

Contracts for Excellence - Maggie L. Walker Campus September 24, 2009

**Contracts for Excellence**  
**Brooklyn Public Meeting, 9/24/09**  
**Maggie L. Walker Campus, 1224 Park Place**  
**Public Comment**

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Good evening.

IN UNISON:

Good evening.

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

So here's what I called this evening to go over the Contracts for Excellence with you and to talk specifically on District 17.

Please note that this presentation represents a preliminary plan only, that the DOE also made an amended version of this plan, you can see any part of it once the public hearings and the public comment periods are complete.

If you want to read more about the program areas and what sorts of activities they include, you can go to the DOE's Contracts for Excellence website. The link appears later in this presentation and I will certainly be pointing it out to you.

As you can see, the overview shows that funds must support specific program initiatives, namely: class size reduction; time on task; teacher and principal quality initiatives; middle and high school restructuring; full-day pre-kindergarten programs; and model programs for English language learners.

Funds must predominately benefit students with the greatest educational needs. We're talking here about English language learners; students in poverty; students with disability or special education students; and students with low academic achievement or, of course, students who are at risk of not graduating.

In addition, if you want to know more about the genesis of Contracts for Excellence, you can also go to the DOE C4E website. It is important to know that C4E is not specifically about class size, but is about targeting funds to the neediest of students. Class size reduction is only one of the six program areas that schools may opt to fund. Because of the economic crisis that we're in right now, the state has

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only funded two years of C4E, so I want to point out again that there were no new funds this year. We are just maintaining efforts for programs from last year. So we are in what's called a "maintenance of effort year".

This slide presents a global view of New York City's entire C4E allocation from the point of view of how funds were allocated. There are more detailed descriptions of what each of the pie wedges mean in later slides.

So taking a look at this, "discretionary funds" are funds that are distributed to schools, based on a formula developed by the state. Schools can spend these funds however they wish within the C4E program areas, and only within those areas.

"Targeted funds" are funds that are distributed to schools to support specific programs that meet C4E eligibility standards. Schools get these funds if they have the populations needed to support these programs.

"Fiscal year '09 maintenance of effort funds" are funds that, under the contract law, was allowed to be used in fiscal year '09 to support existing programs. These funds are used to support last year's summer schools' programs and there is a proposal to continue using them for summer school in fiscal year 2010.

"District-wide initiatives" are programs that we fund centrally, that benefit many needy students across the city.

If we look at this slide, it presents a global overview of New York City's entire C4E allocation from the point of view of the C4E program areas. In other words, if you look at all of the funds that are being proposed to allocate via the discretionary allocations, the targeted allocations, the maintenance of effort allocations, and the district-wide program allocations, this is how it all breaks out.

This slide represents an overview of a subset of our total C4E funds. The discretionary funds that were allocated to schools to use as they see fit within the six C4E program areas, is shown. In other words, if you look at how all of the schools in New York City that were budgeted, these funds are proposing to spend them, this is how it would break out.

This slide goes into a bit more detail about the discretionary funds. Please note that all schools receive the same allocation as last year, since, I keep repeating, but it's important to say, this is a maintenance

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of effort year. It is expected that schools maintain programs that they started with these funds last year, unless they're unable to do so because of changes in student population, or other differences in operations of the school.

While schools have been budgeted these funds, their use of them is not approved until New York City's Contracts for Excellence plan is approved by the state.

This particular slide goes into details about the targeted funds. So if you know that schools that received targeted C4E allocations in 2008-2009, received those allocations again in 2009-2010, as long, as long, as long, as they retain the population necessary to maintain effort. Funds that were previously in schools that lost the population needed to support these programs are being proposed for redistribution to other schools that gained these populations in 2009-2010. However, the total amounts allocated to each of the initiatives described above remains steady, remains the same from '09 to 2010.

In terms of collaborative team teaching classrooms, CTT classes reduce the pupil-teacher ratio for general education students and are an important and valued instructional intervention for special education students. So under the C4E regulations, assignments of additional teacher or teachers to a classroom to facilitate student attainment of state learning standards is an eligible program or an eligible expense in the program area of class size reduction. Allocations for CTT classrooms have been approved by the state in the DOE's fiscal year '08 and DOE fiscal year '09 C4E plans.

So slide 9 goes into detail about the district-wide initiatives and the fiscal year '09 maintenance of effort funding. So in terms of district-wide initiatives, it is being proposed to continue funding the same programs as we did last year. The only difference is that since the ELL success and the middle school success grant programs are in their second year of implementation, and schools receive fixed sums of money, we're adding a college and an AP prep program to make up the difference.

The other programs are just -- I'll briefly explain them: multiple pathways, where we're maintaining efforts for learning to work programs that opened in '08-'09; principal training, where we're maintaining effort for initiatives that were funded with C4E funds last year; and school restructuring, where we're maintaining effort for reconfiguring, phasing out or close high schools into smaller schools that serve high-need students.

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So for the fiscal year '09 maintenance of effort, even though the DOE received new C4E in '08-'09, it is allowed under the law to use 30 million of any new allocation to support existing programs which meet the eligibility standards for C4E.

Proposed Discretionary Spending in CEC 17: Schools in this district were allocated discretionary Contracts For Excellence funds and schools have proposed to spend those funds as is shown on the slide. This slide represents how schools in District 17 are proposing to spend their discretionary dollars. This is the money they can spend as they wish, again, within C4E program areas.

