

Contracts for Excellence

District 26

51-60 Marathon Parkway

Queens, NY 11362

Public Comment

MS. SHIROMA:

Yes. Could you explain, please, on page 12 under Model Programs for ELLs, how we're spending or, actually, what the innovative programs for ELLs at the 66,178 dollars is and also explain why the district didn't get any money for parent involvement for model programs for ELLs, what was the process that DOE went through to end up with zero for parent involvement?

MS. SPEAKER:

Should she say her name also in case they need to get back --

MS. SHIROMA:

Yes. Susan Shiroma, CEC 26 member.

MS. SAUNDERS:

Now, we can answer that now?

MS. SPEAKER:

Is there anyone here from -- on the ISC who can answer that?

MR. SPEAKER:

We can address that, yeah.

MS. SAUNDERS:

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER:

First, what I really -- what I want to make -- I'll use my lunchroom voice so they can hear.

MS. SAUNDERS:

Okay.

MR. SPEAKER

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Important point: There's two things you need to be understanding: what an allocation is and how the funds are used. The allocation, if we go back to the screens that showed --

MS. SAUNDERS:

I think if you just use the arrow on there.

MR. SPEAKER:

Just go to the slide.

MR. SPEAKER:

No, it's not on the --

(Pause)

MR. SPEAKER:

The allocation of funds by the Department is this: The schools receive a pot of money that they decided on how they'd want to use the funds. The schools receive targeted allocations for certain types of classes, like CTT, based on new classes that were opened up. The schools receive apportionment of all these initiatives based upon where those initiatives are taking place. So these are the allocations.

If you go forward a few screens --

MS. SPEAKER:

We could just do it without data.

MR. SPEAKER:

No, because it's not in --

MS. SPEAKER:

Oh, okay.

MR. SPEAKER:

-- slide show mode.

This is not an allocation. This is a compilation of how the schools decided to spend the monies that they received. So no one gave them an allocation zero for parents' involvement. No one gave them an allocation for ELL. No one gave them an allocation for class size. You know that this department, this mayor, this chancellor has -- brings forth that the best decision-making for what happens in schools is by the school community. So we give money to schools, and schools decide how they're going to use it, for the best needs of their community.

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So they didn't receive an allocation -- or they did not receive an allocation; they received dollars. And they decided, based upon the needs of their school and the dollars available, how to best utilize those funds.

MS. SPEAKER:

Who?

MR. SPEAKER:

Who?

MS. SPEAKER:

I mean, so District 26, the rest to get to 66,178 as the CEC 26 part of this total, all of our principals K through high school somehow decided that 66,178 would be our piece of this allocation?

MR. SPEAKER:

Out of this allocation, yes. They may have decided that class size was best used in this allocation. That doesn't mean they're not spending any money on ELL students or parent involvement.

MS. SPEAKER:

But this is what they've asked for to come down the --

MR. SPEAKER:

This is what they've scheduled their money on. They've proposed to schedule their money on to use in the school. If you want to see what each school did on the Web site, and you can see how each school decided to use its funds. Remember, this is just a piece of the school's money. They receive a whole huge allocation and this is a piece of it.

MR. SPEAKER:

Could you explain a little bit about the --

MR. CALORAS:

We have -- if I may? The -- Robert Caloras. The -- from the discretionary money that went to all the schools, not all school got -- I mean, that wasn't divided by 1,200. There were qualifications between -- you received --

MR. SPEAKER:

Right.

MR. CALORAS:

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-- money, and that was primarily based on, I imagine, the poverty level, the ELLs at the school, the thing -- the students that matched those needs.

MR. SPEAKER:

It's based on the state's requirements, right.

MR. CALORAS:

Right. Now, so that explains some of the differentials. Now, the initial allocations, the pie chart, which -- that was determined by the DOE, correct?

MR. SPEAKER:

Yes.

MR. CALORAS:

Okay. They got the total money and they decided this is how we're going to break it up. Did the DOE, when they decided those allocations, seek any -- did the -- was there one public hearing that went into the determination of that allocation?

MR. SPEAKER:

There were public hearings last year. Each year there were public hearings, as there is now, in terms of how the funds will be utilized. And they are preliminary and they can be changed.

MR. CALORAS:

And were those the Contract for Excellence hearings?

MR. SPEAKER:

Yes.

MR. CALORAS:

Okay. Thank you. Now, let me just do a follow-up. Class size reduction is a large portion of the pie. My information is that in very few instances have class sizes been decreased. My chart on District 26 shows on average that class size is up. In fact, Ms. Saunders indicated that one school has a cap; it's probably every year they have a cap.

Basic -- my point being, if my information is accurate -- and I believe it is because my information comes from DOE sources; no one has the ability yet to go and check -- class size is up. Class size is a major portion of the problems cited in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuits. So it's important. Shouldn't there be a reallocation to get a program, to get enough to programs to actually reduce class size in a significant way?

MR. SPEAKER:

Okay.

