

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

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING**
**Phase Out and Replacement for P.S.
298 Dr. Betty Shabazz - 1/20/12**

1 [START RECORDING]

2 MS. MELISSA HARRIS: Good evening, everyone.
3 My name is Melissa Harris, and I'll be acting as
4 your facilitator for tonight's joint public
5 hearing. This is a joint public hearing of the
6 Department of Education Community Education
7 Council, District 23, and the School Leadership
8 Team to discuss the proposed truncation and
9 replacement of P.S. 298. Tonight's proceedings
10 will be recorded and transcribed.

11 Just as a reminder, public comment, if you
12 wish to participate in public comment, then you
13 should sign up outside of the auditorium. The
14 public comment sign up closes at 6:15. All
15 panel participants were asked to be here no
16 later than 5:30. Now that we have started, if a
17 panel participant arrives late, he or she will
18 be given time to speak at the first opportune
19 moment.

20 There may be elected officials who arrive at
21 different times throughout the evening. If they
22 wish to speak, we will do our best to
23 accommodate them at the first opportune moment.
24 Those who are here at the start of the public
25 comment segment will be asked to speak first.

1 The format of tonight's joint public
2 hearing will include a presentation of the
3 proposal and presentation by the hearing - - ,
4 followed by public comment.

5 Public comments can be no longer than two
6 minutes each. The time will be strictly
7 followed, and speakers will be informed when
8 their designated time has ended. There will be
9 a question and answer period here this evening.

10 Members of the audience, if you have a
11 question, please write your question on a
12 postcard that was supplied at the sign in table
13 when you arrived this evening. While public
14 comments are taking place, staff members will
15 organize the questions into categories and get
16 them ready for the Q&A period this evening.

17 Some questions will be asked directly, and
18 others will be batched under headings in order
19 to avoid repetitiveness. Even though all
20 individual questions will not be addressed in
21 this forum tonight, the answers will be
22 available on the web site prior to the panel
23 meeting. If, at the end of tonight's hearing,
24 you still have questions, we encourage you to
25 direct them to us by calling the number on the

1 bottom of the fact sheet or sending them to us
2 via e-mail to the e-mail address provided on the
3 fact sheet.

4 I would like to now introduce the panel,
5 which has been assembled for this evening's
6 joint public hearing. Tonight we have with us,
7 starting from the right, Natasha Capers of the
8 SLT, Lanetta Jeffers of CEC 23, Superintendent
9 Ainslie Cumberbatch, and Deputy Chancellor Mark
10 Sternberg. I'll now turn the program over to
11 Deputy Chancellor Sternberg.

12 MR. MARK STERNBERG: Thank you, Melissa. -
13 - hear me? Great. Again, my name is Mark
14 Sternberg, Deputy Chancellor for the Division of
15 Portfolio Planning in the New York City
16 Department of Education. I'm here this evening
17 as Chancellor Dennis Walcott's [phonetic]
18 designee to engage here in this joint public
19 hearing, which is a required element of our
20 process to move for a truncation here, and I'm
21 going to briefly again thank you for being here
22 this evening, for your time and attention to
23 this, and share some details of the proposal.
24 Again, this joint public hearing was convened to
25 discuss the proposed grade truncation of P.S.

1 298, the Dr. Betty Shabazz school from a K-8 to
2 a K-5 beginning in the 2012/13 school year, and
3 the proposed opening and collocation of a new
4 middle school with P.S. 298 here in building
5 298, K298, in the 2012/13 school year.

6 I'm going to start by emphasizing a point
7 that we'll come back to, which is that we're
8 very pleased, actually, to be here this evening
9 to make clear to the community, members of the
10 faculty and staff, parents and concerned
11 citizens around and in the 298 community that
12 this school is staying open, and we're very
13 excited about that. We spent the fall months
14 after the release of the elementary progress
15 grades - - the school, and with our teams
16 huddled to review the student performance trends
17 here, and to review other trends at the school.
18 To be candid, I think folks know we ended that
19 conversation with very deep concerns about the
20 school as a whole. What we found when we came
21 here and when we looked at the data were real
22 strengths. We are particularly excited about
23 your new principal, Mr. Dell [phonetic], who's
24 sitting here, and I want to take a moment to
25 welcome and actually thank Mr. Dell for having

1 us here at the school and applaud his work in
2 such a short period of time to have the impact
3 he's had here. So Mr. Dell, thank you for
4 having us. Congratulations on your strides to
5 date.

6 So we are here primarily to share with the
7 community that we are excited that the
8 elementary school here at 298 will stay open.
9 We are excited about the direction of that
10 portion of this school. We're excited about Mr.
11 Dell and the strengths he brings to P.S. 298 and
12 the programing in place to help P.S. 298
13 elementary school be a success.

14 That said, the decision to truncate the
15 school is not an easy one. It is one that we--
16 it is a decision that we do not take lightly--
17 [audio disturbances]. How's that? Is it--how
18 are we doing? Okay. Mic check. You guys can
19 hear me in the back? All right. Good. I'll
20 just hold this together. I think it'll be fine.

21 So it's not a decision we come to lightly,
22 and we're here tonight to explain how we arrived
23 at the decision, to hear your comments, to hear
24 from the SLT and the CEC and to answer questions
25 that you all have.

1 So a few technical notes here, and we'll
2 have some of these to get them on the record
3 before the hearing, P.S. 298 is located here at
4 85 Watkins Street in community school District
5 23 in Brooklyn. It currently serves students in
6 kindergarten through eighth grade.

7 On December 19, 2011, the Department of
8 Education published proposals--two proposals.
9 One to truncate the middle school grades of P.S.
10 298, and a second EIS to open a new middle
11 school to replace it. Under this proposal, P.S.
12 298 would remain open, as I had mentioned and
13 will again, so the elementary grades of P.S. 298
14 will remain open to serve grades K through five.

