

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**
**William Cullen Bryant High School -
4/3/12**

1 [START 290_225.MP3]

2 MS. ANNA BALASH: - -. Would everybody
3 please stand for the National Anthem?

4 [Background noise]

5 MS. BALASH: Thank you very much - -. Okay.
6 I would like to welcome you all who gathered
7 here to this very important board meeting
8 between the Department of Education and this
9 Community Education Council District 30 - -.
10 I'm so proud of everyone - - William Cullen
11 Bryant High School. The speaker list will - -
12 our moderator. She will call names so that
13 everyone has a chance to speak, all right? So
14 I'm going to turn this over to - - will be Isaac
15 Carmignani, Co-President of the CEC.

16 MR. ISAAC CARMIGNANI: Thank you, Anna. My
17 name is Isaac Carmignani, Co-President at CEC
18 30. - - this is your - -, okay? You are the
19 community, and volunteer in the community. - -
20 ultimately made by the Department of Education
21 and - -.

22 MS. JENNY SOBELMAN: Good evening, - -. I
23 appreciate - -. So, as Isaac said, my name is
24 Jenny Sobelman, and I will be facilitating the -
25 -. - - for the Department of Education,

1 Community Education Council 30 - - about the
 2 proposed closure William Cullen Bryant High
 3 School. I also wanted to make sure - -. So let
 4 me quickly run through the agenda. So for those
 5 of you who - - for about 15 more minutes. Each
 6 person who signed up will get a chance to speak.
 7 - -. We have allotted 15 minutes per person,
 8 and I'm going to also - -. - - question and
 9 answer. So if you're interested in posing a
 10 question, let me know - -. Also, some questions
 11 may not - -. So what will do is - -. And also
 12 - - proposals - -. And the phone number is
 13 (212) 374-7621, so - -. So let me quickly
 14 introduce - -.

15 MALE VOICE 1: Good evening, and I am very,
 16 very proud to serve our - -. I graduated from
 17 Bryant High School in 1987. And it is one of
 18 the greatest joys - - to represent my high
 19 school 25 years later - - high school, okay? I
 20 want to make it very clear. The Department of
 21 Education has go to know this is not a - -
 22 school. This is a school where success happens
 23 every single day. And - - William C. Bryant
 24 High School is not just because - -. The reason
 25 William C. Bryant is still open is because all

1 of us - - are here today - -. Every single
2 day, lots of success stories happen in this
3 school. Every single day, our dedicated
4 teachers, some of - - are still here to teach -
5 - in the class. They're good teachers, they're
6 dedicated teachers, they are dedicated to - -
7 high school. And they are making a difference.
8 Bryant High School has so many good things
9 happening. There are more - - in Bryant High
10 School graduating and going on to college than
11 in any other high school in Queens, many - -. -
12 - is very, very strong, and the percentage that
13 is graduating - - college is going up every
14 single year. Ending the life of Bryant High
15 School would be like striking a blow to a part
16 of this community and to thousands of people.
17 There is no way, no way they're closing this
18 school down on April 22nd. We will not - -
19 school today. How in the world can we expect
20 young people to learn? On April 22nd, the
21 Department of Education says the school is - -
22 years no longer exists - -. This school has
23 elected officials like myself. I have given
24 over \$200,000 in the last few years - - Bryant
25 High School. - -. We care deeply about our

1 investment in this school. We need - - Bryant
2 High School. We should redouble our efforts and
3 increase our support for Bryant High School, and
4 it will do all the things that we all want it to
5 every single day. This is too important for the
6 future of these young people, young people - -.
7 Any year that is lost, which they'll never get
8 back in the educational lives of these young
9 people that they're never going to get back.
10 Young people and students at Bryant High School
11 should not be caught in the middle of a
12 political war that is going on - -. Because
13 young people, the children of immigrants, the
14 children of working, middle-class people just
15 like myself and others here in the second row
16 here, we believe that all of those young people
17 are learning every single day to succeed with
18 the help of their teachers. There is no way
19 that we should fire over half of the teachers at
20 Bryant High School on April 22nd. There is no
21 way that that would be for the benefit of young
22 people, for the benefit of students, that would
23 not encourage more students at Bryant High
24 School to graduate in four years. That would
25 curb the graduation rate; I believe that with

1 all of my heart, all of my heart. So I want to
2 say to all of you, thank you for standing up for
3 Bryant High School and fighting - -. For we
4 have great community spirit. There are so many
5 success stories that are sitting here in this
6 audience today, so many wonderful things that
7 will happen in the future. I want to thank
8 everybody here, including the SLT and the CEC,
9 the voices of the community for being here
10 fighting for Bryant High School. And I want
11 every single person here to know that I will
12 never stop fighting for Bryant High School - -.
13 I am proud to be Bryant High School, and - -
14 graduated, and I will always be Bryant High
15 School. - - every single one of you. Thank you
16 very much. Keep Bryant High School open.

17 MS. BALASH: Thank you. Thank you very
18 much. - - elected officials, we have State
19 Senator - -.

20 MALE VOICE 2: Thank you. I wanted to
21 strongly state my opposition to any plans to
22 close Bryant High School. This school needs to
23 remain open. We've heard - - amongst the three
24 elected officials that represent this area. All
25 are products of the local public school systems.