Comprehensive information about these proposed allocations, including school level program strategies and performance targets, are available online, so if you wish now to take this down, please feel free to do so, so that you can go online and receive any additional information that you might need regarding this.

Complete information regarding all proposed allocations for individual schools can also be found on this link, on this slide.

It is important to know that the total includes school discretionary funds, also include still unscheduled money as of September 1st of '09.

This slide, and the next one, represent the distribution by program strategy for all funds proposed to benefit our district, whether directly, such as school-based funds, like the discretionary dollars, target allocations and fiscal year '09 continuation of effort dollars and via district-wide programs.

Program strategies are a subset of the program areas and gives more valuable information about how funds are proposed to be used. So we'll take a few minutes, just so you can take a look at this slide. Okay?

All funds by program strategy: the total for CEC 17 includes school discretionary funds, again, funds that are still unscheduled as of September 1st of '09.

So while many schools are still allocating funds to class size reduction activities in '09 and '10, given overall economic circumstances, such as school budgets having been cut and other things, the C4E funds, while allocated by the state in the same amount as last year, obviously will not go as far as it has gone, considering that there have been some very serious budget cuts.

Many schools are using C4E funds to keep class sizes and PTR lower

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than they would have -- PTR meaning pupil-teacher ratio -- lower than they would be otherwise, and this is an acceptable use of the funds.

So at this time, I will begin to take public comment. Please know that this is officially being taped for the public record. Please know that this is not a "question and answer" session. However, if people have specific questions, Omar is here with me again from the ISC, and if we can answer those questions, specific questions, we will. If we cannot answer those questions, we refer you at this time to the website where you can go on to place your comments.

Our DFA will pass out some pencils and some cards, if you don't want to make your comments in person, but you do want to make comments. Those cards will be returned to Tweed. And I must tell you that every comment is taken seriously and that if it goes on the website or if you send it in here this evening, you will receive response. So again, at this time, we will engage in public comment regarding the C4E.

Mr. Wheeler, you need a mike?

MR. WHEELER:

You say you're putting it on tape? It's on tape?

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Yeah, we're taping.

MR. WHEELER:

Good evening, I'm John Wheeler. I've decided that (indiscernible) voice (indiscernible) for the record with the subject of discretionary funds. And I have found some even aware of the discretionary funds. We have a lot of resources and let's just talk about our district and how we can we can make our district stronger. When a new PTA is coming together, most of them don't have no money, they ain't wealthy. And we have a school that had x-amount of money in discretionary funds, it should be, like, here, this is something to start you off and get the school moving.

But I think there's something that the name that -- you know, not naming names of schools, but as I've walked through the schools, and I've been at every single one of those schools, I've seen funds being used for personal gains when it could be used for classrooms. And when I come in the school and I see wall-to-wall carpet and brand new

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furniture, (indiscernible), I see schools that do top-notch work who don't even have things in their office, okay? I see schools that are doing top-notch work. They don't care about the physical appearance of their rooms. They do the business of the school.

This whole (indiscernible), as I'll speak to what you were saying about parents being engaged at a certain time. This is now September, the majority of the money of the schools has already been spent. What does a parent do after the money has already been allocated? Sit down and talk about Title 1 funds? That's the only context you're going to have now is about Title 1 funds because all of the money has been already allocated.

My other question to you is about smaller class size. In a UFT contract there's a different number ratio than there is to the CF-4 contract concerning teacher-student ratio. And see, confidentially, what I'm saying is, if we went to, they said that we can bring the student capita down to maybe twenty to twenty-four children, but the UFT contract said they can take up to thirty, thirty-two kids, 'cause some schools had. That's where the problem is. Everybody's not on the same page. And when you look at those numbers, that what makes all the class size. When we say class reduction prior to (indiscernible) prior to them putting the charter school in our building, in our schools, so then they came and said we have extra space. We need to have some type of format of what happens when we find that the (indiscernible) take the staff (indiscernible) or everybody else decides well, we're going to decide for you how to use that space.

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Okay, thank you very much, Mr. Wheeler. Your comment is duly noted. Any other comments? Ms. Williams.

MS. WILLIAMS:

You talk about using C4E money to, like, when high school is not functioning -- close schools and open smaller schools in buildings, and I know a lot of time -- there is a few schools that did that. My son is in one of those, one of the schools that was closed and they have five high schools in there.

And right now the school is overpopulated. And you have kids, don't have classrooms to go to, and it's a problem, because I did a walk-through in my son junior high yesterday. There was kids in the hallway, don't have an English class to go to. And these are honor students. These kids is in a college program. These kids have Regents,

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already. They're finished, almost finished high school, going to -- they're still in middle school. They just finished going into high school and they're honors Regents and in the honor program, and yesterday they were standing in the hallway, don't have classrooms to go to.

And then today, one of the parents of that particular classroom called me and said, my son couldn't go to class today, because there was no room to put these kids. So when you talk about closing up schools and reopening schools inside schools we have to be careful on capping because we are overpopulating in those schools. You know, this school wasn't supposed to have one -- this school was supposed to have, like, 375 kids, now we have 612 kids. And there is no classroom, there is no space, so I am bothered by that. And this is schools that, you know, got C4E money to do some things, and here it is, we have no classroom for our kids. This is like a (indiscernible) school and I fight, I called the superintendent, I called central, I call everybody. The principal -- she ready to strangle me, but this is our children right here and we have to be concerned so when you talk about, you know, closing up schools and opening up small schools in schools, we have to be very careful with this.