MS. SPEAKER:

So I have the allocations and there are some schools, as you know, they don't barely have enough money even to pay for a teacher to reduce the class size. So that's, I think (indiscernible).

MR. CALORAS:

No, I want a reallocation that the pie looks different so that class size reduction --

MS. SPEAKER:

It can be reality.

MR. CALORAS:

-- is a larger portion, because contrary to -- as the mayor has said and implied in some off-the-cuff comments, there is no requirement that he spend a certain amount of money on class size reduction. There's no requirement that he spend any money on any of those particular things. When he spends the money, it has to be on those six things. So he could break -- you could break the pie up any way. My concern is class size reduction has failed. Why isn't the pie going to be reallocated?

MR. SPEAKER:

There are several issues that you -- that are raised in your question. One has to do with space, one has to do with funds, and one has to do with school choice of what's best for their students in their school community.

Space, we've been adding seats. This administration has added the most seats over the last several years than any administration in years gone by. Tremendous amount of capital improvements to increase seats throughout the city. Is it enough? No, it's not because we still are growing. Our numbers show overall that class size has been reducing each year. Okay?

As far as the mayor doesn't or the chancellor doesn't allocate money for class, they allocate monies to schools. Again, it is their belief that the best interests of the school are served by the school community deciding how to use their money because they know locally what is needed in a building, where the students are, what will help them reach their best potential. And so they decide in terms of how to utilize the funds.

And that's what this represents, how the schools decide. Yes, there are certain pieces in terms of space allowance, and there are certain pieces of, you know, you have a plan in the beginning of the year and more kids come

and that alters that plan. And so this is a reflection of what the schools think is going to help schools best.

The other piece is we all have to recognize that there's been reductions. We are in a financial crisis. And so 4.9 percent of the schools' budget, that's only this year's amount. We had a large decrease last year. That has to impact -- it does impact the school's ability to pay for staff. Some teachers, as Ms. Saunders said, teachers had to be accessed, which means that you're going to have -- definitely have higher class sizes.

So some schools are able to use this to maintain the class sizes that they had rather than going higher, but you're going to see higher classes as dollars shrink. Until we get past that, we're going to be seeing higher classes in various places until something takes place, a change within our economy, and we're able to infuse more money back into education.

MR. CALORAS:

If I may do a follow-up, I want -- I have heard many people in the DOE, the chancellor, praise, were giving -- say -- that were giving the principals and the individual schools the discretion to do with the money as they seen best. However, when we're talking class size reduction, in District 26 in particular, and I know we're not the most overcrowded schools in the city, but we have some that are monstrously overcrowded. Our high schools, as you well know, are a walking public safety hazard waiting for the fire department to wake up. I'll spare you my editorials on that.

In looking at the schools' allocations, over 50 percent of our schools in our district received less than 100,000 dollars. The largest allocation went to probably Cardozo or Bayside. They received 600-plus. Other than shoving another teacher in an already overcrowded classroom, what is a principal supposed to do to reduce class size with 600,000 dollars at a school that's 100 -- 1 1/2 times close -- well, 1 1/4 over capacity? Okay?

Without -- what I'm saying is there's -- I think it's a cop-out to say we're giving the money to the principals, they don't want to reduce class size reduction (sic).

There's not enough money here and, frankly, I don't think there's coordination between the school construction authority, that they're not building enough. As you know, there's not enough to keep up the need. And I understand all the difficulties, but they need more money, whether it's here or in the capital plan.

MR. SPEAKER:

Well, let's face it. All that's a five-year capital plan, which is coming to a close now, and we're starting on the next five-year capital plan, which you'll

have hearings on here; it was eleven billion dollars, most anybody's ever seen in many, many years.

There -- you know, there is still a pot of money there, and most of -- a lot of that money went to build classrooms throughout. There's still a need -- there's no doubt there's still a need, but there was a tremendous effort to build additional classroom space when that took place.

It's not going to solve the problem. We're not going to get there for years. But a school can decide to reduce class size and through teacher -- student-teacher ratio. You know, and I can find my colleague to talk about the different types of programs that schools do implement. It's not just opening up another class to have, like in an elementary school, twenty kids in a class. They can still have twenty-five kids in a class but then have a (indiscernible) teacher to reduce the student-teacher ratio on that particular grade.

So there are all the things that they can do even though the classes have a limitation in terms of how many children can fit in the room, but there are other options available that schools avail themselves to reduce the student-teacher ratio, and they do that.

MS. POLACINO:

But there's not enough money in the budget for the principals to hire teachers to reduce the class size. That's what I think Bob's trying to say about why the class sizes aren't being reduced in this district.

MS. SPEAKER:

Would you state the name, please?

MS. POLACINO:

Maria Polacino (ph.).

