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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING**
**Expansion of Success Academy -
Cobble Hill at K293 - 6/1/15**

1 [START RECORDING]

2 MS. KAREN WATTS: -368K and Success Academy,
3 Cobble Hill.

4 I am Brooklyn High School Superintendent
5 Karen Watts. We have asked the District 15
6 Community Education Council, the District 75
7 Community Education Council, and the School
8 Leadership Team for each school in Building K293
9 to participate in this joint public hearing.

10 I am joined tonight by Valerie Wright from
11 the Global Studies School Leadership Team and
12 Principal Dawn Meconi [phonetic], Susan - - from
13 the International Studies School Leadership
14 Team, and Principal Jillian - - , Sylvia Green
15 [phonetic] from the P368K SLT, and Principal
16 Joycelyn - - Naila Rosario from CEC 15, and
17 Sylvia Green, also representing the Citywide
18 District 75 Council. Success Academy Cobble
19 Hill is present as well and is joined by
20 Principal Kerri Tabarcea, and network
21 representative Lindsay Lukow [phonetic], who
22 have chosen not to sit on the dais.

23 This hearing is being audio-recorded.

24 CEC 15 and Superintendent - - of District 75
25 have confirmed their attendance at tonight's

1 joint public hearing. However, due to
2 unforeseen circumstances, they were not able to
3 send a representative to tonight's meeting. If
4 a member of CEC 15 or District 75 arrives at a
5 later time—are you here? Okay—we will do our
6 best to accommodate them at the first opportune
7 moment.

8 The purpose of this hearing is for you to
9 provide comments about the proposal. Before I
10 describe the proposal, I want to make sure you
11 are aware of the opportunity to provide your
12 input. All of those who wish to speak must sign
13 up in the speaker sign-up area located just
14 outside of the auditorium. The sign-up list
15 will close in 15 minutes. Speakers will be
16 given the floor in the order that they signed up
17 to speak. All comments are limited to two
18 minutes.

19 As you present your comments, please focus
20 on presenting your opinion in a respectful tone
21 as these hearings are open to all members of the
22 community and we want to create an environment
23 that remains respectful of the entire community.

24 The purpose of these hearings is to present
25 your feedback and also to have an opportunity to

1 hear others' comments. These goals can only be
2 accomplished if the tone remains calm and
3 respectful.

4 There may be elected officials who arrive at
5 different times throughout the evening. If they
6 wish to speak, we will do our best to
7 accommodate them at the first opportune moment.

8 Those who are here at the start of the
9 public comments segment will be asked to speak
10 first.

11 All comments submitted prior to 24 hours
12 before the Panel for Education Policy votes on
13 this proposal including the comments presented
14 at this meeting will be mentioned in the
15 analysis of public comments to be published and
16 provided to the panel the evening before the
17 panel votes. That vote is scheduled for
18 Wednesday, June 10th.

19 In addition, we welcome any comments and
20 feedback you may have outside of this hearing.
21 The email address and phone number where
22 additional comments may be made after tonight's
23 meeting are d15proposals@schools.nyc.gov and the
24 phone number is (212) 374-0208.

25 All comments received before 6:00 p.m. on

1 the day before the PEP meeting at the above-
2 noted hearing or through phone or email lines
3 will be addressed by the DoE in an analysis of
4 public comment, which is made available to the
5 public after 6:00 p.m. on the day before the PEP
6 meeting.

7 Here is the proposal summary—the purpose of
8 this proposal is to expand the grades served by
9 Success Academy in Cobble Hill from kindergarten
10 through grade four to kindergarten through grade
11 five beginning in the 2016/2017 school year.
12 Success Academy Cobble Hill is an existing
13 charter school located in building K293
14 currently serving students in kindergarten
15 through grade three. Success Academy Cobble
16 Hill is currently co-located in K293 with the
17 Brooklyn School for Global Studies, the School
18 for International Studies, and PE 368K.

19 For a previous proposal approved by the
20 Panel for Education Policy in December 2011,
21 Success Academy Cobble Hill has already been
22 approved to serve students in kindergarten
23 through grade four beginning in the 2015/2016
24 school year. Success Academy Cobble Hill will
25 also serve one section of full day pre-K

1 beginning in the 2015/2016 school year.

2 Brooklyn School for Global Studies, School
3 for International Studies, and P 368K at H429
4 will all continue to serve the current grades
5 served in each of their respective programs in
6 K293.

7 In addition, this proposal accounts for the
8 anticipated increase in sixth grade enrollment
9 for full 2015/2016 at School for International
10 Studies and assumes that the same level of
11 demand at sixth grade in future years.

12 This proposal is intended to ensure
13 educational continuity for students currently
14 enrolled in Success Academy Cobble Hill. If
15 this proposal is approved, future fourth graders
16 in Success Academy Cobble Hill who fulfill
17 promotional requirements to articulate to fifth
18 grade may do so at Success Academy Cobble Hill
19 in K293.

20 Pursuant to recent amendments of the New
21 York State education law, which provides certain
22 new and expanded charter schools with access to
23 facilities, Success Academy made a co-location
24 request to the DoE for a space in District 15
25 for the fifth through eighth grades of Success

1 Academy Cobble Hill. Although Success Academy
2 requested space for the fifth through eighth
3 grades of Success Academy Cobble Hill, at this
4 time, the Department of Education is proposing
5 the siting of Success Academy Cobble Hill's
6 fifth grade only at K293.

7 Details of the proposal including current
8 building utilization rates in K293 and projected
9 utilization rates in K293 should this proposal
10 be approved can be found in the educational
11 impact statement and building utilization plan,
12 copies of which are available here tonight.

13 We will now have presentations by hearing
14 participants. We will begin by calling CEC 15
15 President Naila Rosario.

