; I'm in for the children.

20 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you so much.

21 MR. EDELMAN: I'm one of - - people--I will
22 wrap up very quickly--I'm - - people that - -
23 our children and - - much - - for the right
24 reasons, - - that while those changes are going
25 on - - special ed teacher - - a new IP

1 [phonetic] program. - - . For example I just
2 - - on a fourth grade level and a sixth grade
3 level for math and fourth level for ELA - -
4 somehow it comes back to level two and level
5 three. - - . But when a kid - - on a test
6 score because you all have taken resources away
7 from them that's a problem. - - what you guys
8 are doing - - .

9 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you sir. Okay. So
10 we've now completed the speaker sign up list and
11 I want to thank everyone for staying close to
12 the two minutes and also being so respectful of
13 each other; I really do appreciate that.

14 So now we have three questions that we're
15 going to respond to so I'm going to read the
16 question a couple times so everyone hears it.
17 and as I said if there were other questions that
18 have been expressed and even things that were
19 said today all of that information is included
20 in the analysis of public comment which is
21 posted on the website and published for everyone
22 to access and then also given to the panel
23 members prior to their vote.

24 So the first question that was submitted is
25 if the school curriculum is a failure why would

1 the DOE leave children in an underachieving
2 school instead of phasing out the entire school?
3 So I'm just going to read it again: if the
4 school curriculum is a failure why would the DOE
5 leave children in an underachieving school
6 instead of phasing out the entire school? And
7 I'll ask the chancellor to respond.

8 MR. WOLCOTT: So a couple of things and I'll
9 get to that question in a second but people
10 asked me questions specifically. And to the
11 gentleman who asked me the question whether I've
12 been to this school: I have not been to this
13 school. But we have close to 1,700 schools
14 throughout New York City and I've been to around
15 700 of the schools throughout New York City.
16 But to answer him directly I have not been to
17 this specific school.

18 Second question, and I just want to clarify
19 second point, and I want to clarify there was a
20 gentleman who spoke and indicated that this
21 school would turn into a charter school--we have
22 not indicated that; that is not the case at all.
23 As I indicated in my opening remarks that it
24 will be a new district school that will be
25 replacing the school itself. I just wanted to

1 clarify that for the audience directly.

2 And now in reference to the issue of the
3 curriculum itself what we try to do is find a
4 variety of different uses, a variety of
5 different strategies to improve the schools. And
6 we've worked with the principal, the
7 superintendents here, the network and others who
8 try to support the school.

9 And then what we've done is that we've seen
10 over the years for a variety of reasons that
11 we're not indicting the teachers, we're not
12 indicting the principal, we're not indicting the
13 parents, it's just unfortunately this school has
14 had poor performing grades. And while people
15 say we shouldn't be closing it our thing is that
16 schools should be really at a high performing
17 level and overall for the schools that we've
18 created throughout the city they have
19 outperformed the schools that they have
20 replaced. And even with the schools that we've
21 created that we are phasing out or closing
22 that's holding those schools accountable as
23 well. Just because we created the school that
24 the school is not doing well, that's not going
25 to mean that we're going to leave that school

1 open. We want to make sure that every school-
2 -folks, listen--I am not going to go. Sir, if
3 this is how we're going to do then I am - - .

4 MR. GRESHAM: - - before so why you waking
5 [phonetic] up to now? You don't care.

6 MR. WOLCOTT: Sir, please sit down because -
7 - I answered your question. I answered your
8 question. Listen folks--no there's no excuse me
9 in this part of the discussion. I was
10 respectful in listening to the questions that
11 were posed--folks if we're going to get to this
12 particular point then I think you're being
13 disrespectful to the other people who want to
14 hear the question and answer. So I can't--I am
15 not going to do it this way, it's plain and
16 simple. No I am not--no, no. There's a format.
17 It's not a cop out because I am here, and folks
18 if you want a response to the question I'll give
19 you the response. But beyond that I'm not going
20 to get into that back and forth. Plain and
21 simple. I appreciate the respect but there's no
22 back and forth right now.

23 MS. SOLEMAN: Sir if you have a question
24 you'd like submitted into the record we can get
25 you a notecard and we can take that tonight.

1 But we have a couple more questions we're
2 going to go through the responses. Excuse me,
3 excuse me. No we've got two more questions
4 we're going to run through.

5 Ma'am, I'm sorry but we have the speaker
6 signup list, we - - people speak. I'm trying to
7 communicate with you but I do apologize. So we
8 have the speaker signup list open; we are going
9 to follow the process as we've stated it. So we
10 have two more questions--excuse me--we have two
11 more questions we're going to run through and
12 then we're going to hear from the council member
13 because he would also like to speak.

14 So if we could run through the next two
15 questions.

16 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I asked a question - - .

17 MS. SOLEMAN: So as I said if questions were
18 not responded to tonight they will be included
19 in the analysis of public comment that's
20 published and made available to the panel
21 members. So we aren't going to necessarily
22 respond to all of the questions tonight.

