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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF  
PORTFOLIO PLANNING  
I.S.339 - 3/29/12**

1 [START 290\_247]

2 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Okay, good evening.  
3 Thank you so much. My name is Jenny Sobelman  
4 and I'll be serving as the facilitator for this  
5 evening's joint public hearing. So this is a  
6 joint public hearing of the New York City  
7 Department of Education Community Education  
8 Council 9 and the school leadership teams to  
9 discuss the proposed closure and replacement of  
10 I.S.339. I also want to note that this  
11 evening's proceedings will be recorded and  
12 transcribed.

13 So I want to quickly run through the agenda  
14 before we get started. It's right here behind  
15 me. And also I want to make a note that there  
16 is a table in the back as you are coming in--  
17 excuse me--where you can sign up for public  
18 comment. So if anyone is interested, as you see  
19 we have a session during the evening for public  
20 comment, each person who signs up is given two  
21 minutes to speak. Only people who are signed up  
22 will be given their two minutes, so please do  
23 make your way to the back. We'll keep that open  
24 for about 15 more minutes. And then the  
25 microphone is here, down towards the front, and

1 there's a gentleman in the front who will hold  
2 up a sign to let you know that you've gotten to  
3 30 seconds and when your time has elapsed. And  
4 I think we've actually got a pretty long list of  
5 folks speaking, so I am going to try and keep us  
6 on track and I'll just let you know and gently  
7 remind you that we want to keep moving. And  
8 then once we've gotten through the speaker list,  
9 we'll move to question and answer.

10 So also in the back of the room they have  
11 index cards, so if you have a question that you  
12 would like to pose to the people up here on the  
13 panel, take this opportunity to make your way to  
14 the back, write it down on a card, and you could  
15 submit that. Some of the questions might be  
16 repeated more than once, and so we'll batch them  
17 together and respond only once to the questions  
18 that are similar. But I do want to make sure  
19 everyone's aware that all of the questions that  
20 are submitted are included in the analysis of  
21 public comment which is posted on the website  
22 and made available to all the panel members  
23 prior to the vote. And, again, there may be  
24 questions that come up tonight that aren't  
25 responded to here in this venue, but all of them

1 will be included in that analysis of public  
2 comments. And if after this evening you have  
3 additional comments or questions or feedback  
4 that you'd like to give to us, anytime between  
5 now and the hearing which will take place on  
6 April 26<sup>th</sup> in Brooklyn, something you'd like to  
7 say, there's an e-mail and a phone number, and  
8 all of those comments and questions will also be  
9 included, and I'll repeat those a few times as  
10 well. So the e-mail is  
11 d09proposals@schools.nyc.gov and the phone is  
12 (212) 374-5159. And I don't believe we have any  
13 elected representatives with us yet, but if they  
14 come in we'll give them an opportunity to speak  
15 as well.

16 So as you see, the panel is assembled here  
17 in the front of the room. I'm going to quickly  
18 introduce everyone, and then we will move to the  
19 presentations. Starting at the far end we have  
20 Jose Betancourt from the SLT, Marilyn Espada  
21 (phonetic) from the CEC, Superintendent Dolores  
22 Esposito, and Deputy Chancellor Kathleen Grimm.

23 Okay, so I am know going to turn it over to  
24 the Deputy Chancellor to present the proposal.

25 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR GRIMM: Thank you. I

1 want to thank all my colleagues who are here  
2 with me on this panel to help us hold this joint  
3 public hearing. I also want to thank Principal  
4 Loren Wilkins (phonetic) and Principal Kim  
5 Autobridge (phonetic) who are also here with us  
6 tonight to flush out the school community, and I  
7 want to thank all of you who are here tonight.  
8 You can't hear me. All right, how's this? So  
9 as I was saying, thank you to all of you for  
10 being here tonight. This is a very important  
11 process for us, and you're going to help us with  
12 your input and your comments and helping us all  
13 to work together.

14 As you know, this joint public hearing is  
15 convened to discuss the proposed closure and  
16 replacement of I.S.339. Before I present the  
17 proposal I would like to say a few words about  
18 why we're here. By closing I.S.339 and  
19 replacing it with a new school we are seeking to  
20 rapidly create a high quality school environment  
21 that children need to prepare for success in  
22 college, in work, in life. The new school will  
23 build on the strongest elements of I.S.339 and  
24 it will also incorporate new elements in order  
25 to create a rigorous culture for teaching and

1 learning. These new elements will include  
2 changes to the school day schedule to increase  
3 learning time, new academic intervention  
4 services, and creating new professional  
5 development that promotes increased teacher  
6 planning collaboration. Students will have  
7 access to a higher quality education option  
8 while they continue to attend school in this  
9 building. We believe that this process will  
10 ensure that all students are set on a path for  
11 accomplishment.

12 The decision to close the school is a  
13 difficult one, and we don't take these decisions  
14 lightly. But when a school is not improving  
15 quickly we have to take action to ensure that  
16 students don't fall even farther behind and that  
17 future students will have a school that can  
18 support their success and their achievement. I  
19 want to acknowledge the students and families  
20 who believe that their son or their daughter is  
21 being well-served in their school. And tonight  
22 I expect we will hear about the success stories  
23 that are happening at I.S.339, and there are  
24 success stories and we honor them. But we also  
25 need to consider the many other students who

1 have not experienced the same success, and they  
2 deserve better.

3 I.S.339 is located here at 1600 Webster  
4 Avenue in Community School District 9 in the  
5 Bronx. It currently serves students in grades 6  
6 through 8. It is called co-located with  
7 I.S.313, School of Leadership Development, in  
8 this building which we call X147. A, quote,  
9 "co-location" means, as many of you know, that  
10 two or more school organizations are located in  
11 the same building and generally share the large  
12 common spaces such as the auditorium, the  
13 gymnasium, the cafeteria. On February 28<sup>th</sup>,  
14 2012, the Department published a proposal to  
15 close I.S.339 and to open a new school whose  
16 number will be 09X570. By closing I.S.339 and  
17 opening a new school, the Department is seeking  
18 to improve student learning above the levels  
19 that we currently see at I.S.339.

20 As I mentioned, I.S.339 does have some very  
21 positive elements that we believe are worth  
22 reserving in the new school. Some examples:  
23 student growth in ELA, English Language Arts and  
24 math was stronger at I.S.339 in the year 2009-  
25 10, suggesting to us that with appropriate

1 restructuring we could reverse the current  
2 trend we're seeing of declining progress. In  
3 the year 2008-09, learning growth in English was  
4 in the 73 percentile and learning growth in math  
5 was in the 72<sup>nd</sup> percentile. Those are very good  
6 numbers. That means almost the top quarter.  
7 Also while the school's overall quality review  
8 rating in the year 2010-11 was listed as  
9 developing as opposed to proficient our  
10 outstanding, the review did indicate areas of  
11 strength such as some very effective uses of  
12 technology in student instruction. However,  
13 based on more recent data and also on feedback  
14 from members from the New York State Board of  
15 Regents that the pace of change in New York  
16 City's persistently lowest achieving schools was  
17 not quick enough to meet student needs, the  
18 Department has concluded that I.S.339 should be  
19 closed and replaced with a new school with new  
20 programs and new "--".

21 The new structural and programmatic  
22 elements that are part of this proposal and the  
23 ability to quickly screen and hire staff who are  
24 able to implement those enhancements will allow  
25 the Department to address the core problems that

1 have led to poor performance. Again, some  
2 examples: Last student performance in I.S.339  
3 has been a persistent trend. In the year 2010-  
4 11, I.S.339 was identified as a persistently  
5 lowest achieving school by the State Education  
6 Department based on its students' low  
7 performance and insufficient improvement in  
8 school results over time. Again, in the same  
9 year, 2010-11, only 10% of students were  
10 performing on grade level in English putting the  
11 school in the bottom 6% of city middle schools  
12 in terms of English proficiency. Only 17% of  
13 students were performing on grade level in math  
14 putting the school in the bottom 4% of city  
15 middle school in terms of math proficiency. The  
16 progress report measures the process and  
17 performance of students in a school as well as  
18 the school environment compared to other schools  
19 serving similar student populations. I.S.339  
20 earned an overall D grade in 2010-11 annual  
21 progress report with a D grade on student  
22 performance, a D grade on student progress, and  
23 a C grade on school environment. This  
24 represents a significant decline from the  
25 school's 2009-10 progress report where I.S.339

1 got a B.

2           Based on a comprehensive review of the  
3 school and evidence that additional supports  
4 were not getting the job done, the Department  
5 believes that closing I.S.339 and opening a new  
6 school will address its long-standing  
7 performance struggles and allow a new school to  
8 develop that will better serve students while  
9 they continue to attend the new school in this  
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  
13 to support additional school improvement, the  
14 Department submitted a school improvement grant,  
15 a SIG grant we call it, S-I-G, to the State  
16 Department of Education proposing to implement a  
17 turnaround model at the new school. If  
18 approved, it's not approved yet, but if approved  
19 this would make the new school here eligible for  
20 up to \$1 million in supplemental federal funding  
21 to support new initiatives.

22           Before we hear from other members of the  
23 panel and move to public comment, I would just  
24 briefly like to discuss a "--" as the impact of  
25 this proposal on current I.S.339 students and

1 families if it were to be approved. If  
2 approved, I.S.339 will close at the conclusion  
3 of this 2011-2012 year in June. All current  
4 students who have not been promoted to high  
5 school before the start of the next school year  
6 in September, they will be guaranteed a seat  
7 here and automatically enrolled in the new  
8 school. All incoming sixth grade students who  
9 would have been enrolled in I.S.339 through the  
10 middle school choice process will automatically  
11 be enrolled in the new school. The proposed  
12 closure of I.S.339 and the proposed opening of  
13 the new school will not impact admissions,  
14 current or future student enrollment, or  
15 academic or any extracurricular programs offered  
16 at I.S.313.

17 I want to thank you very much for your  
18 respectful attention, and we look forward to  
19 hearing the panel's comments and your comments  
20 and taking some of your questions. Thank you  
21 very much.

22 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, Deputy  
23 Chancellor Grimm. So the next presentation will  
24 be from the school leadership team.

25 MR. JOSE BETANCOURT: Good evening, member

1 of the panel, parents, teachers, and  
2 distinguished guests and members of our  
3 community. We are here tonight to voice our  
4 concerns of the proposed closing of I.S.339 by  
5 the New York City Department of Education. I  
6 would like to take a few minutes to show you a  
7 PowerPoint that summarizes the great things that  
8 we had in our school. I will present Mr.  
9 Vasquez now.