16 MS. NAILA ROSARIO: Hi, good afternoon,
17 everyone. Good afternoon, everyone.

18 [Audience participation]

19 MS. ROSARIO: Good afternoon. I thank you
20 all for taking time from your day to be here at
21 this important meeting. All of your opinions
22 and your presence here is very much welcome, so
23 thank you.

24 I'll start off with a prepared statement
25 here. While campaigning for mayor, to become

1 mayor, Bill de Blasio promised that he would be
2 more collaborative and respectful of the input
3 of parents and community members than the
4 previous administration. He promised that the
5 Community Education Councils would be urged to
6 vote on major utilization changes in their
7 community and that the vote will influence and
8 provide insight to the Panel for Educational
9 Policy. He pledged that ~~the~~ he pledges that as
10 mayor he would raise the level of significance
11 of CECs and that the Panel for Educational
12 Policy must address ~~excuse me~~ the PEP's vote on
13 major school utilization changes in their PEP
14 meetings, that they must state why they disagree
15 with the local CEC and work with the local CEC
16 for alternative solutions.

17 Community Education Council 15 is opposed to
18 the expansion of Success Academy. Any expansion
19 would restrict the ability to the existing
20 schools in the building to reduce class size
21 below the current level, which is higher than
22 the city's original Contract to Excellence plan.
23 Moreover, there is a crisis in District 15.
24 With a growing population, co-locations make
25 this problem worse and by their need to

1 duplicate administrative offices and classroom
2 spaces and also because charter schools draw
3 from students outside of the district. In
4 addition, Success Academy has been known to
5 enroll far fewer English language learners and
6 special needs students, which then become even
7 more concentrated in the district public schools
8 with fewer resources and space to address their
9 needs.

10 CEC 15 will be voting on a resolution to
11 oppose this expansion at our next business
12 meeting on June 8th and we will send a copy of
13 this resolution to the mayor, the chancellors,
14 and members of the PEP who will vote on this
15 proposal on June 10th.

16 CEC 15 calls on to the PEP to work together
17 with the CEC on alternative solutions as the
18 mayor pledged.

19 Thank you.

20 MS. WATTS: Thank you. We will now hear
21 from Citywide District 75 council and P368K SLT
22 representative Sylvia Green.

23 MS. SYLVIA GREEN: Good evening.

24 [Audience participation]

25 MS. GREEN: I'm glad to see so much—such a

1 great attendance today.

2 I as District 75 representative, my child
3 does attend this school. He does attend 368.
4 And Success was here when I got here.

5 I do believe that all schools need space.
6 And I do agree that Success needs to expand to
7 the fifth grade because there's no sense in
8 having a school that cuts off at fourth grade.
9 However, I do also think that adding the pre-K
10 is different than the original agreement, so I
11 think it should be revisited.

12 However, like I said, I do agree with them
13 having the space for the fifth grade and I'm
14 hoping—

15 [Applause, cheering]

16 MS. GREEN: But I'm hoping that they do
17 stick to the original agreement, which would
18 have been from kindergarten to fifth grade
19 because adding the pre-K at this time is hard on
20 this building. It would take space from one of
21 the other schools. And as much as you care
22 about your kids, and I'm sure you all do because
23 you're all here, we as public school parents and
24 not just publically-funded public school parents
25 also care about our kids, too. And not

1 everyone's choice is to be told that my
2 children cannot do that.

3 [Applause]

4 MS. GREEN: You know, and I think that my
5 choice should be respected just as much as your
6 choice should be respected.

7 MS. WATTS: Thank you. We will now hear
8 from Global Studies SLT representative Valerie
9 Wright.

10 MS. VALERIE WRIGHT: Good evening, parents
11 and children. I—my name is Valerie Wright. And
12 I am a Global Studies parent of a ninth grader.
13 My son travels very far to come to Global
14 Studies. We live in Queens. I searched high
15 schools within my area and none of them lived up
16 the ability that Global Studies High School can
17 give my son with a smaller class setting. And
18 as someone has already said, each one of us as
19 parents want the best education for our
20 children. I worry that by Success having a
21 fifth grade will take away some space from the
22 high school, which means that the high school
23 students will be—there will be more in the
24 classroom, which means that to me is less
25 attention that the teacher can give to the

1 students.

2 Also I worry about the junior high school
3 being on the same floor with high school
4 students. For me, that's a safety concern
5 because junior high school and high school
6 should not be mixed. They're all at different
7 age levels and they should be in their own
8 environment.

9 I just that everything that everyone wants
10 for their children is available, but I am so
11 very worried about the space for our children in
12 Global Studies High School. I really don't want
13 it to be overcrowded, which means that it would
14 push a lot of the students out of this community
15 and which would not be fair.

16 Thank you very much.

17 [Applause]

18 MS. WATTS: Okay, we will now hear from
19 International Studies School Leadership Team
20 representative Susan Lasker [phonetic].

21 [Applause]

22 MS. SUSAN LASKER: Good evening. I'm a
23 community member. I don't have a lot to say.
24 You know, I think that it's actually very nice
25 to be in a room with parents and faculty from

1 all of the different schools because we share
2 this building, but we don't overlap a lot, so
3 it's nice to see who else is a part of our
4 community.

