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

**P.S. 156 Laurelton**

**2/28/13**

**5:30 P.M.**

1 [START 333997\_BACKUP.MP3]

2 MR. GREGG BETHEIL: This is a joint public  
3 hearing of the Department of Education Community  
4 Education Council and School Leadership Team to  
5 discuss the proposed grade truncation and  
6 replacement of P.S. 156 Laurelton Middle School,  
7 29Q156, beginning in 2013 to 2014.

8 Tonight's proceedings will be recorded and  
9 transcribed. Before we begin the hearing, we  
10 ask that anybody who wishes to speak during the  
11 public comment portion of the evening, please  
12 sign up in the table out in the lobby. It's  
13 about 6:20 right now. We'll keep sign up open  
14 for about 15 minutes until 6:35 when sign up  
15 will end.

16 If you have a question that you want to  
17 address during the evening, please grab one of  
18 the index cards that were out on the table  
19 outside. You can write your questions on the  
20 index card and give them to the volunteers  
21 sitting at the table outside.

22 Only people who have signed up to speak will  
23 be allowed to participate in the public comment  
24 portion of the period. So, again, if you do  
25 wish to speak, please make sure you add your

1 name to the list outside.

2 All panel participants joining me up here  
3 were asked to be here no later than 5:30 p.m.  
4 and we thank you for your patience as we got  
5 here. Now that we've started, if any additional  
6 panel participants arrive late, he or she will  
7 be given time to speak at the first opportune  
8 moment. We do want to be respectful of  
9 everybody's time. There may be elected  
10 officials who arrive at different times  
11 throughout the evening. If they wish to speak,  
12 we'll do our best to accommodate them at the  
13 first opportune moment.

14 Those who are here at the start of the  
15 public comment period will be asked to speak  
16 first. At this moment, we don't have any  
17 elected officials who have signed up to speak.  
18 As you will see, we do have a full agenda as  
19 described outside.

20 The format for tonight's joint public  
21 hearing will include a presentation of the  
22 proposal and presentations by hearing  
23 participants joining me here on the dais,  
24 followed by public comment. Again, speakers  
25 should have already signed up at the table in

1 the lobby. Public comments can be no longer  
2 than two minutes each. The time will be  
3 strictly followed and speakers will be informed  
4 when their designated time has ended. There  
5 will also be a question and answer period.

6 Members of the audience, if you have a  
7 question, please write the questions on the  
8 index cards that were supplied at the table when  
9 you arrived. While the public comments are  
10 taking place, staff members will organize the  
11 questions into categories and get them ready for  
12 the question and answer period. Some questions  
13 will be asked directly from the index cards and  
14 others will be batched together under heading to  
15 avoid repetitiveness.

16 Even though all individual questions will  
17 not be addressed at the forum tonight, answers  
18 to questions will be posted on the Department of  
19 Education website prior to the Panel on  
20 Educational Policy meeting. If, at the end of  
21 the hearing, you still have questions, we  
22 encourage you to direct them to us by calling  
23 the phone number on the bottom of the fact sheet  
24 or sending them to us via email, to the email  
25 address provided at the bottom of the fact

1 sheet. That email address is D29 proposals at  
2 schools dot NYC dot gov, and that phone number  
3 is 212-374-7621.

4 Now, I'd like to introduce the panel, which  
5 has been assembled for this evening's joint  
6 public hearing. To my left, I'm joined by  
7 District 29 CEC member Cheryl Rochelle, and I'm  
8 also joined by Superintendent Lenon Murray. To  
9 my right, we're joined by SLT members Kimberly  
10 Esteva and Beverly Dobson, as well as Principal  
11 Little and Deputy Chancellor Shael Suransky.

12 We do not have any elected officials with us  
13 at this point in the evening. So, I'll now turn  
14 the program over to Deputy Chancellor Suransky,  
15 who will present the proposal.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR SHAEL SURANSKY: Good  
17 evening, everyone. I want to thank you for  
18 coming out this evening and for being here to  
19 support your school community. The joint public  
20 hearing has been convened to discuss a proposal  
21 to truncate and replace the middle school grades  
22 at P.S. 156 Laurelton and this is not a decision  
23 that we take lightly. It's a difficult one and  
24 it's important, as we discuss it this evening,  
25 to explain the reason why we've made this

1 proposal. We examine a lot of different  
2 factors and look at the student performance and  
3 talk to members of the school community about  
4 what is the most appropriate intervention when  
5 students are struggling at a school, and I think  
6 we all count on our schools to provide a high  
7 quality education for every single one of our  
8 students.