Because if you authorize good programs for those schools, you'll find a lot of parents wanted their children to go to those schools. And principal just receive these kids without even capping. So we have to have more accountability when we talk about small class sizes and small space and, you know, it have to be a whole different plan to open smaller schools already in existing schools, because, you know, our children is being left out. I am so sorry, I am so hurt right now. It's not funny, all right?

MS. HURDLE- TAYLOR:

Thank you, thank you, Ms. Williams. Any other comments?

MALE SPEAKER:

Yes. I have comments and you're answering questions today?

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

If we can answer the questions, we will, but it is not a question and answer period, so we'll take comments and if there are questions that we can answer, we'll be happy to answer them.

MALE SPEAKER:

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Okay, good evening, everyone.

(Indiscernible talking in the background)

MALE SPEAKER:

One of my main concerns is about transparency. It was particularly for you, young lady. I didn't catch where you were from and your name and all, but this question is particularly for you. When I read up on C4E on the website, one of the main things was transparency, and for one, SLT teams are not being included inside the schools to make these decisions. So that mean the parents are not involved to sign off on wherever the C4E funds are being allocated.

Another thing here is, as far as transparency, I would like to know the website again, I don't know if it's just strictly C4E Contracts for Excellence, Google it or whatever have you. But I don't know if it'll be a more friendly, because most of the website I always get is always like this one here, <http://schools.NYC.gov> about US funding and, you know, it's kind of lengthy, you know. More user friendly about when you talk about transparency, cause all the parents are not, you know, may not be that astute to go ahead and follow what's going on.

To know what vendors are being used when you talk about transparency, these are funds, these funds are going where? What vendors are being used? Are they going to Nevada? Is it for hotels? Is it for, you know, these different program agencies that are coming out to actually help the schools? So just a couple of concerns.

Another thing is, for Ms. Taylor, in your report here, it says, 'cause I've noticed, it says, "target allocations to schools", okay, I can pretty much understand that. "District-wide initiatives," I can grasp that. But I'm part of the CEC here, and it says, "proposed discretionary spending in CEC 17." I don't know what this means here. This is not clear to me at all.

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Thank you.

INTEGRATED SERVICES CENTER REPRESENTATIVE:

Good evening, everyone, (indiscernible) on behalf of Integrated Services Center. Just a point of clarity before I answer your question. I think Ms. Williams here is - she worked for the campaign for fiscal equity, which as she stated earlier, is, you know, if I could choose what

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word you use, sort of a watchdog to make sure that the funds are being used correctly. So really, you may find that you're sharing the same concerns. And as far as explaining the "proposed discretionary spending" in District 17, what it means is, when you look at the six program areas --

UNIDENTIFIED MALE:

I'm sorry, it says, "CEC 17", not discretionary -- it says, "CEC 17", that's what confuses me.

INTEGRATED SERVICES CENTER REPRESENTATIVE:

Right. Well, that's a good point. I think what it means is, when we're talking about CEC 17, it's our elementary and middle schools in District 17, right?

MALE SPEAKER:

Um-hum.

INTEGRATED SERVICES CENTER REPRESENTATIVE:

It doesn't include the high schools in District 17.

MALE SPEAKER:

Correct.

INTEGRATED SERVICES CENTER REPRESENTATIVE:

So, what that slide is showing you is, exactly how the funding has been quote, unquote budgeted on an active level in all the schools that comprise District 17, or I should say, CEC 17, elementary and middle schools.

MALE SPEAKER:

It's still vague. I really don't understand what he -- 'cause when you say CEC, that's Community Educational Council. Does Community Educational Council has something -- for instance, when the funds come down, they're directed toward, for the most part, the principals, right, which is supposed to encourage the SLT team to take in part where the funds are supposed to be allocated. This says, "CEC 17". So that's what confuses me. Is Community Education Council supposed to have some part in --

FEMALE SPEAKER:

No.

MALE SPEAKER:

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-- are we supposed to have some part in, like, saying, okay, this -- we want to run a program or something that we think will be fit for the kids in, you know, something -- out and into C4E (indiscernible).

INTEGRATED SERVICES CENTER REPRESENTATIVE:

I think this is out of the cycle (indiscernible).

MALE SPEAKER:

Okay.

INTEGRATED SERVICES CENTER REPRESENTATIVE:

It's intended for actually the funding that's given to specific schools, you know, or it's designed --

MALE SPEAKER:

Right.

INTEGRATED SERVICES CENTER REPRESENTATIVE:

(Indiscernible). You know, I did want to say from our last meeting, I know the board wanted more specifics as far as the allocation methodology. You know, I didn't bring the printout of the actual school allocation memorandum that goes into further detail as to the methodology. What I did bring was a nice copy or fifty copies of the exact link that you can go to which sort of breaks things down for you step by step. You know, I'd love to hand it out at the end of the meeting today. It's just more information.

The important thing is that the CECs are here this evening to be helped, to receive cold comments. We have until October 8th, so, you know, the more information that you have at your disposal to think critically about this funding and then make, you know, your recommendations and voice your comments, the better we'll be at the end of the day, so I did bring that with me today. At the end I'll hand it out.