5 Okay, International Studies just wants to
6 say that we support the new BUP, the new
7 building utilization plan, that's been laid out
8 by the DoE. We feel like what we have here is
9 kind of special. It's a true community school
10 going from little kids all the way up through
11 high school, which is great, you know, with
12 places potentially for kids from Success when
13 they graduate from fourth grade because there
14 are two great schools in the building offering
15 middle school - -

16 [Applause]

17 MS. LASER: -which is kind of nice - - stay
18 in one place the whole time.

19 You know, and I think I also wanted to say
20 as New Yorkers, we are all so accustomed to
21 buying for limited resources, you know, and it's
22 something that turns neighbors into enemies.
23 And I've seen that process happen at other
24 schools that I've been a part of. And I
25 appreciate that we're having this community

1 hearing tonight and that the tone is so civil.
2 You know, we're part of a community that really
3 as everybody said all wants the best for their
4 children.

5 [Applause]

6 MS. WATTS: Thank you. We will now hear
7 from International Studies Principal Jillian
8 Juman.

9 [Applause]

10 MS. JILLIAN JUMAN: I think—oh, good
11 evening. I think exactly what Susan just said,
12 I'm going to mirror, is that we believe in
13 International Studies. We're here for the
14 community. We believe that working with other
15 schools is important to fulfill that mission
16 that we have within the district. And we
17 believe that coming together and making sure
18 we're servicing anywhere from pre-K all the way
19 up to 12th grade is our duty. And so I just want
20 to say that we support the building utilization
21 plan. We support the growth of all schools
22 within the building and a true community as we
23 grow together.

24 [Applause]

25 MS. WATTS: Thank you. We will now hear

1 from Global Studies Principal Dawn Meconi.

2 [Applause]

3 MS. DAWN MECONI: Hi. Welcome, everybody.

4 I just wanted to say that I echo many of the
5 things that Principal Juman said and I also
6 understand the concerns of my families and we
7 are all here at the table I think can agree that
8 we all want the best for all students and for
9 all of the schools in the building.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. WATTS: Thank you. We will now hear
12 from P368K at H429, Principal Joycelyn Nedd.

13 [Applause]

14 MS. JOYCELYN NEDD: Good evening, everyone.
15 I just want to echo everything everyone said
16 today because I'm the last person and perceiving
17 we all want what's best for each and every child
18 in this building. That is very clear. It is
19 very clear by your presence here. So I'm in
20 support of the utilization plan.

21 [Applause]

22 MS. WATTS: Thank you. The next presenter
23 will be the Principal Kerri Tabarcea from Success
24 Academy Cobble Hill.

25 [Applause, cheering]

1 MS. KERRI TABARCEA: Good evening. Thank
2 you so much for coming. My name is Kerri
3 Tabarcea. And I am the principal of Success
4 Academy Cobble Hill.

5 When we opened our school in 2012, when we
6 opened our school in 2012, I had a vision and a
7 goal of making sure that we set out to create a
8 joyful, engaging, inspiring community for
9 children and families to participate in. And it
10 has been so exciting over the past three years
11 to see that vision come alive every day when our
12 children are participating in chess, in science,
13 in reading and math, and being able to develop
14 and discover their own love of learning and
15 passion for things that they are just
16 discovering.

17 And we really obviously are in favor of this
18 utilization plan because our fourth graders, our
19 rising fourth graders I should say need this
20 space. They need this space to continue making
21 progress. They need this space to continue
22 learning and dreaming and dreaming big and being
23 able to prosper and achieve their goals. And we
24 want to make sure that we're - - that, that
25 we're allowing them to continue in their

1 journey, to continue building and fostering
2 the relationships with the people and the
3 children that they've already come to know.

4 This year alone we had 2,800 applications
5 for just 102 spots and about 460 applications
6 for just third grade alone. So there is demand
7 in the community. There is need in the
8 community. And we want to continue to provide a
9 great educational opportunity for all families
10 and all children who make that choice.

11 Thank you.

12 [Applause, cheering]

13 MS. WATTS: The next presenter will be
14 Lindsay Lukow - - Success Academy Cobble Hill.

15 MS. LINDSAY LUKOW: Hi everyone. My name is
16 Lindsay Lukow. I support Success Academy Cobble
17 Hill from our network office. It's very nice to
18 meet you all. Thanks, everyone, for coming
19 tonight.

20 Success Academy Cobble Hill is part of
21 Success Academy's charter school network. Last
22 year our schools ranked in the top 10% in math,
23 in the top 3% - -

24 [Applause, cheering]

25 MS. LUKOW: -in the state. As Ms. Tabarcea

1 had mentioned, our scholars learn chess and
2 debate. They take dance and musical theater.
3 They have science five days a week. They
4 participate in HTML coding and art and soccer.
5 And they take field studies all over the city.

6 We are so proud of what our scholars have
7 been able to do across the network and here at
8 Cobble Hill. And as Ms. Tabarcea mentioned,
9 there is very strong parent demand for high-
10 quality schools here in Brooklyn.

11 Our experiences with co-location here have
12 been very positive and productive. Wherever we
13 are located, we believe in creating a learning
14 environment that is safe and conducive to
15 learning for all students. And K293 has been no
16 exception. Over the years, we have enjoyed a
17 positive relationship with our co-located
18 schools. And we look forward to continuing to
19 work with them.

20 Thank you.

21 [Applause, cheering]

22 MS. WATTS: Thank you. We have now
23 concluded the formal presentations. We will now
24 open the floor for public comments. Speakers
25 will be given the floor in the order that they

1 signed up. All comments are limited to two
2 minutes.

3 Our first speaker is Brianna Eastman
4 [phonetic].

5 [Applause, cheering]

6 MS. BRIANNA EASTMAN: Hello. My name is
7 Brianna Eastman - - and now all I need is a good
8 school - - here's the question, how will we get
9 a good school? We work hard and don't give up.
10 And what if you don't - - school. We don't have
11 time for what-if questions. We do have time for
12 - -

13 MS. WATTS: Thank you.

14 [Applause]

15 MS. WATTS: Our next speaker is Autumn
16 Messner [phonetic].

17 [Applause, cheering]

18 MS. AUTUMN MESSNER: Hi. My name is Autumn
19 Messner. Scholars in this school succeed. If
20 people don't let us have space for our fifth
21 grade, we won't be able to make more or even the
22 same amount of success we will if we were here
23 for fifth grade. And we're going to make fifth
24 grade here at Cobble Hill happen. We need your
25 help. Make the right choice and let us have

1 space for our fifth grade. I'm counting on
2 you.