23 AUDIENCE MEMER: I need to ask question.
24 The statement was made that - - school - -
25 earlier have done better, better than the

1 existing schools. I understand - - 33
2 turnaround schools that have just been posted to
3 close. - - . We have schools that have gone
4 from Cs to Bs to As and they are on that list.
5 We demand to know why a school with an A would
6 be on a turnaround list. - - that schools that
7 are doing well should not close. We need to
8 know the answer to - - .

9 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you very much.

10 MR. WOLCOTT: So let me - - . One thing:
11 this is not a UFT [phonetic] chapter meeting, so
12 let me be very clear about this. This is about
13 PS 215 and we are here for PS 215. So no,
14 listen, you know, I don't care what you're
15 trying to do by getting loud with me; that
16 doesn't intimidate me at all. So let's get that
17 clear, right? Nice try, but it's not going to
18 work, all right? Nice try.

19 So the question is--listen, folks, that
20 doesn't work with me. That doesn't work with
21 me. As I indicated--folks? I did not even say
22 that. Don't put words in my mouth. We may
23 disagree, there's some emotions about this
24 school but do not put words in my mouth, plain
25 and simple. I didn't say that. You never heard

1 me say I don't care.

2 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you so much. I want to
3 offer the councilman an opportunity make a
4 comment this evening. Good afternoon. Okay so
5 I'm going to offer the microphone to the
6 councilman for you. Here you go, sir.

7 COUNCILMAN MEEKS: Thank you. Good evening
8 to you all. A difficult question and I trust
9 that the wisdom of Solomon somehow comes here.
10 As a person who's been on the school board for
11 ten years I - - the question comes up two
12 different ways. The first one is the
13 understanding that have been born in the
14 Rockaways that when schools fail, jail does not.
15 When schools fail jail does not, which means
16 that we've got to figure out how to get these
17 schools to work. We've got to get them to work.

18 Now I can attest from my limited knowledge
19 mind you, I can attest that this principal is
20 one of the most caring principals that we have.
21 I can only speak to what I know and what I have
22 seen.

23 However I also am trying to figure out this
24 slide from a C to a D to an F. We need to find
25 out why. This is what I'm going to do. Here's

1 my steps that I'm going to do.

2 First things first I'm going to meet with
3 the Parents Association. After that I will try
4 to meet with the - - principal. I will meet
5 with the UFT, I will meet with CSA, I will of
6 course meet with our chancellor or whoever he
7 wishes. No one in this building is in support
8 of failure. No one in this building is in
9 support of failure.

10 At the same time we have to see if the
11 adequate help was given to the school. I'm not
12 going to make a judgment on that yet. I like to
13 speak from facts and I will try to tell the
14 truth my friends in season or out of season. If
15 I see it I'm gonna say it. Some will like it,
16 some won't but I never will lie to you. I will
17 give it as I understand it to the best of my
18 ability.

19 So those are the steps that I'm going to
20 take on this one. I hear the passion. I have--
21 my kids graduated from these schools too. I
22 understand what we're talking about. All we
23 have are our children. All we have are our
24 children. Under those conditions is the most
25 precious thing.

1 Having said that it will be useful for us
2 to hear the chancellor. It will be useful for
3 him to give whatever. We can disagree, you can
4 boo and hiss but let them man finish first so we
5 know what we're booing and hissing at first. At
6 least hear and based on that you move. But
7 don't--I'm not speaking of him--never given an
8 opportunity to get out without even dealing with
9 your questions. Don't give a person a chance
10 like that. Your questions have great meaning.
11 You deserve an answer. You may - - that answer
12 after you hear from folk.

13 Having said that, my friends I'm very
14 anxious to sit down and hear the rest of this
15 conversation. When I leave here I'm going out
16 that door and I will stand in the front and then
17 meet anybody who wants to speak I will be out
18 there for as long--until the cold gets me for as
19 long as we can. But you've the next steps that
20 we're going to take. It's going to take a lot
21 of discipline. Whatever we do here is going to
22 take some discipline. Whether we keep it
23 closed, open it, do whatever but it's going to
24 take discipline. If you were not a member of
25 the union coming in you should join. If you

1 weren't in the parents association join it.
2 Don't come here and just vent. Join these folk
3 so we can see this thing through, and let's
4 follow the leadership that comes from here.
5 We're looking for leadership in a lot of places
6 including the union. Everybody has a piece of
7 the truth and here we're going to need it.
8 Having said that I'm going to turn this back so
9 I can hear what you say and when it's
10 appropriate I'm out front.

11 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you so much councilor.
12 So as I've said we've got a couple more
13 questions we're going to try and get through and
14 I do appreciate everyone's patient and the
15 respectful manner in which we have conducted
16 this hearing.

17 So the next question is why did it take so
18 long for the DOE to do something to help 215?
19 Why did it take so long for the DOE to do
20 something to help 215 and I'm not inviting the
21 chancellor to respond.