10 MR. MIKE VASQUEZ: Hello, my name is Mike  
11 Vasquez, and I'll present this PowerPoint right  
12 now. I'll try to speed it along. I know many  
13 of you have questions for the panel.

14 Okay, the first thing you got to ask  
15 yourself is why is 339 worth saving. We are  
16 definitely a persistently low achieving school,  
17 but certain things have always been  
18 characteristic of that. You have extreme  
19 poverty, homelessness among our students; some  
20 of our students are new to this school, some of  
21 them have been incarcerated; you have gang  
22 violence; and you have foster care and health  
23 problems among our students. What we've done is  
24 we've managed to actually take our resources in  
25 our school and what we've done is teachers have

1       been--have this common planning time which  
2       enables teachers to share ideas about our  
3       students and discuss plan effective methods of  
4       teaching. We've also been able to have  
5       differentiated instruction as a result of this  
6       schedule in common planning and "--" have been  
7       able to win grants that provided us laptops for  
8       each and every one of our students in the past.  
9       We've allocated our resources and we've been  
10      able to establish goals, and these goals as a  
11      result of all this have helped us in  
12      instructional differentiation "--" technology.

13               We've also recently have been able to track  
14      our data in order to help us to be more "--" in  
15      dealing with a lot of students. Teachers and  
16      administrators gather data on a regular basis in  
17      order to discern our students' strengths and  
18      needs. We also based that data, we have been  
19      able to adjust our instructional strategies in  
20      our instructing our students. We also have this  
21      instructional support team which identifies the  
22      most at-risk students and provides support to  
23      our teachers through cluster classes that we  
24      have in our pods. We have "--" developments  
25      which are also at the same time provides our

1 plausibility to solve problems and better  
2 address the needs of our high need students. We  
3 have school-wide initiatives. We have folios  
4 which each and every of our students have in  
5 each of their conference areas. We have  
6 individual conferences with all students, and  
7 this way they know and understand what's going  
8 wrong and what they need to do to improve and  
9 the next step that they need to take. We have a  
10 workshop model where I--with the teachers here.  
11 We all provide our lesson and model for our  
12 students. We work together with the students in  
13 order to do their lesson, and then they  
14 independently actually carry out those  
15 strategies. Each student in the ELA  
16 particularly have five paragraph essays that  
17 they have to create for their units. We have  
18 skills "--" predictive assessments which we  
19 actually determine when the kids--how we expect  
20 them to do during the year, and actually on that  
21 same test. We have regularly scheduled "--" and  
22 developments which we meet in order to enhance  
23 our abilities to--our strategies for our  
24 students.

25 Various tools that we've used, we've used

1 Aris (phonetic) Acuity, we have collaborative  
2 inquiry teams, we have Reading Plus Achievement  
3 3000, we have Assistant 44, Ramifo (phonetic),  
4 we have Advisory, which we allow our students to  
5 have live skills, we have ELA math test preps,  
6 and, of course, our parent association. We have  
7 intervention programs here. We have peer  
8 mediations. We have AIS, the school sorority,  
9 mentoring programs for our boys, our parent  
10 workshops. We have individual workshops,  
11 referrals to outside agencies. We have high  
12 school articulations, job application process,  
13 mandated students and home visits which we do  
14 when we have students that are at risk.  
15 Extracurricular activities, we have afterschool  
16 programs in ELA and math. We have Saturday  
17 Academy as well in ELA and math for our high-  
18 risk students. We have SES (phonetic) programs  
19 with "--" which provides academic intervention  
20 in ELA and math and also provide extracurricular  
21 activities in basketball, football, soccer,  
22 cheerleading, and dance. Here also is CIS "--".  
23 We have sports for our students, we have track  
24 and field, we have basketball, the girls'  
25 varsity team, the boys' varsity team, and our

1 competition between teachers versus students.  
2 We also have flag football. We can celebrate  
3 the fact that we have "--" field trips for our  
4 students. We have spirit days, we have office  
5 visits, guest speakers, talent shows, graduation  
6 festivities, holiday celebrations, Thanksgiving  
7 food wrap is now can drive and coat drives.

8 The mayor, the DOE, and the network have  
9 failed in their response "--" we feel to provide  
10 adequate support. IRS has gone from A to B to  
11 D. The regression was not monitored by the  
12 superintendent or the network. If IRS did not  
13 receive ongoing support and badly needed  
14 resources to ensure that as soon as these "--"  
15 included textbooks, school supplies, and  
16 consulting services. The school should have  
17 been provided with specific programs for  
18 students with special needs including special  
19 ed, reading intervention, and English as a  
20 second language. Class size and core academic  
21 subjects should be strategically reduced,  
22 particularly in ELA and math we have now a high-  
23 risk students, so we ought to have these  
24 critical "--" and for struggling students.

25 The mayor and the DOE have stopped

1 targeting low income areas and provide needs  
2 for these high schools so that we can not have  
3 so many closures. To support the school in  
4 approving a grant coupled with "--" new  
5 principal high speaker now is beginning to make  
6 significant "--". We have Ms. Autobridge  
7 (phonetic) right now. As you know, she's been  
8 less than one year. To close the school now  
9 would be to deprive her of the authority to  
10 continue to advance our school in a positive  
11 direction.

12 Our conclusion is there is no evidence to  
13 support that closing failing schools and opening  
14 new schools has a positive affect on our  
15 students' academic performance. Closing schools  
16 is not in the best interest of our students or  
17 our community. This community will stay here.  
18 Though we may leave, the school will stay and  
19 our student population will stay. There is a  
20 high emotional cost to students and families.  
21 The process of closing schools is undemocratic.  
22 Parents, students, and stakeholders in buildings  
23 have no voices. And that's why I feel that we  
24 all have--you know, we should try to save 339.

25 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, sir. Okay,

1 so we've actually exhausted the presentations  
2 from the panel and we're going to transition  
3 into public comment. And I think sort of last  
4 call, if you want to sign up to speak, you still  
5 have an opportunity. If this has sparked any  
6 comment, please make your way to the back and  
7 take an opportunity to sign up.

8 And so as I said, I'm going to call folks  
9 up in groups of five, so you can just make your  
10 way up to the front. And also we have a pretty  
11 good list of people, so I am going to try and  
12 keep us to the two minutes per person just so we  
13 can respect everyone's time and attention.  
14 Okay, so I'm going to call up the first five  
15 speakers. We're going to start with Mr. Jose  
16 Vargas from the UFT. Second speaker is Lucinda  
17 Johnson. Speaker No. 3 is Hunter--and I  
18 apologize in advance if I get the names wrong--  
19 Hunter Scred and Juwan Deloche. No. 4, No 4  
20 will be Mamoud Somko (phonetic). Excellent,  
21 he'll be speaking No. 5. And No. 6 is--I'm  
22 sorry--Abubaka Hydra (phonetic). Thank you.  
23 And the next speaker will be Ismael Gakoo  
24 (phonetic). Mr. Vargas?

25 MR. JOSE VARGAS: Good evening, everyone.

1 I'm going to direct myself to the community  
2 and not to the panel. So, you know, I've been  
3 sitting at these things over and over again, and  
4 for those who may not know who I am, my name is  
5 Jose Vargas. I am a neighborhood kid and I am--  
6 I grew up in this neighborhood and I am the "--"  
7 representative for the United Federation of  
8 Teachers. I've been sitting at these meetings  
9 for the last three years, and though this may be  
10 a little different in regards to the 33 schools,  
11 it's the same show, the same game place to  
12 place. And you hear the same stuff over and  
13 over, all of the wonderful things that are going  
14 to happen next year when we open up. Why did  
15 we--why do we have to wait till next year? Why  
16 "--" make them this year? Why? Is this about  
17 what should be happening at a school, or is  
18 there a bigger agenda here? I have to ask  
19 myself that.

20 I have met with parents from this  
21 neighborhood, I have met with parents at this  
22 school who have been calling the Department "--"  
23 repeatedly saying we need X, Y, and Z. Has it  
24 happened? No. I've met with teachers at this  
25 school, the superintendent is well aware of

1 that. We have had conversations about the  
2 things that need to be changed here. Have they  
3 changed? No. That is not within our control,  
4 that's within their control. And yet they have  
5 failed to do what is necessary to keep this  
6 school open. Closing a school is the easiest  
7 thing you can do. Trying to fix it is the hard  
8 job. Why do we have to close this school that  
9 has already gone through a reorganization, that  
10 already sat to do hours of work to implement  
11 changes just so that you can be smacked in the  
12 face and said you're still not good enough, let  
13 me close the school down. 'Cause whatever it is  
14 the plan for next year has to be better. Go.  
15 By their own admission it has to be approved by  
16 someone, okay? So you're taking a vote on  
17 speculation of what you think should happen next  
18 year. Why did you wait? You could have fixed  
19 it this year, okay? If I'm in charge and I have  
20 to close 60 schools in a year, what does that  
21 say about my leadership? Replace them all.  
22 Thank you, folks.

23 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, Mr. Vargas.  
24 Thank you, sir. And our next speaker is Lucinda  
25 Johnson.

1 MS. LUCINDA JOHNSON: My name is Lucinda  
2 Johnson. I am the UFC rep for 339, a union of  
3 professionals. And unlike most people in this  
4 room, I am a product of District 9. My  
5 immigrant parents came here and sent me to 22  
6 and Taft. And at that time success was the name  
7 of the game. It wasn't about closing schools.  
8 My peers are teachers. Down the street the  
9 principal, I grew up with him. We are lawyers,  
10 we are doctors. This is the kind of people  
11 District 9 used to put out years ago.  
12 Unfortunately now the schools no longer have the  
13 resources that my generation was given to  
14 succeed.

15 The Chancellor, Deputy Chancellor just  
16 spoke about high quality teachers being replaced  
17 next year. We're here. Furthermore, you want  
18 to talk about high quality? Where was the DOE  
19 when we had two children shot and this staff  
20 held the parents' hand, paid for the funeral,  
21 sat at the funeral. Where was the DOE in June  
22 when teachers, parents, administrators ran  
23 around trying to money to pay for dues, senior  
24 dues, paying for prom gowns, paying for hairdos.  
25 You want to talk about high quality? Where was

1 the DOE when all of this was going on? Where?  
2 In closing, I would just like to say this is the  
3 best group of teachers I have ever worked with,  
4 and they don't need replacing, they need  
5 support, they need resources. Thank you.

6 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much.  
7 Gentlemen, if you would, just introduce  
8 yourselves in case I got your names wrong, and  
9 feel free to start when you're ready.

