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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF  
PORTFOLIO PLANNING  
Phase Out and Replacement for  
J.H.S. 296 The Anna Gonzalez  
Community School 2/1**

1 [START RECORDING]

2 OLIVIA: --in 2012 to 2013. And a proposed  
3 opening and collocations of the new middle  
4 school, 32K562 and with existing schools, The  
5 Anna Gonzalez Community School, Achievement  
6 Charter School, and P.S. 53K in building K296  
7 beginning in 2012/2013.

8 Tonight's proceedings will be recorded and  
9 transcribed. Before we begin the hearing, we  
10 ask that anyone who wishes to speak during the  
11 public comment portion of the evening sign up at  
12 the table in the back. Sign up will end at  
13 6:20. If you have a question that you want to  
14 be addressed during the Q&A portion of the  
15 agenda, please write the question on the index  
16 cards provided in the back and submit them to  
17 the volunteer by the table.

18 Only people who have signed up to speak will  
19 be able to participate in the public comment.  
20 All panel participants were asked to be here no  
21 later than 5:00 p.m. Now that we've started, if  
22 a panel participant arrives late, he or she will  
23 be given the time to speak at the first  
24 opportune moment. We want to be respectful of  
25 everyone's time. Any elected officials who

1 arrive at different times throughout the  
2 evening, if they wish to speak, we will do our  
3 best to accommodate them at the first opportune  
4 time.

5 Those who are here at the start of the  
6 public comment segment will be asked to speak  
7 first.

8 Please look at the agenda. - - presentation  
9 of the proposal. The presentation is by hearing  
10 participants, followed by public comment.  
11 Speakers should have already signed up at the  
12 sign up table in the lobby. Public comments can  
13 be no longer than two minutes. The time will be  
14 strictly followed, and speakers will be informed  
15 when their designated time has ended. There  
16 will be a question and answer period. Members  
17 of the audience, if you have a question, each of  
18 you had to write your question on the postcard  
19 that was supplied at the sign in table when you  
20 arrived this evening.

21 While the public comments are taking place,  
22 staff members will organize the questions into  
23 categories - - for the Q&A hearing. Some  
24 questions will be answered directly, and others  
25 will be - - in order to avoid repetitiveness.

1 Even though all individual questions will not  
2 be addressed in the forum tonight, the answers  
3 will be on the web site prior to the panel  
4 meeting.

5 If at the end of the hearing you still have  
6 questions, we encourage you to direct them to us  
7 by calling the number on the bottom of the fact  
8 sheet or sending them to us via e-mail on the e-  
9 mail provided on the fact sheets. I would now  
10 like to introduce the panel, which has been  
11 assembled for this evening's joint public  
12 hearing.

13 Deputy Chancellor David Weiner, Community  
14 Superintendent Lillian Druck, the principal of  
15 295, Maria Barreto. Representative of the  
16 School Leadership Team of P.S. 296, Adrian  
17 Thomas, Principal of P.S. 53, Heather Cayman  
18 [phonetic], SLT representative for P.S. 53, Pam  
19 Clayton [phonetic], President of the CEC,  
20 representative Victoria Lugo. CEC Rep, Luis  
21 Hillman [phonetic], SLT rep from Achievement  
22 First, Kit Brown [phonetic], and CEC rep Donna  
23 Lacasio [phonetic].

24 I will now turn the program over to the  
25 Deputy Chancellor, Dave Weiner, who will present

1 the proposal. Thank you.

2 MR. DAVE WEINER: Thank you, Olivia. Thank  
3 you for all of the parents, community members,  
4 children - - . Thanks also to my colleagues - -  
5 . I'm going to try to speak slowly. We have  
6 some translation going on, and I want to make  
7 sure - - . So this joint public hearing is a  
8 meeting to discuss the proposed phase out and  
9 replacement of J.H.S. 296. The decision to  
10 phase out a school is not an easy one. We do  
11 not take these decisions lightly. We - - data  
12 for the proposed course of action. We also  
13 reach out to families and community members  
14 within the school. Before I present the 296  
15 proposal, I'd like to say a few words about why  
16 we're here. All of us count on schools to  
17 provide a high quality education for our  
18 students, and we must hold all schools to the  
19 same standard of excellence because every,  
20 single child in this city deserves the best  
21 possible education. 296 is located at 125  
22 Covert Street in Community School District 32 in  
23 Brooklyn, and currently serves students in  
24 grades six through eight. On December 19, the  
25 New York City Department of Education published

1 proposals for phaseout and replace 296 based on  
2 its performance struggles. When we look at the  
3 296 performance data, it indicates the school  
4 had been struggling. Unfortunately, in this  
5 most recent report card, 296 received an overall  
6 grade of F. It also received an F in student  
7 progress, an F in student performance and an F  
8 in school environment. Additionally, this - -  
9 school designated by the state as a persistently  
10 low achieving school, which means that 296 is in  
11 the bottom 5% of schools in this state in terms  
12 of student performance in all of New York.

13       Unfortunately many of the students at 296  
14 remain below grade level in English and in math.  
15 Last year, only 14%, about one to two students  
16 out of ten, was performing on grade level in  
17 English, put in the bottom 14% of middle schools  
18 citywide. Only 20%, two out of every ten  
19 students, were performing at grade level in  
20 math, putting the school in the bottom 5% of  
21 middle schools citywide.