1 Two of them are from Bryant, the other from
2 Long Island City, which is also on the list
3 that's being considered for closure and also
4 should not be closed. - - from us in two weeks
5 and Long Island City. But the three of us were
6 able to succeed in life because there were
7 people at these schools that cared for us, that
8 nurtured us, and that gave us the tools we
9 needed to succeed. A lot of those people are
10 still here. These are the same people that the
11 city is now threatening with job action. These
12 are the same people that the city is demonizing.
13 It is time to stop the demonization of our
14 teachers and our administrators - -. In all the
15 public discussion about this closure that has
16 been going on throughout the city, I have yet to
17 hear one single, solitary reason for those that
18 are proposing these closures as to why it would
19 make the lives of these students any better, in
20 any way whatsoever. When I was first elected to
21 office in the Assembly, it was back when - -
22 control was first established. And we were
23 promised at that time, we were promised
24 accountability and responsiveness. And how the
25 Department of Education considers can sit before

1 us today, in the face of entire unified
2 community, in the face of the student body and
3 the community that's telling you in the surest
4 possible terms we do not this school to close.
5 And to propose it anyway is telling you one
6 thing very clearly: that this is the result of -
7 - control and that - - control has failed, and
8 we need to reconsider the fact that the city
9 can't arbitrarily make decisions that the
10 community is telling you will hurt its students,
11 and do it regardless of what we think. So
12 please reconsider that. Keep Bryant open; keep
13 Long City High School open. Let's make these
14 schools better the right way, not by disrupting
15 the lives of thousands of students that are
16 going to these schools. - -.

17 FEMALE VOICE 1: - -.

18 FEMALE VOICE 2: Good evening, everybody. I
19 graduated from Bryant in 1995. - - speak,
20 listen, and listening attentively to my
21 teachers, listening attentively to my college -
22 -, telling me how great Bryant was. The
23 foundations that make Bryant great are still
24 here. And in my opinion, those foundations are
25 the teachers. Any plan that would eliminate 2

1 to 3% of the teachers at Bryant, 50% of the
2 people who've invested their lives in this
3 school, who've invested their lives in this
4 community and who've invested their lives for
5 these students, is wrong. I don't know how you
6 tell - - teachers on college applications
7 they're working to figure out what they want to
8 do with their lives, that their teachers are not
9 going to be there tomorrow. I think that's
10 cruel. I think it's not necessary, and if they
11 are really here for the students, in my opinion,
12 second to parents, teachers are the most
13 important people in students' lives. Especially
14 at this stage. I believe in the power of the -
15 - school system. I believe in institutions like
16 this that helps 3,000 students. We're not - -
17 like 14, 15, 16, 17. I graduated here when I
18 was 16. What are they going to do with their
19 lives? You got students like me, who did know,
20 who - - in kindergarten, but then you have
21 students who don't know. But they learn from
22 the other students who may have a little bit
23 more direction. They learn from teachers, who
24 are able to disperse great knowledge to them,
25 not just about a singular subject, but to give

1 them a comprehensive understanding of what
2 this world is about. Those are necessary tools
3 in college; they are necessary tools in life.
4 You know, I think that's very important, that we
5 bring up that the mayor has decided not to close
6 seven schools. And I commend him for that.
7 Because in looking - - they decided that they
8 didn't have to be turned around. But I think
9 it's also important to point out that none of
10 those schools are in Queens. None of those
11 schools are in the most - - borough in New York
12 City. What does that say? The fact that there
13 are seven schools that they're not closing is
14 evidence, in my view, and I think in most
15 peoples' views in this auditorium, that the
16 public education system in New York City is
17 working. We do not shut it down. What we do is
18 invest in our students and invest in our
19 schools, and publicly do that. I just want to
20 say personally, I'd like to say this to all the
21 students here, that you are what William Cullen
22 Bryant was about. You are what this meeting is
23 about, and I hope a decision about what's going
24 on to turn around this school, whether or not to
25 close it down, or to give it a new name,

1 eliminate its staff, eliminate its teachers,
2 most of its teachers, I hope a decision is made
3 after listening to you. Thank you very much.

4 FEMALE VOICE 1: - - Congresswoman Carolyn
5 Maloney.

6 MS. CAROLYN MALONEY: Thank you for allowing
7 me to give a little bit of testimony. I'm
8 Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney. - - testimony.
9 Thank you for the opportunity to provide my
10 thoughts tonight. I would like to express my
11 main concerns about the deals planned for the
12 Turnaround of 26 city-wide schools, three of
13 which are in the district that I represent,
14 including William Cullen Bryant and Long Island
15 City High Schools. Turnaround is one of the
16 most dramatic and intrusive options available to
17 COE under the rules the U.S. Department of
18 Education issued for school districts to become
19 eligible for school improvement grant funds.
20 While I support the efforts to improve schools,
21 I am skeptical about them pitching Turnaround to
22 William Cullen Bryant and then Long Island City
23 High Schools. Closing the school and - -,
24 moving out the teachers and reopening under a
25 new name, seems a disruptive response to a

1 serious problem. The students and parents of
2 the community have rallied loudly in support of
3 William Cullen Bryant and Long Island City High
4 Schools. And they want their schools to be
5 great schools. They just don't believe this is
6 the right way to achieve it. These
7 comprehensive schools have been the recipe for
8 higher achievement as a result of other control
9 models, but the city never gave them a real
10 chance to work. Just this year, Long Island
11 City High School was in complete chaos because
12 of previous reform efforts that resulted in
13 cancelled classes, dropped electives, and
14 students wondering if they'd be able to enough
15 credits to graduate. Is it any wonder that the
16 school hasn't shown as much progress as we'd
17 like? This new plan seems like a recipe for
18 even greater disaster. As a former educator, I
19 deeply believe that supportive, motivated
20 teachers are crucial to the success of the
21 school. Removing that smacks of a lack of
22 respect and understanding for the hard work the
23 teachers are doing here. Professional
24 development and other support services for
25 teachers should be a cornerstone of any reform