15 298's performance data indicates some
16 strengths, as I've mentioned and described. It
17 also reveals some struggles, and confirms the
18 Department's assessment that the school will be
19 better able to serve its community focused on
20 building on its strengths at the elementary
21 grades.

22 P.S. 298 - - take a moment to review some of
23 the performance data that we looked at in coming
24 to the decision both to keep the school open and
25 to truncate the middle school - - .

1 P.S. 298 earned an overall F grade on its
2 2010/11 progress report, including grades in
3 student performance, in environment, school
4 environment, and a D grade for student progress.
5 While we see strengths at the elementary grades,
6 as I've mentioned, we see--let's switch mics.

7 When in doubt, - - . So is that better?

8 FEMALE VOICE: Yes, much.

9 MR. STERNBERG: So as I said, we see
10 strengths in the elementary school. What the
11 data reveals are some significant struggles of
12 the middle school. This is especially
13 noticeable when you look at the school's ELA and
14 math scores at the transition from elementary to
15 middle school. So last year, the 2011 ELA
16 scores for students in--here at P.S. 298, the
17 sixth grade scores--sorry, the fifth grade
18 scores were in the 36th percentile, 36.7, which
19 is not something any of us are happy about or
20 satisfied with, but it shows again some signs of
21 capacity. So we went from--last year, we went
22 from 36th percentile in the fifth grade to the
23 13th percentile in English in sixth grade, and
24 then to the sixth percentile in the seventh
25 grade, and then to the ninth percentile in

1 eighth grade. This trend repeats with math.

2 The fifth grade at 298 last year scores in
3 the 41st percentile in math. That dropped to
4 the 21st percentile in the sixth grade, 19th
5 percentile in seventh grade and the 13th
6 percentile in the eighth grade.

7 So these data and conversations here with
8 the school, again, highlighted strengths in the
9 elementary grades and revealed some of these
10 weaknesses in the middle school grades, in the
11 performance of the middle school, led us to the
12 conclusion that the best course of action was to
13 truncate the middle school to allow the school
14 to focus on its genuine strengths, which exist
15 at the elementary school grades, and to allow
16 Mr. Dell and his team to focus their
17 considerable talents on building on those
18 strengths and moving to truncate the middle
19 school grades.

20 I want to point out that in the process of
21 arriving at this decision, the decision to
22 propose the truncation for panel approval, the
23 Department consulted with many individuals in
24 and around the school. We were here to meet the
25 principal, the SLT, the faculty and parents. We

1 met with the superintendent, the network
2 staff, which is represented here this evening by
3 Robert Hernandez and his team. Folks who are
4 experienced educators who are working with the
5 school closely, and we have with their help held
6 a series of community meetings for parents and
7 school staff to solicit feedback.

8 So again, just a few summary notes and
9 process points. P.S. 298 is the only school - -
10 298. In a separate DIS, also posted on
11 September 19, 2011, the Department of Education
12 has proposed to open and collocate a new middle
13 school, 23K423, here at 298, which would serve
14 students in sixth through eighth grade when it
15 reaches full scale in 2014/15.

16 This new middle school, if approved, would
17 admit sixth grade students from within the
18 District 23 middle school choice process through
19 a limited unscreened selection method where
20 there are no applicant screening criteria and
21 admissions priority is based on attending a
22 school information session or fair. 23K423 is
23 this new proposed middle school, which will
24 replace the existing middle school grades of
25 K298, would provide a new middle school option

1 for all District 23 families and replace the
2 seats lost by the proposed truncation of P.S.
3 298's middle school grades.

4 23K423, the proposed new school, would be
5 collocated here at K298 with P.S. 298 as the
6 middle school grades phase out - - with grades K
7 through five at P.S. 298. So let me talk a
8 little bit about students in the impacted grades
9 if this proposal were to be approved by the
10 panel before we get to presentations from the
11 SLT and CEC and move to public comment.

12 First of all, this is a proposal by the
13 Chancellor. It goes to the Panel for
14 Educational Policy and will be voted on February
15 9th at a meeting that starts at 6:00 p.m. at
16 Brooklyn Tech High School. If the proposal is
17 approved, the middle school grades will be
18 truncated gradually over the next several years
19 and will no longer admit new sixth grade
20 students after the end of this school year.
21 Current sixth and seventh grade students who
22 meet promotional standards at the end of the
23 school year, and current sixth and eighth grade
24 students who do not meet promotional standards
25 at the end of the school year will be supported

1 at P.S. 298 as they progress toward completion
2 of middle school and toward the transition of -
3 - .

4 Current eighth grade students who meet their
5 promotional requirements at the end of the
6 school year will participate--in fact, are
7 participating presently in the high school
8 choice process, the New York City Department of
9 Education citywide high school choice process, a
10 process that is already underway.

11 P.S. 298 would not serve middle school
12 grades after June 2014. At the end of the
13 '13/14 school year, when the school is scheduled
14 to no longer serve middle school grades, any
15 P.S. 298 middle school students who do not meet
16 promotional standards will be placed at another
17 District 23 middle school or at a middle school
18 in the District in which the student resides.

19 If the proposal to open 23K423, that's the
20 new school that would be housed here if the
21 proposal's approved. If that proposal's
22 approved, all students will have the opportunity
23 to submit an application to the new school. And
24 again, the new middle school is projected to
25 enroll approximately 85 to 95 sixth grade

1 students for the 2012/13 school year, that's
2 next school year. Since P.S. 298 currently
3 serves approximately 42 fifth grade students,
4 there will absolutely be sufficient seats at the
5 new middle school to accommodate all current
6 P.S. 298 fifth graders who choose to submit
7 their application for middle school enrollment
8 and other students across the District who may
9 be interested in this new school as well.

10 So that ends my summary of the proposal.
11 Again, I want to thank Principal Dell for
12 welcoming us this evening. I thank everybody
13 for joining us. I look forward to addressing
14 your concerns.

