NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - DIVISION OF PORTFOLIO PLANNING

Law, Government and Community Service High School

February 13, 2013

[START RECORDING]

MR. GREGG BETHEIL: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Gregg Betheil, and I will be acting as the facilitator for this joint public hearing. This is a joint public hearing of the Department of Education, the Community Education Council, and the school leadership teams to discuss the proposed phase-out of Law, Government and Community Service High School, 29Q494. Tonight's proceedings will be recorded and transcribed. Before we begin the hearing, we ask that anyone who wishes to speak during the public comment portion of the evening sign up in the table right out in the lobby. Prior to this hearing, the Office of Portfolio Management worked with the principal and Queens Superintendent Juan Mendez to extend speaker signup for public comment in response to concerns raised by the school community. Therefore, tonight's signup period will end right at 7:00; about 45 minutes from now. If you have a question that you want addressed during the question and answer portion of the agenda, please write that question on the index cards provided at the back and submit them to a

volunteer at the table. Only people who have signed up to speak will be able to participate in the public comment. All panel participants were asked to arrive here no later than 5:30 p.m. Now that we have started, if a panel participant arrives late, he or she will be given the time to speak at the first opportune moment. We want to be respectful of everyone's time, and again, thank you for being here. There may be elected officials who arrive at different times throughout the evening. If they wish to speak, we will do our best to accommodate them at the first opportune moment. Those who are here at the start of the public comment period will be asked to speak first. As you will see, the full agenda is described on posters around the room. The format for tonight's joint public hearing will include a presentation of the proposal and presentations by the hearing participants, followed by public comment. Speakers should have already signed up at the signup table in the lobby. Public comments can be no longer than two minutes each. The time will be strictly followed, and speakers will be informed when their designated time has

elapsed. There will be a question and answer period. Members of the audience, if you have a question, please write the question on the index cards that were supplied at the sign-in table when you arrived this evening. While the public comments are taking place, staff members will organize the questions into categories and get them ready for the question and answer period. Some questions will be asked directly from the index cards. Others will be batched together under headings to avoid repetitiveness. Even though all individual questions will not be addressed in the forum tonight, answers to questions will be posted on the Department of Education website prior to the Panel on Educational Policy meeting. If, at the end of the hearing, you still have questions, we encourage you to direct them to us by calling the phone number on the bottom of the fact sheet or sending them to us via email to the email address also provided on the fact sheet. The email address is d29proposals@schools.nyc.gov, and the phone number is (212)374-7621. I would now like to introduce the panel which has been assembled for this evening's joint public

1 hearing. Starting the left, we're joined this
2 evening by Deputy Chancellor Shael Suransky; by
3 Superintendent Juan Mendez; by President of the
4 District 29 Community Education Council Alicia
5 Hyndman; from the principal of Law, Government
6 and Community Service High School, Donna
7 Delfyett-White. We're also joined by Lynne
8 Callender, who is the principal of Business,
9 Computer Application, and Entrepreneurship High
10 School, Jose Cruz, who is the principal of
11 Mathematics, Science, Research, and Technology
12 High School, and Rosemarie Omard, principal of
13 Humanities and Arts High School. We're also
14 joined by members of the school leadership team
15 for Law, Government and Community Service High
16 School, including teacher Karen Dagis, Kelly
17 Nurse, from the school leadership team, Eric
18 Simone, who is the UFT chapter chair, as well as
19 Nicole Johnson, who is the Parent Association
20 president, and Likkita Middlebrooks, also from
21 the school leadership team. I will now turn the
22 program over to Deputy Chancellor Shael
23 Suransky, who will present the proposal.
24 MR. SHAEL POLAKOW-SURANSKY: Thank you,
25 Gregg. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

1 Thank you for being here this evening. This
2 joint public hearing was convened to discuss the
3 proposed phase-out and replacement of Law,
4 Government and Community Service High School,
5 and I will talk a little bit about the details
6 of that. I just want to mention, so that we're
7 all clear, there's a separate hearing on
8 February 26th for the proposed phase-out for
9 Business, Computer Applications, and
10 Entrepreneurship. The decision to phase out Law
11 is a difficult one and not a decision that's
12 taken lightly. It's a process that involves
13 examining data over several years and talking to
14 members of the school community and the broader
15 community to understand what's not working at
16 the school and what is working. And I'd just
17 like to, before we discuss the proposal, say a
18 few words about why we're here. All of us count
19 on our schools to provide a high-quality
20 education for every child, and we need to hold
21 each of our schools to the same high standard of
22 excellence, because every child in the city
23 deserves the best possible education. When a
24 school is not serving students and families
25 well, we have to take action to ensure that

current students don't fall even further behind and that future students will have a school that prepares them for success in college and in the workplace. I want to acknowledge that there are students here, parents, and teachers who do feel that they're being well-served by this school, and I think we'll hear some of those success stories this evening, and those are stories that we need to honor and acknowledge. But I also want us to consider, as we listen to the testimony, the other students whom the school is not serving well and who have not experienced the same success. These students deserve better. As I mentioned earlier, we'll be discussing the proposed phase-out and replacement. In addition to the proposed phase-out, we're proposing to replace Law with a new district high school which offers a career and technical education track focused on the health sciences. The current school is located, as you know, on Q490. There are several schools co-located in the building. We initially published this proposal January 14th. It was revised on February 6th. And in the proposal it describes the track record of the school and some of the

1 deep concerns that the Department has around
2 the school's performance, and I'll mention just
3 a few of those here. First, the school has
4 earned a D on the progress report for the past
5 year. In addition, the school earned a D on the
6 prior two progress reports as well. Graduation
7 rates have declined significantly over the past
8 several years. In 2008, the four-year
9 graduation rate was 72%. By the '11-'12 school
10 year, it was just 54%. Families and students
11 have both expressed concerns around safety. If
12 you look at the school survey, you see that the
13 school ranks in the bottom 12% amongst parents'
14 views around safety and in the bottom 5% in
15 students' views. That's a serious concern, and
16 it speaks to the challenge of building a strong
17 program that is both one where kids feel engaged
18 and safe, as well as one where they're
19 academically challenged. We believe that, as a
20 result of this trend, that the best way to
21 improve the school and serve both the current
22 students and future students is to allow a new
23 team of educators to take on the challenge in
24 this building of crafting a new school in its
25 place that will provide a different kind of

1 option for the kids in this community. In a
2 separate statement, we've proposed to co-locate
3 that new school in this building. If it's
4 approved, it'll serve grades 9 through 12 and
5 will have limited, un-screened admissions, with
6 a priority to students residing in Queens. As I
7 mentioned before, the new school will offer a
8 career and technical education program with a
9 focus on the health sciences, and the school
10 will offer certification in emergency medical
11 services and nursing. I also want to note that
12 there will be a proposal, as I mentioned
13 earlier, to phase out one of the other schools
14 on this campus, BCAE, and in the following year,
15 there'll be another new school proposed to come
16 onto this campus, so that once this process is
17 complete, there will be the same number of
18 schools as what we currently have. The design
19 of that second new school, because it'll come a
20 year later, has not been finalized, and it's
21 something that we look forward to discussing in
22 more depth once the other proposals have been
23 approved, and we would look to the school
24 community to give us feedback on that. Before
25 we move to the public comment section of the

1 meeting, I want to just briefly discuss the
2 impact of the phase-out proposal on current
3 students here at this school. If the phase-out
4 proposal is approved, Law would not admit new
5 ninth-graders, and it would continue to phase
6 out one grade at a time until June 2016, when it
7 would close. Most current students will be able
8 to complete their high school career here at
9 Law. As the school becomes smaller, students
10 will receive more individualized attention to
11 ensure they're getting the support that they
12 need, and students will also have an opportunity
13 to apply to finish school elsewhere, if that is
14 the choice that they and their parents would
15 prefer. New ninth-grade students will have the
16 opportunity to apply to a different school
17 during the round 2 of the high school admissions
18 process. Other students at Law will get the
19 opportunity to transfer to another high school
20 as part of the public school choice process.
21 Applications for these transfer opportunities
22 will be available to students this spring, for
23 enrollment starting in 2013. Thank you in
24 advance for sharing your feedback on these
25 proposals tonight. We look forward to hearing

1 your comments and questions. Thank you.
2 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, Shael. Our next
3 presenter will be Alicia Hyndman, the president
4 of the District 29 CEC. The microphone on the
5 table should be fine.
6 MS. ALICIA HYNDMAN: Good evening, parents
7 and community members. My name is Alicia
8 Hyndman, and I'm the president of CDEC 29,
9 Community District Education Council 29. I'm a
10 parent first and foremost. I don't work for the
11 DOE, so that there's no confusion, and I'm a
12 product of this community. As a parent
13 volunteer, what I've noticed in the last few
14 years is that we are now bridging the gap
15 between our K-8 elementary and middle schools to
16 our local high schools. We want to keep our
17 children in the community, and although the DOE
18 has said that in examining data they analyzed
19 what is working, what is working is that we're
20 bridging that gap. What is also working are the
21 parents, because I attended a meeting very
22 recently of committed parents to this high
23 school, and I have to say that I found a team.
24 It wasn't just a principal talking. It wasn't
25 just parent leaders. It was the average parent