22       Unfortunately, 296 is not helping students  
23 make adequate progress that they need for high  
24 school and beyond. The school's in the bottom  
25 1% of middle schools citywide in terms of growth

1 from year to year of students in English and in  
2 the bottom 9% of middle schools citywide in  
3 terms of learning growth - - students grow year  
4 to year in math. Because of these evaluations,  
5 the yearly conducted comprehensive review of the  
6 schools to determine which supports and  
7 interventions would be best--would best benefit  
8 its students and the school community. The DOE  
9 worked with the superintendent and other  
10 experienced educators to hold community meetings  
11 with parents and school staff to solicit  
12 feedback. Based on this comprehensive review  
13 and evidence, additional supports were not  
14 working. The DOE unfortunately believes the  
15 most serious intervention, the gradual phase out  
16 and eventual closing of this school, will  
17 address the performance struggles and allow for  
18 new school options to develop that will better  
19 serve the students and the broader school  
20 community.

21 296 is located in building K296 and is  
22 collocated with the elementary school grades of  
23 Achievement First - - Charter School, and P.S.  
24 53K at 296, a District 75 program located at  
25 seven different sites throughout Brooklyn.

1 Collocation means that two or more school  
2 organizations are located in the same building  
3 and may share common spaces such as the  
4 cafeteria, auditorium, gymnasium, library and  
5 other places. A separate EIS also posted on  
6 December 19, the DOE has proposed to open and  
7 collocate a new public middle school, I.S. 562  
8 in K296, which would serve students in grade six  
9 through eight grade, when it reaches full scale  
10 in 2014/2015. The new middle school would serve  
11 students in the 296 attendance zone, and would  
12 also admit District 32 students who reside  
13 outside the 296 zone through a selection  
14 process.

15 296 currently offers a transitional  
16 bilingual program for some of its students. As  
17 student demand necessitates this, the program,  
18 the bilingual program, will continue to exist at  
19 I.S. 562. The bilingual program will exist at  
20 the new school coming in.

21 I.S. 562 will be collocated in K296 with  
22 middle school 296, Achievement First Bushwick,  
23 and P.S. 53 - - . As 296 phases out and 562  
24 phases in. If this proposal is approved, 296  
25 will be phased out gradually over the next

1 several years, and will no longer admit new  
2 sixth grade students after the end of this  
3 school year. Current sixth and seventh grade  
4 students will remain in 296 and be supported as  
5 they progress toward completion of middle  
6 school, and transition to high school.

7 Current eighth grade students who meet  
8 promotional requirements will apply to high  
9 school through the citywide high school  
10 admission process, and most people have gone  
11 through that already. At the end of the 2013/14  
12 school year when the school is scheduled to  
13 close, any 296 students who don't meet the  
14 promotional standards will be placed at another  
15 District 32 middle school, including this one,  
16 or a middle school in the district where the  
17 student resides--or not students in District 32.

18 I would also like to acknowledge the recent  
19 renaming of this school in memory of a beloved  
20 resident of the Bushwick community, Anna  
21 Gonzalez. Her deep commitment to District 32  
22 schools, students and the broader community as  
23 evidenced by her activism on - - , her  
24 transformation of the Hope Gardens Senior Center  
25 and her relentless activism on behalf of all

1 members of the Bushwick community. It is an  
2 honor to be able to name this school after her.

3 We understand that her community chose to  
4 honor her memory - - through the renaming of  
5 296, and accordingly, the DOE will initiate the  
6 renaming of the 296 facility, the entire  
7 building, in her honor. The building we are now  
8 in will forever be known as the Anna Gonzalez  
9 Community Campus in honor of her work and her  
10 commitments. We are happy to be able to  
11 continue this naming.

12 Thank you. We look forward to people's  
13 comments as well as impressions they have. I  
14 turn it back to Olivia.

15 OLIVIA: Thank you. Our next presenter will  
16 be the president of the Community Education  
17 Council, Victoria Lugo.

18 MS. VICTORIA LUGO: Good evening. As a  
19 council, we recognize and understand that  
20 according to the data, we need to make changes  
21 in order to better support the needs of our  
22 children, and improve their performance so that  
23 they experience success. We are requesting that  
24 this proposed phase out and replacing of J.H.S.  
25 296, the Department of Education will pay close

1 attention to the unique needs of our  
2 communities and work closely with parent leaders  
3 to ensure that our children are provided will  
4 the best possible opportunities and options to  
5 succeed in school and to be well prepared for  
6 their future success. In the proposal to phase  
7 out and replace I.S. 296 - - , we want to have  
8 an input on what the new school will offer our  
9 children. We want to make sure that the  
10 programs, services, supports and resources that  
11 are working for our children continue to be  
12 available and strengthened to meet their needs.  
13 For example, I.S. 296 is the only District 32  
14 middle school that offers bilingual programs to  
15 help our children who come from their countries  
16 with little or no English experience. Success  
17 in their language as they learn English and  
18 adapt to the new school system. I.S. 296 has  
19 brought new technology, and our children need to  
20 continue using technology to improve their  
21 skills and to be well prepared for their future.

22 The - - is another important component of  
23 I.S. 296 that need to be continued. The many  
24 resources provided by the CPO [phonetic] - - and  
25 their families, after school programs, - -

1 extracurricular activities and many services  
2 that help support their needs. We want our  
3 voices to be heard, and for our feedback to be  
4 taken seriously, as to planning for the future  
5 of this school community are considered.

6 We need to ensure the unique needs of our  
7 community are taken into account and that we  
8 provide the necessary resources to improve the  
9 performances of our children and build on their  
10 strength so that they are successful and  
11 contribute in improving our societies and  
12 community at large.

13 - - not that it has been approved. We seek  
14 the support of the Department of Education in  
15 ensuring that it does not change with the  
16 proposed phase out, Anna Gonzalez' vision and  
17 dedicated services provided more wealth of a  
18 much needed resource that strengthens our - -  
19 community. Thank you.

20 OLIVIA: Thank you. Our next presenter will  
21 be a representative of the school leadership  
22 team of I.S. 296, Adrian Thomas.