15 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. We'll now have
16 comments from Ms. Capers of the SLT.

17 MS. NATASHA CAPERS: Good evening. I'm
18 Natasha Capers, chairperson of the SLT. Also, I
19 am the vice president of the PA. I just want to
20 say basically that while I do agree with the
21 decision not to close P.S. 298, I do have
22 reservations about the proposed truncation and -
23 - a new school into the building. It is beyond
24 me how bringing in a new school will serve our
25 children positively. Unlike other schools, P.S.

1 298 has not been given a chance to turn
2 around. We've recently had a new infusion of
3 blood. We have two new administrators. We have
4 a wonderful new principal and a wonderful new
5 AP, and they have not been given a chance to
6 turn P.S. 298 around and show positive change
7 within the climate and the school that - - the
8 children and the involvement of the parents, nor
9 have they been able to show how they can
10 implement positive change in the grades.

11 Nor do I believe that the DOE has taken any
12 other ideas besides closing and truncation into
13 account. So those are basically our only
14 options. They're going to close us or they're
15 going to truncate, and I don't believe that some
16 other ideas that may be a little bit out of the
17 box for the DOE have been considered, such as
18 not having a middle school at all in our
19 building.

20 [Applause]

21 MS. CAPERS: Parents, it's - - some students
22 and teachers - - staff have continuously said
23 that they don't feel as if middle schoolers
24 belong in a school with pre-Kers.

25 [Applause]

1 MS. CAPERS: Some of our students are as
2 young as three years old in a building with some
3 16 year old students that - - . No one's
4 considered to take out the middle school and to
5 allow our--to allow us to stand alone as P.S.
6 298 and to grow as a pre-K through five. That
7 was not considered. Nor was it considered to
8 bring in another elementary school so that at
9 least the other school that came in would have a
10 similar demographic and age to the children who
11 are already going to stay here.

12 I believe this is because the city has vowed
13 to open 50 new middle schools. I'm not saying
14 that's true. I'm just saying that's - - . So
15 they put a new middle school in our building on
16 the backs of some of our - - . Just an
17 observation.

18 I agree that our past performance has not
19 been good. - - P.S. 298, it saddens me to see
20 us go from an A school to an F. That saddens
21 me, and that does not need defending. I'm not
22 going to defend us getting an F, but what I will
23 say is that unlike other schools who have
24 consistently failed over and over and over, who
25 have consistently received Cs and Ds and have

1 been given a chance to turn their schools
2 around, P.S. 298 was never given that
3 opportunity.

4 [Applause]

5 MS. CAPERS: I don't know why. I won't try
6 to come up with a reason why, but it doesn't - -
7 . What matters is that their decisions affect
8 us and they affect our children, and they're not
9 affecting us positively. We have seen the
10 truncation and phasing out and closing of
11 schools does not work. We've seen it in our
12 district. Schools - - . Used to be another
13 public school. They closed. They turned it
14 into two schools, and elementary and a middle
15 school. This year, they have now decided to
16 phase out that elementary school. So what they
17 are currently doing on the past ten years of
18 mayor control does not work. - - does not work,
19 and it will not work - - .

20 [Applause]

21 MS. CAPERS: I propose that the DOE take
22 another look at P.S. 298 and not just as numbers
23 on a sheet of paper. But in the eyes and the
24 faces of the children of - - and how this
25 decision will affect them. Let's be real.

1 There's - - for the children who are going to
2 be coming into the building, so we're still
3 going to have the children who are causing
4 problems that came from across the street.
5 They're still going to be coming here. And what
6 is the new school going to be able to do? What
7 resources are they going to be able to have to
8 be able to service those children in a positive
9 way that the DOE refused to give to P.S. 298?

10 So these decisions upset us all, and this
11 particular decision is not going to affect P.S.
12 298 in a positive way. Thank you.

13 [Applause]

14 MS. HARRIS: Ms. Jeffers from CEC?

15 MS. ANETTA JEFFERS: Good evening, parents
16 and community. My name is Lanetta Jeffers, and
17 I'm a CEC member District 23. I'm also cochair
18 to the SLT team and treasurer of the P.S. 298
19 Parents' Association. Tonight I'm speaking on
20 behalf of our CEC president, Charles - - . He
21 agrees with the Chancellor's proposal not to
22 phase out P.S. 298, and he is satisfied with the
23 decision to the truncation.

24 [Muttering]

25 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, Ms. Jeffers. We

1 have now concluded--we have now concluded the
2 panel presentations, and will move onto the
3 public comment portion of this evening's agenda.
4 You are reminded that public comment must be
5 limited to two minutes. Time will be kept, and
6 you will be signaled when you have 30 seconds
7 remaining and when your time is up.

8 The mic is over on that side right here.
9 First names, Janice Thompson followed by
10 Elizabeth Taylor, followed by Ms. Barnes.

11 MS. JANICE THOMPSON: Good evening committee
12 members, staff and parents. My questions are
13 with the students that are coming into the new
14 school, will they be bussed here, or will they
15 be from the District, where they currently live?
16 The population that is here, and the - -
17 conditions will remain the same. What new
18 security measures or actions will be put in
19 place for the new school that will be coming
20 here to address the - - that we have? And also,
21 what systems of support, if any, will - -
22 existing P.S. 298? How are they going to help
23 us - - to - - ourself? What resources will be
24 put in place so we can be - - or affect a change
25 on the - - currently? This is - - coming in.

1 Will they be required to take a test to attend
2 the truncation or the new school that will then
3 coming in? What criteria will you put in place
4 for them to be selected?

5 And please, please, please, provide some
6 sort of support for P.S. 298 - - to be fair.

7 [Applause]

8 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, - - . Elizabeth
9 Taylor? Elizabeth Taylor has gone? Ms. Barnes?

10 MS. BARNES: Good evening teachers, parents,
11 everyone who's - - here this evening on this sad
12 occasion today. I've worked here now for over
13 nine years, and through the time that I've
14 worked here, this school has always had teachers
15 who fought for their students, who worked hard
16 to give the work to their students and to teach
17 above the level of rigor for their students.