1 who wanted a high school in the community
2 that's working. This high school is working.
3 Law and Government Community Service High School
4 had cuts to their essential law classes and
5 other programs that supported and reinforced the
6 school model. The high school has also
7 increased their six-year graduation rate, from
8 58.3% in 2007-2008 to 76.4% in 2011-2012. This
9 school has had four principals within five
10 years, and if there's anything we know,
11 continued challenging leadership brings on good
12 results. Continued leadership sets a trend and
13 a theme and a guideline for the teachers and the
14 students to follow. They've had three network
15 leaders in three years, and the parent
16 coordinator was let go due to budget cuts. And
17 I have to say that I think it's one of the best
18 things Bloomberg ever did was institute the
19 parent coordinator in each school. So how does
20 the school function if they don't have that
21 added arm for the parents to work with a parent
22 coordinator? For those of you who came through
23 the K-8 models, we realize how much of an asset
24 parent coordinators are to the school. We feel
25 Law and Government Community Service High School

1 should be permitted to remain open, a parent
2 coordinator be hired for the school, the
3 reinstatement of classes which reinforced the
4 theme of the school, and the continued
5 leadership be allowed to continue the obvious
6 upward trend that this school has demonstrated
7 in the last two years. Thank you.
8 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Next I would
9 invite Eric Simone, who's representing the
10 school leadership team, to present on behalf of
11 the SLT.
12 MR. ERIC SIMONE: Folks, we have a
13 PowerPoint presentation for you.
14 MR. BETHEIL: If you'd just use the
15 microphone.
16 MR. SIMONE: I'm just going to need the
17 microphone.
18 [background conversation]
19 FEMALE VOICE: So as we all know, data can
20 be manipulated any way that you want. You can
21 look at some of the statistics that were
22 mentioned earlier, our four-year graduation rate
23 decreasing and D's on report cards based on
24 looking at certain points of data, but there are
25 additional points of data that we should keep in

1 mind, points of data that demonstrate that our
2 school has been progressing in spite of the fact
3 that our resources have been dwindling, that
4 budget cuts have affected the school in numerous
5 ways, and we have also gotten an increase of
6 students with high needs. Can we move that
7 somehow? Okay. As was already mentioned, we've
8 had four principals and three different
9 assistant principals in six years. The network
10 has had three different leaders in three years.
11 However, the teaching staff, which has been here
12 from 2008 at the least, when we got a B, has
13 remained the same. As I mentioned before, we've
14 been suffering, as many schools have, from
15 budget cuts. These budget cuts not only
16 affected afterschool programs that help build
17 self-esteem for students and keep them out of
18 trouble, but also an extremely important credit-
19 recovery program that enabled our students to
20 get the credits that they needed, which is why
21 you saw the decrease in credits and the decrease
22 in the graduation rate over four years. So
23 additional data; attendance has increased from
24 84.6 to 86.7 from 2010-2011 to 2011-2012, a 2.5%
25 increase in just one year. Additionally,

1 although they were mentioning the school
2 environment survey being terrible in 2009, we've
3 improved from an F to a B from 2009 until 2011.
4 That's a very big improvement. Additionally,
5 under our current principal, we have been
6 removed from the Department of Education's
7 impact list, so even though we've switched
8 principals over a number of years, something
9 happening right now is working. Credit
10 accumulation has increased. In order to get
11 from 9th to 10th grade and 10th to 11th grade and
12 so on, students need to accumulate at least ten
13 credits each year. This number of ten-plus
14 credits has increased 28% from 2010-11 to 2011-
15 12. Credit accumulations for ninth-grade
16 students in the lowest one-third, which is the
17 most at-risk, have increased 75% from 2010-11 to
18 the 2011-12 school year. And additionally,
19 compared to 2006, credit accumulation for ninth-
20 graders is up 338%. Even though, as was
21 mentioned, our four-year graduation rate did
22 drop slightly, our six-year graduation rate has
23 improved from 58.3% to 76.4%. As was also
24 mentioned, due to budget cuts there were cuts in
25 programs. Law classes that we had due to our

1 thematic law school, these classes have been
2 reinstated, and we have additionally established
3 partnerships with numerous college-ready
4 programs. I'll just name a few of them--they're
5 all up on the board--the Justice Resource
6 Center, Youth at Risk, College Now, Queens
7 Borough Community College, Liberty Partnership,
8 Project Prize. So we were talking earlier about
9 the students being prepared for college and
10 career readiness, and it was mentioned that
11 we're not preparing them adequately here.
12 However, if you actually take a look at the date
13 and you look at all of the New York City high
14 schools, we are not on the bottom. We are smack
15 in the middle. This is not an indication of a
16 failing school. Additionally, if you look at
17 New York State, New York State has lists of
18 schools that are in good standing and schools
19 that are focus or priority schools with needs.
20 We're not on the latter list. We are officially
21 considered a school in good standing, according
22 to the State of New York. And when you look at
23 the date, and you look--yes, we've been
24 struggling; we've had D's but we've made
25 progress--there is a school in Brooklyn that has

1 received progress reports of F's for the past
2 two years and is on the New York State's
3 priority list; however, they're not being
4 considered to phase out. We've had a history in
5 this community for nearly two decades. We've
6 provided a positive learning environment, filled
7 with caring professionals dedicated to working
8 with all students. Here are some statements
9 from alumni, who were outraged when they heard
10 of the proposed phase-out. One student who
11 graduated in 2012 said, "This school helped mold
12 me into the ambitious, hard-working woman I am
13 today. I cannot possibly fathom why anyone
14 would want to tear down something that has been
15 a stepping stone for many ambitious and hard-
16 working students, including myself." And
17 another student, who graduated in 2008, "That
18 school has given me opportunities that I
19 wouldn't have gotten elsewhere. My teachers
20 were amazing and believed in me and the
21 community we grew up in. Closing that school
22 would do the area no justice." As a fiscal
23 crisis--I don't know what this means; ah, sorry-
24 -we have been working to make changes. We've
25 changed our school schedule so that we could

1 provide tutoring after school without
2 additional costs. We additionally have tutoring
3 on Saturdays, to tutor students in classes and
4 to help prepare them for the Regents
5 examinations. We have been able to get some
6 money to purchase a credit-recovery program that
7 the students can do after school as well, and we
8 work as teachers--I'm a teacher; I'm sorry I
9 didn't introduce myself--we work with students
10 during lunchtime to help them with their
11 homework and provide them with additional
12 tutoring. Sorry, I can't see the headings.
13 Additional things that we're doing now; we've
14 purchased Castle Learning to help support
15 classroom instruction, homework assignments,
16 common assessments, and Regents prep. This is
17 an online website that students can access; not
18 only if we as teachers take them into the
19 computer lab or the library, but they can access
20 this at home, and they can additionally use this
21 to prepare themselves with Regents-based
22 questions for the examinations. We also have
23 been able to provide some extra classes for
24 credit after school and credit recovery. We've
25 expanded the Saturday academy to include

1 additional Regents preparation, and there's
2 been a partnership with ADL to foster respect
3 for all and provide opportunities for community
4 service and internships with some of the
5 companies and law affiliations that were
6 mentioned earlier. School closures in general;
7 according to the *Daily News*, the signature
8 Bloomberg administration reform of shutting down
9 failing schools and replacing them with new
10 schools has itself failed thousands of city
11 students. This was from an analysis of data by
12 the *Daily News*. I know that, for me, I've been
13 here for over 10 years, for almost 12 years, and
14 over that course of time, I've seen budget cuts
15 not only affect the programs that help the
16 students academically, but also the programs,
17 the afterschool programs, that help build their
18 self-esteem. So if you keep taking things away
19 and expecting the same or better results, you're
20 really kind of doing the school a disservice.
21 If you want schools to succeed, you need to
22 invest in them instead of removing everything
23 that they need to thrive. Are we done? Once
24 again, in closing, Law, Government, Community
25 Service High School is a home to a caring group

of teachers, administrators, and support personnel who work extremely hard to meet the needs of our students. With the proper resources and supports, there is no doubt that we can remediate any difficulties and continue to serve our children and our community as well as we have for almost 20 years.