22 MR. WOLCOTT: So the DOE and as one of the I
23 think teachers responded we have had a number of
24 supports in place and we've worked with the
25 existing staff as well as the teachers in trying

1 to provide the support through the network and
2 also the superintendent. And then people
3 indicated a lot of the support diminished over
4 the year and decisions were reached on how one
5 would allocate the support to the school.

6 So for example I think one of the people who
7 spoke talked about AIS and the AIS diminishing
8 over a period of time. I remember someone else
9 talked about ESL teachers and how ESL is there.
10 And I know the superintendent and network have
11 worked mostly with the school in trying to deal
12 with the instructional and operational support
13 in trying to build the school back up. And I
14 know it was at an A and it went down and we've
15 been - - with the school. So the support has
16 been provided over the year.

17 And part of that, though, and part of the
18 questions that came up from the people who
19 spoke--sh, can you just--and part of it was
20 dealing with the funding and the cut in funding
21 as well.

22 So over the years school funding has gone up
23 and school funding has diminished as well. And
24 as some know that last year, as a result of a
25 loss of state and federal funding the city

1 provided an additional \$2 billion to the
2 schools to replace those dollars. And as a lot
3 of the folks as well may know we have a fair
4 student funding formula that we put in place.
5 And as a result of the fair student funding
6 formula all schools receive the basic same
7 funding based on the students who attend the
8 particular schools.

9 And when we do our comparison as far as
10 school performance is concerned be compare
11 schools to their peers. So as a result of that
12 and that analysis the figures that I gave
13 earlier as far as the percentile of where this
14 school performs compared to their peers is
15 significantly lower with peers getting the same
16 funding.

17 So the support is the same as far as fair
18 student funding, then principals have had to
19 make decisions based on what we call a PEG, or
20 Program to Eliminate the Gap, the budget
21 shortfall of roughly 2.4 percent that was
22 applied for this particular school year. And
23 that was applied equally across all schools, the
24 2 roughly .4 percent. And each principal made a
25 decision on how to apply that cut to his or her

1 school respectively.

2 So the money loss over the past year has
3 been the same across all schools, and in
4 addition to that what we've tried to do over the
5 years, increase the funding and then when we've
6 had shortfalls in the budget we've decreased it
7 and tried to present a budget that provides that
8 decrease across all schools.

9 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you chancellor. So the
10 third question that we're going to respond to
11 tonight is why can't the current school receive
12 the funding necessary to improve? So I'll
13 repeat that: why can't the current school
14 receive the funding necessary to improve? And
15 again I'll invite the chancellor to respond.

16 MR. WOLCOTT: So as I indicated in the last
17 answer that the school gets a fair student
18 funding formula and in addition to that if
19 there's Title 1 money, Title 1 money that the
20 school is eligible for as well. We work closely
21 with the school as far as the allocation but
22 what we've tried to do is make sure that the
23 school it not cut disproportionately in this
24 school or any school for that matter.

25 So again, the funding that's available we

1 try to get it out there. Over the years we've
2 tried to give schools more dollars and as you
3 know we have faced a shortfall not just with
4 education but throughout the entire city and
5 we've tried to manage that shortfall in a way
6 that is fair to the school. So if there are
7 dollars available we try to provide it for the
8 schools and when the dollars aren't available to
9 try to make sure there's equitable cut to the
10 schools across the board. And that's how the
11 funding formula actually works. So we try to
12 work with the schools to make sure the resources
13 are there, the resources are used properly and
14 given the appropriate support for the schools to
15 address their particular need.

16 The woman asked a question is the formula
17 common knowledge. We've been talking about--
18 public comment--we've tried to talk about a fair
19 student funding formula for years since we put
20 it in place a number of years ago. So the fair
21 student funding formula has been out and talked
22 about on a regular basis and that's why I was
23 trying to be very specific with my answer
24 because people need to hear that there's
25 equitable funding based on the student itself

1 and the fair student funding formula following
2 that particular student itself.

3 So it's been equitably across the board with
4 our schools and when they're cut we've applied
5 those cuts across the board as far as say this
6 last school year or this year that we're in of
7 roughly 2.45 percent through all schools. So
8 yes, we're proud [phonetic] to say that and
9 whether people have heard it or not that I don't
10 know but we have talked about it.

11 MS. SOLEMAN: Thank you. Folks I just want
12 to thank you again for the respectful manner in
13 which we've conducted this hearing. So we've
14 not concluded the question and answer portion.
15 As I said some questions were not responded to
16 tonight but they will be included in the
17 analysis of public comment which is published
18 online and make available to the panel members
19 prior to the vote. The vote will take place on
20 February 9th at Brooklyn Technical High School,
21 excuse me. So again if you have additional
22 questions please do send them via email or a
23 phone number. I provided those earlier and
24 they're also on the FAQ sheet. Thanks again for
25 coming tonight. This joint public hearing is

1 officially adjourned. Get home safe.

2 [END RECORDING]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Signature

Date 01/24/2012