10 MR. JUWAN DELOCHE: Hello, I.S.339. My  
11 name is Juwan Deloche, and I'm an eighth grader  
12 here and I've been going since "--" since sixth  
13 grade. I believe closing this school is  
14 unnecessary because I learn so many new things  
15 every day in social studies, science, "--". Not  
16 just me, but I feel all other grades. I believe  
17 "--" because all the memories I have share with  
18 all my fellow students, right, "--"?

19 MALE VOICE: Yes.

20 MR. JUWAN DELOCHE: Such as Washington,  
21 D.C., Boston College, and Six Flags. My  
22 teachers teach me things not just for school but  
23 for future life knowledge. So with the right  
24 teachers I know that I.S.339 kids can go  
25 forward. And these I.S.339 teachers can give us

1 the right education.

2 MR. HUNTER SCRED: Hello, my name is Hunter  
3 Scred. Hello, my name is Hunter Scred, and I am  
4 an eighth grade student. I think the closure of  
5 I.S.339 is absurd because the memories and  
6 experience I had in this school, like going to  
7 the Museum of Natural History and going to our  
8 nation's capital. Our teacher, named Mr. Davis,  
9 helped me learn inside the classroom and  
10 outside. Therefore, I believe that I.S.339  
11 should not be closed because future students  
12 deserve the wonderful memories I enjoy.

13 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, gentlemen.

14 MR. MAMOUD SOMKO: Good evening, ladies and  
15 gentlemen. I don't think that--I don't think  
16 it's right that Mayor Bloomberg is trying to  
17 change the school because the staff and teachers  
18 are all good people. And just because we are a  
19 D school, that doesn't mean we should close. Most  
20 importantly, failure is not an option at  
21 I.S.339, home of the Tech Tigers.

22 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, sir.

23 MR. HYDRA ABBUBAKA: Good afternoon, ladies  
24 and gentlemen. We are students of C.I.S.339. I  
25 don't think it's fair that Mayor Bloomberg wants

1 to shut down our school because even though  
2 this is a D school, I know that we can achieve  
3 our goal to make this into an A school. My  
4 teachers been helping me. They make me stay  
5 after school, help me with some of my essays so  
6 I can pass this marking period. As you know,  
7 tomorrow is the last day of this marking period.  
8 And we've been, we've been learning a lot of new  
9 stuff. And I think all my teachers, like Ms.  
10 Bentley, Mr. Mellow, Mr. Rummy, and my assistant  
11 principal Mr. Ackerman right there in the back.  
12 Remember, at this school, C.I.S.339, failure is  
13 never an option, failure is never an option.

14 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you very much,  
15 sir. And actually before you start, sir, I just  
16 want to call up the next group of speakers.  
17 Speaker No. 6, I actually have two together  
18 again. It's Charles Francisco and Cheyenne  
19 Tomlinson (phonetic)? No. 7 is Fatina Reyes,  
20 No. 8, Kenya Young, No. 9, Jada Rojas. So  
21 please make your way and feel free to get  
22 started, sir.

23 MR. ISMAEL GAKOO: My name is Ismael Gakoo  
24 from I.S.339. I am here to say I don't think  
25 Mayor Bloomberg has the right to be closing down

1 this school. I think his idea is unfair  
2 because there are three more months left of the  
3 school year and we still have the ability to  
4 change our grades from a D to at least a B.  
5 We're here for our school every day. We have  
6 afterschool programs for "--" to get our grades  
7 higher. One thing to say is failure is never,  
8 ever, ever an option in the eyes of "--".

9 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, sir. So  
10 the next is the two folks that are signed up for  
11 No. 6, Charles Francisco and Cheyenne Tomlinson.

12 MR. CHARLES FRANCISCO: Hello, everybody.  
13 I'm glad you could make it this evening. I'm  
14 hearing a suggestion about closing down the  
15 school and reopening it into a different school.  
16 But I don't believe that's a great decision.

17 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Speak into the  
18 microphone so everyone can hear you, sir.

19 MR. CHARLES FRANCISCO: Thanks to all these  
20 teachers, they help me learn a lot, just not in  
21 school but to use for life challenges. They're  
22 preparing us for more than just high school,  
23 they're preparing us for life. They've done  
24 many things for us. Thanks to the teachers at  
25 I.S.339, they help change our lives, learn new

1 things. And I'm glad that every day the  
2 principal will always say failure is never, ever  
3 an option.

4 MS. CHEYENNE TOMLINSON: Thank you. Hello.  
5 My name is Cheyenne and I'd like to say that  
6 making the school as a turnaround school is a  
7 bad decision because all these teachers have put  
8 all their hard work into what they do. And if I  
9 may add, they do a great job at it. They all  
10 have taught us so much that we can use for high  
11 school and lifelong. What they do is so  
12 outstanding that it's just amazing. Dr. Martin  
13 Luther King said once, "I have a dream," and I  
14 have a dream that teachers don't have to reapply  
15 for their jobs just to come back again, if they  
16 can. Teachers here are holding on by a thread,  
17 and once you cut it, you cut it for good.

18 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you very much.  
19 The next speaker is Fatina Reyes.

20 MS. FATINA REYES: Buenos noches. {In  
21 Spanish.)

22 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: And we'll have a  
23 translator. Sir, if you want to just translate.

24 TRANSLATOR: She identified herself as  
25 being Fatina, I didn't get the last name, but

1 she says she has a seventh grade student here  
2 who has always gotten good grades in the school.  
3 She says that closing the school is not the  
4 right thing to do. What they should really do  
5 is evaluate the teachers who are here in place  
6 and make a comparison. You know, how are you  
7 going to compare these teachers who are in  
8 place, doing a good job, with the new teachers  
9 coming in? And the decision by Mayor Bloomberg  
10 to close down the school is a dumb one because  
11 she feels the right thing to do, the right thing  
12 to do would be to really evaluate the teachers  
13 and see who are the ones that can--that are  
14 performing the best job.

15 MS. FATINA REYES: (In Spanish.)

16 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Okay, thank you.

17 TRANSLATOR: She'd like to know what's  
18 going to happen to the teachers who have been  
19 here for year after year. Will they now have to  
20 reapply for new jobs? That's just not fair.

21 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you. Okay, so  
22 the next speaker is speaker No. 8, Kenya Young.

23 MS. KENYA YOUNG: My name is Kenya Young  
24 and I am a sixth grader here at I.S.339. I feel  
25 that the school should not be closed down. The

1 entire staff and all the students are very  
2 intelligent. I have never been to a school that  
3 has been more caring. For example, Saturday  
4 Academy and afterschool have been really helpful  
5 in improving my grades. This school needs to  
6 stay open because it has made me a better  
7 student. I feel that I am more ready and  
8 prepared for the future than I was in elementary  
9 school. I know that if you give this school  
10 another chance, we will prove we are an A  
11 school. I also think we need to stay open  
12 because the teachers and all the staff members  
13 made me feel comfortable when I arrived in this  
14 school in mid-November. Without these people I  
15 think I would have been lost.

16 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you very much.  
17 So the next speaker, the next speaker is Jada  
18 Rojas. And as you--just quickly before you get  
19 started I'm going to call up the next set of  
20 speakers quickly before you start. Speaker No.  
21 11 is Emmanuel Martinez, No. 12 is Michelle  
22 Patello (phonetic), 13 is Jill Chititus  
23 (phonetic), 14, Alex Pena, 15, Amira Tiller, 16  
24 is Karen Tomlinson, and 17 is Dina Wolk. So  
25 when you're ready, ma'am.

1 MS. JADA ROJAS: Good evening. My name  
2 is Jada Rojas from I.S.339. I know you should  
3 not close this school because it's a good  
4 school. The entire staff, including teachers  
5 and students, are very helpful and respectful.  
6 I think you shouldn't close it down because who  
7 would end up working here? These teachers have  
8 been here for many years and know what to  
9 expect. I know this is a D school, but I  
10 believe that if we try and work together we can  
11 achieve that A we have been reaching for. My  
12 teachers have encouraged me to do my best every  
13 day, and I am doing much better now because they  
14 helped me. If you close down this school, would  
15 there be any teachers willing to come to a  
16 school that has been closed down? So please  
17 think this through and know that this is the  
18 wrong choice.

19 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you very much.  
20 Speaker No. 11 is Emmanuel Martinez.

21 MR. EMMANUEL MARTINEZ: Excuse me, can I "-  
22 -".

23 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: No, that one's for  
24 you, this one is for us. Yep, thank you.

25 MR. EMMANUEL MARTINEZ: Good evening. Can

1 you all clap it up for yourselves? All right.  
2 First and foremost, I'm a former student at  
3 I.S.339. I recently graduated in "--", I  
4 believe? Do you have--yeah, it was OE. So  
5 basically this school is a great school. It's  
6 too high, sorry. So this school is a great  
7 school. No matter what, I can always come back  
8 to it. This school's not "--". No matter what  
9 happens we all are in this together. And I want  
10 to thank Jenna Cruz, Kolman, all faculty  
11 members, that this school is always going to be  
12 here forever. I don't care. This is my family,  
13 these are my friends, and you got to know that.  
14 I came from this school and it really breaks my  
15 heart to see you all close this school down.  
16 And Bloomberg, to be honest with you, you are  
17 all his puppets. He's hiding right behind you  
18 and you're going to take the fall for it.  
19 That's not funny. Look at it. It's not very  
20 funny. Look, hold on. It's not really funny  
21 because the simple fact, like, look, the  
22 etiology of it, you're going to end up--excuse  
23 me--you're going to end up failing--he's going  
24 to end up failing because you all making this  
25 new school, and he's basically taking education

1 and making it a major corporation. I'm sorry,  
2 I'm sorry to you, and I'm glad that we find here  
3 today. Is my two minutes up? Because I want to  
4 really go "--", but I'm not even going to do  
5 that. I'm sorry.

6 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, sir.

7 MR. EMMANUEL MARTINEZ: I'm fed up right  
8 now, I'm really fed up.

9 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much.  
10 And the next speaker is speaker No. 12, Michelle  
11 Patellom (phonetic).