MR. BETHEIL: Thank you very much for the thoughtful presentation. Is there anybody else from the school leadership team that intended to make a comment or a presentation? Any of the representatives of the other schools wish to make any remarks? I just want to make sure. Okay. Before we proceed, I just wanted to acknowledge some representatives from some of the elected officials in the community that are here this evening. Nathaniel Hezekiah is here representing Congressman Meeks' office. Maylene Thurton [phonetic] from Assemblywoman Clark's office. I believe that's everybody, and thank you very much for being here this evening. We've now concluded the formal presentations. We still have the list open in the back for those that have signed up to speak. We'll keep that open for another few minutes, and I'll just

ask if we could bring the list forward so that we can begin the public comment period. Those of you that signed in early know that you'll be called first, and I just need to get the list in my hand so we can call everybody up here. You are reminded that the public comment must be limited to two minutes per speaker. Time will be kept and we will signal you when you have about 30 seconds remaining and when your time is up. We'll allow you to finish your thought, and we'll not cut you off mid-sentence, but do ask that everybody respect the time so that those that have signed up after you have an opportunity to speak. As a reminder, please keep the comments under two minutes. The DOE staff member in the front of the auditorium will be serving as a timekeeper and will be sitting right over here. If you could just raise your hand. That will be Brendan. And we'll raise a sign to alert you when you have 30 seconds remaining and again when time is up. We want to make sure that everyone's voices are heard tonight, so please be sensitive to those in attendance and try and keep to your two-minute time limit. I'd now like to call up speakers 1

1 through 5 up to the microphone. If you'd line
2 up behind the microphone. Speaker number 1 is
3 Christine Martin. Speaker number 2 is Gregg
4 Lundahl. Speaker number 3 is Washington
5 Sanchez. Speaker number 4 is Michael Beaudry.
6 Speaker number 5 had been Celena Gray, but it
7 appears to be crossed out. If Celena intended
8 to speak, please join us at the microphone. And
9 speaker number 6, it looks like Daniel
10 Fargahassun, who is a student, and if you'd join
11 us up here as well. Then we're all set. Okay.
12 Ms. Martin? Thank you.
13 MS. CHRISTINE MARTIN: Good evening.
14 Christine Martin, representing the CSA. Once
15 again, the DOE has scheduled more than--I have
16 to use my principal voice. Once again, the DOE
17 has scheduled more than two dozen schools for
18 closure. The latest 26 schools destined for the
19 scrap heap don't fit into any particular
20 pattern. Several have new principals who were
21 told they would have time to turn the schools
22 around. Several have "effective" ratings from
23 the State. Several have "proficient" quality
24 reviews. One actually has a principal who
25 exceeds expectations and a quality review rating

1 of "well-developed." The DOE seems to take
2 aim at schools as if they were playing Russian
3 roulette. The DOE worst practice often
4 devastates the children and families. It
5 usually takes aim at students who have already
6 suffered setbacks and humiliations from previous
7 schools' closings. Many of them have been
8 turned away from the City's new schools, for
9 reasons of poor academic performance or for
10 coming from families without clout. Then the
11 youngsters are warehoused in other low-
12 performing schools that are likely to be closed
13 too. This is a failing strategy for turning
14 schools around. Law and Government is a case in
15 point. There is a new administrative team in
16 place, and they have begun to effectuate
17 positive change. But in our system, overnight
18 miracles are expected even though we know that
19 many of these miracles are mirages that
20 disappear in the light of day. Thank you.
21 MS. BETHEIL: Thank you, Ms. Martin. Our
22 next speaker is Mr. Lundahl.
23 MR. GREGG LUNDAHL: That's it?
24 MALE VOICE: Yes, that's it.
25 MR. LUNDAHL: I will try to use my classroom

1 voice. Okay. Don't start yet. Let me go,
2 okay? My name is Gregg Lundahl. I'm an
3 assistant to Janella Hinds, the vice president
4 of academic high schools at the UFT. I'm also a
5 chapter leader. I'm just kind of wondering who
6 starts their mayoral career asking or thinking,
7 "I'm going to--in 12 years, I'm going to close
8 schools?" I would say that that really is a
9 sign of failure. At Washington Irving High
10 School we had some similar issues. One, there
11 was an admissions process brought on by the
12 Department of Education that made it so that
13 more and more kids were coming from distant
14 places. We know, the statistics show, that the
15 farther away kids are on average, the worse that
16 they do. We also know that DOE policy caused
17 tremendous violence a few years ago, and that
18 had a major impact on our schools. The closing
19 of schools caused tsunamis, waves and waves of
20 students coming in that made it more difficult.
21 We had higher-need students in these schools.
22 Mayor Bloomberg has hurt more students in his
23 career than he has helped. He's used Darwinist
24 market incentives to solve problems that could
25 have been addressed in our community's homes,

1 with the challenges embodied in the lives of
2 our children. Like Mayor Bloomberg's version of
3 *The Hunger Games*, only a few succeed. Everyone
4 else loses. He creates failure by design;
5 splits up those schools with new schools, and
6 then replaces those schools with pseudo-public
7 schools, which further mirror the kind of
8 elitism, privilege, and segregation that
9 Americans have fought against for their entire
10 history. Mayoral control has failed this
11 school. He has engaged in failure by design.
12 If you want to talk about that, I can talk about
13 that later to anybody who wants to know why he's
14 doing it. I'm going to--just to finish--I'm in
15 a phase-out school. It's not good. It's not
16 good for the students at all. Our students
17 deserve a quality education, not a closing
18 school. Last sentence; they deserve quality
19 choices, not a shell game. It is time that this
20 mayor took responsibility for the schools.
21 MR. BETHEIL: Next speaker is Mr. Sanchez.
22 MR. JAMES VASQUEZ: Hello. My name is James
23 Vasquez. I'm the district representative for
24 Queens high schools for the United Federation of
25 Teachers. I've been in this campus many times,

1 and my big question is, "Where has the mayor
2 been?" The mayor is nowhere to be found,
3 because his policies in education are complete
4 failures. We've been seeing this for the last
5 12 years now, everything that he's done. He has
6 done nothing to support schools and it's been a
7 political shell game. This idea of closing
8 schools and not supporting them, you hear what
9 they said at the school of all of the efforts
10 they made despite the roadblocks or the neglect
11 that the Department of Education has made, and
12 they still continue to succeed. At the same
13 time, there is nothing that was said in any of
14 these documents--the deputy chancellor sat there
15 and read his script very well--because they sit
16 there and do this only because they have to.
17 The only reason we are here tonight, the only
18 reason we are being recorded right now, is
19 because the law says so, and it's the only
20 reason that's going to even put some sort of
21 roadblock to tell the mayor that the community
22 is against your policies. It is wrong to close
23 schools without supporting them. It is wrong.
24 It isn't the first time, but thank goodness this
25 was going to be one of the last times, because

he's only got ten months left in this office. Closing schools and not supporting them is a waste of money. Putting in another set of administrators, putting in and all the other things, this campus was the model for small schools. It was a model for campus schools. And what did the mayor do? He messed this up as well. This campus was a model to sit there to show other schools of how they could do this, and they were trying to do this as well. We have a series of new principals here that are all less than four years, and they are trying to put this together. But I know what'll help them. Let's put a fifth principal in here and see if that makes it any easier. Let's take away some more of their resources, or, as it was said to the parents just a few weeks ago, now that we're going to phase out the school, we're going to give you all of these wonderful resources. We're going to give you these wonderful programs, and guess what, you're kids are going to succeed. And the parents said, "Why couldn't you do this before? Why couldn't you do this before you decided to close it?" In the end, it doesn't matter what the people here

on the panel are going to listen to. It doesn't matter what the Panel of Education Policy's going to say. It is the mayor. It is his failed policies and he should be here and at every other school he decides to close. Thank you.

MR. BETHEIL: I just want to confirm. Was there a Washington Sanchez who was signed up to speak? That was James Vasquez who just introduced himself. So I just want to make sure we're not skipping somebody. Okay. Thank you. Next is Michael Beaudry.

MR. MICHAEL BEAUDRY: Good evening, folks. My name is Michael Beaudry. I'm a teacher in a nearby high school, and I'm here to show my support. We're all brothers and sisters in this, and we're all here for the kids, and that's the most important part. Now last night I had the opportunity to watch the President's address, and the point was that he wants to invest in America, start investing in America, and I'm sure that part of his plan is not closing schools. I'm not sure. Maybe some people didn't get that memo or maybe some of you didn't watch this last night, but I'm pretty

1 sure closing schools is not part of that
2 agenda. I come from a new school not too far
3 from here, and it is my opinion that all
4 schools, new and old, should get the financial
5 and technological support we have gotten. That
6 does not include closing schools. I went into
7 teaching to save kids and to give them a better
8 opportunity than I had, but you can't say that
9 if we are in the business of closing schools.
10 We should be in the business of saving schools,
11 saving our kids, giving them the resources to
12 have a better future than we had. We have
13 technology, iPads, iPhones. Our kids should
14 have this access. We shouldn't be closing the
15 schools and taking them away from them and
16 putting them somewhere else. What confuses me
17 is what actually does consider a failing school.
18 Is it graduation numbers, exam grades,
19 attendance? She kind of stole my thunder over
20 there with this great presentation. The bottom
21 line is, is it the school that's failing or is
22 the City that's failing the school? You cannot
23 turn around and take the tools out of the
24 classroom, take the funding away from the
25 schools, and then point the finger and say,

"Your school is lousy because you can't do anything." Well, what do you expect us to do? We can't create this stuff as we go along. It's pretty simple here, guys. If you don't give us the tools to succeed, the kids can't succeed, and then you're going to turn around and tell us that the school is bad. Well, it's your fault. You've got to help us out here too. This is a partnership. You've got to do your job; we'll do ours. Thank you for your time.

MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Just want to confirm that Celena Gray did not intend to speak. Okay. Our next speaker is Daniel Fargahassun.