MALE SPEAKER:

Thank you. I do -- before I hand the mike over, I do want to say, I think this is truly incredible, and I definitely encourage this, it's just that we don't want the same thing to happen to this what happened to the other funds, you know, so -- thank you.

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Are there any other comments?

We have a comment from the audience.

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Ma'am, please come down.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Hello. I just wanted to know if the entire PowerPoint presentation will be online?

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

I don't believe that at this point, this particular PowerPoint is public. What I do know is that, any questions or comments that's coming up right now as you heard this goes to Contracts for Excellence at schools.NYC.gov, sorry, NYC -- did I say NYC already? Okay, Contracts for Excellence at schools.NYC.gov, and that you will receive a response to your question or your comment. But I do not believe that this particular slide is posted online as yet.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

So how could we get a copy -- it's gone through rather expeditiously, so in order to really analyze what we're looking at, is it possible to get a copy? How do you get a copy?

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

There's a -- yes.

INTEGRATED SERVICES CENTER REPRESENTATIVE:

I think the information online is actually more robust --

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Exactly.

INTEGRATED SERVICES CENTER REPRESENTATIVE:

-- and containing more information containing the PowerPoint slides today, this is sort of just an introduction to Contracts for Excellence. Again, I'm going to hand out this handout at the end of our meeting where it gets into actual specifics involved in the school, okay? But also when you go, if you would go to the schools.NYC.gov and you saw the search engine, if you type in Contracts for Excellence, it will bring you to the Contracts for Excellence home page where you can actually -- where you have all the history that was shared with us today and get that information on exactly what this money's for. There's definitely a lot of information out there. We encourage you to (indiscernible).

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

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And I also wanted to say to the lady who asked the question, that this -- this PowerPoint really is a summary of what you will read online. What you will get online will be all tons of information about C4E. This merely summarizes it so that, you know, within a particular time span I can share it with you. So this you won't find online, but you will find plenty of information about C4E.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Thank you.

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

You're welcome.

MS. DABNEY:

Good evening. My name is Betsy Dabney (ph.) and I'm a member of CEC. My comment or concern is, looking around the auditorium for the people who need to know the facts of what we're trying to explain here is lost in the air.

'Cause we need our parents here, and we can't seem to get our parents to come out unless we are doing something with the children. And we can't do this with our children and expect them to do their homework and get on board with what we need to get on board with because we're spending the money and there's no results.

What we need to do is be able to find some way to get our parents out here to get this information. Now, how are we going to do that? 'Cause the people here basically know what's going on. We can read the handouts that we have, but the people who really need to know what we're talking about are not here. And we can't seem to find them. How are we going to find them? That is my concern.

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Thank you, Mrs. Dabney.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Good evening. (Indiscernible) member of CEC. One of the things I noticed in the e-mail -- the pattern we have here is that at public comment, we can speak to certain things.

And one of the things I'd like to speak to is the public comment process itself. I think it needs a lot of work. We had a CEC public hearing. I don't think it was enough time at all to reach the community, to reach the school community, and I just don't think it was (indiscernible) at all.

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We're CEC members, some of us are brand new, some of us have been, apparently this before and know the instructions, some haven't. And even for us, to sit here and try to digest all this information and then try and ask intelligent questions or make comments, it's not happening. And I think that DOE needs to be thoughtful about how they do this, how they roll it out. Considering that Contracts in Excellence is an appendix on the CEP, there, it says that on essence SOT should have had some kind of discussion or be aware of how these things are being spent on a school level, which then tells me that, if nobody else is sitting here, there should be SLT members who at least (indiscernible) process. They're not.

In terms of the outreach -- the CEC knows how it's funded -- I didn't really want this public hearing to happen this week because I just didn't think there wasn't enough rollout time. The fact that it should have happened in May or June is a whole other thing.

So we're having this discussion in September. I just don't think - what are we walking away from? Nothing. We have a few parents in the audience, these guys over here are translators in attendance, and I know you guys are at all the meetings I go to.

So where is that representation? So what do you walk away with for District 17? What input did you really have to say what? You presented it. Well, is there anybody here? I think that parent was so -- it was so apropos what you said. There's a problem with representation.

It's not as if you can say to parents, "Go to this web site." It's even worse; it's overload. If I'm sitting there and I'm looking at all of these diagrams, I'm looking at these pie charts, I'm looking at this, and you have on one page you have this written down -- it says "contract 387 million" over here and then you have over here "discretionary funds" but then on this page the discretionary funds is a different amount. I have questions. You mentioned 645 million. Well, this says 387 million. This amount, it's 258 million. Where is it? So where's the 258 million? Where's it supposed to be? Where does it show up?

You made a comment that said something to the effect of the funds being retained, that the schools got these funds but they weren't able to retain the population to support these funds, then it was sent to other schools for redistribution of funds. So my question is, what is the required population to support the funds? I'm not clear. So the school got, let's say, 100 dollars to support some program that had twenty-two in it. So now they only have ten children or -- so it was reduced so now they can't do -- they can't fund that program anymore? I mean, and so how do they make up the difference? So the school would now just be losing those funds? Who determines what the population is?