1 if we expect positive results for students.
2 Above all we do, we must ensure that students'
3 education is not disrupted by so-called reforms.
4 Changing aesthetics and bringing in novice
5 teachers will produce instant results. The
6 effort to really turn around the schools should
7 be a collaborative one, with school leaders,
8 staff, and community members. For these
9 reasons, I oppose the DOE's plan to shut down
10 the high schools in my district and I urge you
11 to reconsider less destructive options that will
12 secure funding for these schools and truly
13 inspire higher treatment for our students.
14 Thank you.

15 FEMALE VOICE 1: - -. And our next
16 speaker is - - district leader, Kosta
17 Konstantalis [phonetic].

18 MR. KOSTA KONSTANTALIS: You actually
19 got it. You did a great job. Good afternoon.
20 I just wanted to start off by saying I too am a
21 Bryant alum, 1994. - - very old graduates of
22 Bryant. - - all wear black today. This is your
23 community high school. This is you. You can
24 talk about this building. You'd be very sorry
25 if you close this school down, and you can put a

1 new school in its place. But the spirit of
2 this school is going to live on. The spirit of
3 this school is what makes it great. The blood,
4 sweat, and tears from the teachers and the
5 students is what make this school so great. And
6 you're going to sacrifice that, for something we
7 quite can't understand 'cause you're giving us
8 enough of a criteria. Somehow seven schools
9 were saved, but we're talking about - -. This
10 isn't The Hunger Games. - - explain to these
11 students, as to why they're being blamed for
12 failure. It is obviously of the mayor. We need
13 to stop the war on our teachers. We need to
14 stop the war on our students. This is the
15 second year in a row we've stood here in this
16 auditorium, debating the merits as to whether
17 this school was closed. Last year, we thought
18 it was done. These students went on with their
19 lives. And again, they made it a point of
20 disrupting their education. Again, at the next
21 year, again. It's time to listen to the
22 community. It's time to start building from the
23 ground up and take whatever it is from the top
24 down. - - put together a rally - - before this
25 event today. There were 103 students out there.

1 There were hundreds of members from this
2 community, the diverse community, Muslim,
3 Jewish, Greek, Catholic, whatever religion,
4 background, this is the story - -. - - a
5 message from this community to make sure that
6 it's saved. So I really hope that they take
7 that into account, and that they really preserve
8 the spirit of the school, and make sure that
9 this name means something to everyone in
10 Astoria. It means - -.

11 FEMALE VOICE 1: Thank you. - - Dmytro
12 Fedkowskyj.

13 MR. DMYTRO FEDKOWSKYJ: Good evening. Thank
14 you all for coming. Thank you, members of the -
15 - for taking your time out to listen to concerns
16 of the school community. And we have many. For
17 those of you who don't know who I am, my name is
18 Dmytro Fedkowskyj. In 2008, I was appointed by
19 your borough president to represent you on the
20 Panel for Educational Policy. And over the
21 months and years, I have seen a lot of proposals
22 come out of the BOE that call for certain
23 closures and changes in the school communities.
24 And this is the one that I have to say is the
25 most poor policy I have ever seen in my entire

1 career at - -. I still believe we - - told
2 they had three years to turn themselves around.
3 And as soon as the BOE says - - goodbye.
4 Unfortunately, that's not the way it works.
5 That's not the way it works, folks. We have to
6 give our schools an opportunity to turn
7 themselves around. Give them the resources to
8 turn themselves around, and that was taken away
9 from them. I, for one, will not support this
10 proposal or any proposal throughout New York
11 City to close any school on April 26th. On April
12 26th, I will put forth a resolution to the panel
13 - - that promotes - - the Turnaround model,
14 since it was hastily conceived and arbitrarily
15 proposed, after spending more than six months of
16 dissecting - - schools in 2011. The - -
17 overhauls for significant changes in school - -.
18 It also calls to propose a moratorium on school
19 Turnaround proposals until public presentations
20 are made in every borough. - - this method will
21 raise achievement in lieu of existing models.
22 Folks, don't give up the fight. Come out on
23 April 26th. Come out and - -. I will be there
24 as long as you'll be there. Thank you so much.

25 FEMALE VOICE 1: Thank you - -. - - the

1 liaison to the community. And our last
2 speaker is Melvyn Aaronson - -.