12 MS. MICHELLE PATELLOM: Hi. Thank you.  
13 I'm just like, wow. You have really "--" the  
14 staff. Let me tell you, my daughter been here  
15 since the sixth grade. And I'm a hands-on  
16 parent. And I come to this school and I swear  
17 I've seen some of these kids, and they like--  
18 some of them are like really over the top, rude  
19 and disrespectful, and you all blaming the  
20 staff. I don't--I'm a hands-on parent. If you  
21 call me--all my daughter--the teachers know, if  
22 they call me today and tell me to come in  
23 tomorrow, I'm right here. So you can't blame  
24 them. The parents have to have like some part  
25 in what the kids is doing. You understand what

1 I'm saying? It's like I know a lot of parents  
2 work, 'cause I work, I work at night. So it's  
3 like I don't really have the time that I should  
4 have with her, but I do make time for her. I  
5 make time, you sit down, we do homework, we do  
6 all that. And I'm just like you all blaming the  
7 staff. Like these teachers genuinely care about  
8 a lot of these students. And then you got some  
9 students that, like I said, over the top, rude.  
10 I've walked in, I snuck up on my daughter a  
11 couple of times, I know. I "--" up there and I  
12 done seen a lot of these kids out "--", talking  
13 loud and doing things to where the teachers  
14 can't teach, like they can't do their job, and  
15 you all blaming them because the scores are low,  
16 because the kids is not learning. It's not all  
17 on the staff and it's not fair, it's not. I  
18 don't know what else to say. I've come here and  
19 I'm telling you, I've come here and I've been  
20 wanting to beat some of these kids myself. I be  
21 wanting to take my belt off and beat some of  
22 these kids because they are just like really  
23 over the top, whew. Like this generation, I  
24 don't know, I don't know if it's in the water,  
25 in the milk, I don't know, but these kids is

1       rude and you all blaming the staff. I don't  
2       understand.

3               MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much. So  
4       the next speaker is speaker No. 13, Jill  
5       Chititus (phonetic).

6               MS. JILL CHITITUS: Hi, everyone. While  
7       they're fixing the microphone I'll keep this  
8       moving. My name is Jill Chititus. This is my  
9       fifth year here. I teach health and phys ed.  
10      And I actually have a very unique position here.  
11      I get to see a lot from a different perspective  
12      than an ELA teacher or a classroom teacher per  
13      se. I've seen a lot of changes happen in the  
14      five years I've been here, and this year most  
15      importantly there's been a lot of positive  
16      changes starting with administration, new  
17      leadership, and there's new professional  
18      developments in place. And the teachers are  
19      learning and teaching in general is a learning  
20      experience every day. We better ourselves every  
21      day, every year. We learn from the kids, we  
22      learn how to be better, and that where we are  
23      right now. The data from past years is  
24      determining our future right now. We actually  
25      haven't had a chance to prove ourselves, I feel.

1 The kids haven't even taken the state test  
2 yet. And, you know, if this is going to happen,  
3 then let it happen in the future. But we should  
4 be able to prove ourselves just like these kids  
5 have an opportunity to prove themselves in this  
6 test. How far have we come? How do you measure  
7 growth if they haven't been tested yet? And I  
8 feel as though they deserve that opportunity,  
9 just like we all deserve that opportunity to  
10 prove ourselves, as if we're the kids, you know,  
11 ourselves.

12 And I have to say that the colleagues that  
13 we have here, the staff that we have here, I've  
14 worked in many different schools, and they are  
15 the most dedicated group of people I have ever  
16 seen. They are here, all day, here till 6, 7 at  
17 night, here early in the morning, buying the  
18 children lunch, buying them prom dresses for  
19 prom, and we treat them like they're our own  
20 kids. And you can't just have that kind of a  
21 bond, you build that, and we have built that.  
22 And I think the kids that spoke tonight actually  
23 say it all. And the parents in general will  
24 too. And there's really not much more for me to  
25 say 'cause I really think everybody has said it,

1 but one more thing before I pass the mic off.  
2 This all happened--we're a persistently low  
3 achieving school and we obviously need to  
4 improve just like any system. And we didn't  
5 even have a chance in this transformation  
6 program. And because of whatever happened with  
7 negotiations, we haven't had that opportunity.  
8 We lost a lot of funding and all of a sudden now  
9 we're closed and we lost that opportunity. I  
10 think between communication and this mix of  
11 chaos that I like to call it, a lot got lost.  
12 And I think closing of the school hurts the kids  
13 more than reopening a new school helping the  
14 kids, if that makes any sense to anybody. So  
15 having said that...

16 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much.  
17 Speaker No. 14 is Alex Pena.

18 MR. ALEX PENA: Good evening, everyone. My  
19 name is Alex Pena, sixth grade language arts  
20 teacher. I'm speaking to you as a native of the  
21 Bronx, born and raised. Nearly a decade ago I  
22 joined the New York City fellows because I had a  
23 vision to come back to my hometown, make a  
24 difference, educate and raise the achievement  
25 levels of the children of the Bronx. I probably

1       conceded to dedicate my life to this cause,  
2       but I'm not as naïve as I once was as a 21-year-  
3       old public school teacher. When I voluntarily  
4       decided to join 339 five years ago, former  
5       colleagues and administrators expressed shock,  
6       disbelief and disgust. Some mentioned, you  
7       know, you're going where? Why would you do  
8       that? My answer was this isn't about me. This  
9       is about making an impact in the middle schools.  
10       This is about putting action behind my personal  
11       philosophy. I'm not here for a cushy job. I  
12       want to be part of the solution. However, now  
13       with the impending vote on the closure of this  
14       school, I cannot help but feel that the  
15       underlying assumption is that I am part of the  
16       problem. It seems apparent that the potential  
17       closure of this and other schools around the  
18       city serves to drive a wedge between the members  
19       of the school community. But, you know, in  
20       spite of it all I'm proud of my decision to come  
21       here to 339 and serve the children here in this  
22       community. Thank you.

23               MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, sir.

24       Speaker No. 25 is Amira Tiller. Amira.

25               MS. AMIRA TILLER: Greetings to the parents

1 and the students, and one of my students  
2 actually spoke. I want my students "--" who  
3 stay here all this time, thank you, lovelies,  
4 thank you. That's what it's about, okay?  
5 That's the important reason and that's the  
6 reason I'm here for you all, too, like I said I  
7 would be. First of all, we heard a little bit  
8 of Martin Luther King. I'm going to start off  
9 with one of my future leaders who wrote  
10 something for me to read. She couldn't be here.  
11 "Why should I.S. 339 stay open? I.S.339 should  
12 stay open because it is a good school. First, I  
13 work very hard to pass. Next, I have good plans  
14 and teachers here also. All my family came to  
15 this school and I don't want to lose what my  
16 family had." Skip, skip, skip. "The school  
17 should not close because you have a good  
18 principal. Lastly, this school has good  
19 teachers. Again, I don't want no new teachers  
20 here because I have teachers that I love at  
21 I.S.339 like Ms. Tiller and Ms. Fariz  
22 (phonetic). Mostly, I will also miss my friends  
23 that I have here because they not come back."  
24 Now, once again, I have my own personal "--".  
25 My name again is Amira Tiller. I'm a sixth

1 grade teacher here. I entered I.S.339 in 2007  
2 and have maintained a passion to remain here  
3 despite what the DOE says. I am a dedicated  
4 teacher--I'm sorry--of a big, fine institution  
5 already--okay?--this is high quality already.  
6 'Cause we need to clarify that because I was  
7 very insulted by that statement. You have  
8 deemed our school one that is consistently  
9 failing. While this may be the case, during my  
10 tenure here I received two monetary bonuses for  
11 student achievement on the state exams. Our  
12 school closure is a result of a political game  
13 seeking to gain national attention for  
14 pretending, pretending to care about our low  
15 income students, which leads me to know this "--  
16 " closure is a scheme to say the contrary. You  
17 do not care about "--" students or their  
18 families. Further, I teach children, I still  
19 teach children on a daily basis and know that  
20 they work hard and do not accept failure because  
21 failure is never an option. At I.S.339 the  
22 relationship is not merely educator/student. We  
23 are family. I find your attempt with the threat  
24 of closure disrespectful to our family.  
25 Students walk in with so much weight on their

1 shoulders. Students have confided that they  
2 are in foster care, no food at home, have been  
3 raped, a life of prostitution and so on.  
4 However, they make their way into my classroom  
5 daily on time. I have a problem. I have grown  
6 to know and appreciate the elementary students  
7 that have blossomed into responsible middle  
8 school students. I have seen with my own eyes  
9 the progress that they have made and you've seen  
10 tonight that they see their own progress. That  
11 is powerful. It is with that knowledge that I  
12 am seeking your help, your compassion, your  
13 conscience--do not close our school. We are  
14 here now because of your lack of presence.  
15 Where were you?

16 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, ma'am.  
17 Speaker No. 26 is Karen Tomlinson.

18 MS. KAREN TOMLINSON: Good evening. I'm  
19 taken aback by the lack of accountability of the  
20 DOE. It was your responsibility to oversee our  
21 schools. It was your responsibility to meet its  
22 needs and you failed to do so. So I ask myself  
23 a question as you try to find a quick fix by  
24 erasing teachers and putting more teachers in,  
25 will that really address the problem in the core

1 needs of this school? So if we close and  
2 reopen this school, do we also close and reopen  
3 the DOE? At what point in time do we actually  
4 roll up our sleeves, get from behind our desks,  
5 and actually do the work that is needed for this  
6 school to succeed? You are taking a defeated  
7 mentality that we cannot survive and save  
8 schools, that the only measure we have, the only  
9 recourse is to close and reopen makes no sense.  
10 What are we telling our students? What is the  
11 lesson here? What is the lesson for the DOE?  
12 Because there comes a time when we must realize  
13 that we failed and now we must get together with  
14 community, parents and students and make it  
15 work. And that is the only way we can be  
16 productive, and if that is our actual goal. And  
17 that's what we must be clear on. And so I say  
18 to you that being a parent and coming here since  
19 my daughter was in sixth grade and what I  
20 observed--I'm sorry, I'll be quick--was that  
21 there was a deficiency in leadership and there  
22 still is a deficiency in leadership. It is very  
23 easy to dictate. It takes a high quality person  
24 to lead and engage, and that is not taking place  
25 here.

1 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much.  
2 So the next speaker is Dina Wolk. And quickly  
3 before you approach the mic, I do just want to  
4 call up the next few speakers. Speaker No. 18  
5 is Margaret McHale, No. 19 is Jessica Fagen, No.  
6 20 will be Jennifer Bentley, and No. 21 is  
7 Gabrielle Golfo and Amaris Obando will be  
8 speaker No. 22. Go ahead, ma'am.