3 [Applause, cheering]

4 MS. WATTS: Our next speaker is Makayla
5 Huchsiato - - [phonetic].

6 [Applause, cheering]

7 FEMALE VOICE: Hello. My name is - - we all
8 are here today because we want to fight for our
9 middle school students. And this is Makayla.

10 [Laughter]

11 MS. MAKAYLA HUCHSIATO: I believe everyone
12 deserves a middle school. I believe everyone
13 deserves space for school for any grade, no
14 matter how old they are. I believe that we can
15 have a middle school if we fight. And I think
16 that we should not care how many fights or how
17 many - - or meetings we have to put up to get a
18 middle school. I believe we should get the
19 middle school.

20 [Applause, cheering]

21 FEMALE VOICE: I believe that everybody
22 should have space for school no matter how old
23 they are just like Makayla said. And even
24 though it's not your choice of school, everybody
25 deserves good education and we are all here

1 today to get that education.

2 [Applause cheering]

3 FEMALE VOICE: Thank you, everybody. Thank
4 you, Miami.

5 [Applause, cheering]

6 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker
7 will be Minaf O'Ryan [phonetic].

8 [Applause]

9 MR. MINAF O'RYAN: Hello. My name is Minaf
10 O'Ryan. And I think we should all deserve our
11 good education as we deserve now, so we should
12 always be proud of our—we should always be proud
13 of our scores because we could always make a
14 difference through our learning as we get older
15 so we should learn the same things that the
16 right education we deserve.

17 [Applause, cheering]

18 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
19 Walker Gagliotto [phonetic].

20 [Applause, cheering]

21 MR. WALKER GAGLIOTTO: - - help me change
22 the world and I want to see - - before I leave
23 here.

24 [Applause, cheering]

25 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is

1 - -

2 [Applause, cheering]

3 FEMALE VOICE: I am going to be talking
4 about my school experience. I think my school
5 experience was a great experience I have the two
6 best teachers in the world, Ms. Duffy and Mr.
7 Gloutman [phonetic].

8 [Applause, cheering]

9 FEMALE VOICE: And our school is a good
10 school because they give us really hard math
11 problems - -

12 [Laughter]

13 FEMALE VOICE: And when we do the math
14 problems, it really challenges my brain and I
15 like that.

16 [Applause, cheering]

17 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
18 Jada Caramalu [phonetic].

19 [Applause]

20 MS. JADA CARAMALU: Hi. My name is Jada and
21 I will be talking about what I learned in my
22 class. I learned that we do hard problems in
23 hard math, in hard - - when we get - - every
24 day.

25 [Applause]

1 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker
2 is Rosaria Bay Shepherd [phonetic].

3 [Applause]

4 MS. ROSARIA BAY SHEPHERD: My name is
5 Rosaria Bay Shepherd. And without this school,
6 I would pretty much be nothing because I
7 remember when I was in PS 261 - - and to be
8 honest I don't think I learned anything. But
9 now that I'm in Success Academy, I'm learning
10 about trains, poems and such.

11 [Applause]

12 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
13 Cherokee Penn.

14 [Applause]

15 MR. CHEROKEE PENN: Hello. My name is
16 Cherokee. I am in third grade. I love this
17 school so much because I always learn a lot of
18 things in science. Everybody gets good in math.
19 Everybody gets a chance to share a math problem
20 with the class. In sports, we learn all of our
21 body parts and learn how techniques for each
22 sport. In art, we learn a lot about artists and
23 careers and then art techniques.

24 I hope me and my friends to stay in this
25 school for a long time. So I-so fifth grade in

1 this building would be awesome.

2 Thank you.

3 [Applause, cheering]

4 MS. WATTS: Thank you. The next speaker is
5 Lainie Dip [phonetic].

6 [Applause]

7 MS. LAINIE DIP: Hi. My name is Lainie Dip.
8 And I'm a third grader. I really want Success
9 Academy to go on to fifth grade because it's an
10 amazing school and it is the best school I have
11 been to. My teachers are loving and caring and
12 give us great education. I have been here since
13 first grade and I am not ready to leave this
14 school - -

15 [Applause, cheering]

16 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
17 Ratu AK [phonetic].

18 [Applause]

19 MR. RATU AK: Hello. My name is Ratu. And
20 I believe that we need to get into middle school
21 - - so we can go to college and have whatever
22 job we want. And I think that this school is
23 the best school because we get to learn math and
24 every special. Thank you.

25 [Applause]

1 MS. WATTS: Thank you. The next speaker
2 is Clarissa Baptiste [phonetic].

3 [Applause, cheering]

4 MS. CLARISSA BAPTISTE: Hi everyone. I'm a
5 sixth grader at the School for International
6 Studies. And we as a scholar I feel like we
7 should have—yes, I would say that Success - -
8 more space to have classes and have more
9 opportunities. Also I feel like my high school
10 Global also will be more, what's the word?
11 We're not going to have very much opportunities
12 and our classes are going to be more crowded, so
13 already - - and now we are on the second and
14 first floor. And it's - - of not only like
15 preschool or like elementary, but it's also
16 having - - high school, so the age range is
17 somewhat of a problem because there are some
18 kids who maybe they - - problem because it's not
19 a safe like environment like age-range-wise. So
20 that's how I feel about it, like I'm for space,
21 but I also want space to learn more things
22 myself, so I - - because there are a lot of
23 fairly smart scholars - - in our school and - -

24 [Applause]

25 MS. WATTS: Thank you. The next speaker

1 will be Eliot Blanchard [phonetic].

