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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING
Banana Kelly High School
April 4, 2012**

1 [START RECORDING 290_229_-_MASTER]

2 GREGG BETHEIL: My name is Gregg Betheil and
3 I'll be the moderator for tonight's joint public
4 hearing. I know the acoustics in the room will
5 be a little bit difficult so I do appreciate
6 everybody's cooperation. If you're having a
7 hard time hearing any of us, please let us know.
8 This is a joint public hearing with the
9 Department of Education, the Community Education
10 Council and School Leadership Team to discuss
11 the proposed closure of Banana Kelly High
12 School, 08X530, and the opening and co-location
13 of the new high school 08X563 with Holcombe L.
14 Rucker School of Community Research, 08X332 in
15 building X039 beginning in the 2012-2013 school
16 year. Tonight's proceedings will be recorded
17 and transcribed. Before we begin the hearing we
18 ask that anyone who wishes to speak during the
19 public comment portion of the evening, please
20 sign up at the table outside. We already have
21 about 20 speakers that have signed up. Sign up
22 will end in about 15 minutes at about 6:20 p.m.
23 and if you have a question that you want
24 addressed during the question and answer portion
25 of the agenda, please write that question down

1 on one of the index cards that are available
2 outside at the back table and submit them to the
3 volunteer at the table. Only people that have
4 signed up to speak will be able to participate
5 in the public comment period. All the Panel
6 participants this evening were asked to be here
7 no later than 5:30 p.m., and after we started if
8 any of the Panel members do arrive late, he or
9 she will be given time to speak at the first
10 opportune moment. We want to be respectful of
11 everybody's time and do thank each of you for
12 being here on time. There may be elected
13 officials who arrive at different times
14 throughout the evening, if they wish to speak
15 we'll do our best to accommodate them at the
16 first opportune moment during the public comment
17 portion. Those that are here at the start of
18 the public comment segment will be asked to
19 speak first.

20 Tonight's agenda, before that we'll include
21 a presentation of the proposal and presentation
22 private hearing participants up here in the - -
23 followed by the public comment. Speakers should
24 have already signed up at the table in the
25 lobby, if you have not done so, we ask that you

1 please take the opportunity to do that. Public
2 comments can be no longer than two minutes each
3 and the time will be strictly followed.
4 Speakers will be informed when they're
5 designated time has elapsed, we will have a time
6 keeper who will warn you when there's about 30
7 seconds left. There will be a question and
8 answer period, members of the audience if you
9 have a question we ask you to write it on the
10 postcards that are available on the table
11 outside where you signed in. While the public
12 comments are taking place, staff members will
13 organize the questions in the categories and get
14 them ready for the question and answer period.
15 Some questions will be asked directly and others
16 will be batched under headings in order to avoid
17 repetitiveness. Even though all individual
18 questions will not be addressed at the forum
19 tonight, the answers will be on the department
20 website prior to the Panel meeting. If at the
21 end of the hearing you still have questions, we
22 encourage you to direct them to us at the
23 Department of Education by calling 212-374-5159,
24 again 212-374-5159, we'll repeat that again
25 throughout the evening, or by sending them to us

1 via email at D08proposals@schools.nyc.gov. And
2 now I would like to introduce the Panel which
3 has been assembled for tonight's joint public
4 hearing, at the far end of the table we're
5 joined by a member of the School Leadership Team
6 parent and its Alilson Ramirez, Ms. Ramirez.
7 [Applause] I'm sorry we didn't get - -.

8 FEMALE VOICE 1: - -.

9 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Dr. - - Singleton
10 is with - - on the School Leadership Team. We
11 have Antonio the Principal of Banana Kelly who
12 is here us this evening and Deputy Chancellor
13 Shael Suransky. We don't have any elected
14 officials with us at this point and again when
15 they arrive we'll be sure to introduce them.
16 With that I'll now turn the program over to
17 Deputy Chancellor Suransky who will present the
18 proposal. I'm sorry, a representative from
19 Community Education Council 8 was invited to the
20 meeting and indicated at the time that a
21 representative would be available to attend,
22 they have not arrived yet and don't believe
23 they'll be attending but they were informed of
24 the hearing and told us they'd be able to be
25 here.

1 MR. SHAEL SURANSKY, DEPUTY CHANCELLOR:
2 Good evening everyone, my name is Shael
3 Suransky. For those of you who I haven't met
4 before I'm a former teacher and principal here
5 in the Bronx, I was principal at the Mars
6 [phonetic] High School campus, the school I ran
7 was called Bronx International High School, so
8 I've spent many years at the Bronx and I'm
9 deeply committed to the work that is happening
10 in this school and schools across this
11 neighborhood. I wanted to talk to you tonight
12 about a proposal that we're making that's aimed
13 to create a better set of learning experiences
14 in this building and I think that as we talk
15 tonight that it's really important that we hear
16 all sides and that we understand fully what
17 students, parents, teachers and community
18 organizations connected to this school believe.
19 And I want to also be very clear that this is at
20 the stage of proposal, no final decision has
21 been made. The point of this hearing is to have
22 a respective dialogue where we can understand
23 the perspectives of everyone connected to this
24 school and then based on all that information
25 which will be transcribed, the Chancellor will

1 make a decision leading up to the Panel of
2 Educational Policy vote at the end of April.

3 So let me start with explaining the proposal
4 and I just want to note that this is confusing
5 and so it's worth taking a minute to walk
6 through, how does this impact different
7 constituency's students, teachers, parents and
8 others in this school community. On February
9 27th, the Department of Education published a
10 proposal to close Banana Kelly and open a new
11 school 08X563 and the way that will impact
12 students is different to some of the proposals
13 we've made in the past around phasing out a
14 school. All students at Banana Kelly will have
15 a guaranteed place in the new school. That
16 includes 9th, 10th, 11th grade students as well as
17 any 12th grade students who do not graduate.
18 Also all incoming 9th grade students, who've
19 already been matched to this school through the
20 high school admissions process, will
21 automatically be enrolled in the new school. We
22 don't anticipate that this proposal will have an
23 impact on the other school in this building, the
24 Holcombe L Rucker School. In terms of teachers
25 I also want to be clear because I think there is

1 a lot of confusion on this point, there is no
2 set quota of staff that must be removed. A lot
3 of folks have read in the past that there have
4 to be all of the teachers or 50% of the teachers
5 that is not how it is going to work. So this
6 is- whenever there is a new school, the staff is
7 hired by the principal and the committee made up
8 of representatives from the Teachers Union and
9 from the Chancellor's office and that committee
10 reviews all applicants. So teachers who are in
11 the school now can apply, teachers from other
12 schools can apply, that committee will choose
13 the qualified applicants and if enough teachers
14 from the current school apply there's a
15 guarantee under the provision in the teacher's
16 contract called 18B that at least 50% must be
17 reserved for teachers from the school that is
18 closing. Now that provision does not say it has
19 to be exactly 50%, it could be more, there could
20 also be fewer people that apply so it could be
21 less. The point is that the committee decides
22 who will be best suited to really realize the
23 goals of this new school proposal. And based on
24 that, the senior most qualified people will be
25 hired. I also want to be clear that teachers