18 Upon us having a different administration to Mr.
19 Dell, we had an A on our report card. And when
20 the other administration was here, and our
21 scores continually began to go down, and we as
22 staff members and parents asked them to seek out
23 help in the situation, constantly talking about
24 what can be done, this is not working, we need
25 help, please help us, our cries were not heard.

1 Suddenly, all of a sudden, we get a report
2 card. It's C and D. Then it's a C and an F.
3 Then the last report card prior to this one, Mr.
4 Dill coming, I think it was a C and two Fs, but
5 prior to that, we had an A, B and always an
6 upstanding report card.

7 Now that all of a sudden as it was going
8 downhill, I know you guys had to be watching
9 because it doesn't happen overnight. So I feel
10 that looking in that window, when this was
11 happening, we were crying and no one heard our
12 cries. Now all of a sudden, we're in a hole.
13 The building is on fire, burning down to the
14 ground, and - - truncation. I just feel that we
15 need other resources and other opportunities and
16 a chance because to me, it sounds like the vote
17 is in. I don't think we need to wait for
18 February - - . I feel like it's already
19 happened, and I think that that's not really
20 giving us a fair chance to really show what we
21 are made of at P.S. 298, the Dr. Betty Shabazz
22 Preparatory School for the Arts.

23 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, Ms. Barnes. Ms.
24 Anderson, followed by Ms. - - Donaldson. Ms.
25 Anderson? Ms. Donaldson, are you on this side?

1 Thank you.

2 After Ms. Donaldson is Lloyd Gilkes.

3 MS. ANDERSON: Good evening, everyone. This
4 is supposed to be a meeting of a proposed
5 truncation, but it already seems, which is why a
6 lot of people are not here, that the decision
7 has already been made. That's why people that--
8 it's like why both coming? The decision's
9 already been made. We already have a name for
10 the school. We already know that they're coming
11 to the building. That's the attitude already.
12 And as people have said already, we did have an
13 A. We got an F this last year, and we were
14 crying. We were calling the District. Parents
15 were calling the District. All the things that
16 was going on in this building, we didn't get any
17 assistance. Now we got an F and got a new
18 principal. We just got a new one in September.
19 This is January. Already the decision has been
20 made as to what was going to happen to the
21 school. We haven't been given a chance, an
22 opportunity, to show that we can do better. I
23 say that that's very unfair. It's unfair to the
24 parents. It's unfair to the children, and it's
25 unfair to the staff because we have worked hard.

1 We have the same staff that got that A.

2 [Applause]

3 MS. ANDERSON: - - it starts from the top,
4 and when we were screaming about the chaos that
5 was going on in this building, nothing was done.
6 Nothing was done.

7 [Applause]

8 MS. DONALDSON: Thank you. I was told I had
9 two minutes. I'm going to only have two
10 minutes. I talk very fast. Okay? I knew it
11 wasn't going to be - - . Everybody looked at me
12 when I first came, and they said, oh, the
13 auditorium is empty. It's really a done deal.
14 What Bloomberg is doing, let's just tell the
15 truth. He - - schools to make money. If I
16 could put ten schools inside one building, I'm
17 going to do that. He started from - - .

18 [Yelling] In the school where I worked at,
19 there's three charter schools. The charter
20 schools is coming down and pushing us out. - -
21 , there's a charter school. - - and said
22 that's - - that's a poor community. You all
23 don't care about your community. It's like a
24 done deal.

25 - - over there. That wasn't a good deal.

1 Nobody came in and said that the children
2 needed assistance, but yet you tell me that it's
3 a done deal. You telling me I got two minutes,
4 but Bloomberg got all the time in the world. -
5 - community. - - when they say it - - I'm by
6 myself, but you better watch out for Bloomberg
7 because your children - - the sheep comes like a
8 wolf, and it's coming to devour your community.

9 [Applause]

10 MS. HARRIS: Mr. Lloyd Gilkes? Lloyd
11 Gilkes? Oh, Gilkes, I'm sorry. Followed by
12 Diane Jennings.

13 MR. LLOYD GILKES: Good evening. I just
14 want to make a few observations. The statistics
15 that were quoted about the failure of the - - of
16 the school, I think they did not include or they
17 did not reveal a couple things. For example,
18 they did not reveal the fact that we've had
19 drastic budgeting cuts over recent years. They
20 did not reveal the fact that due to those budget
21 cuts, we've had loss of staff, so we've had some
22 chaotic situations sometimes when, for example,
23 in the lunch room, we have - - . We have the
24 reading scores going down because for example,
25 our reading programs have to pull out of this

1 building. Our coaches, the support teachers,
2 mathematics and literacy, those positions have
3 been abandoned. As America, - - .

4 Teachers do not have the sources. For
5 example, in this building, we have not had for
6 the last two years, a photocopy machine. The
7 support teachers. We've had situations right
8 now, we don't have a library. We've not had a
9 functioning library in years, and even though we
10 have the figures that show that the teachers are
11 failing, the school is failing, the children are
12 not learning, etc., the fact remains that
13 nobody's mentioning the point that we have no
14 money in our budget, and these are the spinoffs.
15 So now we're going to take - - of the situation,
16 - - . I'm sorry, but you're not addressing the
17 real issues here tonight.

18 [Applause]

19 MS. DIANE JENNINGS: Good evening, everyone.
20 My name is Diane Jennings. I'm - - Grandma
21 Jennings, as I'm in here all the time. I was
22 reading this paperwork that was given out at the
23 front desk, and I asked myself, did I miss a
24 meeting? I try to come to tall the meetings
25 about what's going on in the school, and I'm

1 seeing a paragraph where it says that P.S. 298
2 failed because they didn't have the ability to
3 make up the scores or whatever. How much time
4 were they given? Is a timeframe given? Did I
5 miss that? Did I miss it?