MR. SPEAKER:

I don't know if that's because of Contract for Excellence. Let's remember, when you're looking at the Contract for Excellence allocation, that's dictated by the state. So the amount of money schools get is not determined by the Department; it's dictated by the state who says this is where your money has to go for these types of students. So if these students are largely not in District 26, then District 26 is not going to get the largest pots of money than other places get. And that's not a Department of Ed decision; that's a state decision. That's the funding decision that tries to say -- I want to tell you that when I -- I don't know if I did it -- yeah, I think I did it here. When I did the initial proposals for the budget for prior years, we showed that New York City was the only locality out of every in the state where there were guidelines determining how the

Department had to use the funds. Every other locality had flexibility to use for maintenance of effort for most of their funds, and New York City is only because of the interest groups that want to dictate what New York City spends its money on. And that's reality. We could show you the books, we could show you the statement that there's only X amount of dollars that go to New York City for certain kinds of categories, and it's dictated by what the state tells us to do.

But schools receive Fair Student Funding, schools receive Contract for Excellence. They have lots of money to decide on how they're going to use the money. It's not just a Contract for Excellence that's going to reduce class size.

MR. CALORAS:

If I may, my recollection is yes, the mayor, when they were talking about the limitations on how the mayor can use the money, it wasn't just interest groups, unless you want to call concerned parents -- concerned parents lobbied Albany tremendously because it had been concerned parents, experienced, that, in prior to that lawsuit resolution, any time the state said something had to be done with a pot of money or, not even money, anything, there had been -- there was less than full compliance with those laws, those policies and those understandings. That is why the state, in an unprecedented way, and Senator Padavan came here, said he -- they dread putting those kind of limitations. But Albany, with a lot of people in upstate, said you're right, given the history of the way this mayor and this chancellor have abused allocations in the past, we're putting limitations. And I could pull out as many documents as you can to show that. That's my understanding and recollection. So before we go anywhere with that --

And -- that was it. I just want to --

MS. SAUNDERS:

Just state your name again so that -- it was still you talking.

MR. CALORAS:

Rob Caloras. Rob Caloras. Also, if I may, it's not just District 26 that has increased class sizes since the initiation. Okay, what?

MS. SPEAKER:

District 2.

MR. CALORAS:

It's just about every district in the city. Now, I understand the mayor talks about slight reductions. Where there have been reductions, I understand they're very slight. It's my understanding, of course, I'm sure -- there might

be numbers different, but in general -- I have the chart here -- okay, in general, class size reduction is up across the city. Those are my numbers.

MR. SPEAKER:

The numbers on the Department's Web site don't show that numbers are going up; they show they're going down. This year is going to be a difficult year; it's going to be a different year, because of the large reductions. And I want to state, it's no intention of mine to say interest groups parents -- without parents and people going to Albany, we wouldn't have gotten the amount that we've received as the Department of Ed, as the City of New York.

So, by all means, that is not my intention to say anything negative towards parents or groups that have gone and advocated for this system and for the children in the city. They've done that and done that well. It's the only reason that we've gotten the money, additional money beyond what we were getting before.

All I'm saying is that we have a belief that money belongs into schools, money belongs into local areas, and there -- those decisions need to be made. No one at Tweed is trying to decide from who spends what money on what purpose, on what program. It is out there to say you are the school community, you're the principal, you are responsible, you are accountable, you're teachers, you're parents, you should come together and decide in terms of how monies are best used to meet the needs of your students to make them as progressive as possible. And we've seen that in results over the last number of years.

And so we're not into saying we need strings attached to money, we want to put strings attached to school -- money with schools. We want you to decide, for you to be accountable and responsible for the results that take place in your school. And we've seen positive results as a result of all of that.

MS. SPEAKER:

Is there --

MR. CALORAS:

I have -- my understanding -- oh, I'm sorry, yeah.

MS. SPEAKER:

No, no, you go. You go ahead (indiscernible).

MR. CALORAS:

To stay with class size reduction, because several years ago this council passed a resolution -- Rob Caloras -- passed a resolution regarding goals for class size -- class sizes. We had hearings. It was our understanding and we believe -- I believe it still is -- that class size reduction is probably the single best way to improve the academic environment and with -- of students and with the academic environment improvement, test scores, anywhere you want to measure the kid's performance, will improve.

My understanding is also that the State Education Department has the same understanding. In fact, they have rules with class size reduction goals. Now, I know there are goals. My understanding is the city is not anywhere close to those goals.

So even if there are slight reductions, do you agree that the city is not anywhere close -- and I know you're not -- I'm sorry, okay, but I -- again, I don't want to get into this -- my understanding is, and this is from people who look at DOE numbers. I know the new law says there will actually be an independent budget office that is allowed to audit the DOE, and maybe that will be most illuminating, however, until we get that, I could only go on people who look at the DOE Web site, cross-reference, do a lot of things.

We're nowhere near the state goal. The state goals aren't being met. A principal is not doing enough to meet those state goals. Does the DOE give up its mantra of independence to the principal and say you better start reducing class size a little more? Because there's a state law on that. There isn't a state law that specifically says you need to have a particular ELA program or, am I mistake -- that's my understanding.