9         And when a school is not succeeding with all  
10 the students, it's important that we take action  
11 in order to correct that. I will also want to  
12 acknowledge that, in any instance like this,  
13 where some students are not succeeding, there  
14 also are students that are doing well and there  
15 are hard working teachers and administrators and  
16 families who are involved and supporting the  
17 school.

18         But, I think in order to find the right  
19 solution, we also need to consider what's going  
20 to work best to turn around the performance for  
21 kids who aren't doing well. And that's really  
22 what this proposal is about.

23         In addition to the proposal around the  
24 truncation, we're also proposing to replace the  
25 middle school grades with a new middle school

1 that would share the school building. As you  
2 know, P.S. 156 currently serves students in  
3 kindergarten through 8th grade and for the  
4 elementary school grades, K through 5, it's a  
5 zoned elementary school.

6 The students who are in the middle school,  
7 6, 7 and 8th, there's priority admissions for  
8 students coming out of the 5th grade of the  
9 school.

10 On the 22nd of January, the Department put  
11 forward this proposal and I wanted just to  
12 discuss some of the reasons, in terms of student  
13 performance that I mentioned earlier. In 11-12,  
14 only 33 % of the middle school students were  
15 performing on grade level in English Language  
16 Arts. This is 8 % below the performance of the  
17 elementary school students in the same school.  
18 And only 31 % of the students were performing on  
19 grade level at Math, which is 10 points below  
20 the elementary students in the same school.

21 In general, over the past few years, the  
22 elementary school students have performed much  
23 better than the middle school students. Given  
24 this consistent underperformance of the middle  
25 school grades, the DOE believes that a gradual

1 truncation replacement of the middle school  
2 grades at P.S. 156 will address this challenge  
3 and also allow 156 to focus on supporting and  
4 improving outcomes in that elementary grades.

5 This proposal also allows for a new school  
6 option in this community that will have the  
7 potential to better serve the middle school  
8 students in this building. In a separate impact  
9 statement, the DOE has proposed to co-locate  
10 that new middle school here in the building and,  
11 if approved, that school will served grades 6  
12 through 8 and will be open to District 29  
13 students and will offer priority to students  
14 from 156 in the next school year only.

15 So, students who are coming out of 156 next  
16 year will have priority and, after that, it will  
17 be just anyone in District 29.

18 Before we move to the public comment  
19 section, I just want to explain how this will  
20 impact the current students at P.S. 156. If  
21 this proposal is approved, the school would no  
22 longer admit new 6th grade students into 156.  
23 They would go into the new school that will be  
24 phasing in. So, that means that next year the  
25 school will serve the elementary grades and,

1 then, 7th and 8th grade.

2 And, then, the following year, it will just  
3 have 8th grade and, in the 2014 school year, it  
4 will stop serving middle school students. And  
5 during that same time, the new middle school  
6 would be building up grade by grade. So,  
7 starting with just a 6th grade, then a 6th and a  
8 7th grade and, then, by the third year, 6th, 7th  
9 and 8th.

10 Current elementary school students remain at  
11 P.S. 156 and just continue normally and current  
12 5th grade students, as I mentioned before, will  
13 have the opportunity to graduate this year and  
14 they probably have already made applications for  
15 middle school, but they will also have the  
16 opportunity in the second round of the middle  
17 school choice process this Spring to apply to  
18 the new middle school in this building if this  
19 proposal is approved.

20 Current 6th and 7th grade students will move  
21 on to the next grade next September and they'll  
22 be able to remain at the school until they  
23 graduate in 8th grade, assuming they meet all  
24 their requirements for promotion.

25 Current 8th grade students will have the

1 opportunity to graduate from 156 at the end of  
2 this year and should have already applied for  
3 high school, as part of the citywide high school  
4 admissions process.

5 Thank you in advance for those of you who  
6 will share feedback this evening. Let me pass  
7 it back to you, Gregg. Also, at the end of the  
8 public testimony, there will be an opportunity  
9 for folks to write questions on cards and I'll  
10 come back and say a few words in response to  
11 those questions in conclusion.