1 that do not get hired to come back and become
2 part of the new school and I hope that the
3 strongest folks who are here will apply and will
4 become part of the new school, but if they don't
5 they have the option of trying to get a job
6 within another DOE school. Either way if they
7 come to this new school or they go to another
8 school and they can't get a job, they are
9 guaranteed to be on the DOE payroll and have a
10 job somewhere in New York City. And if they
11 can't find a job in a school they would become a
12 substitute teacher until they are able to. In
13 terms of the leader of the school, Antonio new
14 this year, we believe he's doing a really good
15 job. We've had folks come and visit the school
16 and talk with folks here and watch what's
17 happening. There's a real commitment to
18 improving student achievement and building a
19 strong community and we started to see some
20 positive signs as a result of that work and so
21 we are hopeful that he will be the leader of the
22 new school that is being proposed. As I said
23 there is a lot of talent in this building and we
24 need to draw on the talent and we need folks to
25 be part of this process if this proposal is

1 approved. The new school will build on the
2 strongest elements that make Banana Kelly a good
3 place for kids and teachers. And the goal is to
4 make it even better so that every child who is
5 coming here has a good shot at graduating, ready
6 to have a choice when they graduate to go to
7 college or get a good job. We're also going to
8 be applying for a federal grant under the
9 turnaround model that would make this new school
10 eligible for up to \$800,000 in supplemental
11 funding. Now despite that challenges that the
12 school has faced, I think that there are also
13 some positive signs in the data that I want to
14 mention because I want to be very balanced in my
15 presentation, the students who are participating
16 in the schools special education program, called
17 CCT program, are actually doing quite well in
18 this school, 58% are graduating in four years
19 which is a very high percentage for that
20 population of students relative to other
21 students in the City. And in the quality review
22 this year, there were notes that there are
23 strong partnerships with outside community
24 organizations and very collaborative environment
25 amongst the staff. Those are all positive

1 indications that there's some real strength
2 here. However, when you look at some of the
3 problems, Banana Kelly's graduation rate right
4 now is 55%, that's about 10 points below the
5 City wide average and when you compare the
6 school to all the other high schools in the
7 City, it puts it in the bottom 16% of high
8 schools. So that is an area where we really
9 need to work because too many kids are not
10 graduating at this point. And as you probably
11 know, the Regents Diploma is now a requirement
12 for everyone and if that requirement had been in
13 place last year we would have had a graduation
14 rate of only 36%. Attendance has also been a
15 challenge, 77% of students are attending on
16 average, 94% of the other high schools in the
17 City do better on attendance, so this is an area
18 where we want to really see this new school
19 proposal try to change that because we need to
20 see kids here in school in order for the school
21 to succeed. I want to also acknowledge tonight
22 that we're going to hear from many folks,
23 parents, kids and teachers, about some of the
24 successes in the school and I'm going to be
25 listening very carefully, I'm really interested

1 to hear about what you see as the strengths.
2 Whatever happens with this proposal building on
3 the strengths is going to be very important. I
4 also want to know that there are kids that
5 started here as 9th graders who haven't made it,
6 who've dropped out already and those kids won't
7 be testifying tonight. And we have to keep that
8 in mind as we make this decision because the
9 goal is to create a successful school for every
10 single student who comes here. And as we go
11 through this process I hope that you'll share
12 honestly and sincerely your thoughts about each
13 aspect of this proposal. I think that if you've
14 read the Education Impact Statement you'll see
15 that there's some really interesting elements in
16 there about increasing access to foreign
17 language instruction to college advising to
18 trying to create stronger personalized supports
19 around youth development for kids and so I hope
20 that as we go through this conversation tonight
21 you'll also suggest some of the things that you
22 think would make this school really strong.
23 Thank you and I'm going to pass it back to the
24 moderator who will then ask the panel to speak.

25 FEMALE VOICE 2: Before he speaks can I just

1 ask you to clarify a statement that you made
2 about the teachers.

3 MR. SURANSKY: Sure.

4 FEMALE VOICE 2: Regarding substitutes if
5 they're not hired--

6 MR. SURANSKY: [Interposing] Yeah teachers
7 who do not find a job are in the absent teacher
8 reserve pool.

9 FEMALE VOICE 2: And that's very different
10 from a teacher becoming a substitute - -.

11 MR. SURANSKY: Well the current process for
12 the absent teacher reserve pool is that teachers
13 are assigned to schools on a rotating basis in
14 order to fill gaps that those schools have.
15 Typically the most common use would be to cover
16 classes when someone's absent, if there's no one
17 absent then they would fill other needs in the
18 school.

19 FEMALE VOICE 2: Yes, Chancellor I think
20 it's important to - -.

21 MR. SURANSKY: Yeah thank you for pointing
22 that out.

23 FEMALE VOICE 2: - -.

24 MR. SURANSKY: Yeah if- so thank you for
25 pointing that out. Just so I'm very clear, I

1 was trying to speak at a high level but the
2 point is well taken that for those of you who
3 are not familiar there is a process that if a
4 teacher who's guaranteed a job as these teachers
5 are, does not find a job within the new school
6 or in another school, they become part of a pool
7 of teachers that's called the absent teacher
8 reserve pool and the use of that pool is
9 primarily to help schools fill when they have
10 gaps but teachers rotate from school to school.
11 There will be times when a teacher is not
12 substitute teaching and is either co-teaching or
13 doing other types of support in the school.
14 Greg.

15 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Next we'll hear
16 from members of the Panel. Just want to confirm
17 if a member of the Community Education Council
18 has arrived yet, I want to give them an
19 opportunity to speak. As they've not, we'll
20 next turn to a member of the SLT which is Ms.
21 Alilson Ramirez.

22 MS. ALILSON RAMIREZ: Hi, my name is Alilson
23 Ramirez, I am the mother of a 12th grader. I am
24 past president and past secretary of the PTA.
25 This year my husband and I are members of the

1 School Leadership Team. The Banana Kelly
2 community has been through a lot over the past
3 couple of years. After all the turmoil and
4 uncertainty last year, it seemed that the school
5 was moving forward this year bringing in many
6 new staff members, implementing new policies and
7 spending the specially allotted extra funding to
8 start making positive changes. But once again
9 the Banana Kelly community finds itself in an
10 uncomfortable place with much uncertainty about
11 the future. This undoubtedly has an impact on
12 every member of this community. Because of the
13 difficult and challenging times that so many
14 families in the Bronx are facing it is unfair to
15 believe that the problems facing this school are
16 confined only to what happens within the walls
17 of this building. The staff at this school is
18 amazing, everyone here consistently goes above
19 and beyond when it comes to helping students.
20 Staff is willing to stay late, work through
21 their lunch hours and do whatever else is
22 necessary to provide a safe support place for
23 students to come to get not only the extra class
24 work help they need but also to offer the
25 emotional support that helps teenagers get

1 through these challenging years. My husband
2 and I are personally so incredibly grateful to
3 all the staff that has helped our son from the
4 minute he walked into the school and who will be
5 there for him on his last day as a high school
6 student in June. I worry that the spirit of the
7 school could be broken with all the changes on
8 the horizon. I am realistic enough to know that
9 without the extra funding the school desperately
10 needs the positive changes that the Department
11 of Education expects to see will not be possible
12 to achieve. But I'm sad to think that the
13 drastic changes in staffing that are now
14 impossible to avoid will also change the unique
15 and special qualities of this school. My son
16 who has been a beneficiary of this wonderful
17 staff for the past four years recently said this
18 to me, "If I come back to visit Banana Kelly
19 after I graduate will anyone I know still be
20 here?" Thank you. [Applause]

21 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. - - or other
22 members of the SLT or Panel are intending to
23 make comments, just want to confirm? Next we'll
24 have Erika Vargas who is representing the Bronx
25 Borough President's office who has a statement.