MR. DANIEL FARGAHASSUN: Okay. Well, I haven't been at the school for very long, but I see that many things have changed, thanks to Ms. White. But now that the hype is going through the school that the school is closing down, this is not helping the kids. I see my friends. I see seniors. I see sophomores. I see juniors. And they're doing worse now. They don't care. It's not helping the school that you plan on closing it down and opening up two generic schools that won't specialize. This school is a

1 law school. There's only about three law
2 schools in Queens that is close around here. I
3 don't want to--I'm sorry--I don't want to travel
4 an hour or two hours away from my house just to
5 go to some school so I could learn law. This
6 school is right by my house. It only takes 20
7 minutes to get here. It's convenient. And
8 closing this down won't help. Also, opening up
9 a school that's supposed to have all the kids
10 who just want to come here just because it's
11 close is not helping, because it's just a
12 generic school. That's only going to bring in
13 kids who don't care about getting an education,
14 who just want to come here, just want to pass
15 through, and just want to get out of school so
16 they could go on with their lives after, and
17 they don't care what goes after. And this won't
18 help us. That's it.
19 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, Daniel. The next
20 speakers that I would ask to line up at the
21 microphone are speaker number 7, Rona Freison,
22 speaker number 8, Sharon Kletzkin, speaker
23 number 9, Riyad Afiz, and speaker number 10,
24 Cynthia Carter-Richard. And one last reminder,
25 if anybody did not sign up and wanted to sign up

1 to speak, they're about to close the speaker
2 sign-up in the lobby and would ask you to do so.
3 Ms. Freison, thank you.
4 MS. CAMILI TURNER: Good evening, everyone.
5 My name is Camili Turner [phonetic], and I'm a
6 teacher here at Humanities and the Arts High
7 School. I must tell you frankly that closing
8 schools definitely is not helpful. And I also
9 believe strongly, as I talk to friends across
10 the city and watch the news every couple of
11 months about the number of schools that are
12 closing, it comes off as being racist. I have
13 to put it out there. Because when I look in the
14 communities where the schools are closing,
15 they're in African-American communities.
16 They're not in the Caucasian communities. Come
17 on. Are you saying you're willing to allow our
18 kids to fail? Because this is the message
19 you're giving them. When you close the schools
20 in African-American communities, this somehow
21 for some kids represent a safe haven, an
22 opportunity for them to learn something and
23 possibly take it further, college. Some kids
24 who are in some of these schools that are
25 struggling need extra support. I've looked

1 around at people. I have met tons of ATRs who
2 are guidance counselors. What is going in our
3 system that ATRs or absent teacher reserves when
4 there's schools that are being crippled by one
5 guidance counselor for 500 kids? That’s not
6 helping the situation. I've also met school
7 psychologists who has six or seven schools under
8 their belts. Now we obviously know that kids
9 beyond the academics need the social support.
10 So when we take away the guidance counselors, we
11 take away the school psychologist, we're leaving
12 them with little or no support. We also have
13 classes that are at 34, which is the contractual
14 limit, we understand that, but the reality is
15 the guidance counselors who are still having
16 their jobs are pushing paperwork. Whenever
17 there's an issue with a kid, they have to drop
18 the paperwork and immediately jump in. I say
19 you're setting up the schools to fail and this
20 is a racist act. Thank you.
21 MR. BETHEIL: Next is speaker number 8,
22 Sharon Kletzkin.
23 MS. SHARON KLETZKIN: Hi. My name is Sharon
24 Kletzkin. I am a laboratory specialist that
25 services all four schools on the campus, as I

1 did at Andrew Jackson before. And this is not
2 about me, because I will be a lab specialist no
3 matter what happens to the schools. And you've
4 heard about the data, but this about heart and
5 soul. We are a family. This building is a
6 community. And what you are doing is amputating
7 parts of this living, breathing organism without
8 giving them the chance to save those limbs,
9 without giving them the medicine that they need
10 to continue. So I thank you for listening.
11 MR. BETHEIL: Our next speaker is speaker
12 number 9, Riyad Afiz.
13 MR. RIYAD AFIZ: Good night. I'm a science
14 teacher. I have been a science teacher in the
15 Law and Government School for 13 years. I
16 didn't go to school in America. I went to
17 school in another country. It doesn't matter
18 where in this world you go to school. There's a
19 simple formula. School equals stability. So in
20 New York City we came up with this great plan,
21 oh, let's shut down the schools. Every single
22 person here who agrees with shutting down
23 schools is irresponsible, because we're allowing
24 instability in our children's lives. We can't
25 allow that. Schools equal stability. I have a

1 kid today, first day in my class. "Which
2 school do you come from?" "Oh, another school
3 that's closing down." I didn't have the heart
4 to tell her, "Oh, guess what, we're closing down
5 also." I mean what's going to go through her
6 mind when she knows that she went from one
7 school that's closed down, going to another
8 school that's closing down? This is
9 irresponsible, and every single one of us here
10 who agrees to this, alright, we are responsible
11 for this. It's like we're conducting an
12 experiment on our children, alright? And it's
13 like we don't care about what happens to them.
14 Schools equal stability, alright? Keep the
15 schools open. You can't just haphazardly close
16 the schools down, alright? Schools equal
17 stability.
18 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, Mr. Afiz. Next is
19 speaker number 10, Cynthia Carter-Richard.
20 MS. CYNTHIA CARTER-RICHARD: Good afternoon.
21 First of all, I'm a parent, but--I'm a parent
22 first, and I'm also an educator. And I was a
23 part of a school that was supposedly to be
24 closed down. And I'm a firm believer that if
25 something is working, why change it? The school

1 seemingly has been doing very well presently,
2 from what I understand and from what I see. I
3 have a child that attends this school. I was
4 reluctant at first because I heard so much, but
5 when I got in here and I saw the people, the
6 principal, the teachers, and I reached out to
7 them, they reached out to me, and I'm still
8 reaching out. And my child now feels a little
9 more comfortable being here. She was traveling
10 two hours to a school that was getting her home
11 6:30, 7:00 at night, and as a parent, I was very
12 concerned about the danger that my child was
13 going to face coming back and forth every day.
14 I couldn't deal with it. I said, "You know
15 what, if you're prepared to do what you have to
16 do, no matter where you are, you will make it
17 work for yourself." And it took her some time,
18 but I'm now beginning to see that the change is
19 beginning to happen with her way of thinking
20 now, and I'm feeling comfortable, because now I
21 can teach in a school that's an A school and
22 know that my child's in an allegedly D school,
23 but I know she's going to make it work. And
24 after meeting all these wonderful teachers, I
25 can say I'm keeping my child here. If the

1 school stays here, which I pray and hope that
2 it does, she will be here, because it's better
3 for her to come here in 20 minutes to a half an
4 hour, opposed to her traveling two hours there
5 and two hours back. That's four hours of
6 traveling that though she could really be
7 studying and thinking and enjoying life as a
8 student. And me also, as a parent and as an
9 educator, knowing that my child is close by, if
10 anything happened, I can get to her. So I'm
11 saying give the school a chance to make itself
12 work. Nothing comes or happens overnight. We
13 have to take--everything takes time, and I'm
14 willing to give it time as an educator, but most
15 of all as a parent, to see that this progress
16 works. Give these teachers, give Mrs. Delfyett-
17 White an opportunity to make this situation work
18 and for the opportunity for our children to
19 think about--because right now they're going,
20 "Oh, our school's closing down. We don't have
21 to really do anything anymore." We can't let
22 that happen. Save our children first.
23 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. I'd like to just
24 call speaker 11. I'm sorry; I'm having a hard
25 time just reading it, but it looks like Awil

1 Driscoll [phonetic]. Does somebody have
2 speaker number 11? And then behind that will be
3 speaker 12, is Ashique Suomro, speaker 13, David
4 White, speaker 14, Melissa Hubbard, and speaker
5 15, Naimah Trotter.
6 MR. WILLIAM MCDONALD: Good evening. My
7 name is William McDonald. I chair the NAACP New
8 York State Conference Metropolitan Education
9 Committee. I have been dealing with these
10 school closures for the better part of eight
11 years. Most of you on this panel I dealt with
12 in one way or the other. What we're seeing now
13 is the result of a bad policy. Instead of
14 closing schools, you need to give the schools
15 the resources they need. Our children are
16 dealing with things that a lot of children
17 haven't dealt with. I've heard the young lady
18 come up and say she thinks this is racism. When
19 you look at the school closures in New York City
20 over the last eight years, since I've been
21 dealing with it, I can honestly tell you that I
22 know this is racism. When you target a school,
23 you target a foundation in the community. It's
24 almost as bad as targeting churches, which is
25 another foundation in the community. I'm not

1 going to go off and get into the scores, the
2 letter grades, because we all know last year you
3 tried to close a school that had an A in this
4 district right here. You've got junior high
5 school 231 on the phase-out list. You put that
6 school on the phase-out list when it had a B.
7 So what is your reason for closing these
8 schools? It's that--the only thing I could see
9 that it's a failed policy. What I will tell you
10 is that the best thing about the year 2013 is
11 that next year we'll be dealing with a new
12 administration.
13 MR. BETHEIL: Next is speaker 12, Ashique
14 Suomro.
15 MR. ASHIQUE SUOMRO: My name is Ashique
16 Suomro. I am vice president of the parent
17 association of this school, Law, Government, and
18 Community. Respected vice chancellor, sir, and
19 other officers of the Department of Education,
20 in our country there's a saying that if you want
21 to change the spicy rice of a canary, don't dug
22 out, just take out one grain. It will tell you
23 how the canary is cooked, how your food is done.
24 I am witness. My kid joined this school in
25 2009. A boy from Pakistan, now he is a senior