12 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, Shael. Our next  
13 present will be Ms. Rochelle from the Community  
14 Educational Council.

15 MS. CHERYL ROCHELLE: Good evening. The  
16 Community Educational Council supports the  
17 collation--I'm sorry, co-location, thank you--of  
18 the new middle school with P.S. 156. We know  
19 that parents always had a concern with the  
20 mingling of the elementary and junior high, but  
21 we encouraged parents to volunteer in the  
22 schools. This way, they can help separate all  
23 the grades. We also have been hearing, from  
24 parents, that they need more options for middle  
25 schools in our district and adding a new middle

1 school to the school will give the parents  
2 more options for their students.

3 The CEC 29 believes the two schools will  
4 help to engage our parents, our students and our  
5 teachers to rise to the challenge of the common  
6 core learning standards and give our children a  
7 better education, which will prepare them to be  
8 college and career ready. With vision,  
9 commitment and focus, we will have a successful  
10 student, which will result in successful  
11 schools. Thank you.

12 And, unfortunately, I can't stay for the  
13 whole meeting because the CEC has their meeting  
14 tonight and we, actually, on our agenda is to  
15 vote for middle school choice. So, I will be  
16 leaving shortly. Thank you.

17 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, Ms. Rochelle for  
18 your comments. Next, we'll turn to comments  
19 from the School Leadership Team and, then, we'll  
20 begin with Principal Little.

21 PRINCIPAL NOREEN LITTLE: Good evening,  
22 Deputy Chancellor Suransky, Superintendent  
23 Murray, Cluster CFN 205 members. To our  
24 parents, staff, I see some students and other  
25 guests, I want to thank everyone for being here

1 this evening. My name is Noreen Little and I  
2 am Principal of P.S. M.S. 156, the Laurelton  
3 school.

4 I would like to take a few minutes of your  
5 time to speak to you about this school and how  
6 important it is to this community and why I  
7 think that the proposed plan for truncation  
8 would help to bring this school back to the  
9 viable school that it once was in this  
10 community.

11 First, I want to thank the Department of  
12 Education for proposing grade truncation over  
13 the possibility of phase out and/or closure, and  
14 for giving us a chance to show that we can make  
15 a difference in the lives of the students in  
16 this community. Also, allowing the Laurelton  
17 school to grow or regrow and become the pride of  
18 the community it once was.

19 As for K through 8, for the last seven  
20 years, we have struggled with our academic  
21 achievement and this is not something that we  
22 are proud of. But, I think that allowing us to  
23 focus on the kindergarten through grade 5 grade  
24 band is beneficial for two reasons.

25 First, it would allow us to focus our energy

1 on improving teaching and learning for those  
2 in the grade bands that we will be working with  
3 and, also, the creation of the standalone middle  
4 school will give our students the opportunity to  
5 experience what many of the parents and students  
6 have requested, the establishing of a separate  
7 community for our adolescents.

8 As a school community, we are prepared to do  
9 everything necessary to improve our school's  
10 academic standing. The administrators, my  
11 Assistant Principal and I, our teachers, our  
12 parents and our students are ready and poised to  
13 do the work needed to improve our school.

14 We acknowledge that the common core learning  
15 standards will ask all schools to increase rigor  
16 and challenge our children to become college and  
17 career ready. With your help, this is possible  
18 for the Laurelton community and P.S. M.S. 156.  
19 We thank you for your consideration.

20 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, Ms. Little.  
21 Possibly that Ms. Esteva also had a comment?

22 MS. KIMBERLY ESTEVA: Good evening,  
23 everyone. I'm the current PTA President here at  
24 P.S. M.S. 156 and I would like to thank all of  
25 you for coming out to support us and to be a

1 viable voice in the decision that's being  
2 made, or the proposal that's being put on the  
3 table, for our school.

4 The parent body here at P.S. M.S. 156 is  
5 also in agreement with the truncation portion of  
6 the proposal, but we are not in agreement with  
7 the co-location portion meaning we understand  
8 that, factually and statistically, there was a  
9 problem with the grades and different safety  
10 issues and so on and so forth, as you read in  
11 the report card that we received.