1 MS. ERIKA VARGAS: Sorry for that. Sorry
2 don't mind my youngest. Hi my name is Erika and
3 I'm from the Bronx Borough President's office.
4 Unfortunately the Bronx President was unable to
5 attend but he sent myself, I am his community
6 and education liaison. I came to read a
7 statement on his behalf, sorry. Giving the
8 magnitude of the expense that comes with this
9 process, the Department of Education should
10 better utilize the funding to bring more
11 resources into the schools to produce better
12 student outcomes and increase opportunities for
13 more students. The turnaround process should
14 not be used to fire all the teachers from the
15 schools. We have no evidence that this is a
16 necessary remedy for these schools. The DOE has
17 not made a sufficient case that this process is
18 needed. The process only serves to further de-
19 staffilize [phonetic] the schools community and
20 no one benefits from this process. Instead the
21 Department of Education must use this power and
22 resources to bring in the necessary change to
23 help these schools succeed.

24 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. [Applause] With
25 that, that concluded the presentation, the

1 formal presentations and we'll ask the
2 following people to line up over here by the
3 microphone in order for their comments. Our
4 five speakers will be number one, forgive me if
5 I have trouble reading some of the handwriting,
6 Robert Jeanette, number two it looks like
7 Biannon R, number three is Alilson Ramirez who I
8 believe already spoke, number four Osiris Zavala
9 and number five Ryan Ramirez. We are reminded
10 that the public comment must be limited to two
11 minutes, time will be kept and you will be
12 signaled with there's 30 minutes remaining- 30
13 seconds remaining and when your time is up. So
14 with that, Mr. Jeanette.

15 MR. ROBERT JEANETTE: Good evening my name
16 is Bob Jeanette and I'm an Assistant Field
17 Director for CSA for the Bronx High School. New
18 York City DOE's latest attempt to close 26
19 schools which were already in the process of a
20 three year reform program is a political
21 maneuver that is not - - in sound educational
22 practice. Rather it began at the ploy design to
23 avoid negotiations with CSA and US - - over the new
24 principal and teacher evaluation system. The
25 motivation behind that ploy - - follow of a

1 turnaround model, a model that does not
2 require principal and teacher evaluation and
3 allows the - - to close and immediately reopen
4 schools with a new name. What else would be new
5 about them? Up to 50% of the teachers would be
6 new while 50% of the former teachers would be
7 put into excess - -. There is nothing
8 educationally sound about this intervention
9 plan. It is being introduced for - - reasons
10 not to help children. It will not contribute to
11 development of sound principal and teacher
12 evaluation systems. Furthermore in removing up
13 to half the staff from these schools and - -
14 replacements from other schools, New York City
15 DOE will destabilize schools throughout the
16 system, one after the other blank dominoes. So
17 these - - reports are the most important one,
18 there are fiscal costs too. Removing all these
19 teachers and throwing them into the ATR, absent
20 teachers reserve pool, where they will work as
21 substitutes at full salary will cost the City
22 approximately \$144 million dollars anyway.
23 Thank you. [Applause]

24 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you Mr. Jeanette. Next
25 is speaker number two, it looks like Biannon R.

1 MR. BIANNON R: I understand that we had a
2 few moments to you know- the words that I want
3 to say on my mind and with the few moments that
4 I have left here I want to talk right down to
5 earth in which that everybody here can easily
6 understand. Good evening ladies and gentlemen,
7 please allow me to introduce myself. I'm - -.
8 I was born and raised in New York City, lived
9 here all my life. My father is - - descent and
10 my mother of Columbia descent. My name is
11 Biannon, folks around here call me Biannon. Now
12 my parents played a big role in my life, they're
13 my best friends, I don't care what nobody says,
14 in which concerned and always involved in my
15 education, pushing me to go the extra mile.
16 Look at me now, smaller than I've ever been.
17 Yet I could name every person and in their
18 order. I can name every state and their
19 capital, why do you ask? Because my parents are
20 there every night pushing me and - - the
21 importance in my education. While Susan is with
22 her boyfriend partying and John is with his
23 click at the movies and Jacob is sitting there
24 playing his videos games, what am I doing? I'm
25 at home hitting the books, I'm at home studying,

1 and I'm at home reading and learning myself.
2 Now these colleges want to blame the high
3 schools because the high schools don't prepare
4 them for the college, then the high schools want
5 to blame the middle schools for not preparing
6 the kids for the high schools. Then the middle
7 schools want to blame the elementary schools and
8 then the kindergartens, work your way down the
9 ladder and you end up in the basement, the
10 foundation, the parents who weren't involved in
11 the education of their children, making it
12 harder for the schools, allowing them to close
13 the schools down and fire all the teachers. Let
14 me ask you something if you don't live in New
15 York City, there's a lot problems in New York
16 City, but if you see that there's a lot of - -
17 homicides do you blame the police? Do you go
18 around firing all the cops that are around? - -
19 you blame the parents for not teaching them the
20 morals of the children. Blame the parents for
21 not being involved in the education of their
22 children. Just three years ago my father took
23 me to - - of Manhattan, just a sec, just a sec
24 almost done.

25 MR. BETHEIL: Finish up.

1 MR. BIANNON R: My father took me to a
2 street and he said, "There it is son, George
3 Washington High School, where I spent four years
4 of my life at, Class of 2005." And now my
5 question to you is in the next 20-25 years am I
6 going to be able to drive down - - Avenue and
7 tell my son here it is. Banana Kelly High
8 School where I went to school, where I graduated
9 from? Because our children are a reflection of
10 us and they are a part of us, because education
11 is not preparation for life, education is the
12 life itself. [Applause]

13 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you - -. Our next
14 speaker is speaker number four, Osiris Zavala.