3 MR. MELVYN AARONSON: Hello. My name is Mel
4 Aaronson. I've been in the school system since
5 1957, and it's 55 years. I'm the treasurer of
6 the UFT, and I'm here speaking for UFT and its
7 president, Michael Mulgrew, in support of the
8 hard-working educators here at Bryant and the
9 wonderful, wonderful students that have the
10 opportunity to meet the Mel. If I knew that the
11 students of Bryant were great as they seem
12 tonight, I would long ago asked for a transfer
13 to this school so I could teach them and so that
14 I could educate these kids that are going to go
15 places if we supply them with the education and
16 the support that they need. I notice that there
17 a number of alumni from this school that came to
18 speak tonight in support of the school. And I
19 see among the alumni in the audience, there's
20 one alumnus I won't see at this school.
21 Probably the man who caused most of the problems
22 at this school, Winden, Joe Winden [phonetic] -
23 -. In my 55 years here, I never have seen a
24 disgraceful lack of support for education that
25 was caused by the anger of a single person,

1 Mayor Bloomberg. Mayor Bloomberg did not get
2 his way in how teachers make a field and any
3 ratings that they have received. And because of
4 that, he said, "This is my school system. I'm
5 going to close down the schools for no reason at
6 all, except that I want to." That's the only
7 reason this school is going to close. The mayor
8 is refusing to take the school off the list
9 because of - -, and not for educational
10 purposes. The single-minded reliance on mass
11 closure of schools, as Mayor Bloomberg's sole
12 strategy, demonstrates the exhaust in
13 educational ideas, both at City Hall and at - -.
14 There is no reason to close Bryant. It has in
15 place a wonderful improvement plan. It has a
16 new principal. They have new - - programs. The
17 focus should be on helping make these plans a
18 reality, rather than Winden seeking closing the
19 school. This school has in its population, 18%
20 English language learners, and 12% second - -.
21 If these students receive the help that they
22 deserve, these students would be succeeding like
23 all the other students in this school, and there
24 would be no reason to close this school. We
25 have - - and the Bryant school community will

1 continue to struggle to save this school. We
2 must change the school from a Turnaround back to
3 a school under transformation, and then we will
4 all succeed. Thank you.

5 FEMALE VOICE 1: Thank you, sir. - - each
6 member of the panel up front to just quickly say
7 their name and - -. Okay.

8 MS. DOREEN LOPEZ: Hi, my name is Doreen
9 Lopez, and I'm the PA president of school.

10 MS. SOTIRIA ZOUROUDIS: My name is Sotiria
11 Zouroudis. I'm a student PA.

12 CATHY YANKOPOLUSIN: My name is Cathy
13 Yankopolusin; I'm a member of the SLTD.

14 SHANNON: Shannon - -, English teacher and -
15 -.

16 FEMALE VOICE 1: - - also ask other SLT
17 members, our teachers that present - -. - -,
18 who teaches special ed. - -, who teaches social
19 studies. - -.

20 MR. CARMIGNANI: Isaac Carmignani. I'm a
21 20-year resident of Astoria. I'm the co-
22 president of the Community Education Council 30.

23 MS. JENNIFER HARPER: I'm Jennifer Harper.
24 I'm the Queens Borough president appointee for
25 the Community Education Council 30. I'm a

1 Sunnyside resident.

2 MR. ERNEST BROOKS: Ernie Brooks, I'm - -
3 CEC here - -.

4 FEMALE VOICE 4: - -.

5 FEMALE VOICE 5: - -.

6 FEMALE VOICE 6: - -. I work in - -
7 district 30, Community District Council. And
8 I'm a resident of LIC.

9 FEMALE VOICE 1: - -.

10 MS. LAURA RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, - -. Good
11 evening, ladies and gentleman. Thank you for
12 being here this evening. This joint public
13 hearing was convened to discuss the proposed
14 closure and replacement of William Cullen Bryant
15 High School - -. It currently serves students
16 in grades nine through 12. On February 27th,
17 2012, the New York City Department of Education
18 published a proposal to close William C. Bryant
19 and open a new school.

20 [Background noise]

21 MS. RODRIGUEZ: I've spoken in each school
22 according to - -.

23 FEMALE VOICE 1: Excuse me - -. If you
24 could just make sure that everyone has an
25 opportunity to speak, so let - -.

1 [Background noise]

2 MS. RODRIGUEZ: According to the - -.

3 [Background noise]

4 FEMALE VOICE 1: Students, I ask that we
5 show what our school is all about, and this
6 about respecting each other. Let us show our
7 respect for the deputy chancellor as she voices
8 her--

9 [Background noise]

10 MS. RODRIGUEZ: - - so that we can hear - - .
11 - - closing Bryant and replacing it with a new
12 school - - create a school environment that both
13 - - . We need a school that builds on the
14 strongest elements of W.C. Bryant, and it also
15 incorporates new elements in order to create a
16 rigorous culture of teaching and learning.
17 Students will have access to our - - educational
18 - - while continuing to attend school in this
19 very building. We believe this process will - -
20 that all students are set on a path for
21 accomplishment. - - of the proposed new school.
22 - - at W.C. Bryant. She is shown commitment and
23 strong - - to improve student achievement and
24 learning. We hope you will use - - to share
25 with us your voice about programs you want to

1 see in the proposed new school, including the
2 characteristics that matter to you and the
3 principal. Additionally, in conjunction with
4 this proposal, as a - - support additional
5 school improvements, the Department of Education
6 submitted a school improvement plan application
7 to the state education department to implement
8 the Turnaround model at the new school. If
9 approved, this would make the new school
10 eligible for up to \$181,000 in supplemental
11 federal funding. I want to acknowledge the
12 students and families who feel their son or
13 daughter is being well-served by William Cullen
14 Bryant. Tonight, we appear - - success stories
15 happening at William Cullen Bryant. In fact, we
16 just heard such stories. There are success
17 stories, and we honor those. But we also need
18 to consider the - - when your child is in the
19 ninth grade and has not - -.