12 And it, basically, pointed to the junior  
13 high school portion of the school. So, we  
14 understand that that needs to be removed, so  
15 that the K through 5 can be better prepared and  
16 have a different setting, as far as its social  
17 achievements and socialization.

18 Co-locating a new school here, it's not the  
19 answer. Because of the fact that when you have  
20 a new school coming in, they're coming in with  
21 new money. They're coming with new books.  
22 They're coming in with new programs. Then, you  
23 have the host school. You have the children  
24 who, in K through 5, who also desire to have  
25 those new programs and desire to have those new

1 books and desire to have the things that they  
2 are going to hear about, not so much see because  
3 I understand that the plan is to try to keep the  
4 children segregated, the two schools segregated,  
5 except for when there's a common area that must  
6 be used, such as cafeteria, gymnasium or the  
7 auditorium.

8 But, children comingle outside and, of  
9 course, the children that are going to be  
10 attending the junior high school are going to be  
11 excited. I mean they have a new school. They  
12 have new stuff. And so, therefore, they're  
13 going to conversate with the children that are  
14 attending P.S. 156. And they're going to start  
15 seeing that there's a difference in what they  
16 have versus what we have. And that's called  
17 disparity.

18 And when you have disparity, it causes an  
19 impact socially, it causes an impact  
20 emotionally, it causes an impact educationally,  
21 academically. Because, believe it or not, we,  
22 as adults, we can look at a situation and see it  
23 logically. A child is not going to look at it  
24 the way we see it. They're going to look at the  
25 fact that the other children have things that

1 they don't have and they might start feeling,  
2 well, why aren't I good enough to have those  
3 things? Why doesn't our principal get those  
4 things for us? Why don't our teachers take us  
5 to those places? Why don't we have these  
6 programs?

7         And that's where I draw the line. Because I  
8 don't believe that our children should have to  
9 experience any emotion--any more, but like any  
10 more emotional stress. Because just as the  
11 administration here, just as the parents here  
12 have experienced stress because of the current  
13 academic situation, the children are  
14 experiencing it because we are telling you and  
15 you're going home and you're telling your  
16 children, Listen, you have to do better. You  
17 have to pass this test. You have to study more.  
18 They feel the pressure also.

19         And I don't think that they need an added  
20 pressure or an added stressor on their life by  
21 seeing that other children have things that are  
22 better than what they have. Thank you.

23         MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, Mrs. Esteva. Ms.  
24 Dobson, I also had your name on this speaker  
25 list for the public comment portion. You're

1 welcome to make your comment now, if you like.  
2 And while she's coming to the podium, I would  
3 want to acknowledge from Congressman Gregory  
4 Meeks' office, Nathaniel Hezekiah has joined us,  
5 as Community Liaison. Thank you for being here  
6 this evening.

7 MS. BEVERLY DOBSON: Good evening. Welcome,  
8 everyone, teachers, community people, council  
9 people, everybody. My name is Beverly Dobson  
10 and I'm member--Chairperson of the SLT. The SLT  
11 members, School Leadership Team, we are all in  
12 favor of truncation, as opposed to closing.

13 Because when we found out that we were in  
14 option of closing and, then, they found out we  
15 could be truncated, we prefer that, as opposed  
16 to closing.

17 Now, we know Ms. Esteva echoed some of the  
18 disadvantages of co-locations and I hear her  
19 sentiments and I know that we, teachers, we are  
20 thinking about that as well. But, we hope to  
21 work together with the new school to build a  
22 better community in the area, build a better  
23 school in the community.

24 Because, and that they, the key people in  
25 this whole thing are the students and we have to

1 look for them to see what are we going to do  
2 to help them to get better. And we, as  
3 teachers, parents, community members,  
4 administrators, everyone, we have to work  
5 together to build this school back to the way it  
6 was. And I think, with this new process, I  
7 think it can be done.

8 We have some concerns, yes. We're  
9 wondering, Well, what are we going to do?  
10 What's going to happen to P.S. 156 K to 5? Are  
11 we going to get the support from the people  
12 here? Are we going to get your help? Are you  
13 going to help us to--you know, help us get  
14 started to build and get better and get  
15 stronger?