15 MS. OSIRIS ZAVALA: I not going to say, I'm
16 can't be as passionate as the - - speaker but
17 um, it's a real shame to me considering- it's a
18 shame to me considering I've moved around my
19 whole entire life and high school was the one
20 thing I was looking forward to. I went through
21 school after school to prepare myself for high
22 school and my mother and my father, considering
23 how hard they had it, they still pushed me in my
24 education and I really care for it. So now to
25 me, having finally gotten comfortable in a place

1 where people finally understand me, where
2 teachers know who I am or how I am and I think
3 having a community, a family in school, having a
4 certain home in school and losing it without
5 even having moving away is really effecting me
6 and I can't see myself in the future saying what
7 ever happened, and I'm a junior, I've been here
8 three years, to me it's really hard going
9 through this, I don't understand why this is
10 happening, I really don't see the need for any
11 of this. Our teachers teach us the best they
12 can and to me that's- that's all they can do
13 it's up to us students to step up, and you're
14 blaming the teachers, it's not fair to them and
15 sometimes you should be looking at the parents
16 too. It's not fair to the teachers and it's not
17 fair to some of the students who are actually
18 trying. That's all I have to say. [Applause]

19 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Our next speaker
20 is number five, Ryan Ramirez.

21 MR. RYAN RAMIREZ: Hello. My name is Ryan
22 Ramirez and I'm a senior here at what is and
23 what always should be Banana Kelly High School.
24 I strongly believe that this school helped saved
25 me. For a long time, even before high school, I

1 was so depressed. I eventually realized
2 certain things about myself and - - all the
3 rules of society. Right now I'm so happy and
4 thankful for Banana Kelly and all the wonderful
5 and caring teachers that helped me through the
6 dark years and that are now supporting me
7 through the years I'll always remember. But in
8 spite of all these good things that are
9 happening to me I'm saddened by all these bad
10 things that are happening to my school. This is
11 not just my school, it's our school, and it's a
12 shame that we have no control over the future of
13 our school. I believe that the Department of
14 Education- I believe that what the Department of
15 Education thinks of - - as an education for
16 young people are so far from right. All these
17 things they care about is having us pass some
18 stupid test that only measured how good - - are.
19 When I think about I didn't learn a damn thing
20 that you wanted me to learn. I didn't learn all
21 the things that were required me. All I did was
22 memorize things that I didn't see the point to
23 just so I could pass those stupid tests. But I
24 did learn things, I learned the things that - -
25 believes in, things like critical thinking, how

1 to see the bigger picture and how to see
2 outside the box. And above all I learned how to
3 fight- I learned how to fight for something that
4 you don't believe in. I learned how to fight
5 for myself, well - -. I learned that people who
6 think that they know how to run this Country end
7 up screwing us up even more. I question all the
8 things that the Department of Education does,
9 what's the point of closing a school and
10 changing its name? What's the point of firing
11 teachers? Why is it the teachers fault that the
12 students don't pass the test? For once let the
13 students decide the fate of our school. After
14 all we are the people of the future, not you.
15 You don't know what the best thing is for us.
16 Your decisions impact the rest of our lives, not
17 yours. So don't for a second think that you
18 know how to run things at Banana Kelly. I may
19 be a senior but I still care about this school,
20 you should as well. [Applause]

21 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Our next five
22 speakers include speaker number six Nicolo
23 Vitale, speaker number seven Walter Bethea,
24 speaker number eight Richard Sherman, speaker
25 number nine Clifton Campbell and speaker number

1 ten it looks like Alejandra Cirialo. Mr.
2 Vitale.

3 MR. NICOLO VITALE: My name is Nick Vitale,
4 most of you know me as Nick or Mr. Vitale. I
5 have worked here for twelve years, I saw the
6 first graduating class at Banana Kelly. I was
7 here in the years where we were a meets the odds
8 school and I am here now. And what I can tell
9 you is that it's been a lot, a lot of hard work,
10 it's been twelve long years. I've kind of
11 learned a lot, which is great, but something
12 that Alilson said was this thing about spirit
13 and um, it seems every decision that's been made
14 about this school which hasn't been in our
15 control, has been made by people who don't know
16 this school and don't work at this school. And
17 most of those decisions are, I'm thinking, like
18 with good intent but lack of understanding and
19 so what's happen is every decision has actually
20 made it harder to work here. Strange. It seems
21 that decisions are made because of certain
22 statistics but those statistics don't
23 necessarily get to the root of the problem.
24 Just because you know the symptoms doesn't mean
25 you know the cause of the disease. So some of

1 the things are uncertainty, the sort of lack
2 of transparency, I mean why do we now find out
3 this today that the 50% rule doesn't apply, but
4 we've been going since the first meeting we had
5 where we were told about the 50% rule, worrying,
6 planning for our next jobs, and I think a lot of
7 that could have been avoided. So I really don't
8 see that putting us on that list, the changes
9 that were made last year, the changes that were
10 made this year, I don't really think they're
11 well thought out policies and I would ask you to
12 consider in the future at least, because I kind
13 of feel honestly my spirit is being broken.

14 [Applause]

15 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Next speaker is
16 number seven Walter Bethea.

17 MR. WALTER BETHEA: I'm a little nervous but
18 anyways, I don't really agree with closing the
19 school because of tests and whatnot. I mean
20 teachers do their best as much as they can to
21 teach us what we need to know and I say it's
22 more the student's responsibility to take what
23 they're learning. I mean I come into school
24 every day and you'll see kids, cutting, going
25 home, hanging out and so and like there's people

1 that's actually going to school trying to
2 learn what they need to know and like while it's
3 saying that the school should be closed due to
4 test grades, I think that the people that's
5 actually doing good in the school are being
6 forgotten about. The thing that's not so good
7 that's going on is being focused on instead of
8 what needs to be focused on. And I mean, the
9 students and the teachers really have a good
10 relationship with each other and I don't really
11 see that should be broken because the more that
12 our students get along with the teachers I think
13 that the learning will be better and the student
14 can get their education better, more
15 beneficially, if that's a word, that's all I
16 have for now, thanks. [Applause]

17 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Our next speaker
18 is Richard Sherman.

19 MR. RICHARD SHERMAN: I'm Richard Sherman,
20 the Chair Person of the Education Committee with
21 Community Board II. I would just like to read a
22 statement from the Leadership of the Community
23 Group. The - - and Hunts Point [phonetic]
24 Community has always considered Banana Kelly
25 High School our community school. Community

1 Board II sends thanks to the Department of
2 Education for not removing a high school from
3 the community and allowing for the continued
4 education of our community's youth. The
5 community through its Community Board asks that
6 it be part of the process in determining that
7 all segments of the school population are given
8 a quality education by quality educators. That
9 parents are aware of the programs and special
10 activities that are available to the students
11 who attend and that communication channels be
12 open so that parents can easily inquire about
13 the child's academic progress and attendance.
14 We ask that programs that have helped those
15 students with language difficulties and/or
16 learning disabilities be retained or established
17 as well as partnerships that were devised under
18 Banana Kelly High School that provide the
19 students the opportunities, for example to visit
20 and interact with leaders of college campuses
21 and business enterprises. We congratulate Mr.
22 on his appointment as principal and invite him
23 to bridge a partnership with the Community Board
24 so that we may both work together to resolve
25 problems in the school as they come up. Thank

1 you.