9 MS. DINA WOLK: Hi, my name is Dina Wolk.  
10 I have taught here for more than 10 years. I  
11 can state an obvious fact. This isn't an easy  
12 job. Teaching is a full-time job year round  
13 that entails being a mother, a father, a social  
14 worker, a psychiatrist, and so on. I.S.339,  
15 yes, has had its ups and downs. But let me  
16 state the facts. Beginning in 2006 we were  
17 listed under "--" and marked a D school. This  
18 was also the year the New York City Department  
19 of Ed "--" and I.S.339 laptops through "--"  
20 program. In 2007 we were a C school and in '08  
21 we became a B school. In 2009 we were removed  
22 from "--". In July 2008 I attended a conference  
23 in Nashville, Tennessee, with other staff  
24 members. We offered tools and strategies on how  
25 Google transformed my school to other schools

1 interested in learning what we did. In  
2 October 2008, 339 was featured in an article in  
3 the *Village Voice* about the use of technology in  
4 classrooms. The previous chancellor, Joel Kline  
5 (phonetic), even came to our school to view and  
6 congratulate us on all of our achievements. In  
7 2009 I attended and spoke at a conference for  
8 Google at the Hilton Hotel in New York City  
9 while I elaborated on the effectiveness of  
10 technology that it has in our classrooms. In  
11 February of 2011, I.S.339 was featured on the  
12 PBS Frontline program called "--" Saved a  
13 School. We have been held in such a high regard  
14 for so long, and then suddenly these  
15 accommodations have gone, puff, unnoticed,  
16 nothing. Now, you tell me if we have been such  
17 a failure all these years, why is it we have been  
18 so sought after and spoken so highly about over  
19 the past five years? It seems as though  
20 numerous individuals have been intrigued with  
21 our school's capabilities and progress. We have  
22 prevailed over the years and we will continue to  
23 do so, but we need real solutions. I'm tired of  
24 hearing it's the teacher's fault. I know that  
25 these teachers and staff who work in this school

1 are the hardest working people I have ever  
2 worked with. I don't teach for the pay, I teach  
3 because my passion for educating our youth and  
4 making a positive change is tenacious. I use my  
5 own pocket money to help my students buy  
6 uniforms, pay for school trips, buy lunch, Metro  
7 card incentives, have our annual secret Santa  
8 party, et cetera. The truth of the matter is  
9 these students need teachers like us. We are a  
10 one of a kind family and we have dedicated years  
11 of our lives to serving these students. Our  
12 school has a lot of courage, unity, compassion,  
13 justice, and most of all perseverance. Stop  
14 holding us hostage and let us do your job.

15 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much. I  
16 also quickly before the next speaker, I want to  
17 acknowledge we've been joined by a  
18 representative from the Office of Assembly  
19 Member Stevenson, Marzeta Harris (phonetic) has  
20 joined us this evening and she'll be speaking  
21 Go ahead, ma'am.

22 MS. MARGARET MCHALE: Good evening,  
23 everybody. My name is Margaret McHale and I am  
24 a teacher. I have been here, first at I.S.147  
25 and then at I.S.339 for over a dozen years. And

1 something a little personal about me. I'm an  
2 army brat and I lived all over the county and  
3 went to many, many schools and have lived and  
4 enjoyed, you know, lots of places, and there is  
5 no finer place to be than where I have been for  
6 the past 12 years of my life. Being in this  
7 neighborhood so long has taught me so much.  
8 I've learned that our community, the South  
9 Bronx, doesn't have any oil wells, diamond  
10 mines, or even a coal mine to help us out  
11 economically. But we do have an abundance of  
12 the greatest natural resource of all, the fine,  
13 curious, open minds of our young people. And it  
14 has been my privilege to work with the students,  
15 their parents, and the entire school community  
16 to develop that resource with its immense  
17 potential into the leaders of tomorrow. That's  
18 all of our leaders, everybody, our kids. We are  
19 in the business, we here at 339 are in the  
20 business of delivering a high quality education  
21 to children we know, we nurture, and we very  
22 deeply love. They have the right to be part of  
23 a learning community where every teacher,  
24 support staff and administrator cares about  
25 their success. That is what they have at 339

1 already. Losing half the staff is equivalent  
2 to losing half of your family. I'd like you,  
3 the DOE people, to please carefully consider the  
4 impact of your actions on what I believe will be  
5 our greatest generation ever. Thank you.

6 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much.

7 MS. MARZETA HARRIS: Good evening, ladies  
8 and gentlemen. My name is Marzeta Harris. I'm  
9 a representative from New York State Assembly  
10 Member Eric Stevenson. He vehemently opposes  
11 the disruption of the community family here at  
12 339, moreover, the educational process. We can  
13 point fingers and place blame who's responsible  
14 for this, we all know who it is. Bloomberg has  
15 made this decision. I think one of the  
16 important things that the Department of  
17 Education needs to go back and recalibrate for  
18 formula that is utilized for disrupting this  
19 education process and for closing schools. Far  
20 too many times over the last three or four  
21 months I have been to many schools where they're  
22 closing high schools, where they want to  
23 relocate or co-locate charter schools. We have  
24 to find a better measure to save our children.  
25 It's not about us, and it is about the teachers

1 too. You are very, very important teachers in  
2 this school community. It takes a hell of a  
3 person to be a teacher and come into a classroom  
4 under the conditions that exist. You lack  
5 resources. When you come into school  
6 communities you have so many different  
7 populations that you have to serve and you have  
8 to deal with that. We need more resources, we  
9 need to recalibrate the formula. And one of the  
10 other things that I must say, it's wonderful to  
11 see a sea of people out here this evening. The  
12 other thing is the children speak volumes about  
13 this school community. That is a true testament  
14 that what the educational process and what the  
15 social skills and they lifestyle in the school  
16 family has been for these students. And I want  
17 to thank you for that. And if there's anything  
18 else that we can do, feel free to call our  
19 office. The Assemblymen supports the issues of  
20 the parents, the administration and the  
21 students. The other thing I want to tell you,  
22 if you voted against the TS6 legislation.

23 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much,  
24 ma'am. So the next speaker is speaker No. 19,  
25 Jessica Fagen.

1 MS. JESSICA FAGEN: Hi, my name is Ms.  
2 Fagen, and I am a sixth grade science teacher  
3 here at I.S.339. I usually don't talk at big  
4 events like this, but I know I would never live  
5 with myself if I didn't say something for my  
6 students. I've been teaching her for three  
7 years and I'm also a New York City teaching  
8 fellow. After my two-year commitment with the  
9 teaching fellows was over, I decided to stay  
10 after three years with the New York City  
11 Department of Education. I wanted to stay and  
12 work toward transforming this school. And I  
13 remembered being reminded that working at this  
14 school was some of the most valuable and  
15 meaningful and important work that a teacher  
16 could do in their career. The extra funding  
17 provided toward our school and the  
18 transformation process has helped me directly.  
19 Just having more books, triple "--" balances for  
20 the science classroom, microscope specimens,  
21 more academic programming for our students, and  
22 also just extra professional development for our  
23 staff has helped me be a better educator. I've  
24 also learned so much from the staff and my  
25 colleagues and it's been a very supportive

1 environment. Our school has definitely shown  
2 a lot of progress this year and our students and  
3 staff need more support to transform this  
4 school. I could definitely not fathom the  
5 school closing. We definitely need help to  
6 solve this problem and not to close and make it  
7 disappear. Because closing the school will not  
8 solve the problem. So I definitely vote against  
9 your proposal to close the school. And I am  
10 definitely speaking on behalf of all of my  
11 students that I've spoken with. They are very  
12 upset about the proposal to close the school.

13 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much.  
14 And the next speaker is speaker No. 20, Jennifer  
15 Bentley.

16 MS. JENNIFER BENTLEY: Thank you. Okay.  
17 We are the probationary teachers at this school.  
18 My name is Jennifer Bentley. Having been here  
19 from one to four years, we stand together to say  
20 that you're proposing a turnaround but our  
21 school has not even been given the opportunity  
22 to turn around, and closing this school is  
23 incredibly premature as we have received our new  
24 principal only in September. Ms. Autobridge has  
25 not yet had the opportunity to turn this school

1 around. And many of us have been, myself  
2 specifically, have been in career limbo having  
3 completed already three years of satisfactory  
4 service. We were denied--well, our probationary  
5 period was extended simply because we decided to  
6 work in an economically disadvantaged school.  
7 We are dedicated to close the achievement gap.  
8 We are dedicated to our profession. We need you  
9 to give us a chance. We need you to give our  
10 principal a chance. Give our students a chance.  
11 Speaking personally as a former student of  
12 District 9, I graduated from Taft High School, I  
13 went to JHS22, which is supposed to be closed,  
14 CES42. I'm from this community, so I'm speaking  
15 as a citizen of this community. I used to live  
16 on 1458 Webster Avenue, and I think the beauty  
17 of this school is that it attracts so many  
18 people from this community who are dedicated to  
19 basically giving our lives, giving our passion  
20 to uplift our community. So I am asking you to  
21 please consider that and not close this school.  
22 Thank you.

23 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much. So  
24 speaker No. 21 is Gabrielle Golfo.

25 MS. GABRIELLE GOLFO: Good evening. My

1 name is Gabrielle Golfo and I am a sixth  
2 grader. I disagree with closing down the  
3 school. The mayor has been complaining about  
4 how we are feeling, and yet he hasn't helped.  
5 Where are all these teachers going to go? Many  
6 of the teachers have been working here for the  
7 longest time and now they can't. I feel that  
8 these teachers are amazing and they work very  
9 hard. Many schools have had their ups and downs  
10 including ours, but this grade can improve and  
11 go back to an A. Therefore, I think I.S.339,  
12 home of the Tech Tigers, should stay open.

13 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you very much.  
14 So the next speaker is speaker No. 22, Amaris  
15 Obando. And before you start, let me just call  
16 up the next group. No. 23 is David Mello, No.  
17 24, Elizabeth Gonzalez, No. 25 is William Shaw,  
18 26 is Oneida Burner Aromi (phonetic), and No. 27  
19 is Kiara Rosario. Go ahead, ma'am.

20 MS. AMARIS OBANDO: Hello, good evening.  
21 My name is Amaris Obando, and I am actually the  
22 P.A. President of CIS313 upstairs. And having  
23 seen so many things this past year, much of  
24 which was already mentioned, I feel it's my duty  
25 to be here tonight and also make a comment "--".

1 If the DOE and the network do not help their  
2 community counterparts with the resources and  
3 counseling services needed, we in the community  
4 will be incapacitated in supporting our children  
5 toward success. If true success was desired for  
6 our D9 middle schools in the Diana Sands  
7 Complex, then when you identify our  
8 deficiencies, as you are so apt at doing, then  
9 where is the academic, social, and professional  
10 development that we need so our children can see  
11 this invisible force really cares? The second  
12 thing I would like to mention is I have a  
13 problem with the middle school choice program.  
14 I feel that that is where things need to be re-  
15 evaluated. Because if you want to see the D9  
16 children succeed, then please evaluate the  
17 options for problematic students who come from  
18 other communities who are impeding our children  
19 in this thriving community who really want to  
20 get ahead. Thank you.