16 Because we know we can do it, but we need  
17 the support and we hope that you guys won't let  
18 us down. You'll be here for us as we go through  
19 this process. Our teachers are very dedicated.  
20 They're all out here. They sit in the audience.  
21 We come out, we stay late. We do all kinds of  
22 things because we have our input. We want to  
23 make sure that the students that we teach  
24 succeed. No one wants to make them fail. We  
25 try our best and we go beyond and above to make

1 sure that these students get where they need  
2 to get. We stay late. We come early. We work  
3 on our lunch time. We do everything we can to  
4 help them.

5 And, if you don't believe us, come and see.  
6 But, as with any school, you have challenges.  
7 But, we hope that we can overcome these  
8 challenges by working together in the new school  
9 and former old school, P.S. 156 and the  
10 community.

11 We need your help. Come and volunteer.  
12 Give us some things that we need. If we need  
13 more technology, bring it to us. We need that,  
14 because the building--you know, we need that.

15 So, help us. And I thank you and I hope you  
16 guys will really help us. Thank you.

17 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, Ms. Dobson. Okay,  
18 we've now concluded the formal presentations and  
19 we'll begin to ask folks to come to the  
20 microphone over here for the public comment. We  
21 have closed the sign up outside. I would remind  
22 anybody, if you had any questions that you  
23 wanted answered during the Q and A period,  
24 please make sure you add them to the index cards  
25 outside. We only have about seven other

1 speakers. So, we'll move pretty quickly  
2 through that and to the Q and A part.

3 The speakers that come up, you're reminded  
4 that the public comment must be limited to two  
5 minutes per speaker. Time will be kept, and  
6 we'll signal you when you have 30 seconds  
7 remaining and when your time is up. We only  
8 have a few speakers tonight. So, we'll  
9 certainly let you finish your thought and won't  
10 cut you off mid sentence.

11 As a reminder, the DOE staff at the front of  
12 the auditorium will be keeping time and they'll  
13 hold up a sign for you when you have 30 seconds  
14 left and when your time is up. I want to make  
15 sure that everybody's voices are heard this  
16 evening. So, please be sensitive to those that  
17 come after you with the two minute time limit.  
18 But, again, we'll make sure that everybody is  
19 heard.

20 I now call speakers one to five up to the  
21 microphone. Just to acknowledge that Mrs.  
22 Esteva was signed up as number one, but has  
23 already spoken. Thank you. Next will be Mr.  
24 Pierre Jenkins, number two, followed by number  
25 three, Michelle Klass [phonetic], followed by

1 number four, Wendy Williams. And we'll start  
2 with them. Is Mr. Jenkins here?

3 MR. PIERRE JENKINS: Yes, sir. One second.  
4 - - I'm going to my - - .

5 MR. BETHEIL: We only have a few speakers.  
6 So, it's not a problem.

7 MR. JENKINS: I'm going to do it on my own.

8 MR. BETHEIL: Okay. Is speaker number  
9 three, Michelle Klass here?

10 MS. MICHELLE KLASS: My question is--I have  
11 two questions. But, one of them is Are the  
12 students, the 5th grade students currently  
13 attending P.S. 156, but is at risk academically,  
14 how will they be considered for the new school?

15 MR. BETHEIL: It's not a Q and A.

16 MS. KLASS: Oh, it's not a question--

17 MR. BETHEIL: - - public comment.

18 MS. KLASS: And, also, can I ask a question?

19 MR. BETHEIL: Michelle, we won't answer the  
20 questions right at this minute as we finish the  
21 comment. But, there is a question and answer  
22 period. And so, we'll make sure that, if you  
23 put it on the card, we'll make sure to answer  
24 them. But, you're still welcome to make a  
25 statement.

1 MS. KLASS: Okay. I understand.

2 MR. BETHEIL: Okay. Next, I will call Wendy  
3 Williams, number four.

4 MS. WENDY WILLIAMS: Good evening. I'm VP  
5 of the PTA, Vice President here at the school.  
6 My main concern is separating the school K  
7 through 5 in a junior high school. I never was  
8 for one for junior high school, because I feel,  
9 when I was growing up, I did K to 6 in  
10 elementary school, 7 and 8 in junior high school  
11 and I did 9 to 12 in high school. These kids  
12 are not going to have no experience in moving  
13 on. They're at a junior high school and a  
14 elementary school settings. They develop  
15 physically, but their minds are not developing  
16 mentally. How will you develop these kids  
17 that's coming in junior high school to prepare  
18 them for high school?