2 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Our next speaker
3 is number nine Clifton Campbell.

4 MR. CLIFTON CAMPBELL: Well I've only been
5 at this school for less than a year but I just
6 want to say that I appreciate that everything
7 that every teacher has done for me at this
8 school, everything. Like even when I don't
9 understand something there are teachers that
10 will help me no matter what even if I still said
11 I didn't get it they would come to me and help
12 me day after day after day until I actually got
13 it. I know people in this school fight a lot
14 and that's kind of what makes this school bad
15 but believe it or not, everybody in this school
16 no matter how much they don't want to admit it.
17 So, I just wanted to say that I want to thank
18 Daniel [phonetic] because if it wasn't for him I
19 wouldn't be here right now. [Applause]

20 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, next is speaker
21 number ten Alejandra Cirialo. [Applause]

22 MS. ALEJANDRA CIRIALO: Thank you. Hi my
23 name is Alejandra Cirialo. There are times that
24 we're left in the corner thinking they have
25 taken our weapons and will prevent us from

1 fighting, it's sad to see how stereotyping
2 other's position and another person higher.
3 What happens when our humanity- human dignity is
4 at risk or when someone else has the right to
5 decide our values. Since when does me living in
6 the Bronx destine my future? Why is that we're
7 limited, is it because of the way we talk or the
8 way we dress? I have a dream, Martin Luther
9 King, Jr. had a dream as well. My dream differs
10 a bit from his but in the end every dream
11 deserves at least one chance to be able to come
12 true. My dream is to study into law as well as
13 being well informed in politics, to show that
14 yes I am Hispanic, that yes I am aware of my
15 neighborhood and that yes I will work to reach
16 my dream. My mother always sends me to school
17 even in snow storms. Even though the school was
18 closed because there was a blizzard that does
19 not sound like a mother who wants her child to
20 not be successful but the other way around, my
21 success if for me and for my family, for my
22 teachers, friends and community. Throughout the
23 years - - people have questioned me why I have
24 not transferred during my freshman year, the
25 teacher support how- the teacher support, how a

1 teacher will tell me I have potential, they
2 stay on their own time because their happiness
3 revolves around us. I go to my math teacher for
4 help on my school work and a teacher named - -
5 has supported me the most, helped me pursue
6 writing, reading a Nobel prize winner, helping
7 me with the recommendation of - -. There are
8 too many things to say and too many emotions and
9 too many teachers to name. I asked them what's
10 the key to be able to pursue education, they
11 said good schools, I answered no, it takes
12 heart. It takes heart to have to write poetry.
13 Heart to listen carefully to our teachers words.
14 It takes heart to be able to create a bond.
15 Banana Kelly is a family, a family where
16 teachers became parents and are there to educate
17 us. A family in BK we sometimes see them more
18 than our actual blood family, does taking our
19 teachers motivate us to education? No. Does
20 closing the school change our thinking? No.
21 And does predicting that any of this will
22 actually help us? No. We need someone to
23 believe in us, we need the push, so we will not
24 be violent but we will fight with the truth.
25 The truth is the sword that carries a double

1 edge. I will not have continuously fight for
2 this school or stated that I did not believe or
3 try my best. So basically what I meant to say
4 is that there is a bigger picture, that picture
5 is my teachers, peers and on my graduation day.
6 The canvas that draws myself to surpass the
7 colors black and white, my canvas provides me
8 with a multi-colored scenery and many passages.
9 [Applause]

10 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Our next five
11 speakers are number eleven Anthony Francisco,
12 number twelve Edward Bonner [phonetic], number
13 thirteen it looks like Jeanelle Hiens
14 [phonetic], number fourteen Carmen Quinones, and
15 number fifteen Lauren Fardig. Speaker number
16 eleven Anthony Francisco.

17 MR. ANTHONY FRANCISCO: I want to start off
18 by saying I thank everybody for their time and I
19 will just quick and simple. Alright. To say
20 that the school is closing, it really hurts me.
21 Because me as a freshman, when I was in 8th grade
22 I was looking up to this school because I've
23 lived here for awhile. And to find out that in
24 my first year the school is going through all
25 these problems it really hurts me as a student

1 because it makes me feel like you know, you
2 have a dream of going to the school and then to
3 have it hurt by all these things we never think
4 of really hurts me. And I just want to say that
5 this school is a big part of this community and
6 the whole - - of civilization because
7 everything- like every time you walk up and down
8 the strip is like always - - Banana Kelly,
9 Banana Kelly. And even though we share this
10 love of our school, it's whatever we're keeping
11 peace, you know what, closing the school is not
12 going to do anything. It's not the teacher's
13 fault or anybody's fault, it's just the students
14 and I think education and behavior starts at
15 home so you've got to talk to the students and
16 their parents and tell them to stay in school
17 and do what you've got to do, that's all. And
18 basically for those students that really just
19 act up during school just give them a punishment
20 or some guidance that makes them go to school,
21 and that's what I've got to say. [Applause]

22 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Our next speaker
23 is speaker number twelve Edward Bonner.

24 MR. EDWARD BONNER: Okay so for most people
25 if you don't know me my name is Edward Bonner.

1 I'm an 11th grader at Banana Kelly High School
2 and I am the Captain of the Banana Kelly
3 Wolverines. Now, my first year here I didn't
4 want to be bothered with anybody to tell you the
5 truth, I didn't want to come to school, I didn't
6 want to get out of bed, I didn't want to do
7 anything I just wanted to stay home. As the
8 days go by I started meeting people who took
9 interest in me, people who understood what I
10 believed in and people who respected what I did.
11 If it wasn't for this school I wouldn't be where
12 I am today. The teachers, my wrestling coach,
13 my math teacher Zenin [phonetic], my English
14 teacher Rourke [phonetic], they helped me push
15 through and helped me see like the good sides
16 when I was feeling down and everything. Now
17 let's say that we was going to go through some
18 changes, okay fine, but the - - that the Board
19 of Ed wants us to do is not real, they want to
20 close down our family, they want to close down
21 the people I've been with since the 9th grade.
22 They said the Board of Ed wants to close us
23 down, why? Well because we're the only school
24 that doesn't do well on - -. Is that a bad
25 thing? Maybe, maybe not. But if you think

1 about if we always done what we're told, would
2 people be successful in life, would we have the
3 same enlightenment in every - - thinkers that we
4 have now. If we always did what we're told
5 would anybody have the courage to stand up for
6 themselves if blue one looks white. Uh.

7 [Applause] All I've got to say is that Banana
8 Kelly helped me go through and Banana Kelly put
9 me where I am now and to think that you would
10 change the whole staff just because you think
11 it's a step forward, that you're going to think
12 that the students are going to fall in line,
13 how, how do you know that? [Applause]

14 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Speaker thirteen
15 is Janelle Hiens.