20 [Background noise]

21 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Despite a number of
22 challenges the school faced, some - - the
23 elements of William Cullen Bryant are - -. The
24 Department of Education believes that with new
25 programs and a push to improve teacher quality,

1 the new school - -. For example, William
2 Cullen Bryant appears to be having some success
3 in graduating students - -. 30% of students
4 with disabilities - - graduated in four years,
5 putting William Cullen Bryant in the top third
6 city-wide. Additionally, while - - at Bryant is
7 - -, some success is - -. This is positive, but
8 much more work needs to be done. With - -
9 support and restructuring, the Department of
10 Education accepts that the new school will be
11 able to effectively leverage these areas of
12 strength, while improving student outcomes.
13 However, William Cullen Bryant - - overall, and
14 - - the members of the New York City Board of
15 Regents, that the case maintains that New York
16 City's persistently lowest-achieving schools is
17 not quick enough to meet student needs. - -
18 suggests that William Cullen Bryant should be
19 closed and replaced with a new school - -.

20 [Background noise]

21 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Graduation rates at Bryant
22 have been consistently low for years. Last
23 year, Bryant's overall graduation rate,
24 including August graduates, was 57%, well below
25 the city-wide graduation rate of 65% and in the

1 bottom 17% city-wide. That represents a
2 decline from the 60% graduation for the class of
3 2010. If - - diplomas alone can't support
4 graduation as will be the case for most students
5 in the coming 2012-13 school year. The four-
6 year graduation rate at Bryant would drop to
7 just 50%, putting the school in the bottom 35%
8 of high schools city-wide. The progress report
9 measures the progress of performance of students
10 in school, as well as school - - other schools
11 serving similar student populations. William
12 Cullen Bryant - - on 2010-11 annual progress
13 report. - - an F grade on student performance,
14 a D grade on student progress, and B grade on
15 school environment. Bryant was rated developing
16 D on its most recent quality review, in 2010-11.
17 - - evaluates how well schools are organized to
18 support student environment. W.C. Bryant's
19 2010-11 quality review cited a number of serious
20 concerns, including the need for teachers to
21 strengthen their use of assessment to improve
22 identification of - - required for effective
23 academic intervention and - - systems so that
24 students and families are better able to assess
25 progress and articulate - -. First year credit

1 accumulation is a key predictor of students'
2 success. Because students who fall behind early
3 in high school often have trouble getting back
4 on track to graduate. In 2010-11, almost 63% of
5 - - students at Bryant earned at least ten
6 credits. The progress report defines students
7 earning ten or more credits as students who earn
8 at least six of those ten credits in three of
9 the following subjects: math, English, and
10 science, - - or social studies. This rate of
11 credit accumulation puts Bryant in the bottom -
12 -. Before we hear from other members of the
13 panel and move to the public comments, I would
14 like to briefly discuss the impact of this
15 proposal on current Bryant students and families
16 if it is approved. One: all current Bryant
17 students will have a guaranteed seat in the new
18 school. This includes all current ninth, tenth,
19 11th grade students, as well as any 12th grade
20 who did not graduate by the beginning of the
21 2012-13 school year. Number two: All incoming
22 ninth graders who have applied to Bryant and are
23 matched to it in the high school that this - -,
24 will automatically be enrolled in the new
25 school. Finally, I want to clarify the process

1 the new school will go through to hire the
2 best possible staff if this proposal--

3 [Background noise]

4 MS. RODRIGUEZ: There is no quota set that
5 must be removed as a result of this process.
6 This proposal does not require the turnover of
7 any set percentage of staff. Pursuant to the
8 city teacher contract, if this proposal is
9 approved, - - staff who apply to work at the new
10 school will be reviewed by a five-person school-
11 based personnel committee. The committee is
12 made up the principal, two designees of the
13 chancellor, and two designees of the United
14 Federation of Teachers - -. The proposed new
15 leaders will - - qualifications for positions in
16 the new school, and the personnel committee will
17 consider each candidate who applies. All
18 teachers from the current school are eligible to
19 apply to work at the new school. If sufficient
20 numbers of staff from the closing school apply,
21 at least 50% of the new school's pedagogical
22 positions must be selected from among the
23 appropriately licensed, most senior, qualified
24 candidates. Again, there is no set percentage
25 or limits on the number of staff from the

1 closing school who can be hired to work at the
2 new school. And the decisions are made by the
3 personnel committee of the new school.

4 [Background noise]

5 MS. RODRIGUEZ: I want to thank you, and we
6 look forward to hearing your comments and
7 questions.

8 FEMALE VOICE 1: - -. Okay.

9 FEMALE VOICE 7: Hi, - - speaking. I'm - -
10 Doreen Lopez and - -. And then we'll - -.
11 Okay. All right; can you hear me? All right,
12 all right. I need to address a couple of items
13 that came up in the - - educational impact
14 survey, distinguished representatives from the
15 Department of Education honored guests. I took
16 a great deal of time to read that document
17 through and through. I have two points that I
18 need to deal with, that I think are foundational
19 to this issue. The first issue that I need to
20 deal with is the judgment accusation regarding
21 the willingness and effectiveness of Bryant High
22 School teachers and staff, and their response to
23 professional development - -. I am actually
24 proud to address this school - - used to teach
25 here, at William Cullen Bryant. This is a great