19 Because these kids are very, very immature  
20 getting ready to go for high school. High  
21 school is going to suck them in. They don't  
22 have no experience, but being around babies. We  
23 can't keep 11-year old, 12-year olds around  
24 kindergarteners and you expect them to act a  
25 certain way. They're around babies. They're

1 around kids. How do you expect a 13-year old  
2 to act when they're around kindergarteners?  
3 Take them out of the school, leave K through 5,  
4 find some place else to put 7th and 8th. Let  
5 them grow up. That's my comment.

6 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, Ms. Williams. Our  
7 next - - is called--I just want to make sure  
8 Darlene White was signed up at number six, but  
9 had crossed her name out? Speaker number seven  
10 is Dorothy Morris.

11 MS. DOROTHY MORRIS: Good evening. On  
12 behalf of CSA and our President, Ernie Logan,  
13 I'm here to say, Congratulations to P.S. 156  
14 community for overcoming their threat of  
15 closing. This is not a perfect resolution, but  
16 it's still a triumph.

17 You know CSA has consistently challenged the  
18 DOE on school closures. The latest 26 schools  
19 destined for the scrap heap don't fit any  
20 particular pattern, especially 156 did not. The  
21 DOE seems to be playing Russian roulette with  
22 our schools. Fortunately, you were taken out of  
23 the game and your school should be relieved and  
24 we are so happy for the whole P.S. 156 school  
25 community.

1           The DOE talked about best practices.  
2 Well, this is one of their worst practices and  
3 it often devastates children and families. It  
4 usually takes aim at students who have already  
5 suffered setbacks and humiliations from previous  
6 school closings. Many of them have turned away  
7 from the city's new schools for reasons of poor  
8 academic performance or for coming from families  
9 without any clout.

10           Your fight against this kind of ending and I  
11 hope you know that CSA did the same behind the  
12 scenes and so, once again, I want to say that we  
13 are extremely happy and proud of you.

14           MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, Ms. Morris.  
15 Speaker number eight is Jennifer Williams.

16           MS. JENNIFER WILLIAMS: Good evening. Good  
17 evening to the panel. Good evening, parents, my  
18 colleagues. I'm Jennifer Williams, the UFT  
19 Chapter Chair. Thank you, first thing, for  
20 saving our school.

21           But, with that being said, I need to make  
22 sure we understand that a truncation is a new  
23 start. It's a new beginning. We have looked  
24 back and say there was a lot of mistakes made  
25 and we're ready to correct them.

1           Now that we are ready to correct them, the  
2 staff is committed. The staff of P.S. 156, my  
3 colleagues, these are people who, when they come  
4 into P.S. 156, a community school, a district  
5 school, a neighborhood school, they stay here  
6 for life. They come in as student teachers and  
7 they retire from this building.

8           A commitment that carries over. I remember  
9 saying to Ms. Little, at one point, You know  
10 what, principals come and go. Administrations  
11 come and go. Chancellors come and go. Mayors  
12 come and go. And, you know what remains  
13 constant? The teachers at P.S. 156. We are  
14 committed to our students. We are dedicated to  
15 do what we have to do. But, we're asking you,  
16 at this point, things happen and we did not have  
17 the resources. Are you ready to give that to us  
18 now? Are you ready to make us equipped? Yes,  
19 we're glad that you saved us. We're glad for  
20 the truncation. We're even more happy to know  
21 it's a community school coming in. A DOE school  
22 we can, quite likely, show our resources and  
23 build on it together.

24           But, at the same time, please don't forget  
25 156 for 289. Thank you.

1 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, Ms. Williams.  
2 Our final speaker is Speaker number nine, Napril  
3 [phonetic] Foster.

4 MS. NAPRIL FOSTER: Good evening. Good  
5 evening, everybody. I just want to echo what a  
6 lot of the same things that she said, which is  
7 Can we get money for our teachers? I kind of  
8 feel like why is it that you have a new school  
9 that comes in and they can get money for  
10 everything and, then, our teachers that have  
11 been here, that are committed, can't get the  
12 money that they need to have the programs?