16 MS. JANELLE HIENS: Good evening everyone.
17 I think I really want to tailor my comments to
18 the Deputy Chancellor, since you said several
19 times that the decision has not been made and
20 that you're going to take this information back
21 with you to those who make decisions. I heard
22 over and over and over again from these students
23 who are sitting here that this is their family.
24 That their families at home play an integral
25 role in the decisions that they make and in

1 their growth as - - human beings, but these
2 instructors here and these educators here are
3 their family. I'm hearing that they're taking
4 offense to this decision to close down their
5 school and to start over in the same place with
6 many of the same people after the - - basket
7 upset of this whole hiring committee where we
8 may or may not have 50% of the people being
9 brought back and people may or may not end up as
10 subs or really in the ATR pool and confusion is
11 being given to these people over and over and
12 over again after years of being put into
13 transformation programs, after years of working
14 with community based organizations and hospitals
15 and institutions of higher learning and progress
16 being made in the four year graduation rate, in
17 the six year graduation rate, in the credit
18 accumulation of these students. These students
19 are saying that they take offense to this
20 decision to close this school. This school does
21 not meet the City's department- the Departments
22 own standards for school closure, your trying to
23 fit this into a model for school closure and
24 it's very difficult to do because they have made
25 progress, because there is talent here, because

1 there is dedication here, because there is a
2 family here and we're asking you to use your
3 conscious and listen to the message that's being
4 given and show these people some respect and
5 understand that a school is not just about the
6 name, it's not just about the building, it is
7 about the relationships that these dedicated
8 human beings have with each other to make sure
9 that each and every child here is known, is
10 respected, is educated and is - - for as they
11 move onto graduation and adulthood. [Applause]

12 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Next is Carmen
13 Quinones.

14 MS. CARMEN QUINONES: Good evening, my name
15 is Carmen Quinones and I am the District
16 Representative - - Federation for Teachers for
17 District A. My comments are to you. I have
18 been to meeting after meeting, I've heard all
19 your data, all your rhetoric, why all schools
20 should be closed, and I ask myself if anybody
21 else is asking, what are you really doing before
22 you make these decisions to close the school?
23 All this talk about we're going to give the new
24 school resources, how come you can't give the
25 resources to this school? Why does it always

1 have to be the school that's coming. Your
2 idea of what is best for our community is
3 ripped, okay. Banana Kelly was told that they
4 were a transformation school, you have an
5 opportunity to improve and succeed. Then you
6 come back to them and say we're closing you,
7 that's the end of that. You live to break the
8 spirit of these communities and you sit there
9 meeting after meeting and pretend you care. You
10 don't care. [Applause] As we look at what's
11 going on in this school, what has gone on in the
12 school on Friday, what goes on all of the time,
13 you talk about data, let's talk about what your
14 data looks like, okay. What your success rate
15 is, we're not the failures, you failed us. You
16 failed the children, okay. You. As you sit
17 there, you're the cause of the - -. [Applause]

18 MR. BETHEIL: The next speaker is number
19 fifteen, Lauren Fardig.

20 MS. LAUREN FARDIG: So I want to tell you a
21 story. About a home I held onto with white
22 knuckles for four years. A crazy hectic and
23 wonderful concoction of students and teachers
24 who truly do interact like a family.
25 Unfortunately our family has been separated

1 because schools cannot be families too. We've
2 had to try and maintain our identity while being
3 told to drastically change. We are losing the
4 battle but not the war because no matter where
5 we land we will stay together. This is how
6 families are. I may not always be teaching your
7 5th period English class but I am still here and
8 have learned so much from you my students. I
9 have learned to be vulnerable but put up my
10 strong front to get through my days, I have
11 learned how to survive despite my surroundings.
12 You will come to wedding, hold my children, tell
13 me how college is going, how you are growing,
14 what you are reading. You are part of my
15 breath, you are a part of my soul. This hearing
16 tonight is merely a formality, a check to bounce
17 off a list to say that we gave the people a
18 chance to speak up to support their school, when
19 a reality most of the community feels it is - -
20 to fight the schools closing, is afraid to speak
21 out for fear of not getting another job at the
22 DOE, students are getting the message that their
23 voices don't matter. In all honesty the
24 decision about Banana Kelly has probably already
25 been made. Yet I am still to support this

1 community of teaching and learning that has
2 greatly impacted my life and thousands of other
3 lives around me. One of my students asked me
4 yesterday, what good does it do to close a
5 school, I was unable to answer him because I
6 don't understand who benefits from this option,
7 I don't understand how taking hard working
8 teachers who come here every day to get our
9 students to think critically about the world,
10 how changing the staff is going to improve the
11 graduation rate or Regents - - rate. I don't
12 understand how changing the name of the school
13 is really changing everything. The teacher who
14 is committed to public education for life, I
15 think there is a major disservice being done to
16 this community by closing Banana Kelly. This
17 school has been active in our South Bronx
18 community for 14 years, from our roots with our
19 Banana Kelly community improvement association
20 to the work that united players does every week
21 to - - to end violence in our neighborhood, from
22 - - revitalization of community service and our
23 connections with Borough President Ruben Diaz
24 Jr. [phonetic], and Assembly Member Marcus
25 Crespo [phonetic]. I live in this neighborhood,

1 do business in this neighborhood and will send
2 my children to schools that are invested in the
3 improvement of their community. Because
4 children should learn how being a part of
5 something positive can impact their lives. The
6 work that has happened at Banana Kelly has been
7 an academic, social and emotional to meet the
8 needs of a student population who needs not only
9 passing grades but moral lessons on what is
10 right and what justice is. Closing this school
11 is denying yet another resource to the South
12 Bronx and is fracturing an economically and
13 spiritually depressed place even further. These
14 community connections that we have at this
15 school will die if the staff leaves because the
16 staff is what has made these community
17 connections happen and made these partner
18 organizations stay here. [Applause] Time now,
19 just to let you know I'm taking number sixteen,
20 just to let you know. Rather than move away
21 from small schools based upon the ideas of
22 social justice I believe that we need more
23 schools like Banana Kelly to focus on educating
24 the whole child, the focus on teaching students
25 to be questioning, thinking critically aware

1 adults who are active in their community and
2 in their lives. Graduation rates are going to
3 fluctuate at any school if more special
4 education and English language learners are
5 being flooded into its hallways while resources
6 are being taken away. While resources are being
7 mismanaged, new textbooks are not going to solve
8 this problem, but this is how Banana Kelly is
9 different. Charter schools block the entrance
10 of students with special needs, many schools
11 work to transfer these students out so their
12 numbers don't suffer, but not many schools will
13 take these learners in as a part of our family,
14 accept them and try our best to educate them
15 within rigid and arbitrary state guidelines. We
16 are asked to differentiate our classes for
17 different learners but when will our state
18 assessments be differentiated to accommodate
19 these learners' needs? When will our Department
20 of Education look to truly meet the needs of
21 these underserved students? This is when we
22 will again find success in public schools. I
23 don't think that this should come down to a
24 blame game of whose fault it is for our failing
25 schools, students, parents, teachers,

1 administration and community members are all
2 participants in this educational community. My
3 students deserve to attend a school where they
4 are academically challenged and socially
5 nurtured. They deserve better than they are
6 getting but the solution is not to close the
7 school and reopen it under another name. It is
8 to invest in the future of our youth by
9 reinstating the transformation status and
10 allowing real resources, like additional
11 teaching staff, to improve the quality of
12 education happening among them. Thank you.