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And then I noticed, because there's these little asterisks that say constantly that this is for a proposal and it's going to be based on the program analysis. What analysis? What -- once all the schools submit something then there's going to be another analysis so these figures could change?

I was just not clear, and I just don't think this whole process has been done right. I can be a little critical maybe because my background is I've been PTA president, I've been the president of the High School President's Council, I've been on CPAC. So sitting on CPAC, I have all thirty-two districts sitting in front of me, all five borough high schools in District 75. And I see them just as lost on that level as I do here, which means it's not happening here, that's why they're lost when they get over there.

The thing that concerns me is I've gone to other districts, because I have seen other districts very well versed, very overwhelming information, and I think the process is probably different. Or maybe they're just more knowledgeable, that could be it too. But for me to -- I don't think all parents don't want to give input. I don't think, first of all, we're doing a real good job of reaching them, second of all, explaining it and identifying all the different areas and break the situation down to them. And I just think that looking forward we need to do a better job on this. So I just want this on the record so I say that.

MALE SPEAKER:

Ms. Taylor?

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

So the question that I can't answer regarding what students in terms of student population that may leave the school and go to another school and so there's a redistribution of funds, specifically English language learners, students in poverty, students with disabilities, students with low academic achievement, or students at risk of not graduating.

MALE SPEAKER:

Thank you.

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

You're welcome.

MALE SPEAKER:

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Thank you for your lovely questions -- well, comments. I asked a number of questions and I only heard one of them answered. One of my main concerns here is accountability. I love you, Ms. Taylor.

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Oh, it's not personal, I think.

MALE SPEAKER:

It's not. Last meeting it was stated, in the public meeting I believe it was, when we had a representative from the state come, and I asked, well, who -- someone had asked who's supposed to hold these meetings as far as the Contracts for Excellence to bring the information to the district in May or at a timely manner. So I would like to know why weren't we informed in a proper time? And accountability, how do you -- I don't want to say reprimand, but how do you control this kind of situation to where it's when it's not being done in a timely manner so it can be caught before this type of situation happens here?

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Okay. So the answer to that is that every community's superintendent was told at the same time in the same meeting that we had to make this presentation in September.

MALE SPEAKER:

Okay, because it was noted in the last meeting that other districts and other communities had their meetings, you know?

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

No.

MALE SPEAKER:

No? Okay, I'm sorry --

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Okay, let me clarify that.

MALE SPEAKER:

-- in other areas, Westchester and --

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Exactly.

MALE SPEAKER:

Okay, right. Okay.

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MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

If I can clarify that?

MALE SPEAKER:

So --

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Sorry.

MALE SPEAKER:

-- with that being said, it'll be we're here with you.

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Um-hum.

MALE SPEAKER:

So if you need our help you let us know, because we all need to do this together so we can get some answers on why is there a huge gap in those funds -- in those numbers. That is ridiculous, all right?

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

So thank you very much, Mr. Talenty (ph.) because it's really important that the collaborative experience and the collaborative relationship that I've had with the CEC in the past year is something that continues. So to hear you say publicly that we're here for you is important to me because I am here for this community and for our CEC; there is no doubt about that.

What I would like to clarify is that whole issue about other districts having done it before. Those were not any of the thirty-two districts in New York City, as the thirty-two districts in New York City are all doing it at the same time, which is now.

So your comment is well noted. I'm making sure that the tape is still running because it is very important for me that all of the comments and concerns that are here and are out here is presented here so that there can be some answers and some transparency to what questions and --

MALE SPEAKER:

Where do you get it from?

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

-- comments are coming here.

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MALE SPEAKER:

Where did our district -- where did our superintendent district leaders get their information from? Like, who's supposed to hold the meetings with you all then?

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

We have folks from Tweed who sit with us and meet with us and would share the information with us. That information comes from Tweed.

MALE SPEAKER:

And they instructed you to have the meetings in September?

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

All superintendents, we were all told to have these meetings in September.

MALE SPEAKER:

Wow.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

And just let me be clear, that's why I said DOE.

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Yes.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

If you noticed, I did not say the superintendent --

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Yes.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

-- because I know the other districts that I have and I know a lot of those superintendents, I've been involved with many superintendents that they got the directives, so they're just following the directives. But the only way that they're going to know at Tweed and central that this is not working is if we comment so then when it goes back that's a problem. It's not directed at you, it's directed to the hierarchy. Okay, thank you.

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Thank you, Ms. Aygart (ph.).

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MR. WHEELER:

To the superintendent, Marie, one of the things that she said (indiscernible) know it's the same name and you said you'd seen two on these last ones, the master plan, and I'll go over that, is only children in that school till October 31st. That's the master plan with regard to overcrowding. Now, if you can contain that child until October 31st, after that date you're telling me the money stays inside the school. That's the deadline for transfers in the money for that child. Okay? It's in the record. That's the deadline. And what happens is with a lot of schools, they overcast because they'll be told in June that we're going to have 600 kids, but they only got 550 kids, so they have to wait till that date for -- when the city comes in and says, well, you see the date and time, you didn't get those kids so we're going to take that money. And what happened to our school is they already planned to spend that money.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

A point of clarification: you're talking about the regular school budget, not the C4E money?

MR. WHEELER:

Right.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

You're saying that the regular school budget money would not follow the child after October 31st.

MR. WHEELER:

Yes.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

So you're saying then the C4E money should come into play, or you're asking how it should come into play?