23 MS. ADRIAN THOMAS: Good evening, everyone.  
24 It is with much regret that I sit here this  
25 evening as a member of this panel that is

1 seeking to close the school. My sitting here,  
2 in now way indicates that I'm a supporter of the  
3 present action or of the proposed action being  
4 on the table. I.S. 296 is a unique school. I  
5 have been teaching here for over ten years,  
6 having come here just around the time of the  
7 events of 9/11 from a foreign country.

8 Many foreign students here are immigrants  
9 like myself, and are subject to some of the  
10 difficulties that many of our students have. As  
11 a result, I.S. 296 has implemented a number of  
12 programs designed to address the unique issues  
13 being faced by the students here. Their labs,  
14 computer labs that have been put in place so  
15 that our students become technologically aware  
16 and astute, the teaching of English as a second  
17 language, many foreign students being foreign  
18 language speakers, and all of these programs  
19 have been implemented and have been successful  
20 in our children, many foreign children,  
21 achieving in a relatively rapid time, success.

22 I heard the Deputy Chancellor mention some  
23 statistics, but in many cases, we can't all use  
24 statistics to guide our actions. In many  
25 respects we have to look at some of the unseen

1 successes that have been taking place in many  
2 of our schools. The impression of many of our--  
3 of the teachers here is that many of these  
4 decisions were taken high above without looking  
5 at some of the work that have been done that is  
6 not reflected statistically.

7         So if there is time for positive of the  
8 board of education to look at some of the other  
9 variables that they have not looked at, some of  
10 the things that cannot be quantified and may not  
11 be obviously visible, then it would show that  
12 there have been many successes here. So we're  
13 just asking as members of the school leadership  
14 team and members of the school community who  
15 serve the students here to look at our students,  
16 their uniqueness and the fact there are many  
17 individuals who are trying their very best and  
18 who have been trying to ensure that our students  
19 leave here with a kind of education that puts  
20 them - - successfully in society.

21         So let's hope that as a result of the  
22 discussion, and I hope it's a discussion that  
23 emanates from this meeting, that I hope what I  
24 refer to as the correct decision will be taken  
25 to give I.S. 296 the mandate to continue with

1 necessary changes. Thank you.

2 [Applause]

3 OLIVIA: Thank you. We have now concluded  
4 the formal presentations. I'm going to begin  
5 calling numbers for public comment. When I call  
6 your number, please line up, come to the mic and  
7 state your name, and you may begin speaking.

8 You are reminded that public comment must be  
9 limited to two minutes, time will be kept, and  
10 we will signal you when you have 30 seconds  
11 remaining and when your time is up. Thank you.

12 Right now, number one and two.

13 MS. KATHLEEN LEONARD: My name is Kathleen  
14 Leonard speaking on behalf of Ernie Load  
15 [phonetic], president of CSA. The DOE has  
16 scheduled 25 poor schools to phase out and  
17 closure and said that the schools open - - that  
18 they replace. Yet in the latest round of  
19 closings, 11 schools were opened during the  
20 mayor's administration, ironically some of the  
21 names of the schools are usually among those  
22 that are closed and become part of the vicious  
23 cycle of failure. The New York City public  
24 school system is not a place for experimentation  
25 where you open and close schools for students, -

1 - traumatized by previous school closings. -  
2 - bully our people who have not been saved by  
3 the city's new school safety net. They have  
4 been turned away from new schools for reasons of  
5 poor academic achievement or for other reasons  
6 and sent to be warehoused in other low  
7 performing schools that will probably be closed  
8 also.

9 This is a losing strategy to turn schools  
10 around. Low performing schools are invariably  
11 attended by children of color from economically  
12 disadvantaged communities. The - - strategy is  
13 to eliminate schools that the administration has  
14 least - - to fix and to approve - - schools that  
15 won't have - - . The fact is the closure is an  
16 initiative paid by city hall. The Bloomberg  
17 administration needs to take more  
18 responsibility, not less, the schools that are  
19 not doing well rather than turning them over to  
20 private entities like EPOs who are closing them  
21 and washing their hands of a deep rooted problem  
22 that has been - - . Thank you.

23 MR. CYRIL JOSEPH: Good afternoon, ladies  
24 and gentlemen. My name is Cyril Joseph. I'm a  
25 member of - - . I'm an elected - - democratic

1 party. This school happens to be in my  
2 district. I am coming here in front of you to  
3 opposed the closure of this school. Reason  
4 number one is that my kids went to this school,  
5 and both of them graduated with As. One's in  
6 college, and one's at - - now. The other thing  
7 I'm saying that the school has been renamed in  
8 honor of - - district. She was the chairperson  
9 of community board - - , Anna Gonzalez. It made  
10 me feel proud, and - - that this school has been  
11 renamed in honor of all the good that she has  
12 done, and it would be a shame to see that this  
13 school is closed. We have many kids or children  
14 who speak different languages, and this school  
15 has been very instrumental in - - . I have - -  
16 on many occasions unannounced, both for the - -  
17 to see what performance - - has been done. I  
18 urge everyone in this audience - - achievement  
19 speak loudly against closure of this school - -  
20 politicians, city council, assembly, state, that  
21 we are against this school closing. Thank you  
22 very much.

23 [Applause]

24 OLIVIA: Thank you. At this time, I'd like  
25 to recognize a representative from Councilmember

1 Martin Delan's [phonetic] office, - - , and  
2 representative from State Senator Martin Delan's  
3 office, Michael Olwega [phonetic]. I'd also  
4 like to introduce Assemblymember Raphael  
5 Esguinar.