6 They got the F in June, and - - January,
7 it's finished. It's finished. I don't
8 understand that. What resources were these
9 people given, these teachers given to turn that
10 F around?

11 CROWD: Nothing.

12 MS. JENNINGS: What support was given, what
13 money was given to these teachers to turn that F
14 around? What did I miss? I don't understand
15 it. I don't understand it at all, and I feel
16 bad for my grandson here. I'm trying to keep
17 him here, but this is crazy. This is absolutely
18 crazy. Our children have to suffer like this
19 because of grown folks' craziness. Grown folks.
20 It's not the kids. Grown folks. I don't
21 understand it. Thank you.

22 [Applause]

23 [Yelling]

24 MS. HARRIS: Mr. Ulysses Mason?

25 MR. ULYSSES MASON: Good evening, family.

1 Listen, I'm an advocate for my people and my
2 community. Listen, you want to talk about - -
3 talk about our neighborhood, so we know - - down
4 here, all the politicians came out, but after a
5 couple of days when the - - is calling, so did
6 they. Now, you all coming in here talking about
7 closing our schools. We have a gang problem in
8 this neighborhood. You all are going to take -
9 - teenagers and mix them with the - - so that
10 you all can pervert them, too? Listen, what we
11 need in this neighborhood is for you all to stop
12 putting in outsiders to teach us other child--
13 telling us how to teach our own. You need to
14 give us the funds and let us teach our own.

15 You all - - sitting up at the school, they
16 didn't talk to none of these kids that's going
17 to the - - . You've got the - - neighborhood
18 and you've got - - standing on the corners since
19 that lady got killed. There ain't nobody giving
20 us the resources, but you all - - to take our
21 kids to the - - on Martin Luther King's
22 birthday, and - - do with us.

23 You all don't care nothing about us. If you
24 did, you would be listening to - - babies. Your
25 time is up.

1 [Applause]

2 MS. HARRIS: Excuse me, I can't read this
3 one number right here, but did you receive a
4 number nine?

5 [Yelling]

6 MS. SADIE SAMUELS: Good evening, everybody.
7 My name is--get it right, you all. Sadie
8 Samuels. I'm the director for the after school
9 program, which is right across the street. Now,
10 we were here I think in October for a meeting
11 regarding the closing of the school, and at the
12 meeting, the officials that are sitting up here,
13 I think there was a superintendent - - ? They
14 said at that meeting that they was going to take
15 back all the concerns that the parents in the
16 community had, take it back and try to see what
17 they could do about it. So apparently they took
18 it back, but they didn't take back the real
19 story. They didn't take back the real story.

20 - - try to run at the school, and the new
21 principal Dr. Dell, is a new principal in the
22 school who was trying with the staff to turn
23 this school around. But if you never give him a
24 chance to turn it around, then you're talking
25 from both sides of your mouth. But see, some of

1 us have allowed the mayor to get away with
2 this stuff. We have allowed the mayor to take
3 control of our children's education. And trust
4 me, most officials, - - sitting up here, we have
5 to - - , no, you'll not. When you're closing
6 the schools in our community, you're not
7 concerned about the most vulnerable children,
8 the most vulnerable - - in our community.

9 Now, you tell me I got 30 seconds, I got
10 more than 30 seconds because I got the floor
11 right here. I'm going to say this. In October
12 when we were here, we talked about resources for
13 this school. We talked about laptops that the
14 kids needed. We talked about the SMART boards.
15 People who were here should remember this. We
16 talked about the library. They don't have a
17 library. They don't have art. They don't have
18 music. Where's the - - for this school? These
19 are the resources. Teachers - - and pencils and
20 notebooks for the children? Where are the
21 resources that the parents and the teachers
22 need? Where are the resources that the teachers
23 need to teach the children correctly? We don't
24 have that, so the message for the mayor, is
25 we're not going to stand for this - - into our

1 school.

2 This is P.S. 298, - - . No, we got to take
3 the name down. So take that back to the mayor.
4 That you got to do something. You work with the
5 principal and his staff to bring in the
6 necessary tools so they can educate the children
7 correctly. It's a shame that in America, that
8 in America, - - educate children, - - school.
9 What in the hell is wrong with you people? What
10 is wrong with you? How dare you close schools
11 of children? - - is wrong when you close a
12 school for a children. - - people. Look at
13 these children because our school - - community.
14 I want to know where you all get the gall to
15 find yourself - - ?

16 How many school districts have charter
17 schools that's not in the black and Latino
18 community? - - check it out. Check it out, you
19 all. Check it out. - - necessary - - why in
20 the hell you want to - - [yelling] got a library
21 - - where your own kids be, and don't blame the
22 teachers. They're doing the best in a job they
23 can do. - - school to protect them. When
24 there's shootings going on, where the hell is
25 the damn mayor? [Yelling] - - assistant

1 principal, she's always outside that door.
2 Always outside that door. The teachers come
3 inside to protect their children that they're
4 trying to teach. They cannot do that. They
5 don't have the necessary - - . I don't have no
6 two minutes. I don't have no 30 seconds. I
7 still got the mic.

8 [Yelling from audience, drowns out speaker]

9 [Chanting]

10 MS. RONALDA MCMILLEN: Good evening. I'm
11 standing before you probably as the newest staff
12 member of the Betty Shabazz community. But I'm
13 standing for students, I'm standing for my
14 students' community, and I'm standing for my
15 administration. What I do want to say is we
16 need to remember we're educating students. This
17 is not a business.

18 [Yelling from crowd]

19 MS. MCMILLAN: I came to a school that was
20 closed. At one point, we have five schools in
21 our building, so we had five principals, ten
22 Assistant Principals, but we still had class
23 sizes of 30 to 32 students. I had one class
24 where I had 38 students - - and 29 seats in my
25 classroom.