13 If I go to other schools around the city,  
14 would I find that they would have a lot more  
15 resources than we would here? And, it just  
16 seems unfair.

17 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you for the comments. I  
18 just want to make sure that everybody who was  
19 holding a number had a chance to speak.

20 We'll now begin the question and answer  
21 period. Remember, there are some individual  
22 questions and others have been bucketed into  
23 categories. Any question that's not answered  
24 here tonight will be answered on the Department  
25 of Education website.

1           And, again, I'll remind everybody, if you  
2 have additional questions at the conclusion of  
3 tonight's proceedings, we ask that you direct  
4 them to us via phone or email. The phone and  
5 the addresses are at the bottom of the fact  
6 sheet. But, again, the email address is D29  
7 proposals at schools dot nyc dot gov or by phone  
8 at 212-374-7621. With that, I'll turn the  
9 microphone back over to the Deputy Chancellor,  
10 who will address some of the questions.

11           DEPUTY CHANCELLOR SURANSKY: Thank you. And  
12 let me thank you again for your comments and the  
13 questions that have been submitted.

14           So, let me just try to answer the questions  
15 one by one. There was a question that was  
16 raised regarding the impact of the proposal and  
17 current 156 students. Let me just restate that,  
18 in case anyone missed it.

19           So, elementary school students in grades K  
20 through 4 continue at 156 and 5th graders go on  
21 after they graduate and can apply to middle  
22 school. And, for the next school year, those  
23 5th graders will also have priority to attend  
24 the new middle school that's in this building.

25           Someone else had asked, Is that true also

1 for at risk students? And, yes, any student  
2 will be able to attend. This is not going to be  
3 a school that has an academic screen for  
4 academic--you don't have to have a specific  
5 score in order to get in.

6 For the middle school kids now, they will be  
7 supported at 156 as they progress towards  
8 graduation and 8th grade students are in the  
9 process, or have already applied for high  
10 school.

11 One other question, in terms of what's the  
12 process for selecting the teachers for the new  
13 school. So, there will be a hiring committee  
14 that considers teachers who want to apply. And  
15 there is a right for teachers who are currently  
16 middle school teachers in this school to apply,  
17 and those qualified teachers will be considered  
18 as part of that process. Then, other teachers  
19 from other places can also apply.

20 Another question that was asked is When will  
21 students be notified of their acceptance into  
22 the new middle school. I don't know if we have  
23 anyone who knows the exact dates on the middle  
24 school admissions process. I don't know it for  
25 District 29, but it generally happens in the

1 Spring of this year and we can post the answer  
2 in the details, unless there's someone who  
3 already knows the dates. We'll find out and get  
4 it for you.

5       Okay. Will the new school has the same  
6 Principal, staff and administrators? So, there  
7 will be a new Principal of the new school, and  
8 that new Principal is, as I mentioned before,  
9 will hire new teachers and it'll start with a  
10 small group, because it'll just be one grade the  
11 first year. And, then, the second year will be  
12 two grades and the third year, it'll be three  
13 grades.

14       What will be different, in terms of the  
15 educational approach, we will have--if this  
16 proposal is approved, we will have an  
17 information available about the new school, so  
18 parents who are interested in considering it can  
19 talk with the school leader and hear about the  
20 vision for the school.

21       And I think that one of the things that  
22 we've seen, as new schools start, is it's very  
23 powerful when you sort of organize a team of  
24 teachers that have all signed up to kind of go  
25 along with that vision of that new school

1 Principal, because then, they're working very  
2 closely together to realize that vision and  
3 there's an ability.

4 When it's just a middle school, instead of a  
5 K-8, to really think about, Well, what's  
6 different about middle school kids and how do we  
7 create supports that are specific to those  
8 students?

9 Another question that came up is Can we  
10 consider a pre-K for this building? That's not  
11 an answer I can give right now. But, I'll refer  
12 to folks who work on pre-K and we can get back  
13 to you on that.

14 Another question is This school is  
15 considered low performing. How do you define  
16 the low performing and how did the school get to  
17 this point?