1 community school. And I trust you will listen
2 to what I say tonight. We know that you've long
3 and hard to accumulate accurate and substantial
4 information about our school. We know that your
5 data analysts have crunched and re-crunched
6 numbers to try and make some fiscal sense out of
7 - -, teaching, and learning, which produces
8 tangible results in domains that have to this
9 point, remained impossible to measure
10 distinctly. We know the children are not
11 judging us on numbers. Educate measures
12 statistically, and that the comparable dip in
13 our four-year graduation rate, we have decided
14 to close this landmark institution, known as
15 William Cullen Bryant High School. We, based on
16 your educational compact survey that you feel
17 that - - great effort to model lessons for
18 teachers, and to deliver meaningful and
19 substantive terms to teachers on what the new
20 expectations were. We know that you have been
21 informed of these efforts, by very reliable
22 informants. Distinguished representatives, I am
23 here to inform that your informants are
24 misinformed. Did we never learn as a faculty,
25 come together to explore and define internally,

1 what is meant by the phrase, not enough - -,
2 lesson? We asked for permission for this for a
3 long time. We have asked for modeled lessons
4 that demonstrated this. We have asked
5 repeatedly for real guidance on - - 2012. - -
6 individuals running the presentation had
7 different ideas on what it is and how to
8 manifest itself in the classroom. We have had -
9 - much further than that, although a handout was
10 provided in session, which we're not going to
11 have time to look over during the presentation.
12 This is all well and good. We can begin to work
13 with this. The problem is your report is dated
14 February 29th, several days before the - -. Your
15 report says that lessons can be modeled, that
16 they've been shown to administrators that they
17 want us to see. We have been faulted for not -
18 - in the lessons. - -. We have repeatedly
19 asked for modeled tests. We have repeatedly
20 asked to be shown what is wanted, so that we can
21 see and understand what is wanted. We did get a
22 lesson, modeled - -. Yes, we did. We had a
23 great presentation with attorneys that did not
24 know the high school's setting, as they - - went
25 to the school setting. But this too, - -,

1 because certain strategies can be applied at
2 any grade. As an educated faculty, we can
3 figure it out and use it. The only issue is
4 that this is per March 16th, 2012. Your report
5 is dated February 29th, 2012. - - looking at how
6 we look at what was shown. Distinguished
7 representatives, our professional development is
8 delivered in sound bites. - -. This is a not
9 the real issue. Did you find constraints in
10 budget issues? This has been the situation for
11 many years, not just here. For many places, and
12 for many, many years. - - you have to - - and
13 you have to really invest in your teaching
14 staff, and - - that really matters and really
15 works, with enough time allotted to allow
16 teachers to be understood and to get the
17 message. This has not been the case for years.
18 Vilifying and blaming teachers - - problem, of a
19 lack of quality professional development. A
20 problem which seems even tender in the
21 Department of Education. Now, let's look at our
22 graduation rates. The main reason that you
23 decided to close Bryant in principle, is that
24 the fact that you could not get a 60% graduation
25 rate last year. You are referring to a four-

1 year graduation rate. According to your own
2 report, our six-year graduation rate has been
3 above 60% for the last three years, and - -.

4 [Background noise]

5 FEMALE VOICE 7: This study - - on one of
6 the metrics, at above 60%. Why are you not even
7 taking a look at - -? - - this is a highly
8 diverse community, and we - - from all over the
9 world. This happens on a regular basis. 150 -
10 - languages are spoken in Queens, more than any
11 area in New York City, New York State - -. - -
12 students come into our school needing to learn
13 English, or needing to learn it more
14 proficiently, in order to see that the high
15 school level, it can take many years to learn a
16 language proficiently, to learn it well enough
17 to succeed at the high school/college level. We
18 get our students there. Many get 75s or better
19 on their language - - tests, indicating higher
20 standards. We also passed with a C average on
21 SAT results. - - longer due to the time we had
22 core language acquisition needs of many of our
23 students. And we don't quit on that. We get
24 them there. Distinguished representatives, if
25 we can, as educators, you'll understand that

1 providing extended time is needed. It's part
2 - - meeting the needs of our students. You will
3 understand that closing the school by shutting
4 the - - out is in effect, punishing us for
5 providing for the needs of our students. You'll
6 understand that even though we may - -, the
7 action of closing down this school is in effect
8 an action against the differences with diversity
9 that many - -. - - of learning. - -. To do so
10 makes - -. We need - -. - - programs that show
11 improvement, that includes all teachers and
12 staff, that involves all teachers and staff as
13 agents of change. As participants in the
14 shaping of the educational experience of our
15 students. There is much more to this experience
16 than our faculty and staff. They should not be
17 discarded because of the poor implementation of
18 staff development, training, and planning, lack
19 of sufficient - - and financial resources. Save
20 Bryant High School.

21 FEMALE VOICE 1: Thank you. Let me
22 introduce Doreen Lopez, president of - -.

23 MS. LOPEZ: Good evening, everyone. Thank
24 you for coming out - - Lopez. I'm the - -
25 president - - 30. I went to school, not at

1 Bryant but went to the other schools in
2 District 30. I - - this corner of the school.
3 I hope they don't do what they plan to do. I
4 wanted to say Bryant, it's a great school. We
5 have a great staff here. I am very upset that
6 they'll replace 50% of the staff. I don't agree
7 with that. - -.

8 [Background noise]

9 MS. LOPEZ: The teachers here, they are our
10 kids' mentors. They don't give - - to the
11 teachers. - - 50% of the - -, and bring them -
12 -? - - up here. Please, save our teachers.
13 Save our school. - -. - - April 26th - - a
14 little early - -. Thank you.