1 That's not acceptable. That's just not
2 acceptable, and this is a new administration,
3 and Mr. Dell, Ms. Anderson, Ms. Miles has been
4 here for a while. And they're here trying to
5 support our students, but they need the
6 opportunity to turn this school around. Change
7 does not happen overnight. This school did not
8 get into the situation that it's in overnight.
9 It's not going to get out of it overnight. They
10 need that opportunity. The students need an
11 opportunity to adapt to the changes that are
12 doing on at Betty Shabazz. Everybody needs time
13 to adapt. In my opinion, if the DOE has enough
14 money to have two sets of principals, two sets
15 of teachers, two sets of - - , why can they not
16 find the cash to give this school more support
17 so that we can have a Dean, so that we can have
18 a - - , so that we can have a projector and a
19 laptop in our room instead of just a SMART board
20 sitting there, looking pretty? We need to come
21 and we need to support our kids and do what we
22 need to do for our children and put the money
23 where the money needs to be put. Thank you.

24 [Applause]

25 [Yelling]

1 MS. HARRIS: Number 11, Sharon Johnson?

2 MS. SHARON JOHNSON: Good evening,
3 everybody. - - in the building. I came here
4 when I saw the school - - , and I looked at the
5 - - through this years and different things that
6 happened. I said, wow, how did this happen?
7 Unfortunately, I've been in two other schools
8 that were closed down, and I looked at the
9 politics, I looked at the business and
10 everything else that was going on. In one of
11 the schools I was in, they came in after the
12 school had got a passing grade, progress report,
13 everything okay. They came in, and they said,
14 oh, we have bad news for you. We want - - . We
15 changed the rule book. We changed the criteria.
16 So as a result they said, oh, we're going to be
17 putting so many more schools in your building,
18 and you're going to be phasing out.

19 So the fact that I see what's happening in
20 so many of our communities, my question is what
21 is really the bigger picture and the bigger
22 vision in whose eyes?

23 I know that part of Bloomberg's legacy is to
24 change the whole system of - - , to set up
25 another - - , but - - if he really got the

1 chance, why - - ? Because - - resources - -
2 to come in before the school comes in, they
3 cause - - fix up the building, put all the money
4 in to do what they have to do to prepare for
5 that school. Then they bring a new school in,
6 into an already shared - - instable situation
7 already. Now you're bringing even more friction
8 because I see principals and administrators in
9 the building fighting over space, fighting over
10 resources, fighting over turf, fighting over
11 territory, and - - issue bigger than the kids,
12 that it stems from the adults who - - because
13 you cannot tell - - . How do you facilitate?
14 How do you have shared resources?

15 You have taken and now made schools into
16 campuses. So what happens when you have
17 campuses? That's having more than one school,
18 two, three schools in the building. So now you
19 get more money per capita, per child. Now you
20 have so many more administrators. Rather than
21 fix what is broken, you're investing so much
22 money. This new school's not on the radar for
23 three years as far as testing, whatever else, so
24 they can pull their school up, whatever they
25 have to do.

1 After that, they have their own criteria
2 for children that remain in the school. So when
3 children have a behavior problem, what do you
4 do? You put them over to the existing
5 struggling schools that are already having
6 problems, and you transfer those bad kids back
7 into that struggling school. So now you
8 compound the existing problem that's already
9 going on. We need to look at the bigger picture
10 of what's happening. Why are you coming into
11 the black communities, Latino communities,
12 taking over the school? Who's really
13 benefiting?

14 I know Bloomberg has the agenda with the
15 charter schools, so I'm going to - - charter
16 school system, so the more - - you can bring
17 under that system--and by the way, we haven't
18 even mentioned the issue of special needs
19 children, and am a special needs teacher. I
20 have been in a school where - - say, oh, we
21 don't have any room for those special needs
22 children. We can't take children - - why? It's
23 going to affect this story? It's going to
24 affect their system, so we need to look at the
25 bigger picture.

1 Rather than closing Dr. Betty Shabazz,
2 what does this community need? You don't change
3 nothing by bringing in another middle school.
4 You'll have the same problem, the same safety
5 issues and everything else. The only thing
6 you'll have is another school in an already
7 struggling building as it compounding more
8 problems.

9 If you're going to give more resources and
10 the laptops and everything else they need while
11 you phase out this school and say, hey, - - this
12 in because once you start the truncation process
13 and phasing out process, I don't care what - - ,
14 they still won't have a dean. They still don't
15 have other resources, laptops, computers, SMART
16 Boards, and you're telling us to take these into
17 the 21st Century? Guess what?

18 Anything that you pull out of our hat to do
19 and giving us lemons, and we're making lemonade
20 with it. Let's face the real issue. He has a
21 budget. He can't take and bring laptops and all
22 these things into his school. The budget is not
23 allowing it, so we need to look at the bigger
24 picture here.

25 [Yelling]

1 MS. JOHNSON: I have a question. What is
2 the real agenda here?

3 [Yelling]

4 MS. HARRIS: Thank you, everyone. We've now
5 concluded--

6 [Applause]

7 MS. HARRIS: We've now concluded the public
8 comment portion of the agenda. We will now
9 begin the Q&A period. Remember, there will be
10 some individual questions and others that have
11 been bucketed into categories where we will have
12 representative questions asked. Any questions
13 not answered here tonight will be answered on
14 our web site. If you have additional questions
15 at the conclusion of tonight's proceedings, we
16 ask that you direct them to us at the phone
17 number or e-mail address found on the back of
18 the fact sheet. Deputy Chancellor Sternberg?

19 MR. STERNBERG: Thank you, Melissa. I want
20 to thank everybody for your input this evening.
21 A lot of passionate--a considerable display of
22 passion for P.S. 298, which is what we saw when
23 we came to explore the student - - that gave us
24 pause. That passion and that drive is what we
25 saw and what informed our decision to in fact

1 keep P.S. 298 open, and we're excited to do
2 that.