18 So, each year, we issue a progress report  
19 where we give schools a grade, A, B, C, D or F.  
20 And, so, this school had a D progress report  
21 grade and only about 30 % of its middle school  
22 students--just over 30 %--are performing on  
23 grade level. And so, that's well below the  
24 citywide average and what we'd like to see for  
25 the school, overall, as it improves is for it to

1 get to an A or B on its progress report and,  
2 at least, have 50 to 60 % at minimum of its  
3 students performing at grade level.

4       Ideally, you want to get to 100 % for a  
5 time, but you have to take that step by step.  
6 There was some questions raised by the speakers.  
7 One of the concerns that I heard was around is  
8 there going to be a disparity in the resources  
9 between the new school and the current school?  
10 And one good thing this school year, because the  
11 curriculum is changing, we are offering all  
12 school the opportunity to buy new books for  
13 English and Math curriculum.

14       It's something that both the elementary  
15 school and the middle school will have the  
16 opportunity to do. And so, I don't think, at  
17 least on the books and the curriculum and the  
18 textbooks, you'll have that disparity. I also  
19 think that, with younger kids, they're used to  
20 seeing that things are a little different for  
21 their older brothers and sisters or older  
22 students above them and they look forward to  
23 getting to that level.

24       And we'll work hard, though, I think and the  
25 school communities will need to work hard to

1 make sure that kids understand what it is that  
2 is different between the two school and why and  
3 to create a rich set of learning experiences for  
4 kids in both schools.

5 Another question that was raised was around  
6 the support for the existing school and I think  
7 we have members of the support team and the  
8 Superintendent here tonight who are committed to  
9 helping P.S. 156 to improve. It's great to see  
10 so many teachers here and to hear the unified  
11 voice of the school community that there's a  
12 desire to improve and we will work closely with  
13 you on that goal.

14 And the reason why we decided to phase out  
15 the whole school, but to do this truncation  
16 proposal is that, when we visited and when we  
17 talked to people in the school community, we  
18 realized that there's a lot of potential here.  
19 And that this is a school that can improve and  
20 turn around.

21 Okay. So, when a school is struggling,  
22 there is a lot of reasons for it, and I think  
23 that one of the challenges that we always look  
24 at is What is the connection going on each day  
25 between teachers and kids in the classrooms?

1 And our kids engaged--when you look at their  
2 assignments, are they actually connecting with  
3 what they're working on in their classroom to  
4 the real world? Are they connecting it to the  
5 expectations that the state has set?

6 And, sometimes, it means that there needs to  
7 be some work to build the curriculum and make it  
8 stronger, to create more support services for  
9 students who may come in with special needs, and  
10 to bring the staff together and really look  
11 closely at the work that kids are producing and  
12 talk about how do we change what we're teaching  
13 in order to improve the quality of what's  
14 happening.

15 And that's the kind of improvement process  
16 that's allowed a lot of schools to turn around  
17 and I think it gets easier when the school is  
18 smaller and when it's possible to really focus  
19 from a place of strength. And so, that's part  
20 of the proposal that we've put forth tonight.

21 So, let me close there and, again, thank you  
22 for sharing your views this evening and we're  
23 hopeful that this is the beginning of a new  
24 chapter here in this building.

25 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. We've heard many

1 significant comments this evening and  
2 appreciate the questions. We do appreciate the  
3 feedback and the contributions to the hearing  
4 from both the panel participants, the staff, the  
5 families and the community members that are  
6 here. The information that was shared here  
7 tonight will be shared with the Panel on  
8 Educational Policy. They will have their  
9 hearing on March 11 at Brooklyn Technical High  
10 School, which is at 29 Fort Greene Place in  
11 Brooklyn to vote on this proposal.

12         Again, public comment can be submitted  
13 through email or by phone until March 10 at 6:00  
14 p.m. You may submit that feedback via phone by  
15 calling 212-374-7621 or in writing via email at  
16 D29 proposals at schools dot nyc dot gov. This  
17 contact information is also included at the  
18 bottom of the fact sheets that are still  
19 available in the lobby. Thank you all for  
20 coming this evening. This joint public hearing  
21 is officially adjourned.

22             [END 333997\_BACKUP.MP3]

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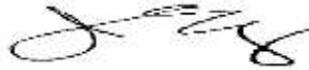
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C E R T I F I C A T E

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. J. J.", is centered on the page.

Date March 3, 2013