1 in 12th grade. I see his, every day, report
2 from school; when he's coming, he's going to
3 school, how he's behaving, and how responsible
4 he is. I'm happy with the progress of this
5 school, which is doing for poor families like
6 immigrants like me and other people here. I
7 request you guys please don't phase out this
8 school. One speaker said, "What the mayor is
9 going to get from this?" Sir, I was deputy
10 secretary in a federal government of Pakistan
11 special education department. I know why they
12 get. They get when they propose new development
13 schemes, they get money from - -, commissions,
14 and they have to accommodate their friends. Now
15 our mayor is trying to get more money to beat
16 Warren Buffett and Bill Gates in money. That's
17 it. He needs money. That's why he's phasing
18 out the schools, introducing other development
19 schemes. Thank you very much.
20 MR. BETHEIL: Before our next speaker, I'd
21 like to invite City Councilman Leroy Comrie to
22 the microphone.
23 MR. LEROY COMRIE: Good evening, everyone.
24 I'm here to ask and to request that Law and
25 Government High School be kept open. I clearly

1 understand all of the issues that are before
2 this community, before what has been placed on
3 Law and Government, the fact that they have not
4 been able to have a decent register, that the
5 children that they were getting were way below
6 grade level. The issues that they've been--the
7 resources they were getting were cut off to
8 them, that they lost $200,000 in the midst of a
9 school year, that they have a principal that's
10 only served for less than two and a half years,
11 that they have a student--a teacher base and an
12 administrator base that is serious about
13 maintaining a qualify of excellence in a school
14 system, that they're not being given an
15 opportunity to get the right children and to
16 keep that moving in a positive direction. I am
17 against closing Law and Government High School.
18 I know that we have other schools in this city
19 that have worse records that are being kept
20 open, and worse records for a longer period of
21 time that are being kept open, and to break up
22 the four schools here by trying to create a
23 different type of environment here would not
24 help this entire building. And we need to make
25 sure that we understand that to do this, to try

1 to come in with a--some of the things that I
2 heard were proposed to replace Law and
3 Government High School would change the whole
4 focus and the idea of what this campus was
5 originally designed for, to give children an
6 opportunity to have different experiences,
7 different opportunities, right here in one
8 campus. Law and Government High School has been
9 something that has worked. I've had the
10 opportunity to have young people intern at my
11 office. They've moved on to solid careers in
12 colleges. I know the work of the teachers and
13 the administrators here at the school. There's
14 no reason to close the school. What it needs is
15 the proper resources to keep up and a
16 flexibility to get the additional resources
17 needed beyond what is being prescribed to them
18 by the Department of Education. The idea of
19 only matching resources to the number of
20 children don't work. We need to make sure that
21 certain schools get additional resources to deal
22 with the fact that they're more transitional
23 children than other schools, more temporary
24 children than other schools, more children that
25 are first-time learners than other schools, and

1 that those kinds of decisions are not being
2 made properly. And then you're inhibiting their
3 ability to catch up. You're inhibiting their
4 ability to take those difficult learners and
5 bring them up to speed. And then you're putting
6 them under an unfair clock. It's unfair that
7 we've had a principal that's only been here two
8 and a half years and is not getting time to do
9 the things necessary to improve the school.
10 There should be a minimum of four years and the
11 resources, again, losing $200,000, that needs to
12 be restored, and there needs to be other money
13 put into the school now. We cannot continue to
14 just try to close a school and fix it. The
15 problems that are happening when you close a
16 school, you leave the children that were in the
17 school adrift for anywhere from one to three
18 years. They don't have the resources and they
19 are totally displaced in the process as well.
20 If we really care about our children, we will
21 save the school that they're in, as opposed to
22 leaving them adrift. Closing a school hurts the
23 children that were part of Law and Government
24 High School. They will not get an opportunity
25 to get the full services or the assistance or

1 the counseling or if they're on a team, that
2 they need to have so that they can graduate
3 properly. Sorry, I just went to the dentist, so
4 I'm not enunciating properly. But I wanted to
5 be here this evening to ask and to ask you when
6 you make your recommendations to keep Law and
7 Government High School open. Thank you very
8 much.
9 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you, Councilman. Mr.
10 White, and thank you for waiting.
11 MR. DAVID WHITE: Thank you for allowing me
12 to speak tonight. I also have my own timer. I
13 want my full two minutes.
14 MR. BETHEIL: You will have it.
15 MR. WHITE: My name is David White. I am
16 the husband of Donna Delfyett-White, principal
17 of Law, Government and Community Service.
18 There's a whole lot I want to say tonight, but
19 I'm going to try to get it all in in two
20 minutes. I know there's going to be a decision
21 that's coming down on March 11th, and that
22 decision should be to keep this school open.
23 And let me tell you why; first of all, I'm a
24 graduate of Christopher Columbus High School, a
25 New York City public high school. I'm a

1 graduate of Baruch College, CUNY. I'm also a
2 post-graduate of St. John's University; all
3 local, all within the community, and all part of
4 my success. I also worked for Pfizer, who is
5 headquartered here in New York City, but I now
6 work for another company. So let me tell you
7 why you should keep this school open. Shael,
8 you went to Bank Street, same program my wife
9 came out of. Mendez, how many times you been in
10 to coach my wife and make sure that, over the
11 last two years, she's going in the right
12 direction? Why disrupt this school? Let me
13 tell you what you're doing. Why do you make
14 this announcement in the middle of the year?
15 That makes no sense; a school that is on the
16 mend, a school that is improving. What you've
17 done is disrupt the chemistry and the healing
18 that's going on in this building. You've done
19 that. You're killing the chemistry. You're
20 killing the momentum of hard work on students
21 and parents and teachers. Four principals in
22 the last six years. If I had--excuse me--if I
23 had four bosses during my tenure, I'd be a
24 raving maniac. Your current grade is based on
25 higher state standards, is it not? The school's

1 grades you had before, a couple years ago,
2 were based on lower standards. It's not apples
3 to apples. And you want to bring in career
4 technical programs to help students get jobs on
5 their high school diploma? Well, let me read a
6 couple that you can actually prepare them for
7 with Law, Government, Community Service; police
8 officers, court officers, stenographers,
9 probation officers, non-profit management, state
10 workers, city workers, city managers, law, U.N.
11 jobs. Health and hospitals corporation, with a
12 $13.4 billion spending budget, take some of that
13 money and bring some of those health programs
14 here that will go to work in the government
15 hospitals and institutions right here in Queens.
16 You don't need to close a school. You need to
17 get off your butts, find the resources that
18 you're already spending money for, and bring
19 them here. I see my wife coming home every
20 night, when she finally does come home after 16-
21 to 17-hour days. Now the first thing that she
22 ran into in this school was a safety issue.
23 That number got better. You didn't mention
24 that. So now that the building's safer, the
25 teachers can teach, and the students can learn.

1 You've got to let the process work its course.
2 There are other schools you can close that
3 deserve to be closed, not this school. Not this
4 school.
5 MR. BETHEIL: Our next speaker is Melissa
6 Hubbard.
7 MS. MELISSA HUBBARD: I'm short, but at the
8 same time I'm trying to see if I need my glasses
9 on or off. Good evening. My name is Melissa
10 Hubbard, and I am the PTA president of one of
11 the sister schools in this building, Humanities
12 and the Arts High School. I'm not going to
13 spend a lot of time talking about the data and a
14 lot of things that people have talked about. I
15 think it speaks for itself. What I'd like to
16 say is that these failed policies that the mayor
17 has instituted is really not about children. It
18 really is a shell game. It reminds me of the
19 games that get played in you trying to decide
20 whether you want Coke or Pepsi. All depending
21 upon how you market it will determine which one
22 you like better. If we really want to talk
23 about education, it is about taking a child, no
24 matter what their issues may be academically,
25 psychologically, socially, and molding them and

1 bringing them and developing them into the
2 best person that they can be. And that's what
3 the individuals here, not only at Law and
4 Government, but all four schools on campus, do
5 daily. And that is not reflected in any of the
6 data that is put out there. Why? Because you
7 choose not to. If we really want to talk about
8 what's going to make things better, it should
9 have been that some of the issues that were
10 discussed with the chancellor, who is from this
11 community, when a steering committee was held
12 with Assemblywoman Barbara Clark back in
13 November, we talked about some of the things
14 that we need. I'm also a proud graduate of
15 Andrew Jackson High School. At that time there
16 was talk about what was wrong with Jackson. And
17 yet I'm a proud graduate of Andrew Jackson. I
18 received a wonderful, excellent education here,
19 and I went on to do wonderful things. I too
20 have been an educator. I've worked in the
21 Catholic high schools, both in Brooklyn and both
22 in New Jersey, and what I love about working in
23 private schools and why I never wanted to work
24 in the DOE is because the bureaucracy gets in
25 the way about what should be first and foremost,

1 and that is educating our children. I see how
2 Principal White, Principal Callender, Principal
3 Cruz, and my own principal, Mrs. Omard, all of
4 their APs, all of the teachers, the parents; as
5 a PTA president I work closely with Ms. Johnson
6 and Ms. Lewis and Ms. Davis-Smith in trying to
7 assist our schools in providing things for our
8 children. We have done a lot, and yet the DOE
9 has stated that we're a failure. They're not a
10 failure. The DOE is a failure, because they're-
11 -already, oh, man.
12 MR. BETHEIL: Finish your thought.
13 MS. HUBBARD: I can always write a proposal.
14 Thank you.
15 MR. BETHEIL: I'd like to call our next four
16 speakers. That'll be number 15, Naimah Trotter,
17 number 16, Donice Redding, number 17, Monica
18 Simone, and then Yvette Small, and then we have
19 four speakers after that.
20 MS. NAIMAH TROTTER: Hi, good evening. My
21 name is Naimah Trotter, and I was a teacher in
22 the New York City school system for 17 years
23 before I moved on to become an administrator. I
24 currently work in the Half Hollow Hills school
25 district. Ten of the years that I worked as a