15 [Background noise]

16 FEMALE VOICE 8: All right. I'm - - Bryant
17 High School. - -. I graduated here in 1982.
18 This is my school. Here is a beacon of this
19 community. It has been for over 100 years.
20 People send their children here, and send their
21 children to some safe, nurturing environment. -
22 - to save this school. To say that the teachers
23 are making this possible every day. Bryant
24 embodies the fabric of this neighborhood, this
25 community. I'm saying - - of so many valued,

1 different people from many different places,
2 and it works. Why would they want to mess with
3 something that's working? So save this school.
4 I sent my daughter here to Bryant, to - -.

5 [Background noise]

6 FEMALE VOICE 8: The mayor believes all
7 these kinds of changes aren't affecting our
8 children. I'm sorry, Mr. Mayor. I think the -
9 - a long time. You've changed and restructured
10 the curriculum in the school system while - -
11 schools three different times. - - a problem.
12 You need to reassess how you're looking at
13 changing and fixing things. - - with no school.
14 He talks already like this is a done deal. He -
15 - \$1.8 million. He has - - opposing closing our
16 school. We have - - model. The other schools
17 got it. And then they took away. This is not
18 about the teachers. This about the children.
19 We - - model, and they told us we couldn't have
20 it - -. They want to close our school. This is
21 a beautiful school. There are going to be other
22 people here. What's wrong with the staff we
23 have? We love our staff. We love our - -.
24 I'm not here for the teachers. I'm here for the
25 students. - - the emails, the information

1 that's sent - -, the vote on closing the
2 school. All I hear is - - I'm still here.
3 We're not closing it. Save our school. Save
4 Bryant.

5 [Background noise]

6 MS. ZOUROUDIS: My name is Sotiria
7 Zouroudis, vice president here. Before we
8 start, I just want to, on the count of three, to
9 say, "We love Bryant," so that - - all hear that
10 we do care. Ready? One, two, three.

11 [Background noise]

12 MS. ZOUROUDIS: Today, I'm here to represent
13 the students, the 3,000-plus students that go
14 here. That's including at least 500 seniors
15 that are graduating. When we graduate, we want
16 to be able to come back and see the teachers
17 that have always getting us through these past
18 three years. Seeing the mentors that - - and
19 pushed us through, to make sure that we
20 graduated in four years. - - coaches that have
21 helped us so much. I know that the - - team
22 loves their coach. They - -.

23 [Background noise]

24 MS. ZOUROUDIS: We - - and make sure our
25 voices are heard, that this isn't only affecting

1 the teachers. It is affecting the students.
2 I've heard tons and tons of times that, "Don't
3 worry; the students are still going to be here.
4 That's not going to change." Yeah, but now who
5 are we going to have to turn to when we have a
6 problem, an issue? What if we have a question
7 about college and - - aren't there anymore? - -
8 around here? - - to tell us where to go for
9 tutoring? - - school. You might not see it. It
10 might not appear - - at times, but every
11 schoolteacher in this school makes this school,
12 and represents it. - -.

13 MALE VOICE 3: Good evening - -. The Mayor
14 has constructed a system that punishes schools
15 like Bryant. - - a lot of statistics today.
16 And I'm not here to talk about statistics, but
17 I'm here to talk about the things - -. - -
18 Bryant has been on the - -. - - numbers of
19 students today with special needs, and how do
20 you meet these? - - for our students. - -.
21 Bryant High School has - - this number of 48%.
22 - - going to on college is 30%. It seems to me
23 that this is very, very similar to a football
24 score, so let me give you a - -. Bryant High
25 School 48, - - 30. - - we argue, - - of course

1 is that the most important statistic - - if we
2 serve our students - - the school. In other
3 words, - -. - - to close the school that - -.
4 - - a new budget system which again punishes
5 schools like Bryant and favors new schools - -.
6 So when we look at those different schools, you
7 see that - -. You see that class sizes are
8 between 20 and 22. That's not a - - in that
9 school. And so we come today. Bryant High
10 School has 62 overfilled classrooms, that - -.
11 We have - - that encourages - - students to - -
12 smaller schools, and - - other students into the
13 larger schools. We teach - -. We are happy to
14 do so. - -. Teachers prepare so that their
15 students prepare. - - policy. - - Bryant's
16 policy is not deficient. We are not a - -. We
17 are connected to - -. I leave you with this: -
18 - teachers - -. Teachers who have retired come
19 here - - to maintain this place, to keep this
20 place open. - - by very, very, very rich people
21 who are telling us that this place is no good,
22 who are telling teachers that other teachers can
23 somehow do this job better. - - a small group
24 of people can tell an entire - - full of people
25 - -. - - does a disservice to the community and

1 this is a disservice to our students - -. - -
2 their jobs. We're not fighting for our jobs.
3 We will have our jobs. The neighbors - -. We
4 are fighting to save - -; we are fighting to
5 continue to the work that we do, and that is
6 what we - - for. Thank you.