2 MR. ELIOT BLANCHARD: Hi. My name is Eliot
3 Blanchard. And my son Aza [phonetic] is
4 finishing his kindergarten year at Success
5 Academy. And I just wanted to talk about some
6 of the things that he likes so much about the
7 school.

8 You know, we always knew that Aza was a real
9 curious kid from day one. And we wanted to find
10 a place, you know, that could keep up with him
11 and, you know, keep him interested, which is why
12 we decided to do Success Academy. And he's
13 ended up loving it.

14 You know, he loves the way that they use
15 project-based learning to tie everything
16 together. He loves - - like chess. Even in
17 kindergarten he's really excited about it. And
18 he especially loves having all of the science
19 time every day of the week. He also loves his
20 teachers, who are really supportive of him.

21 And, you know, another thing that was
22 important for us is that, you know, Success is a
23 really diverse school that kind of matches the
24 diversity of Brooklyn as a city, which is a
25 really great and important thing.

1 I guess the last thing I wanted to say was
2 that I feel like Success is also good for kids
3 that aren't in Success Academy. You know,
4 ourselves personally, if we weren't going to
5 Success, we would be at PS 58, which is a great
6 school. But, you know, as everybody knows, it's
7 already really overcrowded. So having a great
8 option like Success takes the pressure off of
9 those other schools. And I think extending it
10 to fifth grade will help the middle school
11 situation as well.

12 That's all I wanted to say and I hope - -

13 [Applause, cheering]

14 MS. WATTS: All right, I would just like to
15 remind the comments are limited to two minutes.

16 Our next speaker is Andrea Scotting
17 [phonetic].

18 [Applause, cheering]

19 MS. ANDREA SCOTTING: Hi. Thank you so
20 much. Hi. My name is Andrea Scotting. I have
21 two kids, Charlie and Lily, here in the first
22 grade at Success Academy Cobble Hill.

23 I always hear charter schools put into a
24 different category of competing schools, a
25 characterization that doesn't really make a lot

1 of sense to anyone who has experienced our
2 community. So I'd like to talk about community
3 for a little bit today.

4 My daughter, Lily, she kind of struggled
5 with math a little bit this year. Now I'm no
6 great mathematician myself. I won't be applying
7 to Mensa anytime soon. So I could see where she
8 was coming from.

9 She didn't do so well on her math IA, an
10 important exam. Her teacher was very concerned,
11 asked my husband and I to come in, go over
12 Lily's exam with her, go over Lily's exam with
13 the teacher. The test pages were alternately
14 covered with wrong answers and doodles of
15 flowers - -

16 So we put together an action plan. Lily was
17 put into a small math group. She got a lot of
18 one-on-one instruction time. We spent extra
19 time working with her at home. One of Lily's
20 kindergarten teachers even volunteered to help.
21 Yeah, a teacher that doesn't even have my
22 daughter as a student anymore made it her
23 personal mission to help Lily succeed. She even
24 started calling us all Team Lily. This was in
25 February, icy, cold, dark February. Twice a

1 week Lily met up with her before school and
2 you know how early that is. The first grade
3 team rallied around her. Their support was
4 truly incredible.

5 So last week first grade had their final
6 math IA of the year. I was on pins and needles.
7 I was dying to know how she did. If she tanked
8 on this one, would she be going to second grade?
9 I was a little scared. Not knowing was pure
10 torture.

11 The next day my phone rang. It was Lily's
12 teacher. She was giddy. Lily scored 103% on -
13 -

14 [Applause, cheering]

15 MS. SCOTTING: Now before you point out that
16 she must be really bad at math to not realize
17 that you can't get more than 100%, let me brag
18 that she scored 3 extra percentage points in
19 extra credit, so you could imagine how ecstatic
20 I was.

21 And I just want to say it is community that
22 made this possible. Without community, there
23 was no Team Lily. Without community, we
24 wouldn't have teachers going above and beyond to
25 make sure every kid has the tools to succeed.

1 Without community, this room wouldn't be
2 packed with parents advocating for this
3 incredible school.

4 Clearly Success Academy Cobble Hill is
5 benefiting our community. The truth is we can't
6 have too many great schools. So please take
7 this opportunity to support one of them.

8 [Applause, cheering]

9 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
10 Arthur Fullerton.

11 [Applause]

12 MR. ARTHUR FULLERTON: Hi everybody. My
13 name is Arthur. I'm a middle class kid from
14 Canada, so the concept of a charter school was
15 completely foreign to me when we moved to the
16 United States. So have a 6-year-old boy,
17 Nathan, who is right here. And we got him into
18 the school, didn't really know what to expect.
19 And after he showed up - - value could be
20 brought to these schools. And at first I
21 suspected mind control because I just did not
22 know that it was going to be as good as it was.
23 But he ended up really doing quite well and
24 continues to do quite well. And I'm a little
25 conflicted because I am a product of public

1 school. My parents were products of public
2 school. They were teachers and, you know,
3 produced me and my siblings. And we're all
4 doing quite well. So I am conflicted a little
5 bit because I don't think that there should be
6 any casualties in this. I think everybody
7 should have an opportunity, an equal opportunity
8 - -

9 [Applause]

10 MR. FULLERTON: -education. But for my own
11 selfish needs, I want to see this school go to
12 grade five so that I can - - continue to do
13 well.