MR. WHEELER:

No, what I'm saying is that if the old column exists (indiscernible) of October (indiscernible).

FEMALE SPEAKER:

It contributes to the old (indiscernible).

MR. WHEELER:

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Yes, and what happens is that if you're not happy as a parent after a certain date and you reach past October 31st, that money doesn't travel with that child to the next school. And then a school can then (indiscernible) when you tell them they're going to get no money (indiscernible) and the school has to go into its budget and find the money for things like books and things of that nature. That's a fact. And that's why I think we see overcrowding. They're just looking at that (indiscernible). That's the key. And I bet you they (indiscernible) a penalty or something if the schools do not follow this code of ethics of spending the money the way they should spend their money because (indiscernible) in April. That's when the schools start they always clear out their budget. They take all the money that they have and put it into one lump sum. Okay? And see, that's where the (indiscernible) comes about. They take all the money that they have, like, pocket (indiscernible) and you put in the CEP plan that you're going to hire three reading teachers but you only hire two. That money for that third reading teacher is still in the budget. So if you don't have to (indiscernible) between now and when you're coming up into April, that pay for that teacher is still in that budget. And what happens is they have to accumulate all of that money and just spend it on something. But the money has to be fit. You've got to show me that you've got a blank balance come June when new money comes in.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

(Indiscernible) check and balance system that they want imposed?

MR. WHEELER:

Yes, because that prevents money from being spent -- like I said, I've mentioned, and I was very careful, I mentioned about how I see money being spent in our schools. I see the high performing schools with not any luxuries. And I've seen luxuries. I've been in your halls and I didn't see no luxuries in 61.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Thank you.

MR. WHEELER:

So I'm staying with you, and like I said, with all due respect, I've seen unattained luxuries in some schools and they'll have children achieving. So I just wanted to put that out there because that's what's really going down. Children's achievement has nothing to do with renovating the offices. And if we want to really take care of children we've got to concentrate on the fact that we care about these kids. And I'm just saying if they really want parents really interested because there are a

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lot of CECs, we've got people that have been around two years on that board, okay?

What happens with us, we come in and (indiscernible). We've got good quality because we come from a background, but what happens, that's what makes a difference between this CEC and other CECs. But make no doubt about it, CECs never seem to go out of style. People will come to us for observation. Make no bones about it. And I'm just saying that the superintendent, will he not know about your representation today? You have an open door policy.

And like I said, sometimes you might not want to hear things but you're going to say it anyway because that's just the situation. You don't have to beat around the bush. I'm just saying concerning our school when you do your walk-through, questions need to be asked, questions -- you know, why you got new drapes? Why you got wall-to-wall carpet? Why you got rested lean-back chairs? If that's what they manage to develop in that school. That's what I'm saying.

And I haven't named any names. I'm just saying I noticed it. And just to mention myself, how can we stop the city from coming and saying well, we got extra space? Why can't we -- because you said the principal's already sending that information prior, to how much waste they have in the building. How can we stop that part by coming up with our own ideas to use that space when we see we have extra space? Because you know what happens, I guess it takes three rooms to start a charter school. It takes three rooms, three rooms to start a brand new charter school.

Let's not make a mistake about that, but they're not to be impaired by the district to make sure that we funnel the funds (indiscernible) space not being used that we can target by going in there and coming up with ideas to use that space. Thank you -- thank you for (indiscernible).

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

So Mr. Wheeler, I do thank you for your enthusiastic comments and questions. There were a lot of questions in there. I'm going to try to answer as many as I can, primarily the question about whether or not -- I don't remember the word that was used, but is there a -- like, do principals get a beating, a flogging when they don't use their money correctly or appropriately.

So what I can say is that this funding is very specific and it's laid out the way it is to be used and has to be used, and therefore principals must use the funding for C4E according to the guidelines that are stated.

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I did want to answer Ms. Aygart's question because I thought it was a very smart, very apropos question about why the numbers are not adding up, right? And so what we do know is that there are still some unscheduled funds out there that principals have not maybe decided as yet how those funds are going to be allocated probably because principals were waiting until registration to see how many students they would get before they make a decision. And so what you'll notice is that once you add what you added and then add on the unscheduled funding then the numbers should begin to add up a whole lot more. Okay?

MALE SPEAKER:

Transparency -- there should be another column that says "in limbo", whatever, "have not quite decided yet", I'm sorry. But I'm going to crawl up the ladder because I think it's pretty good that we're all in questions on pretty much a lot of levels here. But I want to climb this ladder here to find out, like, who dropped the ball on the city, all thirty-six districts.

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

Thirty-two.

MALE SPEAKER:

Thirty-two districts having our meeting in September. So Ms. Lucas is it?

MS. LUCAS:

Yes.

MALE SPEAKER:

Ms. --

MALE SPEAKER:

Let's just say the man because he's the one that made the major decision --

MALE SPEAKER:

Right, but if Contracts for Excellence is supposed to be funds that's

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supposed to jump over everybody from taking money out of our kids' education, from our kids' future, from our future, right, then why is it going down the same channels so it can still be -- you know, so hands can still be dipped into that bucket?

My question, Ms. Lucas -- Ms. Lucas what's -- I'm sorry?

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Ms. Lopas -- Lopas.