6 MR. RAPHAEL ESGUINAR: Good evening. My  
7 name is Raphael Esguinar. I'm a - -  
8 assemblymember here in the 54th District, and I  
9 do cover District 32. I just want say that I do  
10 believe what the DOE has been doing to our  
11 schools is really unfair. Before they decided  
12 to close our schools, you should look at  
13 changing administration, look at what programs  
14 are missing. I think - - . I have schools that  
15 don't have internet access. I have schools  
16 collecting bottles to pay for programs, and I  
17 have schools that don't even have art or library  
18 teachers. So the blame is not on the school.  
19 It's not on the students. It's on the DOE not  
20 implementing what the school needs to help our  
21 kids. So before you decide to phase out our  
22 school, look at what the problem is and address  
23 that problem.

24 So again, I'm - - but also, the - - city  
25 council - - and the state senator, and we're

1 aligned together to make sure this school  
2 stays open.

3 [Applause]

4 MR. ESGUINAR: And if the DOE doesn't want  
5 to listen and you guys decide to close the  
6 schools, I'm going to make sure that we don't  
7 have a charter school coming in here and using  
8 up all their resources. It's not fair. - - .

9 [Applause]

10 MR. ESGUINA: So on behalf of our  
11 neighborhood, on behalf of Bushwick District 32,  
12 keep our school open. Thank you.

13 [Applause]

14 OLIVIA: Thank you. Numbers three, four,  
15 five and six. If you come to the mic. Thank  
16 you.

17 MS. SYLVANA MEDINA: [Speaking foreign  
18 language]

19 [Applause]

20 FEMALE VOICE: Why are not we, the school,  
21 not given the resources that are needed the most  
22 instead of replacing it with yet another new  
23 school? I have tried before to put my kids into  
24 a charter school, but they have this waiting  
25 list, and that makes it impossible. So why

1 don't they put the effort and the energy and  
2 the resources into the existing school?

3 OLIVIA: Thank you.

4 MS. OSBLANDO NUMB: [Speaking foreign  
5 language]

6 FEMALE VOICE: I am somebody who is pretty  
7 much on the same page of the young lady who was  
8 speaking before. I have a kid enrolled here  
9 currently, and he got kicked out from another  
10 place. When he came over here, he was able to  
11 do a much better job, and he was doing great.

12 MS. NUMB: [Speaking foreign language]

13 FEMALE VOICE: And also, the same problems  
14 will continue to occur, so it is better if they  
15 just keep this school open. Thank you very  
16 much.

17 OLIVIA: Number six, seven and eight.

18 [Applause]

19 MS. ELISA CASTILLO: Hi, Buenos noches.  
20 [Speaking foreign language]

21 [Applause]

22 FEMALE VOICE: Okay. So I am Anna Gonzalez.  
23 Good afternoon, teachers, principals and  
24 students. My name is Elisa Castillo, sorry. I  
25 am from Honduras. I have been here for--I have

1       been in the United States for one year, and I  
2       represent the bilingual department. I'm going  
3       to speak to you about the school, Anna Gonzalez  
4       Community Service in Bushwick - - . The school  
5       has served in many, many ways to the community  
6       and others. During Thanksgiving, the members of  
7       the school community, they collected canned food  
8       to give away to the children and families in  
9       need. Also, they had a GED program and ESL for  
10      parents who speak Spanish so that they can  
11      graduate high school. In addition, from here,  
12      every year there are--we are sending cards, and  
13      we take music for the elderly. The last goal,  
14      the goal is to help youth in our community to  
15      obtain a better, high quality education. How  
16      you say that all this and all the great work  
17      done from the teachers, from the principal, I  
18      consider our school is very important for the  
19      city of New York. In addition, also, Ms. Anna  
20      Gonzalez has served, participated in many--  
21      excuse me. In many activities of community  
22      service. Our school is the only bilingual  
23      school in this community, and it's constantly  
24      assisting students who migrate from other  
25      countries.

1           Every day we have students, new students  
2 that come in to live in this community, and they  
3 have a really hard time assisting to a school  
4 where they only speak English. It's been a  
5 pleasure to be a part of this school.

6           [Applause]

7           MR. MICHAEL HARRY: Wow, the last time - -  
8 like that, and those only based on certain  
9 students, and I just wanted to say that we're  
10 not all like that, and - - I know - - stuff, but  
11 we can do better, and if you give us another  
12 chance, I promise you that we can do better.  
13 And like, the - - stuff like this because I'm -  
14 - but if this school wasn't here, I would've  
15 commuted out because of activities and things  
16 like that. So that's one of the reasons why I  
17 don't want our school to close. Thank you.

18          [Applause]

19          OLIVIA: Thank you. At this time, I'd like  
20 to introduce a representative from Congresswoman  
21 Lydia Valasquez' office, Evelyn Cruz.

22          [Applause]

23          MS. EVELYN CRUZ: Good evening, board  
24 members. My name is Evelyn. I represent  
25 Congresswoman Lydia Valasquez, [Speaking foreign

1 language]. I'm here this evening as I've been  
2 rotating at different schools in Brooklyn,  
3 particularly in low income communities faced  
4 with this situation. The Congresswoman is  
5 quite, again, disturbed by DOE's policy of  
6 assuming it's best to phase out, close the  
7 school, that would be the solution to their  
8 education. We totally disagree with that.

9       What we need is DOE to really invest in our  
10 - - schools. This is a community that's a dual  
11 language community. [Speaking foreign  
12 language].

13       What I'm saying is that we need other  
14 resources, our children and the teachers, and  
15 everyone engaged needs to get the capacity  
16 building, the technical support and the money  
17 and the resources that we can invest to really  
18 empower our young people to learn. They have  
19 the potential.