1 teacher I was a teacher here at Law,
2 Government, Community Service Magnet High
3 School, and when I first came on board, it was
4 because Andrew Jackson was closing. And when I
5 came here, Law and Government was a school--one
6 of the four schools that was replacing Andrew
7 Jackson. It's very hard for me to believe that
8 that was only 20 years, less than 20 years ago,
9 and you're still proposing to do the same thing.
10 I think what you're saying here is that the
11 first time you made that determination that we
12 need to close schools, that this was the answer.
13 But you're closing this school, and I don't
14 understand. It's not the answer. A lot of us
15 have long-term memory. We remembered what
16 happened. Many people, many of the teachers
17 that are still in this school, were part of that
18 as well. I just would like you, deputy
19 chancellor, to please think about that. I now
20 see it from both sides, first as a teacher and
21 now as an administrator. These schools need
22 support. They do not need closure. And one of
23 the things that rang true tonight that I heard
24 was this graduation rate. And in the school
25 district where I work, even though we perform

very well, we do have struggling students. And what we can't forget is that those students do need support. They need summer school programs. They need p.m. school programs. And those things were taken away from this school. So can you please reconsider what you can do as a department of education to help this school? It's not the teachers' fault. And I have to say, some of the best teachers in my school district are from New York City.

MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Speaker 16 is Donice Redding.

MS. DONICE REDDING: Good evening. My name is Donice Redding. I am the guardian of a student on this campus. I also live in Cambria Heights, and I have the privilege of serving as the president of the Cambria Heights Civic Association. I've read all of your data. I've listened to everyone speak, and certainly two minutes does not allow enough time to do much, so I will download some information later. But tonight I'd just like to say that in all of the data that you've provided, you've talked about what you've done for the teachers. My question is what have you done for the DOE? I enrolled

1 my child here two years ago as a freshman. I
2 had to go to open enrollment, because my child
3 did not live in the State of New York. The DOE
4 person told me that I shouldn't bring my child
5 here. And my question is why? Do they take
6 every good performing student and send them to
7 different schools and just use this school, this
8 campus, as a dumping ground? That's a question
9 I have to ask. Closing a school does not solve
10 a problem. If there are problems in the system,
11 and I've heard from the educators what they
12 really are--I'm not an educator; I don't know--
13 but what I've heard from the educators is that
14 what they are lacking is the support that they
15 need. Closing a school and bringing in a new
16 school and nothing else changes, you're simply
17 creating a pattern that will continue and
18 continue. The one thing that I paid attention
19 to on your paper that was passed out tonight,
20 was the safety issues. We have to also remember
21 that these people are educators. They are not
22 parole officers. You cannot just use them for
23 repeat offenders. You can't just send them all
24 here. Spread them around. Yes, they need an
25 education too, but I'm sure that there are

1 schools that can be set up to handle problem
2 students with specialized instructors there for
3 them. Campus Magnet has teachers, principals,
4 educators, not parole officers, not police
5 officers. Closing a school does not solve a
6 problem. We have to solve the problem. Thank
7 you.
8 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Next is speaker
9 17, Monica Simone.
10 MS. MONICA SIMONE: Hi, good evening. My
11 name is Monica Simone. I am a teacher at a
12 nearby school. I'm here to stand up to support
13 Law, Government and Community Service High
14 School. My school too was designated as an
15 early-engagement school, so I know the feeling,
16 being in that school. I just wanted to lend my
17 voice to everyone else here and say closing
18 schools is not the answer. I've only been
19 teaching for four years, so I can't speak to Ms.
20 Trotter's long memory, but what I can tell you
21 is, even with a short experience here, it just
22 doesn't make sense. I try to put myself in the
23 DOE's point of view. You have a school that you
24 feel is failing. Okay, I'm a teacher. What do
25 I do when my students are failing? Well, I

1 can't phase out a student. I can't sweep them
2 under the rug. What do I have to do? I have to
3 redouble my efforts. I have to find a different
4 way. I have to be creative, okay? So if those
5 are the standards that I'm held to as a teacher,
6 why is the DOE not holding itself to those
7 standards? You can't sweep a failing child
8 under the rug, and you shouldn't sweep an entire
9 school of children under the rug either. Thank
10 you.
11 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. As Yvette Small
12 comes to the microphone, I would ask speaker 25,
13 John DeFelipe [phonetic], and speaker 26, Barel
14 Nyak [phonetic], speaker 27, Tashima Taylor
15 [phonetic], and our last speaker, speaker 28,
16 Tanya Gaynor, to come down towards the front.
17 Ms. Small? Ms. Small, the microphone's all
18 yours. Thank you.
19 MS. YVETTE SMALL: Okay. My name is Yvette
20 Small. I'm president of a council for District
21 29 schools, especially for the elementary. I
22 know you start the time on me. Here we go
23 again. I remember a few years ago when we came
24 here and we had to do this before for this
25 particular school. What I didn't hear is within

1 that time how much more support you gave the
2 school. As we sat here the last time, we heard
3 how--you changed the principal, correct? In
4 that time--Mr. Mendez wasn't here--we had
5 changed either three or four superintendents.
6 So on top, we didn't know what we were doing;
7 that's the DOE. So it's the trickle-down
8 effect, because when you have a parent who's not
9 effectively parenting in their house, it
10 trickles down to the children, right? It's the
11 same thing with the DOE. If you're not doing
12 things correctly on top, because what I see,
13 you're experimenting with our children, and at
14 the time, which is the most critical time in
15 their life, when they're transitioning from
16 infancy into adulthood, we're experimenting and
17 telling them our schools aren't good enough. So
18 these children are going into the future saying,
19 "When we don't like something, we just throw it
20 away." You're throwing out the babies with the
21 bath water, and that's not correct. We need to
22 fix what's on top, because what I'm afraid of, I
23 am glad at the end of this year the mayor will
24 be gone, but what hell is going to happen next
25 year as we transition into something new? I

1 think what should happen at this point is we
2 should stop everything, because in less than a
3 year there will be new policies in place. So
4 I'm asking, as one of the leaders in the
5 District, leave our schools alone. Give us the
6 money you're wasting printing these ridiculous
7 books. There's millions of dollars being wasted
8 in the DOE. Stop putting so many different
9 people in front of us, and give the children the
10 money they need. Give the teachers and
11 administration the money.
12 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. I'd like to
13 apologize. Apparently there were a number of
14 speakers that signed up on the back of the page,
15 and so I want to make sure that speakers 18
16 through 23 are acknowledged. So Sandra Dunn is
17 speaker 18, Ms. Dunn? And then we'll return to
18 the list. My apologies. Sorry, is Sandra Dunn
19 here? Okay, if she arrives, we'll give her an
20 opportunity. Speaker 19, Suzette Lewis. Thank
21 you, Ms. Lewis.
22 MS. SUZETTE LEWIS: Good evening. I'm the
23 PTA president for Business, a sister school of
24 Campus Magnet. My son attends--my son wants to
25 know why. He doesn't understand why. He asking

1 me, "Mommy, can they do this? Can they close
2 the school?" I don't have the answer to give to
3 him. My son was doing well in school, and since
4 the time we found out that the school is
5 closing, he failed two classes. He actually
6 wanted to go away to Tennessee University, and
7 now he's not going to have the 85 average that
8 he's used to having. His average is now a
9 65.83. I need the schools to stay open so that
10 he could get back on track, 'cause I don't know
11 what else to do for my child. Thank you.
12 MR. BETHEIL: Next is speaker 20, is Clyde
13 Vanel.
14 MR. CLYDE VANEL: Good evening, everybody.
15 My name is Clyde Vanel. I'm an attorney, a
16 community advocate, born in Queens, raised right
17 down the street from this school, from this
18 institution. Today I'd like to talk about
19 institutional building or institutional
20 destroying. We are destroying institutions.
21 Now the effects what you guys are doing by
22 closing the schools, everybody can agree that--
23 everybody's saying, "Please support the schools,
24 give the schools its resources, and not break
25 the schools up." Imagine this; we're sending

1 our young men and women to start this world
2 from a failed institution. On their resumes
3 they're going to put the name of an institution
4 that failed. That follows them for the rest of
5 their life. I'm going to speak here from the
6 perspective of the community. The effects of
7 your vote and what you guys are going to decide
8 will have an effect on generations, on
9 generations. We cannot send our young men and
10 women and tell them, "Look, you have to go to
11 school, work hard, right, get an education,
12 don't fail, but we fail your entire
13 institution." That is not the message we should
14 provide. That's not what we should do. We are
15 having a detrimental effect on the entire New
16 York City and the entire community. We cannot
17 close our institutions. We cannot do this to
18 our young people. Thank you.
19 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Speaker 21 is
20 James Etoro.
21 MR. JAMES ETORO: Good evening. I come from
22 a school that is being phased out as we speak,
23 Jamaica High School. I don't want to repeat
24 what everybody has said so far about how school
25 closing is terrible. I'm living proof it is not