13 [Applause]

14 MR. BETHEIL: However our last speaker that
15 signed up is Daniel Jerome. Two minutes.

16 MR. DANIEL JEROME: Thank you. Well I've
17 been at this school for 11 years and I saw when
18 the school was less than 200 students. I was
19 there when Banana Kelly was named the big - -
20 school back in 2006, one of 13 school that
21 graduated schools at a higher rate and they also
22 did better at college than similar schools.
23 Then four years later we're named a failing,
24 four years later we're named a- if - - named us
25 a failing school, what happened, how did that

1 happen? How is that possible in four years?
2 So the principal has four more years of
3 experience, did he suddenly become stupid? The
4 teachers have four more years of experience, did
5 we suddenly become lazy and ineffective? I mean
6 Nick who spoke before he's been here those
7 years, did he suddenly become a bad science
8 teacher even though he was one of the first
9 recipients of the - - prestigious award you won?
10 Or the Emily - - who stays until seven?
11 [Crosstalk] Look at Emily - - she stays til 7:00
12 p.m. habitually working with students. Carl and
13 Amanda, they're a duo right, they roll together.
14 I ran into a student on the train the other day,
15 yesterday in fact who cited them as the two
16 teachers who pushed her the hardest. So I don't
17 know maybe it was their - -. [Applause] And
18 Lauren - -, first teacher took a group of
19 students in a car to Michigan to present, in
20 Detroit, followed up a couple years later by
21 presenting at the NCT as a third year teacher,
22 so I'm trying to figure out whose fault it is,
23 because if it's not our fault, why are we being
24 asked to leave? Why are being told that we're
25 going to have to prepare our resumes, in fact

1 the Superintendent said, "You know if I were
2 in your shoes, I'd brush up my resume because
3 you're going to have to look for- you may have
4 to look for something." So this the part that I
5 don't understand, because I will talk about what
6 I do know what I happened though, some things
7 that happened because maybe it was our fault,
8 but if it was I'm going to talk about what
9 possibly did happen. The - - report which is
10 the DOE's own study, right, - - our enrollment
11 increased 65% which is contradictory to the - -
12 reports suggestions which said smaller schools
13 are more successful for these students.
14 Something else happened, the number of low scale
15 of - - students increase, alright, over - -
16 students increased. In fact the part that the
17 report predicted the graduation rate of our
18 school, so I don't understand why they're
19 closing us down if what happened was what was
20 predicted. But the other schools - - been here
21 for a long time that are committed to teaching
22 the kids in the Bronx we find this whole process
23 a farce and a tragedy. [Applause]

24 MR. BETHEIL: Okay, I just want to make sure
25 that speaker number seventeen, Jocelyn Silas

1 [phonetic], if we've turned in her number, we
2 just wanted to make sure she wasn't still here
3 and planned to speak. Okay. With that we've
4 exhausted the speaker list. We've been told
5 that a couple may have just arrived and wanted
6 to reiterate that we do have Spanish language
7 translation available over here on the left if
8 anybody should need it.

9 MALE VOICE 2: [Foreign audio]

10 MR. BETHEIL: As we said before we may have
11 members that show up, Evelyn Rodriguez of the
12 Citywide Council and High Schools has just
13 arrived and has asked to make a short comment.

14 MS. EVELYN RODRIQUEZ: Good evening
15 everyone. Good evening Mr. Suransky, I saw you
16 yesterday at Lehman High School. That's also
17 another that is closing or proposed to be
18 closing, Lehman High School in the Bronx at
19 District 8. My question, my biggest question is
20 what new programs are you installing with the so
21 called new school that you want to bring into
22 Banana Kelly High School. Because when I was
23 looking at the reports I see that they want to
24 implement new programs regarding attendance, for
25 college and career readiness and these are the

1 things that already Banana Kelly has in place,
2 they have a long, almost exhausted list, of
3 agencies that they're working with. So my first
4 question to the - - is what new programs are you
5 actually bringing into Banana Kelly High School
6 with your so called new school. Thank you
7 everyone. [Applause]

8 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, we will now begin
9 the question and answered period. Remember
10 they're will be some individual questions.
11 Jocelyn. Do you have your ticket?

12 MR. MELVIN ZAFERTI: Let me formally
13 introduce myself, my name is Melvin and I've
14 been in this school for three years and that has
15 been the best of my life. And you may have seen
16 me in the hallways and you may have not, but the
17 most important thing right now is that you see
18 me right now doing what I love is defending my
19 school right now, which I certainly love. Now I
20 want to say what you guys did, or what you guys
21 are actually doing right now, let's say your
22 like ICS, is that how you say it? You know
23 those people that take away your children? SCS,
24 you're like SCS, you're taking me away from my
25 family. You just can't take me away and put me

1 with other strangers, you know I just can't
2 work like that. I've been involved with these
3 people for the past three years and I feel like
4 I've known them forever. I know them, they are
5 my family. I just want to inform you that I
6 came here at the last minute, I didn't come here
7 with a script, I did not write anything, I'm
8 speaking from the heart right now. I would also
9 like to say that we were gradually informed
10 today that you guys were actually doing this, so
11 to inform us at the last minute was like a back
12 stab for us. See right now we don't have
13 nothing because this is good enough. If we were
14 informed back then we would have had an army to
15 defend this school right now and that's was all
16 I wanted to say. [Applause]

17 MR. BETHEIL: Just to be sure is there
18 anybody else still holding a number that
19 intended to speak? Okay. Now we will begin the
20 question and answer period. Now remember
21 there'll be some individual questions and others
22 have been bucketed into categories where we have
23 representative question to ask, any question
24 that is not answered here tonight will be
25 answered on the department's website. If you

1 have additional questions at the conclusion of
2 tonight's proceedings, we ask that you direct
3 them to us via the phone number or the email on
4 the website, that's by calling 212-374-5159 or
5 sending them to us via email at
6 D08proposals@schools.nyc.gov. Now I will turn
7 it over to the Chancellor for the questions.