MR. SPEAKER:

No, I'm not -- I'm just saying that state law should be towards improving instruction of children and making them as successful as possible. And so class size by itself is not going to improve education. If you don't have teachers who are best ready to teach in a classroom, or if you don't have materials, or if you don't have the types of programs that a student needs -- students need, then reduce class size is not going to do it by itself.

So that's why believe that principals have to have choices with their staff and with their community to best serve the needs of their students. We're not trying to -- we are trying to increase our class size, which is why we're building so many buildings throughout the city to improve space so that we have more places we can hold classes.

But just an example, when the state used to allocate money for class size reduction, it allocated the same flat amount year after year after year. And we all know that teachers' salaries rise year after year after year. So if you're allocating flat and expecting the same amount to be maintained in

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terms of class size with the same dollars and higher salaries, it's not going to happen.

And so that's another way that we were not allocated properly. We had to use city funds to use just to maintain the same level that we were doing year after year after year. And that's -- you know, that's reality. And that's why parents went to New York City, to the state, because we weren't getting our fair share, and that's why we received more money because we proved out that case.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

Let me explain a little bit about the choice aspect of this. The principals agree that class size reduction is extremely important, because the largest --

MS. SPEAKER:

Introduce yourself. Just say --

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

Oh, I'm Gus Hanzdemetri (ph.), Office of School Improvement, assigned to District 26. The pie chart indicates that the overall majority of principals chose to spend the -- most of the money that was allocated for class size reduction. I'm more involved in the macro -- the micro rather than the macro aspect of all of this at the school level. I want to tell you a little bit about the process that each school utilized to decide among those various categories, how they were going to use the money.

You'll all recall that there is a comprehensive education plan that is put together by every school. Principal, in collaboration with the school leadership team. Appendix 8 of the -- of last year's CEP was the Contract for Excellence selection process. The school leadership team and the principal went online and chose how they were going to use their allocation at the school level, and some decided -- well, we see that overwhelmingly they decided class -- the majority of schools, class size reduction was a -- the most significant districtwide allocation of the way they wanted to use the funds, but some chose for model ELL programs, some chose for Time on Task. I think Time on Task was the second largest category. So, based on the decision-making process at the school level, that's how the use of those funds were decided by each individual school in District 26.

This year that was largely carried over; that's why it said "maintenance of effort" in the slide presentation. The majority of schools kept their funding in the same categories, with the exception of schools, as the slide presentation said, where you had a dramatic change of register or some other instructional need that changed from last year to this year.

So, of course, the expenses have gone up, so the money didn't go as far, and we have a fiscal crisis. All of these factors were factored in. But at the school level, I mean, it really is a school-based decision-making process. And you can argue about the size of the allocation or the formerly used, but the amount that was given was decided upon by each school community. And it's not one size fits all. If you look in detail on the site, you'll see that each school chose, in slightly different ways, on how they best thought the instructional program could be benefited by the use of these funds.

Do you want to add anything, Anita?

MS. SAUNDERS:

Yeah, I think (indiscernible) said -- well, I see --

MR. SPEAKER:

Question for me or in general?

MS. SAUNDERS:

I have another --

MR. SPEAKER:

Okay --

MS. SAUNDERS:

(Indiscernible).

MS. ALEXANDER:

Pia Alexander, CEC 26. I just have a question. If the funds were predominantly benefiting students with the greatest educational needs, students with disabilities, and those students continued progress depends on consistency with their support therapies, their OT/PT speech reading remediation, et cetera, why are there not funds allocated for the continued therapies like, first, as a summer school would do, as many other counties do and many other states do? There are no summer schools --

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

I think there were funds that were allocated directly to maintain particular -- I think -- what was it, the autistic student category?

MS. SPEAKER:

ASD program.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

-- that with a part of a -- you see, there were two pieces to the puzzle. The DOE allocated funds directly to maintain certain crucial programs. Then there was another part of money that went to each school where each school had decided last year how they were going to use the money. So there was an actual effort made to try and maintain high-needs programs like the kinds of programs you're talking about. If you wanted to see that in detail, again, public transparency is one of those terms that we use quite a bit in the DOE. I'm sure you can go online and see where that money went and how it was used to try and maintain the kinds of programs that you're talking about.

MS. ALEXANDER:

Okay. Yes, because my suggestion or my -- another question is I know that for many students that are in general education programs but do receive these services, many of these services, in District 26, I know, in particular, but throughout the city, the therapeutic services that provide these services over the summer outside of the school have a cap on how many students they can take.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

Right.