1 fun. Now if closing schools was the answer,
2 back in the 90s when they closed the long time
3 Andrew Jackson High School, it would have been
4 huge success with the new schools. But they're
5 admitting failure of their own policy by coming
6 back so soon after to close it again. Now
7 Shael, I listened very closely as you were
8 reading the phase-out and talking about all of
9 the things you were going to provide for these
10 students as the school phases out, and I'm here
11 to tell you they're not going to come through.
12 We know that. They made a bunch of promises to
13 our kids when they said they were going to phase
14 out Jamaica. They came through with none of it
15 basically. As the population went down, so did
16 the course offerings, and the space that we're
17 squeezed into is not enough to provide much of
18 anything except a skeleton, bare bones,
19 education. Now if you look at how many AP and
20 honors classes were in our building just a few
21 short years ago and compare that to now with a
22 five-school model in the same building, we have
23 much fewer, much fewer. Does that help them?
24 The course offerings shrink and the push-outs--
25 because if you can't make it out by a certain

1 time, you get pushed right out. Well, it
2 doesn't work. Now I'm here to tell you that
3 we're fighting it. We're still in court on our
4 issue. You guys should fight it too. What can
5 you do? You can go to the state legislature and
6 get the law changed to take away mayoral
7 control, or you can vote smart this year and
8 make sure we get a mayor who's going to say, "No
9 more of this madness of closing schools."
10 MR. BETHEIL: Speaker 22 is Joel, looks like
11 Vigne.
12 MR. JOEL VIGNE: Vigne.
13 MR. BETHEIL: Vigne, sorry, Mr. Vigne.
14 MR. VIGNE: Hello, my name is Joel Vigne, or
15 Vigne really, because I changed my name here,
16 but--because no one could pronounce it. So
17 we're here again. We're here again. 2009 we
18 were here. 2010 we were here. 2011 we were
19 here. 2012--what is going on? We can keep on
20 coming to this school, coming to this building,
21 and keep saying, "Schools are failing." What
22 are we doing about it? Nothing, nothing. I
23 came here, ladies and gentlemen, because I'm
24 from the school that was supposed to be phased
25 out in 2010 and, to be honest with you, because

1 of the illegal action of the DOE, the school's
2 remained open. Then we came again, and Mr.
3 Mendez came, and we had a--the first time I met
4 Mr. Mendez--and we had a pre-engagement meeting
5 then, and we were allowed to stay open. Then my
6 school got a C, and we were allowed to stay, and
7 then I'm thinking, "This is great." But Law and
8 Government has a pre-engagement meeting, and in
9 this very building we have the network leader
10 come up and say, "We're going to do this, we're
11 going to do this, we're going to do this, this
12 is what we're going to do." Where's that
13 network leader now? Principal of Stuyvesant.
14 That's how we support our schools. How does the
15 DOE support our schools? We break apart big
16 schools and make them small schools. Well, you
17 did that already. You did that already. Now
18 you have four small schools--I'm going to ignore
19 that sign for a second--we have four small
20 schools here, and now that we're struggling--
21 that's what you say--what's your suggestion?
22 Break it apart again. Let's phase it out and
23 bring in, in two years, six schools in this
24 building. That is your answer, six schools in
25 this building. Brilliant idea. Right now I'm

1 going to invite everybody to the February 26th
2 meeting, because this proposal does not affect
3 one school. It does not affect two schools. It
4 affects all the schools in this campus. My
5 time--they're saying my time is up. Trust me,
6 February 26th, I'll have my time. Thank you very
7 much.
8 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Speaker 23 is Rita
9 Aware. Speaker 23, Rita Aware. And that is not
10 Ms. Aware. Is Rita Aware here? Okay. We'll
11 turn back to speaker 25, John DeFelipe. Thank
12 you for waiting, Mr. DeFelipe.
13 MR. JOHN DEFELIPE: Wow, my voice sounds
14 weird on microphone. Morning, everyone--not
15 morning--good evening, everyone. I'm a senior
16 at Law and Government. I've been here for all
17 four years, and there's a lot of things that my
18 teachers said already, Mr. Simone and Ms.
19 Wechsler [phonetic], they said about how the
20 programs have been--we've been lacking a lot of
21 programs in the last few years and Ms. White has
22 brought a lot of them back, and I want to
23 discuss a couple of them with you. One I'm
24 particularly involved in is moot court, which we
25 brought back this year, and well, we had our

first competition tonight, and I can't support my teammates today, because you guys had a meeting to close my school down, so thanks a lot for that. And you guys are saying that our grades are low, and I've seen teachers stay 'til 6:00 p.m. doing Regents prep on Thursdays, Tuesday, Wednesdays. And you guys want to bring a new set of teachers in to replace them. Where you going to find these dedicated teachers from, 'cause where are they? Are you going to pull them out of other schools and fail those schools too? I just wanted to know that. And Law, Government is a school that's been really kicked down and stomped while it didn't need to be stomped on. Earlier this year we were invited to go to the student town hall meeting, which was supposed to be on NBC. You guys never saw us on, because we were given the wrong time to come to that meeting, and when we were there, Dennis Wolcott [phonetic] said to us, "What are you guys doing here?" They didn't want us there. We were never--the DOE doesn't want us. I have a friend named Max who transferred here from Van Buren, and when he tried to transfer to our school, he was told not to come here. I

1 don't know how you can say that the school's
2 been given a fair shot, but we've been trying.
3 We've been giving--oh, I'm out of time, right?
4 Well--
5 MR. BETHEIL: You can finish your thought.
6 MR. DEFELIPE: Well, we appreciate your
7 concern about our school now that you guys care
8 about it, but we're dealing with the problem.
9 We have been dealing with the problem. We don't
10 agree with your solution. We don't like your
11 solution, and we don’t want your solution.
12 Thank you.
13 MR. BETHEIL: Our next speaker is number 26,
14 Barel Nyak.
15 MS. BAREL NYAK: Good evening, everyone.
16 MR. BETHEIL: Good evening.
17 MS. NYAK: When my son and I was going
18 through the process to choose a high school, we
19 chose Law, Government because of the law
20 program. It was the only one closest to where
21 we live, and we thought it was going to be an
22 exciting thing to be in the law program. My son
23 is a sophomore presently and because the
24 resources has been taken away from the school,
25 he's only had one law class this past semester.

1 But it hasn't really concentrated on law per
2 se, because the resources is not there to do the
3 court trials and the actual law process of
4 learning what the law has to do. When we take
5 away from our kids what the teachers and the
6 principal and the Board of Ed. is supposed to be
7 providing, we cannot send our kids to the
8 schools that we dream of sending them to. We
9 have to give them the foundation to stand on to
10 move on to the higher education. We don't want
11 to put them in a vocational school that's going
12 to lead to a menial job later on down the road.
13 We want them to go onto a higher education,
14 maybe PhD program, whatever the field they're
15 in. We didn't send them to school to learn a
16 trade or whatever else it is you guys are
17 planning on bringing in here. We want a four-
18 year foundation in the high school, another four
19 years of the bachelor's degree. I have a son
20 that graduated from New York City public school
21 and is now a senior at Penn State. I want, when
22 he finish that, he goes on to do his master's or
23 his PhD, because he had that foundation from a
24 New York City public school. We cannot phase
25 out schools that have no foundation for our

kids. We have to give the resources that's necessary to maintain the school and to further their education. Thank you.

MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Our last two speakers are speaker 27, Tashima Taylor, and she'll be followed by Tanya Gaynor.

MS. TASHIMA TAYLOR: Hello, good night. My name is Tashima Taylor. I graduated last year as the valedictorian, and I came back to visit, and the next thing I was reading was the school was closing. So I was like, "What?" I came here three years ago from Jamaica. I started here. I was like--everything was new. I had to start all over again. I came here. I had one teacher look at me and said, "You're going to be the valedictorian your graduating year." And I was the valedictorian. See, when you have people that care about you and support you from the start to the end, you'll have success. If you close the school, what's going to happen? You have a bunch of caring teachers here. I've never met so many people in my life that cares about people. They look out for you. They support you. Don't close the school. That doesn't make any sense. And that's not

1 something that I want to hear. I come back
2 for a visit and my school is closing. I love
3 this school. I love my principal. She just
4 started. She started when I did, and I love
5 her. That short time I get to know her, I love
6 her. I was on the SLT committee. I was
7 involved in my school. I don't want my school
8 to close, so don't close it. Thank you.
9 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. Our final speaker,
10 number 28, is Tanya Gaynor. Ms. Gaynor?
11 MS. TANYA GAYNOR: Good evening, good
12 evening. My name is Tanya Gaynor. I'm a former
13 parent, an SLT member, and a member of the PTA.
14 My son struggled academically throughout his
15 four years in Law, but not because of the
16 teachers, but because of his own doing, yet I'm
17 proud to say that he is part of the 2012
18 graduation rate. And why and how was that
19 possible? It was the unlimited support and
20 dedication of Mrs. White and her staff, from
21 constant communications from the teachers, the
22 afterschool tutoring, the Saturday academy for
23 the Regents prep. Everyone worked tirelessly,
24 not only to help my son, but the other students,
25 successfully graduate. With the limited budget