8 MR. SURANSKY: So I want to acknowledge and
9 thank everyone who came here tonight. I want to
10 share what I heard first and then there were two
11 questions that were submitted as well as a
12 number of question that people asked in their
13 testimony and I will try and answer those as
14 best as I can. But let me first say that what I
15 heard was that there's a number of students and
16 teachers who spoke this evening with great
17 passion about why this school has been a
18 powerful community that has supported them in
19 developing critical thinking schools, and
20 connecting them into school and making them want
21 to be here. Teachers who stay late, teachers
22 who don't give up on kids, teachers who develop
23 a sense of spirit and love in this community, a
24 sense that it's possible to dream and a sense
25 that there is true potential and something to

1 fight for and I think that all of those things
2 came through very clearly. And those are
3 powerful messages that I heard and I will be
4 sharing based on what you said this evening. I
5 also heard students who talked about learning to
6 question and learning to engage in critical
7 thinking as a core value as part of the school
8 community. I heard teachers talk about their
9 belief that school is not just about the test
10 scores, it's about supporting the social and
11 academic and emotional elements of kid's lives
12 and developing their capacity. And I think when
13 I said at the beginning that there are real
14 strengths here, I meant what I said. And when I
15 said at the beginning that there is a lot of
16 misunderstanding out there about what this
17 process means, I meant what I said. So I heard
18 some of those misunderstandings come up again in
19 the testimony. Some of the things I heard were
20 that this means that you won't be able to be
21 here anymore as a student. All students will be
22 able to be here in this school next year. I
23 heard a perception that teachers definitely
24 won't be able to be here, now what I explained
25 at the beginning is that there will be a process

1 as- if this proposal is approved, a committee
2 will be formed to select the staff for the new
3 school and there is the possibility that many of
4 the teachers, particularly the strongest
5 teachers who have, as I have heard kids talk
6 this evening, who've made a real difference in
7 their lives, will be in a position to continue.
8 I don't know every teacher, I don't know every
9 student in this school, the reason that
10 committee exists is to go through a process to
11 figure out the question of who should be
12 teaching at the school. And I also heard a
13 misconception that this is something that is
14 being done in order to remove this school from
15 this community. This school will be in this
16 community, there will be many elements we now
17 know as Banana Kelly incorporated into the new
18 school's proposal and the goal of this process
19 is for the folks that spoke this evening to
20 actually be part of helping to define what that
21 school looks like. We cannot really begin the
22 work of defining that new school proposal until
23 there's been a final decision about what is
24 going to happen with Banana Kelly which will
25 happen on April 26th.

1 Now let me speak to some of the questions
2 that came up. One of the questions was that
3 there is a, let me read it. Why do you have to
4 change the school's name? So under the rules,
5 when a new school is created, it does have a
6 name that it is different, however that process
7 is also defined by conversation in that school
8 community. And so if this proposal is approved,
9 the school's name would be selected by the
10 principal, the staff and members of the
11 community who are consulting with us. And we
12 encourage you, if the proposal is approved, to
13 be part of that process. The second question
14 was about performance data, why does the
15 Education Impact Statement claim there is a
16 downturn when many of the indicators show
17 improvement? And I want to emphasize again that
18 I said at the beginning that we do see some
19 elements in this data that show that there's
20 improvement. But I also want to be honest, four
21 years ago there were 132 students who were
22 accepted into the 9th grade in this school, today
23 78 of those students- there's 78 12th graders.
24 So along the way many kids left the school, got
25 held back or dropped out. And those voices are

1 the voices that were not heard tonight. And I
2 think we all have a collective responsibility to
3 change that and that is not about passing tests
4 or about data or statistics, it's about real
5 kids lives and figuring out how do we do a
6 better job. And that is the purpose of this
7 process. And I think we can legitimately have a
8 discussion where we disagree on whether this
9 will work to improve the school or not. I heard
10 folks saying things that the goal of this was to
11 break the spirit of the school or to deny the
12 school resources or to cast blame and that is
13 not actually the goal. I know that that is what
14 many people here spoke about and felt but I am
15 saying that is not the goal. The goal is to try
16 and create a process that means we don't see so
17 many kids lost along the way. And it is not an
18 easy job, I have taught in this community, I've
19 been a principal in this community and I know
20 that it is not an easy job. I had also have
21 seen schools that have succeeded in ways that I
22 think we can learn from and strengthen what we
23 are doing here. And that is the point of this
24 proposal is to strengthen what's going on here
25 and I really hope that as folks consider this

1 and as the decisions are made in the coming
2 months that in any route that this goes, whether
3 the proposal is ultimately approved or not, that
4 the folks who spoke this evening with such
5 passion and commitment will continue to engage.
6 And will not give up and will try to become part
7 of strengthening what we've got here. And I've
8 visited Banana Kelly over years and I know that
9 there are teachers here who've done amazing
10 work, I know that the school was a Beat the Odds
11 school in 2006. I know that there were real
12 challenges that came with growing and that
13 decision was made partially because of the
14 space. Those of you who were here a long time
15 know that the school is in a very very small
16 space next door that was tough to manage and as
17 it came into a larger space, the school grew.
18 And that has been one of the challenges that as
19 the school grew it got to be more complicated.
20 I also want to just touch on one other point
21 that came up this evening around kids who spoke
22 about feeling like they've just gotten to a
23 place where the school is working for them, that
24 they knew the people here and that this is going
25 to tear them away from folks that they feel

1 connected to and I hear that and I think that
2 is one of the challenges that we all need to be
3 very sensitive to. And I hope that many of the
4 strongest teachers that are here will continue
5 and become part of the new school so that in
6 many cases those relationships can continue and
7 are not disabled. And I also hope that where
8 teachers haven't been successful that there's an
9 opportunity for some new folks to come in and
10 become part of this community and help students
11 to succeed. And I think the combination of the
12 two could be a very powerful thing.

13 There's one last note that I want to make,
14 there was a question that was raised about the
15 Department standard for closing a school and I
16 just want to be very clear that, and this is
17 part of a process every year when we go through
18 the school closure process, that the schools
19 that we look at fall into four categories.
20 Schools that have three C's in a row, schools
21 that have a D or an F or schools that have been
22 named by the State on the persistently low
23 achieving list. That's what's on all of our
24 documents, on our public website, as the
25 standard that we look at for closing a school.

1 This proposal is different to the phase out
2 proposals that we do in some important ways.
3 The students will continue in this building.
4 None of the students have to leave. The school
5 that is created as the new school will be
6 designed with the goal of building on many of
7 the strengths that are in the existing school
8 but also strengthening some of the areas where
9 the school is struggling. So with that I hope
10 that I've been able to answer the questions were
11 raised. I would be happy to stay afterwards and
12 talk individually if folks have other questions
13 and I want to thank you again for the thoughtful
14 comments that you shared this evening.

15 MR. BETHEIL: As Shael has said we've heard
16 many significant comments this evening and we do
17 appreciate the feedback and the contributions to
18 this hearing. The information from tonight will
19 be shared with the Panel on Educational Policy
20 which will have its hearing on April 26th at 6:00
21 p.m. at Prospect Heights Campus located at 883
22 Classon Avenue in Brooklyn to vote on this
23 proposal. Again please use the phone number
24 212-374-5159 or send comments via email to
25 D08proposals@schools.nyc.gov if you have any

1 other questions or concerns. Thank you all
2 for coming, this joint public hearing is now
3 adjourned.

4 [END RECORDING 290_229_-_MASTER]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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

Signature

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Betsy [unclear]".

Date April 7, 2012

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