MS. ALEXANDER:

So each year the number is growing and growing and growing of the students like my son and maybe fifteen or twenty-five other parents that are in a support group with me of public school parents whose children could not get into those programs. So they don't have -- you know, there isn't the progress for that.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

I can't speak to a specific program, but I can tell you along general lines there was an effort to try and maintain crucial needs. The other thing that I don't mind telling you because, again, this is, you know, from the field, firsthand experience, my colleague Sylvia Jamison, the senior grants officer, and I -- last year the state comes in and selects a certain number of schools and reviews the use of Contract for Excellence funds in a great deal of detail. And I'll mention Francis Lewis High School, for example. Jeffrey Shore who is the principal there, on class size reduction, they wanted to know in such a large school how those funds were used and how you could reduce class size in a particular school like that. And they pulled, you know, registers. We went through numbers. And, you know, it wasn't only Francis Lewis. Every single school that they visited, at a micro level they wanted to know what the needs were of the particular students that were targeted. They asked are you targeting students most in need in the building. I mean, this was a very detailed kind of process. And I can

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tell you, because I went through it along with Sylvia -- I don't know whether she wants to comment or not --

MS. JAMISON:

Yeah, I do, yeah.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

And so there is not, I assure you, an arbitrary use of these funds at the school level, because I assume that they will again monitor -- they'll select schools and they'll select different schools in District 26 this year. And once again, we will be in a position of going at, you know, either one day or two days with the state representatives and going over the allocations, the budgets, the program. They even -- it's not a paper review only. They actually go into the classrooms and they count the number of children.

MS. JAMISON:

Right, they look at class schedules.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

Right. And they --

MS. JAMISON:

Also -- um-hum.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

They --

MS. JAMISON:

Right.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

They check the schedules.

MS. JAMISON:

Right, check the schedules.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

They look at the instructional materials. It's a quite detailed process.

So it is something that I'm sure will go through again. And these funds are in the public, you know, scrutiny and domain, and they -- the state takes them very seriously. And our job as DOE employees are to support the schools that are selected for review.

As Mr. Bauer (ph.) in the ICC and the various other entities that support schools programmatically and fiscally, our job is to make sure that the allocated funds are being used at the school level properly in the way each school leadership team and principal said they were going to use them according to the document, which, again, is on Web sites; you can check and see.

And it is very much school-level choice that's made at the building level. And the DOE strongly feels that that is the -- my colleague Mr. Bauer said that's the most effective way instructionally that each building can make that kind of decision, how to park the funds where they -- where the funds are needed most. You could argue, you know, there are not enough funds. There are never enough funds in these fiscal things. Things are increasingly difficult. But the choice is at the school level.

And I'm very proud of our principals, all of our principals, but I'm very familiar with principals in District 26 and the school leadership team. I think they make very good decisions. And when we went in and talked to the individual teachers and schools and so on, they took the use of these funds and they were very grateful for them and used them very seriously and very responsibly, I thought.

MS. JAMISON:

Right, and please know that the state is holding schools accountable for how they're saying they're using the class size reduction funds, you know these funds to do class size reduction, I should say. And they expect class size reduction at the aggregate school level. Whether it's reducing class size or it's reducing the pupil-teacher ratio, it must be done at the aggregate school level. That means that the state doesn't want to see a class size reduction in just one class; they want it to be impacting the whole school.

So please know that the state, when a school says they're using for class size reduction, they monitor us very seriously. Like Gus was saying, here we have a monitoring review by the State Department of Education. And if a school is using these funds, targeting class size reduction, then that means that class size reduction better be happening at the school level, not just in one particular classroom or there, there somewhere, but at the aggregate level.

MS. SPEAKER:

Say your name.

MS. SPEAKER:

Sylvia Jamison.

MS. JAMISON:

Oh, sorry. Sylvia Jamison.

MS. SPEAKER:

I think Irene was next, right?

MS. FINELL:

Irene Finell (ph.), CDEC 26 member. You know, the pie chart indicating that class size reduction is thirty-five percent in District 26, a lot of that is based on two high schools using almost a million dollars' worth of -- I'm sorry, yes, a million dollars' worth of funds. So that number has kind of escalated by the use of that much money from two schools.

And also, you know, keeping in line with what you're saying, the schools have the discretion, well, it's the principal, it's not the school community. The SLTs may have been consulted but they didn't have to be consulted.

So we are proud of our principals here but in other districts they may not have the same caliber of principals that we have here in 26.

I do note that a lot of our principals chose dedicated instructional time, probably because we don't have the room for new classrooms. So they have pull-ins or push-ins -- pull-outs or push-ins to get more -- a lower ratio.

So, you know, I do understand what you're saying, but class size reduction here, our numbers are very high because a million dollars in two schools, it's not really across the board. But it is what it is and, you know, they do have the discretion.

So we as parents, however, don't see this. We're not asked for our input at the PTA meetings. It doesn't happen. And now we only have a month to get -- all of us here have this knowledge now, and we have to get this to our -- you know, to the school community. It's almost impossible. So we do need more time next year to get this information out to the school community, not just the principals.

MS. SPEAKER:

Thank you.

MS. SHIROMA:

Just a general comment --

MS. SPEAKER:

State your name.

MS. SHIROMA:

Oh, hi, it's Susan Shiroma from CEC 26. I definitely agree with Irene because with every comparison chart here it raises another question. But I do understand, Gus, you're saying it's the principal's choice. And there are -- just as many of our District 26 principals chose to spend the bulk of their -- much of their monies on time -- on dedicated instruction time, which falls under Time on Task. There's wildly varying expenditures on class size reduction. And then even when you look in that category, there's wildly different expenditures between new classroom and the reduced pupil-teacher ratio.