1 and the resources that Mrs. White and her
2 staff has to deal with, they have made a
3 positive turnaround in this school. I'm a
4 personal witness to attest that the Law program
5 is working. And for the record, will you please
6 acknowledge the petitions and letters against
7 the school closing that you received this
8 evening? Thank you.
9 MR. BETHEIL: Thank you. That concludes the
10 public comment period. Before we move to the
11 question and answer, I'd just like to
12 acknowledge that we were provided by the SLT
13 with some letters and petitions that we'll make
14 sure is included in the record, so thank you.
15 We'll now begin the question and answer period.
16 Remember that there will be some individual
17 questions, and others that we'll group together.
18 I believe we just received a few. Any question
19 that is not answered tonight will be answered on
20 the website. If you have additional questions
21 at the conclusion of tonight's proceedings, we
22 ask that you direct them to us by phone or by
23 email. Those numbers are on the fact sheet, but
24 again, the email is address is
25 d29proposals@schools.nyc.gov, again,

1 d29proposals@schools.nyc.gov, and the phone
2 number is (212)374-7621. With that I'll turn it
3 over to the deputy chancellor for the questions.
4 MR. POLAKOW-SURANSKY: So I want to
5 acknowledge that what we heard tonight is
6 there's a very strong disagreement in this
7 community with this proposal. There's very
8 strong support in this community for this school
9 and a belief on the part of the students and
10 teachers and parents who testified that they're
11 really good things going on in this school. And
12 I think it's important to acknowledge that and
13 recognize that and celebrate it. And for those
14 students who took the time away from other
15 activities, for those teachers who took the time
16 to prepare presentations, I thank you. And I
17 want to very honestly tell you that what you've
18 said tonight is important and meaningful. I
19 want to respond to some of the things that were
20 said, because there are places where I disagree,
21 and I want to share that view, and I also want
22 to answer some of the questions that were passed
23 in. So let me first start with the questions.
24 One of the questions that was asked is about the
25 funding of the new school. So the new school

1 will receive funding in the same way that the
2 existing school receives funding, through a
3 formula that's based on the number of students
4 that are in the school, and students that have
5 higher needs coming into high school carry extra
6 funding weight. So for example, a student with
7 special education services or an English
8 language learner or students who have struggled
9 academically in middle school would come to
10 school with extra funds attached to them that go
11 into the school's budget. And that same formula
12 is what's used in every New York City high
13 school. The only difference in funding that
14 occurs is in the beginning of a new school. In
15 the first year there are some additional startup
16 funds to buy supplies that are required when you
17 start up a new school. Some of the supplies may
18 be borrowed from other schools or schools
19 phasing out, but there are also new supplies
20 that need to be bought. I think to put the
21 broader funding question that was raised tonight
22 in context, over the past ten years the budget
23 for the public school system has doubled, from
24 roughly $12 billion to roughly $24 billion. In
25 that time teacher salaries have gone up almost

1 50% and school resources over that period have
2 gone up significantly. In the economic crisis
3 that happened in this country in 2009, huge
4 amounts of money were lost, and the federal
5 government and the state government took money
6 out of the City's budget. And the City replaced
7 most of that money, but didn't have enough to
8 replace all of it. And that did lead to cuts in
9 every single school in New York City, and those
10 cuts, even though they were much smaller than
11 the funding increases, they were about 13% over
12 three years, they were significant and painful.
13 And I want to recognize that, but I also want to
14 make sure that we're all very honest about how
15 that occurred. That is not a malicious attempt
16 to take resources away from schools. In fact,
17 if you look at what happened in the rest of the
18 school system, outside of schools, the cuts were
19 40%. Much, much deeper cuts happened at every
20 other level of the system in order to make sure
21 that most of the cuts didn't hit schools. But
22 when there's an economic crisis, there are
23 budget cuts. We're coming out of that now and
24 we'll hopefully see in the coming years better
25 budgets from the federal government and the

1 state government, which will help us. But
2 that is a problem that every single school in
3 New York City has struggled with, not just this
4 one. And the performance in the school during
5 this period didn't go down a little bit. It
6 went down from 72% to 54%. And that's a lot of
7 kids. That's not just a statistic. So let's
8 talk about what's behind that number for a
9 second. If you look at the passing rates, how
10 many kids are earning their ten credits in ninth
11 grade, that number doesn't look so bad from last
12 year. About three-quarters of the kids are
13 getting what they really need to get to the next
14 grade. But then when you look at the tenth-
15 graders, it's only about two-thirds of the
16 students who are getting their ten credits. And
17 then when you look at the 11th-graders, it's only
18 53% of the students that are getting their ten
19 credits. Now there's a pattern there. Over
20 time, we're losing students in the school
21 community. I'll give you another example of
22 that. Four years before this last graduating
23 class, in 2008, there were 250 students in the
24 ninth grade. The next year, in 2009, there were
25 126 tenth-graders. The next year were 77 11th-

1 graders. And then in '11-12, there were 64
2 12th-graders. And that tells you that there are
3 kids that are succeeding and we should be very
4 proud of them, but as a community and as a
5 school system, we have a responsibility to ask
6 the question, "What's happening to those other
7 students?" When I look at the survey data, I
8 see some real strengths. I see that there's a
9 community here that a lot of people have good
10 feelings about, but when kids were asked the
11 question, "Do my teachers inspire me to learn?"
12 54% said "Yes." That's the same number that are
13 graduating from this school. What about those
14 other 46% who don't feel that way? And what are
15 we doing to address that need? And that's why
16 this is such a serious conversation, and that's
17 why there are strong views, and I think that
18 there are legitimate disagreements. There were
19 suggestions tonight, and one of the questions
20 that was asked is, "Are there other things that
21 could be considered in order to improve the
22 school? Why do you think a new school is the
23 right decision?" And a lot of folks who
24 testified said this is a shell game; this is not
25 about improving the school. It's about making

1 money or something like that. There's no
2 money being made off of this. And let's look at
3 what's happened in other places in the city over
4 the past ten years. Springfield Gardens went
5 from a graduation rate in the low 40s to a
6 graduation rate in the high 60s. That's not
7 perfect, but that's a dramatic change as a
8 result of the creation of new schools. Across
9 the system we've seen 20% to 30% more kids
10 graduating, half the kids dropping out, when you
11 use the strategy where you get a new team of
12 educators who slowly build something new in that
13 building for future generations. And I think
14 it's absolutely right to demand that the
15 students that are currently here continue to be
16 served well and continue to get resources. And
17 that is the job of this staff and this
18 principal, who have clearly demonstrated a deep
19 commitment to those students. And it's our job
20 to make sure as--if this proposal is approved--
21 as that school changes and gets smaller, that we
22 actually see more kids succeed. That is the
23 goal there as well. Another question was raised
24 about how community feedback is incorporated
25 into this process. We did a set of meetings

1 earlier this year and in those meetings we
2 talked to different parts of the school
3 community about the strengths and weaknesses.
4 In addition, we're doing this meeting tonight,
5 and I said, and I mean it, we take it very
6 seriously what people say, and we're trying to
7 balance a very difficult decision about what's
8 the right thing to do, not just for the folks
9 who are here tonight, but for those 46% of the
10 students who aren't here anymore and who aren't
11 speaking up tonight. A question was asked about
12 how the other schools on Campus Magnet will
13 continue to be supported. And what I want to
14 describe briefly is that schools have a large
15 say actually in the way that they get supported.
16 There's a fixed amount that every school gets
17 that's their fair share of the budget, but in
18 terms of making decisions about what programs to
19 put in place--we heard about some new programs
20 that have been restored in the past couple years
21 under the principal's leadership--in terms of
22 the kinds of professional development that are
23 needed, we actually believe quite strongly that
24 the needs of each school are different. And so
25 crafting the supports depends on talking to the

1 educators in the school about what they need
2 and trying to provide those kinds of resources
3 and trying to provide partnerships and trying to
4 provide training where that's requested. And
5 that's the kind of support that will come to
6 other schools in the building and will continue
7 to come to this school if this proposal is
8 approved. But you never fix a school from the
9 outside, and truthfully you never fix a school
10 with an extra $100,000 or an extra $500,000.
11 You fix a school by changing what's happening
12 every day in the classroom and inspiring young
13 people to learn and making sure that the
14 curriculum is rich and rigorous and exciting so
15 that kids are here. And that work has happened
16 in some parts of the school community, but for
17 many kids it hasn't happened. And I don't want
18 to for a second suggest that the teachers here
19 are not hard-working or dedicated to their kids,
20 'cause that came through very clearly. I was a
21 teacher myself. I know how hard this work is,
22 but I also know that sometimes it takes a
23 different organization, a different focus, and a
24 different combination of people to get kids to
25 really succeed. And that's the question that

1 we've been discussing and will continue to
2 discuss and review the feedback that we've
3 gotten and make a proposal on March 11th to the
4 Panel for Education Policy. I thank you for you
5 testimony and thank you for being here this
6 evening.
7 MR. BETHEIL: As Shael just said, we have
8 heard significant comments this evening. We do
9 appreciate the feedback and the contributions to
10 this hearing. The information from this hearing
11 will be shared with the Panel on Educational
12 Policy, which will have its hearing on March
13 11th, 2013 at Brooklyn Technical High School,
14 which is located at 29 Fort Green Place in
15 downtown Brooklyn, to vote on this proposal.
16 Public comment can be submitted via email and/or
17 phone until March 10th at 12:00 a.m. Again, you
18 may submit feedback via phone by calling
19 (212)374-7621 or in writing by email at
20 d29proposals@schools.nyc.gov. This information
21 is also included at the bottom of the fact
22 sheets that were available in the lobby. Again,
23 thank you all for coming this evening. This
24 joint public hearing is officially adjourned.
25 [END RECORDING]

1 C E R T I F I C A T E

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 19, 2013
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