14 So thank you.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
17 Matt Polaazo [phonetic].

18 [Applause, cheering]

19 MR. MATT POLAAZO: Thank you, ladies and
20 gentlemen. My name is Matt Polaazo. I'm the
21 parent council president here. And my
22 experience may be a little interesting. I have
23 grown up on this block, living at 14 Butler St.
24 since 1981. I'm a public school teacher, have
25 been for 16 years. And my father also taught in

1 the public schools for over 30 years. And
2 I've taught at pretty much every grade and age.
3 And when you teach as long as I have, it doesn't
4 take long to appreciate a good education when
5 you see it. And simply walking in the doors at
6 Success Academy, it became immediately apparent
7 that my children, Eli and Naomi, were getting an
8 incredibly good education.

9 One of the interesting things about charter
10 schools is that they do take from out of the
11 zone and out of the district. And, you know, I
12 was not able to say - - thanks to the changes of
13 the schools that I was zoned for I just didn't
14 feel were of the highest caliber. And, you
15 know, this school has given me the opportunity
16 to send my children to a school across from the
17 street where I grew up. And to me that's been a
18 very special experience.

19 I also just wanted to note that just a
20 little anecdote just about how special the
21 community is, one time I was having my lunch
22 break and I got a phone call on my cell phone
23 that it was Ms. Tracy, our amazing art teacher,
24 and she called to tell me that she was teaching
25 the students how to paint shadow and light and

1 she said that Naomi had painted this
2 unbelievable pumpkin and that she thought that
3 she was really grasping this concept of light
4 and shadow. And it was—I saw the painting. It
5 was amazing. But I have to say, it was almost—
6 it is corny, but I was like almost about like on
7 the verge of tears to have my child's teacher
8 call me in the middle of the day was just so
9 special. So I really support the expansion and
10 I hope that it can go through.

11 Thank you so much.

12 [Applause, cheering]

13 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
14 Samantha Thompson.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. SAMANTHA THOMPSON: Good evening, good
17 evening, good evening. My daughter is Nancy
18 Reed and she's in first grade here. She started
19 in kindergarten. And I am - - who is here in
20 Success Academy and I appreciate this school so
21 much, the community here, the parents, the
22 students, we are so diverse.

23 I grew up in - - all my life. And I love
24 it. It's growing. It's expanding. But,
25 however, the school system there is not for me,

1 for my daughter. And Success Academy made it
2 possible for my daughter to learn the way she
3 needs to learn. We come from a family of - -
4 and Madison is learning the way her grandmother
5 taught her, which his from her community,
6 learning about the police department. She
7 salutes the police when she sees them in the
8 street. She salutes the firefighters when she
9 sees them in the street. She can point out the
10 - - I didn't learn that till I was in fifth
11 grade.

12 So - - kindergarten - - the first grade and
13 canines and, you know, the teeth and we didn't
14 learn that. So these children need an
15 opportunity to grow and expand themselves in
16 fifth grade. We should not be fighting for a
17 space. This is education. This is not a war of
18 the spaces. This is about progression. This is
19 about education. This is about our children
20 learning.

21 [Applause]

22 MS. THOMPSON: And every family here, every
23 family here wants their children to learn and to
24 grow. And we need a fifth grade space in order
25 to make that happen. You guy - - your teachers

1 are awesome, our teachers are great. We need
2 that space. We didn't have to fight for this -
3 - when I was in first grade or in fifth grade or
4 tenth grade. And in the words of my
5 illustrious, wonderful high school principal,
6 whose kids? Our kids. Whose kids? Our kids.
7 Whose kids?

8 [Audience participation]

9 MS. THOMPSON: Whose kids?

10 [Audience participation]

11 MS. THOMPSON: Thank you.

12 [Applause, cheering]

13 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker
14 will be Clayton Harding.

15 [Applause]

16 MR. CLAYTON HARDING: Thank you. My name is
17 Clayton Harding. I'm the father of Miles
18 Harding-Wood, a third grader here. I'm also a
19 native New Yorker, a native Brooklynite, a
20 product of the public school system here. I
21 graduated from - - High School in - - and my
22 father is a retired school teacher as well. So
23 I'm also a 25-year DoE vendor. I have - - a
24 variety of standardized tests all over New York
25 City for 25 years ever since I was - -

1 And so what I want to say is that I've
2 been in dozens of schools and taught thousands
3 of students and I have never been at any school
4 that has impressed me more than this school.
5 And the principal and the staff here is the
6 reason.

7 [Applause, cheering]

8 MR. HARDING: Teachers give up their own
9 personal time and Miles went to the Museum of
10 Natural History on a Saturday with his science
11 teachers. They gave up a Saturday after - -
12 during the week to go out and spend some extra
13 time with the students. The curriculum is
14 outstanding. The numbers speak for themselves.
15 We don't even have to talk about the math and
16 the - - numbers.

17 So I guess what I wanted to--really want to
18 say is I'm so impressed by the partnership here,
19 to hear all of the other principals speak about
20 the core existence here in this building, again,
21 I'm talking dozens of schools. New York City
22 has over 60% of its schools are co-located and I
23 know you know that they don't all get along as
24 well as we seem to get along here. And I really
25 commend you all for being such a great family

1 and such great partners.

2 Clearly we all want to same thing as
3 everyone else has said, which is what's best for
4 our children. The opportunity today I think is
5 just to see how we can best make that happen
6 because the idea of sending these amazing
7 scholars back to a non-Success school for fifth
8 grade seems untenable to me, the idea that they
9 would have to go back into their zone schools
10 for one year just seems like such a waste of an
11 opportunity to continue with being clearly so
12 successful. So I hope that we can figure out a
13 way to now make that happen.

14 Thank you so much.

15 [Applause, cheering]

16 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
17 A. Nose [phonetic].