3 So a number of questions were asked this
4 evening. A number of questions were submitted
5 on note cards, and I'm going to break protocol a
6 little bit and try to answer questions I heard
7 this evening. The protocols we agreed to with
8 this on SLT and CEC were to answer questions on
9 the note cards, but I'm going to do my best to
10 see if I can get to all the questions I heard,
11 and I'm happy to stick around after the panel
12 this evening to continue the conversation and
13 talk with folks, as are other members of my
14 team.

15 So I think we're going to agree on some
16 things this evening, and we're going to disagree
17 on some things, and I acknowledge that. The
18 purpose of answering your questions is not to
19 change your minds because I don't think that's
20 going to happen this evening. But what I want
21 to do and what I hope I'll have an opportunity
22 to do in the next few minutes is to simply
23 address the questions I heard and offer our
24 thinking. And again, I can feel the passion in
25 this room and understand the folks here have a

1 deep invest in the school, and clearly in the
2 middle school grades here at the school. So
3 again, not anticipating that I'll change minds
4 this evening, but do hope I'll have an
5 opportunity to explain our point of view.

6 Let me start with some things I think we
7 agree about, if I may. First of all, I think
8 everybody here agrees that we have the right
9 principal at P.S. 298 right now, and that is Mr.
10 Dell. We agree on that. It's good to have
11 things to agree on. We agree that it is a good
12 thing that P.S. 298 is keeping its doors open
13 and continue to serve students. I think we
14 agree on that.

15 We also agree that there are many strengths
16 here. We've heard this evening from concerned
17 parents. We've heard from members of the
18 faculty. We've heard from community advocates,
19 folks who run programs across the street in the
20 neighborhood, folks who have been at the school
21 for many years, folks who have just arrived,
22 teachers and council members and community
23 activists. So we know tonight, we've seen it,
24 we knew it when we came here to visit the
25 school, when we did a deeper investigation of

1 the performance trends over the course of the
2 fall months. We know that there are strengths
3 here. We are very pleased and excited to
4 continue to invest in those strengths and to
5 build on those strengths with Mr. Dell and his
6 leadership, with the faculty here. And we see
7 those things. I cited some of those that show
8 up in the performance data. We see real promise
9 in the elementary grades.

10 So we are pleased--

11 [Yelling]

12 MR. STERNBERG: I heard. I heard, and what
13 I said earlier is that I'm not planning on
14 convincing anybody why we're sitting here or why
15 we're proposing a truncation, but what I hope is
16 we can have a respectful moment here. I have
17 been listening respectfully to the comments made
18 and preparing some comments back and want to
19 maintain the respectful tone that's been
20 represented throughout the meeting.

21 So we do think this is a time to reinvest in
22 the elementary grades, to double down on those
23 strengths here. We think we have the right
24 leader, and we are committed to the ongoing
25 success of the elementary grades here at the

1 school.

2 So on these things we agree. We're going to
3 disagree on a few other things. The Department,
4 as you'll note in the form of this proposal,
5 subject to panel approval in February, the
6 Department thinks that truncation is the best
7 course of action.

8 We do not view this as a punishment for P.S.
9 298. We think that this is an important and
10 timely intervention for this school that will
11 assist Mr. Dell and his team and the faculty
12 here on focusing on the strengths and building
13 on the strengths. It has been noted that the
14 Chancellor has closed a series of schools across
15 the city. It is a strategy that has worked, and
16 it is a strategy that the Department is willing
17 to pursue, but it is a hard decision to make,
18 and it is the toughest decision to make. It's
19 one that we do not take lightly, and in this
20 instance, it is not the decision we made because
21 of the strengths that I've described.

22 One of the things I'll disagree on, I can
23 tell from the tone this evening, that this is
24 perceived as a punishment for the school, and we
25 view it as something quite the contrary. We do

1 it as an intervention that will help this
2 faculty and help this leadership team focus on
3 the strengths that exist here, build on those
4 strengths and continue to improve the outcomes
5 for students here in the elementary grades.

6 FEMALE VOICE: We beg to differ, sir.

7 MR. STERNBERG: I assume you will. I know
8 that you will, and I appreciate the respectful
9 tone that we've maintained throughout the
10 evening. Again, I don't pretend to be here to
11 convince you otherwise. I'm here to explain our
12 point of view respectfully, and I have deep
13 respect for members of Mr. Dell, for members of
14 the SLT and CEC, and for everyone who's spoken
15 this evening. I understand your position, and I
16 dearly hope this evening that I can convince you
17 to at least understand our point of view.

18 I shared the performance data that leads us
19 to this decision, the data of fifth graders at
20 the school, which in last school year, was in
21 the 40s in math and 30s in ELA and dropped in
22 the sixth grade in half, by 50% and continued to
23 decline through the eighth grade. So that is
24 the performance, the student performance that
25 leads us to believe that now is the right time

1 to invest, to double down on our investment
2 and the real strengths that appear at the
3 elementary grades.

4 I want to note that a lot has been made of
5 the progress report scores, and I want to
6 describe how those progress report scores are
7 arrived at in the context of conversations this
8 evening about school budgets and supports. So
9 the way that the Department analyzes and
10 produces scores for schools across the city with
11 the progress reports is pretty straight forward.
12 What we do is--what we do is we analyze the
13 student makeup of a school, the student needs
14 and the demographic, the achievement profile of
15 the students, and we categorize the 1,700
16 schools across the city, all five boroughs, into
17 peer groups of 40. So we find the 40 schools
18 that have a student population that is most in
19 common, and we call that group a peer group.

20 So P.S. 298 is now at or near the very
21 bottom of its peer group, these other 40
22 schools. Here's what we know, the other 39
23 schools in this peer index serve a demographic
24 population, a family of students that are
25 extremely similar to that here at P.S. 298.