But I wanted to come back to the 66,178. When you look at the high schools in our district, I think everybody agrees that at least three of them are terribly overcrowded. What would it mean to you, and as a statistician, that Cardozo High School spent about 48,652 dollars on class size reduction and put the districts, the entire amount, on model programs EL -- they were the only school in the district that put money into these model program ELLs with the 66,178, whereas when we look at, for instance, Lewis High School, which was in the papers this week for being just -- breaking at its seams, that principal put over 600,000 dollars into class size reduction and the Bayside High School Principal put about 587,000.

What does it mean when one principal in the district at the high school level puts about 66,178 dollars into model programs for ELL? Would it mean that that school has more of an ELL population, or they have a specialty in that area?

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

Well, I would assume that that --

MS. SHIROMA:

And I haven't looked --

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

Right, I mean, I _-

MS. SHIROMA:

-- exclusively at their CEPs yet.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

I can't speak directly, but I would assume, since it's a school-based decision, that they identified an instructional need that adhered to the state guidelines for the use of these funds, and the principal, in collaboration with the school leadership team, which has representation of the various constituencies in the building, decided to use this funding in that way as an

allowable strategy in order to improve and maintain the instructional program.

Now, when a school leadership team and the principals sit down to decide on their overall use of their budget, remember that they don't look at one source of funding in isolation; they look at it in collaboration with other sources of funding.

So I can't speak to exactly how that particular building allocated all of its, you know, funding together. This piece of it obviously they identified, based on what you're telling me there, the need for that instructional program and put the majority of their funds in that place. Perhaps they had other funding that they could allocate to address other needs in the building. My colleague here who is a fiscal expert can perhaps speak to that.

MR. SPEAKER:

If I can add, what we teach schools to do is not what used to happen in the past. We don't teach schools here's a pot of money, here's a pot of money, here's a pot of money, build your program to the pots of money. We teach them to build a program, which is a CEP, comprehensive ed plan, based on the needs of the building. Now take the funding and try to mirror -- match it with the program needs that you believe -- because if you implemented this whole program, you would be able to get your students to a higher plateau.

And so not everything in all of the CEPs are able to be done, because of the limitation of funding, and so we match our funding to meet the educational program that's developed at the school with the whole community.

So one school may decide I'm going to use the funding that I have within the limitations of what I'm supposed to use Contract for Excellence for, for this program, but that doesn't mean I'm still not using my other monies to do some -- reduce class size somewhere else. You're just not seeing it right now. You're just seeing how the Contracts for Excellence money are being used.

So it's not that they build towards this pot of what, are you going to use it; the pot builds towards the program needs.

MS. SHIROMA:

And the 66,178 dollars could have been on a teacher's salary or -- I just -- where did that go?

MS. SPEAKER:

You're talking about (indiscernible).

MS. SHIROMA:

Yeah. I don't understand --

MS. SPEAKER:

So, different schools --

MS. SHIROMA:

-- how it applies at Cardozo High School.

MS. SPEAKER:

Different schools have different models, programs for ELLs. That's 66,000 may have paid -- maybe they needed an extra ELL feature.

MS. SPEAKER:

Oh, okay, so --

MS. SPEAKER:

Okay? But that doesn't mean that the other school that didn't put any money in there didn't use that money for ELLs. The ELLs are mingled in the classrooms and they may have used push-in models or some pull-out. Different schools have totally different models. In this district, you know, we never have self-contained ESL in elementary or middle schools. And I don't think that we -- I'm not sure about all the high schools but, generally speaking, we know from the research here that it seems to work very well when they are intermingled with other children and learn English better that way. And we provide either push-in/pull-out surfaces for them.

So as our colleagues said, the way that -- what you see on the chart doesn't necessarily represent what's happening instructionally in that school; it just means that the principal there used that money allocated for ELLs in that -- in particular, school props; it was for a teacher. But in the other schools they're using money for ELLs maybe under class size reduction.

MS. JAMISON:

At least some modest schools have Title III funds that they can use for their English-language learners too. So, again, even though a lot of schools in the community School District 26 use it (indiscernible) programs, they may have used their other funds -- I'm sure they used their other funds for that, you know, the Title III funds. So this is just, like, a little snapshot. This particular fund wasn't -- I mean, other funds it will have available to them (indiscernible) compilation.

MS. SPEAKER:

But when we take this back to our communities, the key thing is to go back to that CEP to see what the thinking was within the school.

MR. SPEAKER:

Absolutely.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

That's the basic document instructionally for every building. And it also is aligned with the budget as well.

MS. SPEAKER

Now, did our District Comprehensive Education Plan in 26 impact the way any of these principals were working?

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

You mean the DCEP --

MS. SPEAKER:

Yeah, the DCEP.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

-- the District Comprehensive Education Plan?

MS. SPEAKER:

Yeah. Does that play a role in this discussion?