21 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much.  
22 Speaker No. 23 is David Mello.

23 MR. DAVID MELLO: David Mello, teacher of  
24 social studies in my 11<sup>th</sup> year and an immensely  
25 proud member of this 339 family. In some

1 respects, in some respects I'm pleased that a  
2 more intense light is being shown on the  
3 difficulties that schools like ours are having.  
4 This is a tough and unstable neighborhood and  
5 some of our results have matched that  
6 instability. It's been an honor getting to know  
7 so many wonderful families in this neighborhood.  
8 The respect I have for them is unbounded. It's  
9 a tough and unstable neighborhood to live in  
10 and, more importantly, to learn in. What I'm  
11 not pleased about, nor should our 339 family be  
12 pleased about, is the DOE's response to this  
13 slow realization that our school needs help and  
14 support in its fight against this instability  
15 that undermines the education process here. It  
16 seems that the essence of the DOE's response to  
17 finally seeing our struggles is to make it  
18 another aspect of life and learning here more  
19 unstable. For a school that loses already a  
20 daunting percentage of its staff each year, the  
21 proposed solution is let's change the name of  
22 the school, let's remove the bulk of the  
23 teachers, let's bring in a whole bunch of new  
24 people who will be slow to understand the unique  
25 challenges we face here, the unique kids, the

1 unique kids we try to teach and love each and  
2 every day, in essence, let's create even more  
3 instability. Our kids need a lot of things.  
4 What our kids don't need, can't be burdened with  
5 is even more instability. What our students,  
6 our kids, our family does need is more support.  
7 Not just from us, we're already giving it, but  
8 from the DOE. Smaller classes with consistent  
9 rosters, consistent curriculums that are  
10 enhanced each year and not rewritten. And rock  
11 solid professional teachers that bring a small  
12 measure of stability to our children's otherwise  
13 often chaotic lives. Let our school be a haven  
14 for our kids, not just another unpredictable  
15 aspect of their lives. Make no mistake, these  
16 decisions being considered here tonight are  
17 politically motivated. Politics is all about  
18 instability, about changing the guard every few  
19 years. I should know because I am a city  
20 councilman currently in the City of Hoboken, New  
21 Jersey. But the DOE should not let our schools  
22 nearer the ever-changing tides of politics.  
23 When it comes to our Bronx kids, change is not  
24 always good. You'll destroy our schools with  
25 this instability and likely destroy many

1 students' lives in the process. Our students  
2 deserve better. Where will you say you were  
3 when you could have given it to them?

4 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, sir.  
5 Speaker No. 24 is Elizabeth Gonzalez.

6 MS. ELIZABETH GONZALEZ: Good evening. I  
7 am here to represent the "--" at 339. My name  
8 is Elizabeth Gonzalez, and I stand here to  
9 represent all of us who work here at 339 very,  
10 very hard. I am not politically minded, but I  
11 know children and I have been working at this  
12 particular school for more than 30 years. I've  
13 been giving of myself to this community, a  
14 community that I grew up in. My mother still  
15 lives on 170<sup>th</sup> and Webster Avenue. It is my  
16 choice to give back to my own community. This  
17 is where I want to be. When the school opened  
18 we were here like a family. But since Mr. Hart  
19 retired, and may he rest in peace, this school  
20 has been constantly being decapitated every few  
21 years. Every few years they give us a new  
22 principal and a new staff, everything changing  
23 over. How can we work this way? I can't even  
24 count how many principals that we've had. And  
25 the educational foundation broken and uprooted

1 all the time. New principal, new regime, new  
2 entourage, change eight periods to 16 periods,  
3 change Mondays and Fridays to A, B, C, D days.  
4 Come on, what are we going to do? How can we  
5 teach when we feel like we're on pins and  
6 needles all the time? This is a type of  
7 bullying. And then we have to interview for  
8 jobs that we already have? Come on now. This  
9 is an insult and it is an attack on our  
10 integrity.

11 I also speak on the children that have no  
12 voice. This school is one of the largest  
13 special ed populations in this district, and the  
14 children that we work with don't understand  
15 about closing schools, they only know our faces  
16 in the morning, the constant care and the love  
17 that they desperately need, as we deal with all  
18 their many, many issues and get to know their  
19 families. We've been an A school before and we  
20 can be an A school again. Just help us. Where  
21 is the \$30,000 worth of help that we supposed to  
22 be getting? Stop bullying us. Let us do our  
23 jobs and just give us the help we need. Thank  
24 you.

25 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, ladies. So

1 our next speaker is speaker No. 25, William  
2 Shaw.

3 MR. WILLIAM SHAW: Good evening. I stand  
4 in front of you at this particular time to speak  
5 on behalf of our children. I decided on this  
6 job not only in the country, coming from way,  
7 way from rural Africa with all the  
8 opportunities, I decided to become a teacher.  
9 And when I came here as a linguist, I was told  
10 you will do better, according to what we've had  
11 from you with special needs kids. I decided to  
12 do that, it is my passion. They are like my  
13 kids. I ask again, and I've asked this before,  
14 Superintendent, what do you say to the kid, as I  
15 have mostly been here from rural Africa speaking  
16 French and Portuguese and some other language,  
17 or Arabic, but comes here and is left in the  
18 maze. No particular services. What about the  
19 kid from Santo Domingo who comes here and is  
20 just thrown in the class. No regular and  
21 particular bilingual services. I've been there  
22 and I've seen what it means. By the grace of  
23 God I speak a lot of languages, but I learned in  
24 school. And by the grace of God, too, I went to  
25 some of the best in Europe, in England,

1 particularly in "--", and here. But what are  
2 we doing for these kids? And I say we're  
3 failing the kid that is going through a  
4 linguistic transformation and there's no help  
5 for him. And finally what do you do? Blame the  
6 teachers. When the mindset of the teacher is in  
7 "--" and the kid reads and also translates in  
8 Spanish and the kid comes for French, no help  
9 for the kid. I want us to reconsider--and this  
10 is just one of the things--and consider giving  
11 the help, we need the help. We have a new  
12 principal, we need the help. If we don't have  
13 the help, you can't blame us. Let's stop  
14 playing these games with the lives of these  
15 kids. They are unstable already. They come  
16 from unstable backgrounds. They need help.  
17 Let's have a conscious and help the kids. It's  
18 not about policies, about the kids. Thank you.

19 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, sir. The  
20 next speaker is speaker No. 26, Oneida Burner  
21 Aromi?

22 MS. ONEIDA BURNER AROMI: My name is Oneida  
23 Burner Aromi and I'm with Supportive Services,  
24 counseling "--". And it's saddened all of us  
25 that this is happening. I don't think the DOE

1 or anybody understands what's happening to  
2 these children. They were sad when it was  
3 called 147 and they cried, because why? The DOE  
4 says, hey, you're not doing that well, so we're  
5 going to make it 339, I'm sorry. Now they're  
6 crying again because, why? You're saying, I'm  
7 sorry, you're not doing so well. And here  
8 they're coming back and they're telling us,  
9 look, I'm a lawyer. Look, I'm a teacher, look  
10 where I'm teaching, look what I'm doing. What  
11 you're saying, what they learned here wasn't  
12 anything. It was sad in my office when a child  
13 came in that's usually very bubbly and smiling,  
14 he had his head down. I said, "Son, sit down.  
15 What's the matter?" He said, "Ms. Burner, is it  
16 true?" I said, "What do you mean is it true?"  
17 "They're closing 339." I looked at him. He  
18 said, "Why?" His eyes started watering, just  
19 like mine is right now, because I can see his  
20 face. See, you can't see it, but I can see it.  
21 "Why? You promised me." When I go to high  
22 school I see your "--", but I got to tell the  
23 story. They said, "When you--you told me, you  
24 promised me when I go to high school at least I  
25 can come back and you'll be here, but you may

1 not be here. What am I going to do?" He just  
2 kept crying and I couldn't stop him. I had to  
3 let him cry. But guess what? I couldn't cry  
4 with him and it hurts because we are a family in  
5 this community. Those children need us, the  
6 parents needs us. Why in our community it also  
7 happens? I know too many communities out there  
8 that are not tore up like these communities?  
9 Why? Our children are not failures. Our  
10 teachers are not failures. You're saying  
11 replace us, bring in new. That means  
12 something's wrong with our licenses?  
13 Something's wrong with our parenting skills?  
14 What's going on? How do you live with  
15 yourselves? You're not in here. You're only  
16 here for a little while, you go home. Tomorrow  
17 we have to see them.

18 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, ladies. So  
19 the next speaker is speaker No. 27, Kiara  
20 Rosario. And quickly before you start, let me  
21 just call up the next five speakers. We have  
22 speaker No. 28, Milagros Escobar. The next  
23 speaker will be Clayton Davis, followed by  
24 Rosedani Cheko, followed by Andre Dekgrow,  
25 followed by Shandelle Perez. Go ahead.

1 MS. KIARA ROSARIO: Hi, my name is Kiara  
2 Rosario from Class 605. I'm in the sixth grade  
3 here at CIS339. I think that we deserve another  
4 chance. I think we as a school will achieve  
5 that A. If you gave us more time, you would see  
6 that. The staff and students at 339 work very,  
7 very hard. Students are working hard, the  
8 principal is working hard, everyone is working  
9 hard. So don't close the school. I have never  
10 been to a school that cares so much about all  
11 the students. If it wasn't for the teachers and  
12 the programs, I would have not been as confident  
13 as I am about the exam. These are the reasons  
14 why I don't want this school to be closed down.  
15 Thank you for your time.

16 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much. So  
17 speaker No. 28, Milagros Escobar.