1 Those 39 other schools receive the same
2 resources, the same funding, and we acknowledge
3 that over the last few years--and I'm a former
4 principal, so I know how hard it is--we
5 acknowledge that resources have been declining.
6 In some instances, those resources have declined
7 because they've declined for the city and for
8 all other schools, including the 39 other
9 schools in the peer index of P.S. 298.

10 So while--in other instances, those
11 resources have declined because student
12 enrollment has declined. We have a system in
13 New York City where the money followed the
14 student, so if student enrollment goes from 100
15 students to 105 students, then a school will
16 receive five times more the per person
17 allocation than it did the previous year.
18 Otherwise, if the enrollment declined, the
19 school would receive that much less per person
20 allocation because of the decrease in student
21 enrollment. Principal Dell knows what I'm
22 talking about. This happens every year, so this
23 is how principals manage - - .

24 So we know that the 39 other schools had a
25 very similar student group, had identical

1 funding, but produced a different set of
2 results, especially at the middle school. So we
3 feel an obligation to pursue this intervention.
4 We feel that because of the strengths we see at
5 the elementary school, we feel that because of
6 the relative performance of other schools
7 serving the same students with the same
8 resources and the better outcomes they are
9 receiving.

10 A number of comments were made this evening
11 about a campus model, and the dynamics on a
12 campus, and I answer these questions as, again,
13 a former principal. I was a principal of a high
14 school, the - - campus in the Bronx. That was a
15 campus of one school that upon its phase out now
16 houses six schools, and I will concede the
17 following. There are moments when having six
18 schools on a campus is complicated. There are
19 moments where it can be difficult, but the
20 results on that campus today in the last eight
21 years, graduation rates have almost quadrupled
22 from a 19% graduation rate to a nearly 80%
23 graduation rate. Same students, same funding,
24 marvelous results.

25 The six principals on the campus meet weekly

1 on a building council. I can say over the
2 course of our time together, we bickered, there
3 was discord at times, there were disagreements,
4 but that group of principals were people I was
5 proud to call colleagues. Every week when we
6 met, we sorted through our differences, and we
7 did what was right and best for that campus, and
8 I'm sure, given what I know about Mr. Dell and
9 his leadership, that is exactly what will happen
10 here at P.S. 298.

11 That the new school will be welcomed here if
12 it is approved, and the principals will work
13 closely together to make for a successful
14 collocation. I will add that with the help of
15 people like Mr. Hernandez and a number of - -
16 superintendent, and other folks who work in the
17 Department of Education, resources are available
18 to help principals sharing space work together
19 and resolve their differences. New York City is
20 fortunate to have 1,700 schools, over 700--

21 [Crosstalk]

22 MR. STERNBERG: Over 700 schools across the
23 city share space. A number of comments this
24 evening have been made about charter schools.
25 The mayor and the chancellor--

1 [Crosstalk]

2 MR. STERNBERG: The mayor and the chancellor
3 have made a deep investment in the new school
4 strategy, and that investment has produced
5 remarkable gains. Remarkable gains.

6 [Yelling]

7 MR. STERNBERG: - - about 100--I appreciate
8 your respect.

9 FEMALE VOICE: The same funding you're
10 giving these charter schools should be given to
11 the other schools, especially DOE. We need that
12 kind of help here.

13 MR. STERNBERG: I understand your question,
14 and I'd like to respond to it. I understand
15 your question. So let me be clear. Of the 500
16 schools that have started, 131 have been
17 charter, 369 have been non-charter. The new
18 school that would come to this campus happens to
19 not be a charter school, happens to be a
20 traditional middle school, District school that
21 would receive, like charter schools, the same
22 per people allocation, the same amount of
23 resources that P.S. 298 receives.

24 [Yelling]

25 MR. STERNBERG: So a number of questions

1 were asked about where the students will come
2 from and the criteria for enrollment if this new
3 school is approved. - - whether new students
4 will be bussed in, whether tests will be
5 required, what criteria will be used to enroll
6 new students. So let me be clear. This will be
7 a new school, and students will have to apply to
8 the new school, but this--

9 [Yelling]

10 MR. STERNBERG: This will be a limited
11 unscreened school, - - question.

12 [Crosstalk]

13 FEMALE VOICE: What happens with the special
14 ed. students, if you don't mind my asking?

15 MR. STERNBERG: This will be a limited
16 unscreened school, so any--there are no--

17 [Yelling]

18 MS. HARRIS: Excuse me.

19 [Yelling]

20 MS. HARRIS: Excuse me.

21 [Crosstalk]

22 MR. STERNBERG: So I'm going to ask a staff
23 member to talk to you to answer your question.
24 It's impossible to answer right now.

25 [Yelling]

1 MR. STERNBERG: Limited unscreened schools
2 are open to all students, students with special
3 needs. Any student who applies is eligible to
4 attend.

5 [Yelling]

6 [Crosstalk]

7 MR. STERNBERG: Yes, ma'am? That is not
8 true.

9 [Yelling]

10 [Crosstalk]

11 MR. STERNBERG: The school is open to all -
12 - .

13 [Yelling]

14 [Crosstalk]

15 [Yelling]

16 MR. STERNBERG: I apologize - - . The new
17 school is open to all students. Yes, ma'am.

18 [Yelling]

19 MR. STERNBERG: - - back to you.

20 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. We have now
21 concluded the Q&A portion of tonight's agenda.
22 We've heard many comments here this evening, and
23 we appreciate your feedback and contributions to
24 tonight's hearing. All comments that were
25 received this evening, we will share the

1 information to the Panel on Educational
2 Policy, which will have its hearing on Thursday,
3 February 9, 2012 at Brooklyn Tech High School to
4 vote on this proposal. We ask that you please
5 use the phone number or web site at the bottom
6 of the fact sheet if you have any other
7 questions or concerns.

8 Thank you all for coming. This joint public
9 hearing is officially adjourned. Good night.

10 [END RECORDING]

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

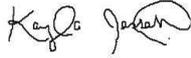
24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

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

Signature



Date January 25, 2012

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