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

The District Comprehensive Education Plan summarizes the overall approach and the -- there's an actual list, which is the same list you can find online, of how each school used the budget. So it just gives an overview and then it gives, in detail, how the schools in District 26 allocated the funds.

MS. SPEAKER:

So when you're called up to the state to, let's say, take a look at Francis Lewis High School because, for whatever reasons, the state looked at something and said a red flag was going off of interest?

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

No, you know, it's interesting, I've -- you've been doing this for many, many years. The logic of which schools they pick, it alludes me. They sometimes pick schools that are higher-performing, and sometimes they pick schools that are low-performing. Sometimes they pick small schools. Sometimes they pick large schools. They go through their own process and their own logic. And they usually do not pick the same school two years a in a row.

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So I expect that, in District 26, different schools will be chosen this year. And I can't predict ahead of time which schools they're going to choose. So what we try to do is maintain the best, you know, oversight and program and support system we can for all schools, because the better prepared all schools are, the less work there'll be in addressing the questions when the state comes in.

And it's not only that day that they come. Then they write a report. They ask specific follow-up questions and documentation. And then we assist the principal and the superintendent in answering those specific questions and providing the documentation to the state by school.

So it's a fairly intensive process.

MS. SPEAKER:

And are they comparing your CEP to whatever's in the district (indiscernible) plan?

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

Oh, yes, the first thing they do is they --

MS. SPEAKER:

So you've got to go up to Albany with all these documents?

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

Absolutely. They -- the first thing they ask us, actually, before we come to visit, they say we want to see the latest CEP. And as you should all know at this point, the CEP is no longer a static document; it's a dynamic document, a living document. It's online. And it's supposed to be adjusting and changed as new data becomes available.

So what they do is they say okay, fine, we know what you gave us at such and such a point in time, we want to see the latest document, have there been any adjustments, have there been any changes, et cetera. And they come with that document in hand. And, you know, they usually have Post-its or, you know, they highlight different things in it, and that very much informs their discussion with us and the principal in the use of the funds.

MS. SPEAKER:

Is there a negative outcome of any of these meetings perhaps not on behalf of our schools but on other schools you've represented? When you go to the state.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

What do you mean?

MS. SPEAKER:

When the state calls you up to Albany to discuss this (indicating).

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

Well, sometimes they find errors of a bookkeeping nature or some anomaly, and then we have to explain it or correct it. And there have been corrections made in individual schools at different times.

In a system as large as the DOE and the number of schools, the number of budgets and the number of programs, there are sometimes errors that are made. But, again, having gone through this process for many, many large schools, we have -- I can only speak for Queens and the districts that I've worked, and I've always worked predominantly in Queens and Queens District, we -- our reputation is excellent with the New York State Education Department. And the scrutiny that they give us is very professional, but they know that when they come to a District 26 school or a District 25 school or a 28 or 29 or 30, all of those schools I've been involved with, you know, so I know them firsthand, that chances are things are going to be in -- as perfect as to order as can be expected, you know, given school realities and the kinds of things that they're looking for.

MS. SPEAKER:

But we never get any -- are there any instances where schools in Queens get more money because of this audit?

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

No.

MS. SPEAKER:

We don't -- I know Sandy doesn't let it get that far.

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

I wish. I wish they would give us more -- you know, more funds. One of the things that I'm very -- you know, I don't get to talk to you. I usually attended district leadership team meetings. But one of the things that I was very pleased to see is that with the changes in the entire (indiscernible) law, for the first time a very significant number of District 26 schools have gotten Title I funding. I've been fighting for that for, you know, the last six years. And I've been arguing with everybody who would listen that the instructional needs of the schools in District 26 are as important as the instructional needs of any district in the city.

And so I'm glad that that formula was finally changed. I was not happy that the per capita amount for Queens was not as high as it was in other

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counties, because it changes from place to place. But these decisions are beyond my control. At least for the first we got something.

And the -- on October 5th we are holding a technical assistance session in PS 191 for -- the majority of schools in District 26 are invited. And the agenda of that meeting is to assist not only the schools that had Title I before but also schools that have never had Title I before in making proper use of the funding, doing their paperwork and assisting them, because schools that haven't had Title I funding before have appendices to fill out on their CEP that they haven't filled out before, so they need some extra help.

So that is, I'm happy to say, a Queens initiative. My colleagues Roseanne Napolitano, the ISC staff, Jo Mae Ha (ph.) and myself have decided that we're going to do that for Queens, and it's just around the corner, October 5th. I just got approval to be able to send out the e-mail I was waiting with bated breath, as the superintendent knows, and we launched it this morning and it reached -- and, you know, it looks like the turnout's going to be tremendous. So we hope to help schools in dealing with this new funding.

MR. CALORAS:

Just --

MS. SPEAKER:

Say your name.

MR. CALORAS:

Rob Caloras. Regarding the Title I money, my understanding is that's only the stimulus money?

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

Yes,

MR. SPEAKER:

Yes.