MALE SPEAKER:

Lopas, I'm sorry. Ms. Lopas, where does -- between the superintendent and Contracts for Excellence, what are the channels that come down from Tweed -- what are the channels in between Tweed and where the original funds is set down from, from the state? And where does that mix-up come in at to where we're having our meetings in September and the other districts in other counties is having their meetings in May as scheduled? So can you help me out here?

MS. LOPAS:

Do you want me to come up and speak?

MALE SPEAKER:

Yes.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Yes, thank you.

MS. LOPAS:

What I can answer to you is that the same (indiscernible) is funded in April. In April the state set the state education budget. At that point, education was eight percent. The state education department in April issued a PowerPoint which is still on their web site. I think in the information that we sent out to you I actually put links to that. You can look at it yourself. They actually show how much the maintenance of effort would be for '07-'08 and '08-'09. At that point the districts knew how much money. New York city is considered -- New York city is considered one district by the state and then within our city we have one or two school districts.

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So at that point the money was preserved. Then the Department of Education, actually, on the DOE web site they have posted the SAM memo which is -- I forget what SAM stands for, but it was posted on their Contracts for Excellence page. And it shows in May they allocated the Contracts for Excellence to the schools. They told the schools how much funding they were getting.

So it's really up to the state education department to enforce their regulations and it's up to the Department of Education to organize their contract terms. The law requires that there be borough-wide contract hearings, that there be hearings held by the CECs. That's written into the law, that was not changed.

When the SED put out their guidelines in April and May, their guidelines actually made it very clear that every contract district had to hold a hearing and had to go through the complete public comment process which entails publishing or making available the contract, the proposed contract, providing a thirty-day comment period, and holding the hearings that were mentioned.

So that is in fact published on the SED. We have reached out to them many times in our position as an agent and an organization that feels strongly about trying to see that the law is upheld and that also that this money makes a difference, that we show that this Contracts for Excellence makes a difference. And the only way we can do that is if it is allocated properly, if it's actually spent the way it's allocated, so we can see what difference it makes, what programs are effective. Anyway, so that was my comment to your question.

MALE SPEAKER:

Right. I want to elaborate on that one. So just for clarity, you have the state education, then it goes to the city, which is for us Tweed, correct?

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Correct.

MALE SPEAKER:

Okay. What do they put in the guidelines, because this all stemmed from a lawsuit stating that we were being dealt wrongly, if you will. What is put in place so when something like this happens, okay, because May, June, July, okay, September -- four months, five months down the line, okay, because we are near our deadline, what is in place on the state level, when something like this happens, for somebody to

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be reprimanded or because -- what do they have in place or is there anything in place like that?

FEMALE SPEAKER:

I understand that by law the Contracts for Excellence are not supposed to be released to the city until they have approved contracts. So they really should not be receiving -- the city should not be receiving the Contracts for Excellence funds until they have an approved contract in place. So that's one thing.

In terms of the public, what can be done about it is certainly this hearing, and also you know it's written into the law, and certainly citizens and speaking up about whether or not the laws are being followed is one of the most powerful ways you have to try and see that reforms are met.

MALE SPEAKER:

All right, well --

FEMALE SPEAKER:

But it's up to the State Education Department, that is their role. And the way the law works, basically, you know, they pass -- or legislative passes the law and then it's up to the agency that handles that part of the law -- so this is the education department -- to write the regulations, which means the guidelines that the districts then use to implement the law. So now we're in the implementation stages. So really the district looks to the state education department to see what they need to be doing to implement the law. So I'm not privy to any conversations that went on between them but that's what they would do, that would be the procedure.

MALE SPEAKER:

I just want to say that I'm not trying to attack you, it's just that --

FEMALE SPEAKER:

No, I mean --

MALE SPEAKER:

-- on your level you have more answers for me.

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FEMALE SPEAKER:

-- this is the system.

MR. SPEAKER:

Right.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Yeah, this is the way the system works.

MALE SPEAKER:

Okay.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

You can --

MALE SPEAKER:

I have a couple more questions, that's why. I just wanted to say that, okay? So there is nothing in place -- there is nothing in place as far as accountability is concerned, because I understand what you're saying the funds shouldn't have been sent down or whatever have you. But the thing here is it still falls down on our children, all right? And our children is being mistreated -- our future. All right?

So it's not as far as the district or the principals, it all goes down -- it's all about our kids. If it's not about our kids, what is it about? All right? So we can go -- we can take those measures with every other -- for instance, Contracts for Excellence is for kids in our communities being mistreated, okay, if you will. So those measures, we can take the ones you just explained about Contracts for Excellence. We can take with the regular budget for the department of education.

So I mean, there's nothing extra, like, 'cause I thought there were watchdogs that watch for this. And it was -- the web site was pretty adamant about transparency. That was one of the main focuses on Contracts for Excellence, transparency. So when you have time frames and funds that's not being seen, then who are we supposed to go to? Are we supposed to go back to the government and the state legislator?

FEMALE SPEAKER:

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I would say yes.

MALE SPEAKER:

Okay.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

I think that it's the way all the laws work in our country.

MALE SPEAKER:

Okay.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

If the laws aren't being followed or if we don't think the laws are appropriate, then -- I mean, certainly that is your avenue, that is an avenue that is open to you. We are a watchdog organization and so we try to see what's happening or not happening and get it out into the public knowledge. We publish our analyses, we send them out to the newspapers and try to get the word spread widely.