18 MR. MILAGROS ESCOBAR: Hi, good evening,  
19 I'm Milagros Escobar. I'm 13 years old. And to  
20 be honest with you, I do not go to this school,  
21 but I am very upset that they're closing down a  
22 school that one of my family members goes to.  
23 My little brother is here for the first time,  
24 and I'm already seeing his school being shut  
25 down. I've seen this principal in work before,

1 in PS4. When I was in pre-K she was doing  
2 this work with other students. She turned that  
3 school around from a B to an A. Why don't you  
4 let her do it again? I've been sitting here,  
5 I've been sitting here, I've looked at your  
6 faces many times. I've seen the expression on  
7 whatever they say, I'm going to still change  
8 this school. This school shouldn't be changed.  
9 This school has been here since I was in pre-K;  
10 that's 13 years ago. This school shouldn't be  
11 taken down after a dozen years or more after her  
12 succeeding so much. I have friends that go to  
13 this school, they tell me this school is the  
14 best. And before I never seen this happen to  
15 one of my schools. I saw Bloomberg in my school  
16 the other day. I wanted to go up to his face  
17 and be like why they let you go a third term if  
18 you turning these schools into your ATM machine?  
19 Why are we standing here working our butts off  
20 for your paycheck? We sit here. You press a  
21 mere button on that little ATM machine, you call  
22 the school and you win money. That is not how a  
23 school should be played with. Schools are not a  
24 piece in your games. I recently saw this. I  
25 read the Hunger Games. I can see now why

1 Suzanne Collins is making this so simple, that  
2 this "--"--not even, this nation is going to  
3 become districts where there is no peace, no  
4 unity. You can't even see your mothers down in  
5 Texas if you have someone. You can't do nothing  
6 because someone is holding you back. This man  
7 that's put us into the third term, he can change  
8 the constitution for all he wants, but he wants  
9 to change a school that doesn't need to be  
10 changed. Why do you want to change that? This  
11 school has been rising and flourishing, it can  
12 shine as bright as ever, so why close it down  
13 when it's on the bridge of success? Thank you.

14 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much.  
15 Speaker No. 29, Clayton Davis.

16 MR. CLAYTON DAVIS: That's certainly a  
17 tough act to follow, but good evening,  
18 everybody. Good evening. Before I begin, allow  
19 me to preface my comments with the following  
20 statement: I believe that every child has the  
21 potential to achieve academic success, every  
22 single child. And I know many of my colleagues,  
23 all of my colleagues, believe that as well. The  
24 question that follows must be whether or not we  
25 are giving our children the opportunity to

1       succeed. This is the fundamental reason of  
2       why we are here this evening and should be at  
3       the center of every question that policymakers,  
4       leaders, and educational professionals ask of  
5       themselves each and every day. Does this  
6       initiative or idea or practice place our  
7       children in the best position to achieve  
8       success? Does this proposal place our children  
9       in the best position to succeed? I appreciate  
10      the statement by this board of education to  
11      improve educational outcomes, but I question the  
12      plan and motivation behind it. Since so many  
13      things within this department is done at an ad  
14      hoc basis, I fear that the process will be  
15      subject to the same tradition--rushed, hurried,  
16      and unplanned. And should I predict otherwise.  
17      And without a plan who will suffer? It will be  
18      our kids. Tonight we are questioning the wisdom  
19      of these proposed policy decisions. Where is  
20      the historical data that suggests this is the  
21      correct strategy to promote student growth?  
22      Where is the plan that will ensure this growth  
23      moving forward? Yes, we have room to grow, yes,  
24      we have room to grow. That is undoubtedly true.  
25      But thanks to the administrators of this school

1 and those teachers in this building that labor  
2 tirelessly on a day-to-day basis, there is a  
3 plan at this school moving forward.

4 And if I can just add, I've only taught  
5 here for four years, and I have had the  
6 privilege of teaching with a couple teams of  
7 teachers, but those teachers have consistently  
8 on a day-to-day basis given their all to our  
9 kids. And that is the only experience I can  
10 share and I'm proud to have served with them.  
11 And the last thing I'll say is as one of my  
12 students just told me moments ago, the same  
13 amount of effort that is spent in closing the  
14 school can be spent to making sure that it  
15 becomes successful.

16 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much,  
17 sir. Speaker No. 30 is Rosedani Cheko.

18 MS. ROSEDANI CHEKO: Good evening. My name  
19 is Rosedani Cheko and I'm a seventh grader in  
20 I.S.339. And, well, I've been hearing that you  
21 think that the bad guys are the teachers, right?  
22 The teachers aren't the bad guys, the students  
23 are. So if you all want to change all the  
24 teachers, why not change all the students? Or  
25 try again. Because I don't think that the

1 teachers are doing a bad job. If my sixth  
2 grade teachers gave me a 3 in my ELA exam, I  
3 don't think they're doing a bad job. Now, I may  
4 not be as good at math, but I don't think that  
5 the school curriculum that we had last year was  
6 as good. So that may be why I was as bad at  
7 math. Now, this year we have a new principal,  
8 which I heard that is a very good principal and  
9 could change our school to A. Why don't you  
10 give her a chance to change it? Why are you  
11 trying to close my school down? Why is it fair  
12 that you all are closing it down? Why is it  
13 fair that all these teachers get graded for  
14 everything they do? Why is it fair that even  
15 before bulletin boards they had to get graded?  
16 Why is it fair? I don't find it fair. It's not  
17 fair to me. Now, you all may find it fair, but  
18 that's not fair to me.

19 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you very much.  
20 And the next speaker is speaker No. 31, Andre  
21 Dekgrow. Are you Andre?

22 MALE VOICE: No, I came for her to speak.

23 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Okay.

24 MALE VOICE: My name is Jerry Tavis  
25 (phonetic) and I am a seventh grade student at

1 I.S.339. And I may not be the best student to  
2 be speaking because my grades are not the best,  
3 but that's my fault. My teachers are a very  
4 good team. They work together to--like they go  
5 home and they spend their time making lessons to  
6 teach us. That's dedication right there. Now,  
7 if I choose to not listen, that's on me. But  
8 they come every morning to teach us. Now, in  
9 the classes, I am in 706, there are good  
10 students and there are bad students. Now, the  
11 students that want to learn come in here every  
12 day with their uniform, with everything ready to  
13 learn. And now the teachers, they teach them.  
14 But then there's other kids, such as myself,  
15 that sit in the back and don't listen. We do  
16 our own little thing. But, see, we come to  
17 school to learn. And this--I came in last year.  
18 I had to go to summer school, but that is my  
19 fault, that's on me, that's on my shoulders.  
20 But my teachers--Ms. Wool, Mr. Prodo, all of  
21 them--they taught me. And actually a couple of  
22 times they actually stayed after school to spend  
23 their time trying to teach me. See, that's  
24 dedication.

25 Now, closing the school, I do not think

1 that's a good idea. Now, we--the teachers  
2 know our strength and our weaknesses and they  
3 know who to send us to. They know, I'm going to  
4 send you to this teacher, she knows how to work  
5 with you, I know her. Now, if you eliminate all  
6 the teachers and bring in new teachers, like  
7 they don't know us, they don't know our  
8 strengths, they don't know our weaknesses, they  
9 don't know nothing about us. So I personally  
10 think that's not a good idea. I am a seventh  
11 grade student and I--my grades are not so good  
12 but I will tell you that sometimes I do try.  
13 When I am focused and I'm not speaking, I  
14 actually do my work. And I can't guarantee  
15 anybody that I'm going to go to the eighth  
16 grade, but I want to actually--if I do go to the  
17 eighth grade, I would like to come back and say,  
18 oh, hi, hi, Ms. "--", hi, Mr. Foto, but I won't  
19 be able to do that if you remove all of our  
20 teachers. That is not a good idea.

21 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much,  
22 sir. Thank you so much. Speaker No. 31, Andre  
23 Dekgrow.

24 MR. ANDRE DEKGROW: Hi. I'm Andre Dekgrow.  
25 You probably don't know me, but I hear a lot

1 about you on a daily basis. My fiancé is  
2 actually a teacher here. And I see the hard  
3 work that she puts in and the effort and the  
4 time, the late nights and all the weekends that  
5 I would rather see her doing other things with  
6 that time. And I felt compelled to speak today  
7 because I also hear about the difficulties and  
8 the achievements of the students and the  
9 teachers at this school, the parents who work  
10 two to three jobs who make ends meet, the kids  
11 who come from foreign countries, having not  
12 attended school in two or three years. And you  
13 know what? If I knew nothing about this school,  
14 I would be really excited about the DOE's  
15 proposal. It sounds as if we're getting a  
16 perfect new school and there's absolutely no  
17 repercussions. But I know teachers at I.S.339,  
18 and because I know of how this school works, I  
19 have three reasons why this is--or three  
20 questions perhaps for the DOE. First of all,  
21 the DOE proposal gives us no reasons why the  
22 changes that the new school would implement  
23 can't already be implemented with I.S.339.  
24 Secondly, I don't quite see how turning over the  
25 administration of this school for the third year

1 in a row will help students who we've already  
2 seen are at grave risks already. A lot of these  
3 students come to school, and this is the only  
4 stability that they have in their day-to-day  
5 lives. So I don't see how changing the teachers  
6 and the administration does anything to address  
7 those needs. And lastly, if the teachers are  
8 the problem--and what I can only describe as the  
9 most disrespectful language of this proposal  
10 towards the teachers--if the DOE really believes  
11 that the teachers are the problem in this  
12 school, I don't see how keeping half of the  
13 teachers, based solely on seniority and not on  
14 aptitude, really addresses the problems at this  
15 school. It seems to me that the DOE is not  
16 really addressing the problems and that the  
17 teachers here are putting in a lot of time and  
18 effort, as is the administration, as are the  
19 students, as are the parents. So I challenge  
20 the DOE to really think twice about what they're  
21 doing and for everyone here representing the DOE  
22 to really give themselves, look at themselves  
23 and figure out what role they're playing within  
24 these larger processes.

25 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, sir. So

1 the next speaker is Shandelle Perez, speaker  
2 No. 32. And you'll be followed by speaker No.  
3 34, Francis Vicee (phonetic), and then speaker  
4 No. 35, Marilyn Spada (phonetic).

5 MS. SHANDELLE PEREZ: Good evening,  
6 everyone. My name is Shandelle Perez. I am the  
7 USC Power Lab of I.S.339, on behalf of 30 of my  
8 fellow Power professionals here, the past five  
9 years in this diverse middle school. This  
10 school as a strong cultural community that  
11 speaks for itself. The way students and family  
12 live is greatly affected by their social  
13 economic status which is determined by their  
14 income, their wealth, their occupation, and  
15 educational attainment. One, we need to  
16 understand the respect different backgrounds  
17 from which students come and understand the  
18 importance of stereotyping student behavior or  
19 academic potential on the basis of family  
20 structure. Understand that the young people  
21 need caring adults to help them maneuver through  
22 the tribulations and challenges of childhood and  
23 teenage years, which is motivation, management.  
24 Myself and other Power professionals here in  
25 I.S.339 truly believe in our jobs to work, we

1 have passion for our students, we have faith,  
2 we have bravery in our daily profession, and we  
3 have an education by implementing the learning  
4 process for the students here throughout their  
5 middle school years. These students of I.S.339  
6 see us as their mentors, secondary mothers, and  
7 most of all, as guides, "--" for hope for a  
8 better tomorrow. We give them much faith and  
9 positivity to continue without a doubt, a  
10 winning dignity to say that they are someone  
11 because that teacher, who sat there three years  
12 here at I.S.339, told them so. These are the  
13 students of I.S.339 who come back to the school  
14 to show that they listened, they learned, and  
15 had a passion to be an asset to the new  
16 generation of this school. I.S.339 has an  
17 ancestry of students, family, members who have  
18 attended this school, who have good memoirs of a  
19 learning experience here. Please, we urge you  
20 not to close I.S.339. This school has a good  
21 influence for development for a better future.  
22 We need you. Where were you?