MR. CALORAS:

Thank you. So that's maybe -- and we're thrilled that some of our schools are getting it. However, my understanding is that it is stimulus money and that's probably a one-shot deal; they'll go back to the old formula --

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

Two years, two years.

MR. CALORAS:

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Two years. So within two years they'll, in all probability, go back to the old formulas?

MR. HANZDEMITRI:

I don't know.

MR. CALORAS:

Okay, but it's still -- but we won't look at -- it's a nice gift now.

Regarding -- and I know this is almost a policy choice, I've heard that, to go back to the -- what, Susan asked and what I mentioned before, the allocation on the big pie, Cardozo only received 200,000. There's not much you can do with 200,000 dollars when 345 of your classes are overcrowded. Okay? There's not much, so why bother spending what little money you're getting?

And I understand Cardozo doesn't qualify. Cardozo has 345 classes that are over proper sizes. What -- you can't do much with 200. Even Bayside, they have probably 200 to 300. To their credit, they put 600,000 there. But none of that is going -- I can't imagine that going for anything other than new classrooms. What are you going to build with 600,000 dollars? Okay?

And let me just -- and I hope they -- they might have gotten some things for the parking lot, the -- what are those, the trailers, the portables. And that's wonderful. And I wish the mayor and the chancellor's kids go to school in portables and their grandchildren, because it's only appropriate that they, you know -- but my point is, as mentioned before, and what you said, this money is in conjunction with other money. To allow -- to fall behind the mantra that we're giving it to the schools when there is a law about class size reduction, you hide behind -- and this has happened on many occasions, you hide behind -- you're giving it to the classes; you hide behind an SLT process that doesn't work the way it's supposed to. And I can't imagine anyone refuting that one. The discussions are not so open. You -- and you hide behind that it's a class -- it's a school-based decision.

In District 26 and in others, it -- you're strapped with what you can do because the money isn't there, you're not getting overall help. Yes, they're building a couple new schools here or there, and yes, a lot of the new schools -- my understanding is those are the breaking up of the large schools, and then they say that that's a new school. Okay? Shovels in the ground with bricks, not that many. That's my understanding. I'm sure there's others.

Okay, just in District 26 we have probably our most overcrowded elementary school, PS 162. They received --

MS. SPEAKER:

(Indiscernible).

MR. CALORAS:

Well, these numbers -- it's interesting because -- oh, I'm -- what did they get, forty-six? They received 46,142 dollars, and they applied it all for new classrooms.

The point is it's policy. I know I'm throwing out a lot of editorial. It's a policy. And with all due respect to the mantra that you need good teachers too, this, that, I've spoken with enough teachers; so have you. Give a teacher a half a chance.

And I don't want to sound like I'm making a speech here, but I am, okay? If you gave a teacher a slightly reduced classroom, I guarantee you, even a nonperforming teacher will become a better performing teacher. Everything shows that.

The six choices was a cave-in to the mayor. This should be in conjunction with all the other money that the city gets in capital plans, eleven billion as you pointed out. And I find that the allocations should be much heavily -- much more heavily weighted to class size reduction in conjunction with other money that's there already. That's it. That's my speech. I'm sorry.

MR. SPEAKER:

I think we've answered, so there's no need (indiscernible). Grab your opinion, which you should have, and that's what this whole hearing is about: to get people's opinions and to take them back.

MR. CALORAS:

No, absolutely. I understand that.

MS. SAUNDERS:

Are there any other questions or comments?

MS. SPEAKER:

I would (indiscernible). I don't have the document in front of me.

MS. SAUNDERS:

You could put comments -- you can write it if you wish.

MS. SPEAKER:

Yes. I want, first of all, the one online.

MS. SAUNDERS:

No, we have to have it now.

MS. SPEAKER:

Now?

MS. SAUNDERS:

We have to turn this in tomorrow morning.

MS. SPEAKER:

You know, I don't have the (indiscernible).

MR. CALORAS:

And if it's not turned in tomorrow, it's not heard?

MS. SPEAKER:

If you have time for me --

MR. CALORAS:

Excuse me. I mean, if a comment is not handed in by tomorrow morning, (indiscernible)?

MR. SPEAKER:

Well, you have until October 9th to send in comments.

MR. CALORAS:

Okay.

MS. SPEAKER:

You can do it on the Internet.

MR. SPEAKER:

You could do it online, you can --

MR. CALORAS:

So you could send it in --

MS. SPEAKER:

You could send it in, yes.

MS. SPEAKER:

You can write it on the Internet.

MR. SPEAKER:

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And anyway we prefer your comments.

MS. SPEAKER:

Yes.

MR. CALORAS:

In fact, if you want to make a comment, oral comment, you may, and you could send in a written comment that would have -- elucidates -- you know, beefs up whatever you said.

MS. SPEAKER:

Yes.

MR. CALORAS:

That's my understanding of the public open appearance law, whatever --

MS. SAUNDERS:

Any other comments that we can submit? If not, you can go on the Internet on ContractforExcellence@schools.nyc.gov. And you could submit those before October 6th. Thank you very much.