7 FEMALE VOICE 1: Okay, I'd like to invite -
8 - to come up and speak - -.

9 FEMALE VOICE 10: - - but education is now -
10 -. Under Bloomberg's master plans, Bloomberg
11 closed and reopened in less than 24 hours - -.
12 I am told that this is a standard business
13 procedure, - - a takeover or a reorganization.
14 The irony is not lost. - - to remove and - -
15 history. The history of the community, the
16 history of thousands of students and families -
17 - connecting with Bryant over 125 years. When I
18 started teaching at Bryant, it was 46 years ago
19 at the age of 20. When I had children, they
20 attended Bryant. I'm a part of this community,
21 and always have been. But to designate a school
22 as failing because not all the students graduate
23 in four years, is a relatively new and arbitrary
24 decision. As a graduate of the New York City
25 public school system and a teacher, I can say

1 that most schools never have 100% four-year
2 graduation rates - -. Today, teachers are
3 encouraging - - students - - graduation. Yet
4 the powers-that-be do not - - differentiation in
5 graduation rates, that they have decided must be
6 achieved. Students have become this - - one
7 size label - -. This policy does not see the
8 face of the student who may need five years to
9 mature. It does not see the face of the student
10 who is just learning English. It does not see
11 the face of the student who has learning
12 disabilities. It does not see the face of the
13 student whose family's deterioration affects
14 school performance. And it does not see the
15 face of the student who may take four, five, six
16 years to complete high school, to better succeed
17 in college and in a career. This policy does
18 not see the face of William Cullen Bryant High
19 School. It does not see the tree of the school
20 as family, as part of this community. The mayor
21 and the DOE see that - -. And that is the real
22 failure.

23 FEMALE VOICE 11: I love - -. Thank you,
24 ladies and gentlemen. With all due respect, I
25 did not write - - off the top of my head. But

1 this is coming off the top of my head. This
2 comes from my heart. These students are my
3 babies. - -. I am a college counselor. I'm a
4 school counselor. We are the heart and soul of
5 this community. We are the people who guide
6 these students their classes. Yes, our
7 graduation rate went down last year. When the
8 Department of Education - - school. And yes, -
9 - in the past. When the budget has been cut
10 each and every year for the past five years. We
11 are doing more with less on a regular basis, and
12 in spite of that, in spite of that, our six-year
13 graduation rate has gone up. And our four-year
14 graduation rate, just like a blip, has been
15 going up consistently. Our - - promotion and
16 accumulation, 10-credit weight that you broke at
17 63% percent, as if that is a failure, has been
18 consistently raised over the past three years.
19 59, 60, 62, 63%. We are school improving on our
20 own. - -.

21 FEMALE VOICE 1: Thank you, Ms. - -. Is Mr.
22 Lawrence [phonetic] in the auditorium? Mr.
23 Lawrence? Okay, maybe he - -. I'm going to
24 turn this over to - -.

25 FEMALE VOICE 12: I just want to acknowledge

1 and appreciate every presentation that we're
2 going to have. A few more formal presentations
3 from the panel and then we will start with
4 public comments - -.

5 MALE VOICE 4: Good evening, everyone. I
6 have a couple of comments that I wanted to make
7 - -. I can't agree more with the last speaker.
8 - - when she said that the teachers here. Not
9 only are they doing more with less, but this
10 community has been changing demographically
11 significantly over the past ten years. It was
12 seven years ago that, I lived here for several
13 years and then - - the other side of the
14 district. And I came into a - - on Broadway - -
15 . And with that came - -, and that needs to be
16 taken into consideration. I also want - - it's
17 possible to bring in all the elements of
18 improvement without immobilizing - - of a vote.
19 The transformation of - -. - - money, or some
20 of the money that comes into the transformation
21 model as well. If so, that would be a more - -
22 way to handle this problem. There is no - -, as
23 some of us would say. - - 50% from the federal
24 Department of Education. Graduation rates are
25 just a few percentage points below city-wide,

1 and - - this could be the result of - -. I
2 have to say - - it takes a while. A community
3 is a school's lifeblood. Its alumni, there are
4 certain high schools in the city here that are
5 raising money because their alumni come back.
6 If the school closes, - -. And all these
7 electives, people who come here - - from other
8 schools - - make the changes - -. - - on the
9 school and do things that need to be done - -.
10 That being said, something else - - in the
11 community, right here at William Cullen Bryant
12 High School. Every day, I would see the kids
13 coming out of this school. Now the reason why
14 I'm - - this out is because I've worked in other
15 parts of the city as well - - in Brooklyn. I
16 remember a school - - every single day, there
17 was some kind of disruption. There were fights,
18 there were kids cursing. There was just so much
19 unsavory behavior coming out of these kids. - -
20 I would never - -. You just don't see that.
21 What you see are young people that are - -. So
22 that's just an empirical observation, and I want
23 to say about the mascot, the school is not - -.
24 So tonight, - -. And that being said, I want to
25 introduce Jennifer Harper, who's - -.

1 MS. HARPER: I just wanted to say that as
2 - - at Community Education Council, we
3 completely support the students, parents and
4 school in not wanting to close the school. It's
5 a wonderful school, and - -. I - - and I want
6 you to know that closing the school and
7 destroying the schools here is - - school, and -
8 - anything with the Turnaround models - - public
9 school. So I'm just going to be part of the
10 solution on your behalf on April 19th. - - high
11 school Turnaround. There are actually eight
12 large high schools in Queens, - - Turnaround - -
13 in which the current school is closed - - and
14 the entire staff - -. - - only 50% of their
15 staff, which is what we - -. And whereas each
16 of the schools service the diverse communities
17 in which they - - vicinities, as well as across
18 the borough - -, and whereas these eight schools
19 offer diverse special programs meeting the needs
20 of all the students - -. And whereas - - these
21 eight schools to--.

22 [END 290_225.MP3]

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

1
2 The prior proceedings were transcribed from
3 audio files and have been transcribed to the
4 best of my ability.

5
6 Signature

Aime Coleman

7 Date April 5, 2012
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25