20       We were reviewing the - - report for this  
21 school for the year 2008 and 2009. This was an  
22 A school. It was an A school. That means it  
23 has the capacity to be an A school if given the  
24 opportunity. And how it slipped from A to B or  
25 C or D and DOE did not start to implement

1 correctional remediation for the school is a  
2 problem. So I'm here to sustain that we are  
3 quite disturbed. We will not support any  
4 expansion of charter schools here or any  
5 incoming charter schools here. What we want  
6 DOE, what we want the chancellor to do is to  
7 invest here.

8 I know that the mayor is saying he's the  
9 education mayor. We need him to support the  
10 public school. We need him to understand that  
11 our children are graduating and not making it in  
12 college. As we've heard from the state's own  
13 report, they are leaving middle schools, they  
14 are leaving high schools not ready for college  
15 learning where they have to get remediation  
16 courses.

17 We need to invest at this age, and I think  
18 it's very distractive, it's very destructive for  
19 the families that are here in the school to have  
20 to understand this phasing out and - -  
21 graduating in 2014 with an F school. There are  
22 many parents here who are saying why should my  
23 child remain in a school that's an F school for  
24 another three years?

25 So these are the kind of questions that are

1 being raised by the parents that need to be--  
2 that should have been addressed earlier.

3 [Speaking foreign language]

4 [Applause] OLIVIA: Number nine, ten, 11 and  
5 12.

6 MS. VALINDA VAREGA: Good evening. My name  
7 is Valinda Varega [phonetic], and first and  
8 foremost, I'd like to acknowledge - - , I'd like  
9 to acknowledge the students, the parents, the  
10 school, the administrators, the teachers, the  
11 Board of Ed., the Chancellor. The first thing I  
12 wanted to say is I asked my daughter, okay, who  
13 is now a sixth grader. She's coming from P.S.  
14 151, and has always been a three and a four when  
15 it comes to the standards.

16 Now, my first question to her, I said, do  
17 you want me to transfer you out of the school,  
18 and I'm also - - things. Okay? I do substitute  
19 teaching. I'm a - - at the school. I - - 291.  
20 My sister was valedictorian in 1977, and I still  
21 have my honor pins, my honorable pins, my maroon  
22 and my yellow, and I think that I chose after  
23 college to come back and to be a part of this  
24 neighborhood because I know the students in the  
25 neighborhood.

1           I've been in a room where I taught  
2 students who were doing multiplication who were  
3 - - to take home a - - with telephone numbers.  
4 They wanted to know, oh, if I change from 718 to  
5 212 or in reverse, what the - - are. So - -  
6 also work in a 53 schools where it's just  
7 exceptional. I see some of the work and the  
8 standards that they do, okay?

9           And getting as you know about the 30  
10 seconds. What my daughter said when I said--is  
11 she said--when I said save the school? She said  
12 save the kids, and I'm very proud to see that  
13 two young people are standing here in front of  
14 me because you know what, they represent who we  
15 are, okay? I have a lot of questions.

16           First of all, I'd like to talk about - - .  
17 Okay, and - - my time is up. I'm going to go  
18 back, and I'm going to sign another number, and  
19 I'm going to - - three panelists stand up and  
20 sign in so I can get the time that I need for -  
21 - here. Can I get three panelists to get me,  
22 ten minutes? Two minutes?

23           OLIVIA: Excuse me? The sign up period has  
24 ended. If you have questions, there are index  
25 cards - - .

1 MS. VAREGA: No, this is - - because you  
2 say that the panelists don't come out. The  
3 panelists don't come out, and you know what, I  
4 don't think that the students should be - -  
5 because I'm very much an historic and a  
6 statistician, and I know whenever you add up  
7 percentages, you have to analyze what that  
8 percentage is, and as you know, if you looked at  
9 the reports that were given, approximately 51% -  
10 - your time. Can you sign - - in? Can you sign  
11 in - - 20 minutes?

12 Oh, okay. All right. You know what, there  
13 are other ways because I say you have - - , you  
14 know? We have a voice, and there's some things  
15 that need to be heard because whenever you're  
16 saying--right, why don't you - - what you're  
17 saying to me. Yes.

18 OLIVIA: Thank you.

19 MR. JUNIAR HARAGO: [Speaking foreign  
20 language]

21 [Applause]

22 MALE VOICE: - - been in the school two  
23 years now, and this is a good school - - I've  
24 learned more English than I've ever learned  
25 before. - - thank you.

1 [Applause]

2 MS. PRECIOUS BROWN: I myself would like to  
3 keep this school open. I feel like - - going to  
4 this school for years - - precious. My name's  
5 Precious. - - I would like - - . I have many  
6 good memories of my friends, and I would like to  
7 keep this school open - - us kids - - more  
8 moments with their friends. Thank you.

9 [Applause]

10 OLIVIA: Thank you. Numbers 13 and 14.

11 MR. AUSTEN MARTINEZ: Hello, everybody. I  
12 want to say this in Spanish first. [Speaking  
13 foreign language]

14 I'm going to say it in English right now.  
15 No, - - same time. [Speaking foreign language]

16 Let me translate in English. I'll do it  
17 different now. I think that it's very fair for  
18 you to be here tonight trying to close a school  
19 that is not performing the way you want to.  
20 2009, this school used to be an A plus. And - -  
21 done to the school. I think the principal - -  
22 so I think that she have done the job that I  
23 think - - do to make the school good than  
24 anybody else. It's not her fault. It's not the  
25 teachers' fault that the school is not

1 performing.