23 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you very much.  
24 Speaker No. 34, Francis Vicee.

25 MR. FRANCIS VICEE: Yeah, good evening. It

1 is sad, it's really sad, of course, to be sent  
2 to somewhere and to "--" school year here at 339  
3 is going to be closed. One, don't you think  
4 that if you--

5 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: If you would, sir,  
6 just speak into the microphone so everyone can  
7 hear you.

8 MR. FRANCIS VICEE: Don't you think that  
9 when you do that you've destroyed the image of  
10 the youth or the students and the teachers and  
11 the whole--the school as a whole? My daughter  
12 is here, I send my daughter here. Let me tell  
13 you the real facts. Like if my daughter is not  
14 being "--" I'll tell you right now. "--" to my  
15 daughter if I won't give it my daughter I'll  
16 give around 19% of "--". Now my second daughter  
17 who is coming. Because of the "--" hard work of  
18 this school, that's why I'm trying to send my  
19 children here. And now at the moment I'm being  
20 told that the school is going to be closed. I  
21 don't know who gives this order. So I'm trying  
22 to tell you if you may send your report to the  
23 place that the order is coming from, tell the  
24 person over there that, excuse me to say, I know  
25 when all this is going on, I don't know whether

1 to be influenced in politics. The teachers  
2 here are good. We are not reporting them. Now,  
3 at long last you blame teachers they are not  
4 doing well. And when you bring other teachers  
5 in again, you think "--"? So my "--" I'm  
6 begging you, "--", give us the last change. We  
7 are not going to go for any last chance. Please  
8 leave I.S.339 "--". This what I have for you "--  
9 -" so that the children "--" cannot be  
10 destroyed. Thank you.

11 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you, sir. And  
12 now we're going to hear from the President from  
13 the CEC.

14 MS. MARILYN SPADA: First of all, I want to  
15 thank everyone for coming today. This has  
16 actually been the first public hearing for our  
17 school that's closing that has an outstanding  
18 amount of support for the school, for the  
19 students, the parents, the staff. I applaud you  
20 for that. And second of all, I am here to  
21 advocate for the parents. I do not work for the  
22 DOE. As the CEC President, I have to sit on the  
23 panel. It's been heartbreaking to sit here and  
24 listen to these students of I.S.339 express  
25 their concerns and their sadness of their

1 school, their second home being closed. I as  
2 a parent and also a parent of a child that  
3 attends 313 on the upper floor of this school  
4 building have been welcomed many times to visit  
5 339, which I have, and I feel very comfortable.  
6 Everyone in the staff, students were very  
7 polite. I also got a chance to meet the  
8 principal, Mr. Autobridge, and she was very  
9 greeting when we came in. Everybody was, you  
10 know, opened their doors. It was a good visit.  
11 And I just wanted to know if there's a  
12 possibility, which I hope, that this hearing is  
13 for nothing, maybe it's already a done deal, but  
14 anyway, I was just hoping that maybe I.S.339 and  
15 the new principal, Ms. Autobridge, would get an  
16 opportunity to prove Bloomberg wrong and just  
17 keep these students where they feel comfortable,  
18 safe, and wanted, and don't close their second  
19 home. They have expressed their concerns, they  
20 have begged, they have shown that the staff  
21 members do care for them. And just take it into  
22 consideration and listen to these students that  
23 are pouring their hearts out to the DOE. And if  
24 this is really being recorded and maybe  
25 Bloomberg does listen to this, maybe Bloomberg

1 should be rated or graded.

2 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you so much.  
3 Okay, so we have now exhausted the speaker list  
4 and we're going to transition into the question  
5 and answer. So as I said earlier, folks had an  
6 opportunity to write down questions on cards.  
7 We've batched them together, there were some  
8 that were repetitive, so we're going to respond  
9 to a few. And again, if you posed a question  
10 that isn't responded to tonight, everything is  
11 responded to in the analysis of public comment  
12 which is published for the panel members prior  
13 to the vote which will take place on April 26.  
14 And as I said, if additional questions or  
15 comments come up based on what's happened this  
16 evening, please take advantage of the phone and  
17 e-mail and I'll provide them again. It's on the  
18 website, but if you want to take it now, it's  
19 [d09proposals@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:d09proposals@schools.nyc.gov) or by phone at  
20 (212) 374-5159.

21 Okay, so I'm going to read the first  
22 question which, as I said, we had lots of  
23 questions that sort of asked a version of this  
24 about why the DOE is proposing to close and  
25 replace 339. Is this necessary? Why do we

1 think it will be better? Why not let it  
2 continue? We heard it during the public comment  
3 as well, and I'm going to invite the Deputy  
4 Chancellor to respond.

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR KATHLEEN GRIMM: Well,  
6 each year we go through a process where we  
7 review all of our schools and how they're doing.  
8 This year, of course, schools that have been  
9 designated as persistently lowest achieving by  
10 the State Education Department received special  
11 attention from the Department. And specifically  
12 for PLA schools such as I.S.339, the Department  
13 looks at whether one of the federally approved  
14 intervention models can adequately address the  
15 school's needs. We are proposing to close and  
16 replace this school because we believe that  
17 doing so will provide a better educational  
18 option to current students and it will provide a  
19 more rapidly and with more certainty than the  
20 current interventions which were simply not  
21 adequate in order to make the school an  
22 acceptable choice for current and future  
23 students.

24 This strategy will allow us, however, to  
25 preserve the elements of the former school via

1 I.S.339, that have led to improvement. Many  
2 speakers talked about interventions that have  
3 worked and have been taken, and we would build  
4 on that. What we are trying to do by closing  
5 I.S.339 and opening a new school is to quickly  
6 create a high quality school environment that  
7 the children need to prepare for high school and  
8 college and careers.

9 I will say that schools which have  
10 historically undergone this process have good  
11 track records of shifting the culture of a  
12 school further along toward one that sets high  
13 expectations that supports student learning and  
14 achievement.

15 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Thank you. And the  
16 second question--actually there were a couple of  
17 questions, so, again, these were batched--about  
18 staffing and hiring teachers under this  
19 proposal. So the question is what percentage of  
20 teachers will be rehired? Will there be a new  
21 administration, so questions about the  
22 administration. And I will again invite the  
23 Deputy Chancellor to respond.

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR KATHLEEN GRIMM: Thank  
25 you very much. You know, what we're talking

1 about here is closing--a proposal to close  
2 I.S.339 and open a new school. As I said in my  
3 remarks, we have an application in Albany at the  
4 State Education Department for a turnaround  
5 school. It has not been approved and that's not  
6 a certainty. What we are doing is acting under  
7 section 18D of our contract with the UFT and  
8 there's no set percentage. What's going to  
9 happen if the proposal is accepted is, first of  
10 all, the current principal will remain the  
11 leader of the school. We think that the work  
12 she has done in her short time here is excellent  
13 and we want her to continue that leadership.  
14 Either way, we are open to any comments you  
15 might have in terms of our--of this decision,  
16 but based on what I heard tonight, I think that  
17 might be a popular decision. Anyway, Ms.  
18 Autobridge as the principal will then form a  
19 committee. That committee will be made up of  
20 the school principal, two designees of the UFT  
21 president, and two designees of the chancellor.  
22 It is called the 18D Personnel Committee. And  
23 that committee will look at the teachers who are  
24 currently at the school and they will use--  
25 decide upon what evidence they want to review or

1 what criteria they want to use to determine  
2 which teachers should stay, which teachers are  
3 most aligned with the programs that are going to  
4 be in place and the initiatives and the  
5 interventions that we hope to have here. There  
6 is no set percentage. The only set percentage--  
7 let me finish, please. The only set percentage  
8 is that 50% of the teachers must remain. So we  
9 don't know where that process will come out.

10 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Okay. And then we  
11 have one additional question that we're going to  
12 respond to this evening, and that is what will  
13 happen to the students and what school will they  
14 attend? And I'm going to invite Amanda  
15 Contreras to respond to that question. I'm  
16 sorry. Actually what we need you to do though  
17 is write it on a card. Oh, so as I said, not  
18 all the questions are going to be responded to  
19 tonight. Some of them are going to be responded  
20 to in the analysis of public comment. Okay,  
21 well, let me go through this one, okay? Not  
22 right now. I'm going to go ahead and go on to  
23 the next one. Thank you so much.

24 MS. AMANDA CONTRERAS: Thanks, Jenny. Good  
25 evening, everyone. I'm Amanda. The question

1 was about the students and where they'll  
2 attend school. If the proposal is accepted, any  
3 student who is currently in sixth grade, any  
4 student who is currently in seventh grade, and  
5 any of our students in eighth grade who are  
6 staying for an additional year would  
7 automatically, and will be guaranteed a seat in  
8 the proposed replacement school. And students  
9 who through the middle school choice process  
10 were going to come as sixth graders would come  
11 to the new school.

12 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Okay, thank you,  
13 Amanda. So, as I said, we have responded to a  
14 handful of the questions. I know there are  
15 other questions that were posed we haven't  
16 responded to. I said that at the beginning we  
17 were going to respond to some; others will be  
18 included in the analysis of public comment, all  
19 the questions that have come in through the  
20 phone and e-mail as well, that will be published  
21 on-line and made available to the panel members  
22 prior to their vote. That vote will take place  
23 at a public hearing on April 26<sup>th</sup>, which will be  
24 held at Prospect High School in Brooklyn. So,  
25 again, if additional questions or comments come

1 in, let me give you the phone number and the  
2 e-mail one more time. It's  
3 d09prospoals@schools.nyc.gov, and the phone  
4 number is (212) 374-5159. So I want to thank  
5 everyone for coming. I think we heard some  
6 really important feedback this evening. And the  
7 hearing is officially adjourned.

8 [END 290\_247]

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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.

*Dianna Fortie*

April 2, 2012

Date\_\_\_\_\_