And then certainly yes, it is -- you know, it is your right as a citizen. And with the Contracts for Excellence there is also a complaint procedure which is posted again, like I said, you can go to the state web site or the Contracts for Excellence web site and it will show you the procedure. You can read the -- it's really more about really probably the actual allocations, but certainly in this hearing, as they say, as it is written in many places, it is also about the process and (indiscernible).

MALE SPEAKER:

Okay, thank you.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Can I just -- so you can get a copy.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

So I just wanted, really for me personally -- so for me it's not so much a matter that I feel the children are being mistreated, because when you say that, that's kind of -- there's kind of a lot of wind to that.

MALE SPEAKER:

That's what is happening.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Well, for me it's more so that it's the voice of the parents that is not being allowed --

FEMALE SPEAKER:

-- to be heard?

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Right. The whole point is, you know, if you look at education throughout this whole country, everything, all the research, the stimulus package, the money (indiscernible), with social commissions, (indiscernible) education department with perks, and everybody looks to the PTA and everybody is into this whole thing of parents, parents, parents. When the parents are involved, you know, research shows that when parents are involved children do better, okay? And we know that. So the point is this, what's in process, should speak to that. So if we're in the schools and we have a body (indiscernible) that is supposed to have some input on how you use district payments, like how we allocate them, somebody who's going into the school and say no, you can't use -- put it there, but it's that I should have been informed, I should be aware, I should be involved in the discussion, I should have some say.

And one thing, where's the evaluation? So this is a maintenance effort, so is there an evaluation to look and see well, we did this last year, we now think this is what we should do this year. It's your voice. It's the parents' voice that's missing from this whole process. So to now throw something out in September and expect us to gather everybody in the community and all the schools, and there is many schools that have functions going on the same day, it's just not following. And it doesn't make a parent feel like you really care about my kids. And I think that's more the issue, at least for me, more so than anything. You know?

MALE SPEAKER:

Right.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

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Okay, I'm sorry, I'm finished.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Hello again. Ms. Atkin (ph.) said something earlier and when I see my school I'm going the school chairperson, and (indiscernible) I run a lot of (indiscernible). And last Friday we had a (indiscernible) meeting. And on our agenda I put C4E discussion. And my principal was very surprised when I had that, he was like, "Wow, Ms. (indiscernible)". So he knew (indiscernible) so you know, he had to explain to me, you know, how he was using those funds, because you need (indiscernible). And you know, we need meeting days like this to have an audience appearance. We have to look at the calendar and think yesterday was the third Wednesday in the month, and a lot of PTAs had meetings yesterday. And if they were to come out today, you know, not having anybody be here, it's just that a meeting yesterday and another meeting today, which this meeting is very important to us as parents. So when we come to choose those meeting days, let us look at our calendars and figure out how to reach our parents.

And I think what District 17 needs to do in cooperation is to develop a real good outreach to reach our parents to come to those meetings because it's very, very important because I have a (indiscernible) right that nobody else can take away from me. I will try to educate my parents because it's good for parents to sit in the audience and have an input at meetings, because not everybody has the same opinion. But we do choose those meeting days together with having to think what's going on in the district before we come to that agreement. And then let's develop a core outreach, how can we reach our parents to come to those kind of meetings. Okay, thank you.

MALE SPEAKER:

This is the last comment for the superintendent. Why can't we flood them? We have thirty-two schools. Let's group them. Let's group these schools. And I think we can then get a retarget with school leadership (indiscernible) with all of the principals and the (indiscernible). Let's do that kind of grouping, because see, to me that (indiscernible). But what he plans to do is merge, okay, because he doesn't want to meet with everybody, so he's throwing all the districts together. So I'm suggesting that A, and B, we come up with a format like contemplating this meeting, 61, MS- 2, 92, 6, 399, all in the same (indiscernible). And we can merge those schools together and sit down and have meetings, maybe we need to have five meetings, but a school (indiscernible), maybe we are beyond the deadline but we still can have funding to precipitate what's going to happen in the future. So I would

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suggest that why can't we merge the schools that have, like 300, you know, all the schools like 394, 12 and merge those schools together and bring out those issues and hold them accountable for bringing back (indiscernible). So that's what I'm feeling that maybe we can do today.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Do you want to make your comment first?

MALE SPEAKER:

Okay, yes, I want to make my comment first. I just wanted to state that I did go to my schools that I'm a liaison to and I did pass out flyers to the schools that did have PTA bodies, and I would just say, parent coordinators. All right? So I did reach out, but as you can see the turnout. I did see a couple of people that I did invite in here, but you know, people have -- they make their own choices.

MS. HURDLE-TAYLOR:

So I want to say thank you very much for that comment. Mr. Wheeler, for your comment as well. It doesn't relate directly to C4E but it speaks just in general about District 17 and maybe conversations about the whole issue of the parent voice and getting our parents more involved.

I do want to thank you for listening to this very lengthy presentation and for all of your comments. I want to say again that all of the comments that were heard here tonight have been taped, and if you have written comments or questions, please pass the cards to the sergeant, and if you still want to make additional comments up until the deadline, you can go to Contracts for Excellence at [school.nyc.gov](http://school.nyc.gov). So thank you very much and I'll pass that to our President, Dr. Spait (ph.).