18 FEMALE VOICE: Hi - - was really impressed
19 with all of the scholars who spoke. I just want
20 to give a moment for that because that was
21 really fantastic.

22 I-my son is in first grade. His name is - -
23 and my daughter will be in kindergarten this
24 coming year.

25 The reason I chose Success Academy in the

1 first place was because the middle school
2 process in New York is so awful and further
3 segregates kids. It really - - their potential.

4 So I wanted to talk about the three things
5 that parents most care about. And these things
6 are simple things, not so much test scores, but
7 things like is my kid safe? And here I
8 absolutely know that my kid is safe. They're
9 not going to be bullied. They're not going to
10 be a bully. And they are going to have their
11 teachers supported in being able to help them
12 learn.

13 The second thing is how is my kid behaving?
14 I know every day how my kid is behaving. I get
15 calls, the good, the bad, and lots of great
16 information just to-like the-Matt's, you know,
17 art story. I really do feel like he's gone from
18 me all day and I like know exactly what's going
19 on.

20 And the third thing, and this is a note that
21 I made for myself is is my kid learning. And
22 the note is this is the part where you get to
23 brag. He is learning so much - - every day,
24 which is another reason that I chose Success
25 Academy. He wasn't going to have science at all

1 in kindergarten. And now he has it every day,
2 which is so great for him. He's reading at a
3 third grade level. He's doing amazing math
4 problems. I could really go on and on and on.

5 And this is basically to say that this is
6 the education that I would like him to continue
7 to have and for all of the other kids to be able
8 to have. And this is the education that they
9 deserve.

10 So I hope that we can—I hope like Arthur
11 said that - - in this and I hope that we can
12 work it out so that everyone can be able to
13 continue in this space, but this is definitely
14 such a great school that we cannot lose the
15 fifth grade opportunity.

16 [Applause]

17 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
18 Carol Jeffrey.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. CAROL JEFFREY: Hi. My name is Carol.
21 I'm a speech language pathologist from the
22 School for International Studies. And I welcome
23 everyone here tonight. There's so much
24 inspirational talk from—about good education and
25 so many good models of young students who are

1 doing great.

2 We have many - - six to twelve who could be
3 here and tell you the same stories about how
4 wonderful our school is and how - -

5 [Applause]

6 MS. JEFFREY: And I know we all want the
7 best for our students, for our children. So I'm
8 asking you to think about the kids who have been
9 here and the space that they need. They're
10 wonderful, just as wonderful as every kid who
11 spoke today. And we want you to really consider
12 their space needs and be fair for everyone - -
13 yes, but it was-it's going to be hard to make
14 space for everyone beyond that. So, please, you
15 know, think about all of the students in the
16 school.

17 Thank you.

18 [Applause]

19 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
20 Anna Writ-Townsend.

21 [Applause, cheering]

22 MS. ANNA WRIT-TOWNSEND: Good evening. My
23 name is Anna Writ-Townsend. My son is Jeremiah
24 Townsend. He is in the second grade. He's a
25 rising third grader. He absolutely loves his

1 school. I call it our school.

2 Initially when he started school, we went to
3 the public school for pre-K. Every day I had to
4 worry about his safety, but—and it was hard for
5 me to decide to bring him to a charter school
6 because I was scared of the structure because my
7 son was very disciplined and he didn't need the
8 structure. But after coming to Success, I am so
9 happy that we made the choice to come here.

10 There are three things that made me decide
11 to come here and stay here. One is that is my
12 child learning? Jeremiah is learning every
13 single day. He is learning about the rock
14 cycle. He can multiple, divide. He's in the
15 second grade. I didn't learn these things until
16 I was in high school.

17 The second thing was his safety. Although
18 Jeremiah doesn't have issues of—with discipline,
19 there are other children that do. So if there's
20 a community—if he's in a community that is
21 structured, we don't have to worry—I don't have
22 to worry about his safety because he's safe here
23 and that is one of my main concerns.

24 The other thing is if he's happy. Jeremiah
25 is very happy here. Sometimes when I want to

1 discipline him, I tell him that he's not
2 coming back, so he cries and waits about ten
3 minutes and then says Mommy, do you really mean
4 I can't go back to school? And I said no, I
5 just want you to behave yourself.

6 But the other night something interesting
7 happened. He cried himself to sleep because he
8 said he didn't want school to end. In second
9 grade, summer - - I was looking forward to. And
10 I can't believe that my son wants to stay an
11 extra few days.

12 Thank you. Please allow us to have a fifth
13 grade.

14 [Applause]

15 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
16 Susan Schroeder [phonetic].

17 [Applause]

18 MS. SUSAN SCHROEDER: Good evening. My name
19 is Susan Schroeder. My daughter, Ruby, is in
20 the third grade. And there was a discussion
21 before about whether or not Success successfully
22 works with children with learning disabilities.
23 I can tell you that when Ruby got here as a
24 first grader, she had a learning disability and
25 school had been a nightmare. But after getting

1 special ed five days a week at Success, she
2 graduated from her IEP and now I can't get her
3 to stop reading her books.

4 [Applause]

5 MS. SCHROEDER: The thing about this school
6 that I've seen in my daughter and in the other
7 friends that she has at the school is that I see
8 them being challenged every day, I see them
9 doing hard work and realizing every time they
10 overcome a new challenge that they can do it.
11 They say things to each other like that test was
12 easy and I'm smart, yeah, so am I. And when I
13 think about the nightmare of having an
14 adolescent daughter, which is looming very soon,
15 and I think about what fifth grade is going to
16 be like and middle school, the thing I think is
17 most important for our children is an
18 environment where every day they have the
19 opportunity to be challenged and to prove to
20 themselves how smart they are and how valued
21 their opinions are. And I can't imagine many
22 schools where a legion of third graders will get
23 up in front of a crowd like this and believe
24 that their opinions matter and that they should
25 be heard. And I hope that we can continue to

1 have - - as our children reach adolescence and
2 puberty they have that same experience, I think
3 the most important gift we can give them.