2 I think when you have a student that is not  
3 performing, that is not making the grade, what -  
4 - used to the student - - you pay somebody to -  
5 - you doing a job that you're supposed to be  
6 doing for the school and the community. I  
7 understand that we are a multilingual community.  
8 I also - - and I see the plans, and they work  
9 long hours, and when they go home, they're  
10 tired. They don't even check their homework.  
11 So I think you have to bring the resources to  
12 the school and bring more - - to the students  
13 because they're not performing the way you want  
14 it, - - program. Bring better teachers, a  
15 better lab and everything else. Oh, my time's  
16 up.

17 [Applause]

18 OLIVIA: Thank you.

19 MR. MARTINEZ: Oh, I'm sorry, - - . I was  
20 told my time is up. - - give - - to go to a  
21 private school for - - , so I'm going to be  
22 waiting for you for - - for the private school.

23 MS. MARIA ROSARIO: [Speaking foreign  
24 language]

25 [Applause]

1           MALE VOICE: Greetings, everyone,  
2 students, superintendent, director, members of  
3 the panel, parents, families. What changes are  
4 there going to be in this school when - - what  
5 time, when is that time coming? How much time  
6 is there to wait? When does the new  
7 reconstruction of the school or unit going to  
8 happen in this school? Which is the reason for  
9 the closing of this school? It's a - - closing.  
10 Why? Who is it going to benefit? Which is the  
11 support that the Department of Education's going  
12 to bring us? What will be the opportunities for  
13 these kids when they graduate in 2014? Which is  
14 the--what's the benefit of being a school that's  
15 rated F that has an F ranking. I understand  
16 it's - - . And what's their chances of entering  
17 a better school.

18           Listen to my voice, please. Thank you.

19           [Applause]

20           OLIVIA: Thank you. We will now begin the  
21 question and answer period. Remember, there  
22 will be individual questions and others that  
23 have been bucketed into categories where we will  
24 have representatives' questions asked. Any  
25 question that is not answered here tonight will

1 be answered on the web site.

2 If you have additional questions at the  
3 conclusion of tonight's proceedings, we ask that  
4 you direct them to us here at the phone number  
5 or e-mail address on the fact sheet. I'm going  
6 to hand it over to Deputy Chancellor David  
7 Weiner.

8 MR. WEINER: Thanks, Olivia. First of all,  
9 I want to thank everyone for coming out and  
10 having your voices heard. We really do take  
11 this meeting very seriously, and we appreciate  
12 it. We want to thank and appreciate the  
13 children who came out and spoke. I can imagine  
14 how hard it must be for some of the students who  
15 recently moved here - - come here even in the  
16 last year, so that's really amazing that they  
17 came up here and speak, and of course - - .  
18 Thanks and appreciation for each of those  
19 students - - .

20 - - some questions here, and I'm going to  
21 try to go through--I'll try to cover them as  
22 comprehensively as I can, but as Olivia  
23 mentioned in the beginning, we will cover full  
24 comprehensive answers to all the questions in  
25 case - - . Or if people have additional

1 questions after this. So please be aware that  
2 we won't be able to cover them all. I will try  
3 to cover as much as I can here.

4 We have about maybe five or six questions  
5 about the new school that's coming in, so I'm  
6 going to address those first, and then I'll  
7 cover some of the other ones. The first  
8 question is in regards to the selection of the  
9 new school. Is there a selection procedure? Is  
10 there specific criteria, what's the process, and  
11 why hasn't there been a copy before from the CEC  
12 - - to review. That's the first question. We  
13 think the Department of Education should have a  
14 fully staff office at the new schools. They  
15 actually engage in a lengthy rigorous  
16 application process. It's very high bar that  
17 new schools much enter, and that as per the  
18 application process, a new leader is at least  
19 identified to be the leader of the new school.

20 This process begins with the submission of a  
21 written application that outlines the plan, the  
22 pedagogy, the educational experiences of the new  
23 school, the process actually continues for  
24 several months, - - interviews with candidates  
25 for principal, teachers, whoever is going to be

1 involved in the new school, then they go on  
2 onsite visits to schools that these people come  
3 from. They do observations and it ultimately  
4 results in a pool of really good candidates that  
5 are the matched with the new schools across the  
6 city, including replacement schools - - those  
7 schools ultimately proposed for phase out. For  
8 example, the new school that's coming into this  
9 building, several speakers spoke about the  
10 importance of the bilingual program, and that's  
11 why this new school is matched to this  
12 community. As long as the bilingual program  
13 continues to be needed in this community, the  
14 school will provide it.

15 So there were two questions that kind of  
16 involved the involvement of the community and  
17 also the CEC in terms of - - leadership for the  
18 new school and how community members and CEC  
19 members would get to know the new school and new  
20 leaders involved. So I'm going to cover both of  
21 those here.

22 The new school has not been approved yet.  
23 It will be voted on, on February 9th at the PEB  
24 meeting, and if the new school is approved, very  
25 shortly thereafter, there will actually be a

1 meeting held at the area school in this  
2 neighborhood so that - - parents and other  
3 community members can also meet the new school  
4 leaders and get to learn about what that new  
5 school--get to learn about I.S. 562 and  
6 determine if it's the best option for their  
7 children - - sixth grade, other community  
8 members can ask different questions about  
9 programs and procedure that will be in place at  
10 the new school, hear about plans for this  
11 school, be able to ask any questions that they  
12 have.

13         This meeting as well has the Community  
14 Educational Council - - who will help the leader  
15 of the new school determine what kind of program  
16 and community partnership will be best to serve  
17 the needs of the new school. It's also  
18 important to note that the new administrator of  
19 the school will go through what the DOE calls  
20 the C30 process. The C30 process is an  
21 opportunity for a group of School Leadership  
22 Team members, teachers, parents, actually  
23 Superintendent Drucker will be able to - - that  
24 process, and so they will actually make a final  
25 decision. Principals are not actually

1 officially appointed to schools until the C30  
2 process with the community actually has input to  
3 determine whether that's the best thing for a  
4 school to move forward. So the person will just  
5 be what we call interim acting, so won't be  
6 officially appointed until after the C30  
7 process.

8         That's when the community will have an  
9 opportunity to participate. There was a  
10 question about what types of supports and what  
11 types of opportunities were given to 296. So  
12 extensive supports are offered to struggling  
13 schools, and they can have varying degrees of  
14 success. It includes support both from the  
15 superintendent as well as the network, the  
16 cluster provides support and assistance, they  
17 provide both instructional and operational  
18 support. The principal can receive that support  
19 as well if he or she may need that support, and  
20 they try to really target the particular  
21 challenges that school community might have. So  
22 that's - - support. The new school will receive  
23 similar support as the old school.

24         There's a question here about will the  
25 application process for the new school be open

1 to parents to apply, and if so, when? - -  
2 some of these dates, but you do not need to  
3 write them down or anything. This information  
4 is all up on our web site, although I would be  
5 happy to mention it as many times as I need to  
6 until everyone understands it. On Monday, March  
7 26, so - - six weeks, the applications for a new  
8 school are actually disseminated to fifth grade  
9 students in the District. So the fifth grade  
10 students can determine where they want to go.  
11 On April 4 is the date that the new middle  
12 school applications are actually returned to the  
13 schools that the child is attending, and in May,  
14 this upcoming May, notification letters will be  
15 sent to families about where their child has  
16 been accepted into a school.

17 There's actually an appeal process, where a  
18 parent decides later that they want to go to a  
19 different school or doesn't get accepted into a  
20 school they want. There's an appeal process in  
21 place, and that occurs in June. It's a second  
22 opportunity for students to apply to - - middle  
23 schools.

24 Again, the dates I mentioned on this are  
25 available on our web site, and the new school

1 process and the application process. Although  
2 if anyone has any questions, I'd be happy to  
3 answer them - - at the end of this.

4         So there's another question regarding  
5 feedback from parents and how the Department of  
6 Education has taken feedback into account. So  
7 first of all parent feedback is actually a  
8 crucial component in determining the process of  
9 which schools would need to be phased out and  
10 how it should be replaced. We hold what we call  
11 early engagement meetings, and these are  
12 actually meetings that have occurred three and  
13 four months ago. Parents and community members  
14 were invited to those meetings, and we basically  
15 tried to solicit as much feedback as we could  
16 from parents.

17         Parents also every year, the annual survey,  
18 fill out information about the school. In this  
19 particular school, they felt that last year - -  
20 informed our decision, and the feedback really  
21 allows us to get a better understanding of what  
22 areas are working, whether it's safety issues or  
23 instructional issues or communication issues to  
24 try to help address some of the needs and also  
25 feeds into this conversation.

1           So another question here is the existing  
2 bilingual program here at 296 are very important  
3 for our community, and I think we've had a lot  
4 of speakers mention that, as well as - - more  
5 than one mentioned they were actually enrolled  
6 in the bilingual programs, and there's a  
7 request, as part of the question, that we want  
8 to ensure the Department will continue to - -  
9 the needs of our newly arrived ELLs so that they  
10 are successful. As I mentioned both in my  
11 initial speech and then in response to another  
12 question, that the bilingual programs will  
13 continue to exist here as the new school gets  
14 phased in as well as 296 gets phased out, and  
15 that those programs will exist as long as the  
16 need exists in this community. So that's  
17 definitely something that's going to remain as  
18 it's an important component to the families in  
19 this community. It's something we'll be able to  
20 maintain.

21           I have two more questions. You want to take  
22 a break?

23           OLIVIA: Well, at this time, I'd like to  
24 introduce Councilmember Eric Delan.

25           MR. WEINER: Okay. I'll give him a chance

1 to speak, and then I'll answer the question.

2 Thank you.

3 MR. ERIC DELAN: Thanks, and thank you for  
4 allowing me the opportunity to speak. I promise  
5 not to take too much of the time, as I think I  
6 will say what will probably be redundant, but I  
7 do want to go on the record and have my office  
8 go on the record about what's happening here at  
9 this school.

10 Now, what I will say is this school has long  
11 been a pillar of the Bushwick community. I'm  
12 going to make it very, very clear that I'm going  
13 to do everything in my power to stop the  
14 attacking of people, with no uncertain terms,  
15 expect me to do that. Look, I'll be honest.  
16 The principal here is someone who I consider a  
17 personal friend, but I have a major, major fault  
18 and a major, major objection when the Department  
19 of Education consistently closes schools before  
20 making the change in administrative leadership.  
21 Look, she's a friend, and don't get me wrong.  
22 I've been on the school board. I've closed  
23 schools, so I'm not opposed to closing schools,  
24 but if you see that the numbers are not going in  
25 the direction that it needs to go just in

1 general, it has nothing to do with her, I love  
2 her. I got nothing against her. She's a good  
3 friend, but why are we going to allow a school  
4 to continue to go in a certain direction before  
5 we move the leadership and change  
6 administration?

7 The burden that you guys are putting these  
8 parents through in terms of finding a place for  
9 their children to go and all the relocations and  
10 all the adjustments is a major inconvenience. I  
11 don't think anybody is against a good quality  
12 education. I don't think anybody wants their  
13 kids to go to a poor school.

14 My father went to this school. He's the  
15 state senator. My sister went to the school. I  
16 have two children that probably come to this  
17 junior high school, so we all want it to work.  
18 But I think to let it go to the point where the  
19 school has to close because the academics are  
20 not meeting the standards that our kids need, I  
21 think is entirely unacceptable.

22 And I want to stress to the DOE from a  
23 citywide and broad stroke approach that before  
24 you make decisions to close a school, consider  
25 administrative changes, whether they be at the

1 top or any level, to make the school work for  
2 the kids and the parents and the communities  
3 that they are in.

4 In every instance where the DOE does this, I  
5 will be there to oppose it. I will say again,  
6 this is very personal. My family went here. My  
7 community lives here, and we've worked hard for  
8 the school. We've pumped a lot of money in this  
9 school in terms of - - to make this successful.  
10 We've done a lot of help with Ms. Gruber when  
11 she was the PTA president and as she serves in  
12 her current capacity. We care and put a lot  
13 into the school.

14 Frankly, if the DOE had stepped to me and  
15 said, hey, can you do more, you know, this is  
16 struggling, is there anything we can do to help  
17 out, I would've stepped up. But it never  
18 happened once, not once, and I'm going to be  
19 here for this school. I'm going to be here for  
20 these people, and if I have to sue, I will. I  
21 know nobody's afraid of that. Nobody's  
22 threatened by that, and that's fine, but I don't  
23 leave any surprises. I leave everything that I  
24 intend to do out there.

25 I have no disrespect for anybody on a

1 professional level, but I think what  
2 professionally, I believe my community's being  
3 really disrespected because yes, they'll - -  
4 your plans on what you intend to do, and they  
5 can come and talk for two minutes, and there's  
6 nothing they can really do about it. They just  
7 have to sit back and accept it, and I don't  
8 think that's fair.

9       So I'll end there, and I'm glad I met with  
10 Chancellor Walcott [phonetic]. I told him  
11 exactly what I've told you tonight about this,  
12 so he's not surprised. He knows my position.  
13 I'm glad they listened to one thing because  
14 normally when these things close and they become  
15 campuses, the names of the schools change. Anna  
16 Gonzalez is a local hero, so I'm glad you at  
17 least listened to that because a lot of people  
18 are very, very proud of Anna Gonzalez and what  
19 she stands for, so I'm glad that will at least  
20 remain.

21       [Applause]

22       MR. DELAN: I'm glad you took that into  
23 consideration. So where I give my criticisms, I  
24 also give my compliments. I'll say one other  
25 thing before I close. I'm not against charter

1 schools, but what I am against is the  
2 collocation of public and charter schools  
3 together because they create inherent conflicts  
4 in terms of who is in control or who's in charge  
5 of the building, and both entities will continue  
6 to compete for space and compete for resources  
7 and compete for everything that happens in this  
8 school.

9         If you want to create charter schools, fine,  
10 I don't care, but give them their own building.  
11 I'll support that. I'll help them get space.  
12 I'll help them, and we'll open up choices to  
13 parents, but every instance where the DOE has  
14 created collocations, there have always been  
15 problems, and I really would like--and I know  
16 it's costly. I know it's costly to do that.  
17 It's easier and cheaper to collocate, but I  
18 think the competition that it creates against  
19 public and charter schools is inherently unfair,  
20 and the public schools don't get to pick their  
21 populations in the kids that they have to  
22 select, and it's really not fair.

23         And what I will say in defense of Ms.  
24 Paretta [phonetic], she had to accept a lot of  
25 students on the changed standards that had to

1 take the exams with limited English  
2 proficiency, and those standards change. To her  
3 as a professional, that's highly unfair. But  
4 that's the name of the game. That's the way it  
5 was across the board. I really don't think it's  
6 fair. I wanted to go on the record, and thank  
7 you for the opportunity to speak.

8 If it doesn't get settled here, I'll find  
9 another way to settle it, and I'm sure the  
10 parents will be with me. So I look forward to  
11 seeing you on this matter again.

12 [Applause]

13 OLIVIA: Thank you. - - .

14 MR. WEINER: Thank you, Council member for -  
15 - your thoughts and beliefs and what you say - -  
16 . I appreciate you - - . I will. Thank you  
17 very much.

18 I'm going to go back to some questions. We  
19 have two or three more questions, and then we'll  
20 be out of here. There's a question about what  
21 will happen to the existing CBO. There's  
22 several CBO - - programs, several students, and  
23 the parents spoke about that, and that they've  
24 served the community and been important support  
25 to the students. I want to make it crystal

1 clear that planning has already been done to  
2 ensure that the CBOs currently operating within  
3 this building will be able to remain in the  
4 building and be able to serve the communities  
5 and the students within this building. So the  
6 CBOs will remain in this building. I want to  
7 make sure that's clear.

8 The final question, what I think the Council  
9 Member spoke about briefly, is 296 basically,  
10 there had been requests about the school had  
11 been renamed Anna Gonzalez. I mentioned this at  
12 the beginning, and the council member mentioned  
13 it again, but the Department of Education  
14 recognizes the important role that Anna Gonzalez  
15 played in this community, the importance of her  
16 and her beliefs and everything that she did both  
17 for the school but for the larger Bushwick  
18 community, and we're committed to naming this  
19 entire complex the Anna Gonzalez school. So to  
20 be very clear, we have heard the voices of the  
21 community, and that's something that we're going  
22 to be able to maintain and move forward with.  
23 So that's actually the last question, so thank  
24 you.

25 OLIVIA: OKAY. We have heard many

1 significant comments this evening. We  
2 appreciate your feedback and contributions to  
3 this hearing. The information will be shared  
4 with the Panel on Educational Policy, which will  
5 have its hearing on February 9, 2012 to vote on  
6 this proposal. Please use the number or web  
7 site at the bottom of the fact sheet if you have  
8 any other questions or concerns.

9 Thank you for coming out. This joint public  
10 hearing is officially adjourned. Thank you  
11 again.

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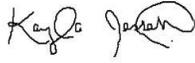
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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



7 Date February 5, 2012

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