4 Thank you for listening.

5 [Applause]

6 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
7 Richard Hopps [phonetic].

8 [Applause]

9 MR. RICHARD HOPPS: Hi. I'm Rick Hopps - -
10 and one of the things, it's interesting to hear
11 - - come up, they kind of talk about their kids
12 and how their kids are doing. And I got to tell
13 you, I dread - - okay, we were in a nice little
14 school called PS39 in - - but I have friends who
15 are administrators and teachers who all told me
16 I was nuts and they were going to kick my butt
17 if we didn't take her to this school. It was
18 this right here, I take a look at the kids in
19 the schools, the neighborhood district schools,
20 you don't see the diversity there you see here
21 in this school. We have kids - - 100 nations in
22 this room. You don't see that anywhere. You've
23 got great teachers here - - last year, this year
24 we got lucky to get Mrs. Stack [phonetic] and
25 Ms. Bacter [phonetic] - - to meet with you early

1 in the morning, in the afternoon, on the
2 weekends, science teachers that take time from
3 their weekend to take the whole family to the
4 Museum of Natural History - - art teacher - -
5 for 35 years and - - and one day my daughter
6 comes from this school, goes running into the
7 house screaming Daddy, they've got a Kandinsky,
8 they've got a Kandinsky. I'm like they got a
9 what? I have no idea what it was. So we needed
10 the fifth grade. We need the fifth grade in
11 this building. And we need Success Academy
12 because a rising tide raises all boats.

13 Thank you.

14 [Applause]

15 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
16 Joseph Looters [phonetic].

17 [Applause]

18 MR. JOSEPH LOOTERS: Thank you very much.
19 My name is Joseph Looters. And I am the father
20 of Ivy Looters, who is enrolled in the third
21 grade here at Success Academy Cobble Hill.

22 As you know, the proposal to be considered
23 is whether or not to permit Success Academy to
24 expand to include a fifth grade in our current
25 building.

1 Here is the situation as I understand
2 this. The Department of Education has written a
3 brief in support of this plan. The building, in
4 which we are co-located, has ample space to
5 accommodate these additional students. And the
6 principals of the other schools support this
7 plan as well, not to mention the families who
8 are currently enrolled at Success Academy who
9 wish to stay in the current building for
10 purposes of continuity and efficiency.

11 Now I realize that Success Academy charter
12 schools are controversial and some have
13 criticized their merits. As a professor of
14 political science and as a parent, I've looked
15 into this question quite a bit for its factual
16 basis. And I was surprised to find that the
17 support for the research on this strongly
18 supports that Success Academy produces
19 substantial educational results and that these
20 results are not due to mere smoke and mirrors as
21 some have alleged, but more importantly there
22 are numerous parents at this location who have
23 testified about their lived experiences, about
24 the dedication and professionalism of the staff.
25 And this makes a huge, huge difference.

1 My daughter, Ivy, has excelled at this
2 institution in math, English, science, and art,
3 so in my view, while there are many policy
4 decisions that involve difficult tradeoffs or
5 gray areas, this decision does not seem to be
6 one of them. Here is a superb school with a
7 need for more space and more space happens to be
8 available and amicably available I might add.
9 The choice is simple and all that I can say is
10 that I sincerely hope that you will make it.

11 Thank you.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. WATTS: Thank you. The next speaker
14 will be Elizabeth Schumpter [phonetic].

15 FEMALE VOICE: Very good.

16 [Applause]

17 MS. ELIZABETH SCHUMPTER: Good evening. My
18 name is Elizabeth Schumpter and I current have a
19 son in second grade at Success Academy Cobble
20 Hill. Come September, I'll also have a son in
21 kindergarten at Success Academy Cobble Hill.

22 My second grade son, Benjamin, is an all-
23 around great kid. He works hard. He excels
24 academically. He's well-behaved. He has lots
25 of friends and he respects his teachers. It

1 would be easy for any teacher to let him
2 cruise through school each day knowing they
3 don't have to worry about him because he's
4 always just going to be okay.

5 However, during our three years at Success
6 Academy Cobble Hill, our experience has been
7 very, very different.

8 Last weekend I received a call from his
9 dance teacher, Ms. Langley. She had taken time
10 out of her Memorial Day holiday to call me and
11 to tell me that she had recently seen Benjamin
12 working very, very hard and demonstrating a lot
13 of dedication in class. She complimented him
14 personally on his efforts during school. And -
15 - the news with me, a smile of pride stretched
16 across his face as he watched me hear the news
17 from her on the other end of the phone line.
18 Her call literally made Benjamin feel so
19 incredibly special and I, his, mom, was bursting
20 with pride.

21 But this wasn't the first time I received
22 such a call. Earlier in the year it was Ms.
23 Easton to talk to me about the effort Benjamin
24 had demonstrated in science. Last year it was
25 Ms. Bristow and Ms. Vasid [phonetic] and in

1 kindergarten it was Mr. Watson. He excitedly
2 told me about Ben's progress in - - about his
3 reading progress and how he had shown exemplary
4 behavior in caring for and helping one of his
5 students who was struggling.

6 Granted, I'm his mom. I think the world of
7 him. The reason for my sharing these anecdotes
8 with you tonight is not to sing my child's
9 praises, but to illustrate what a special place
10 Success Academy Cobble Hill is.

11 The halls downstairs and around the corner
12 are filled with an exceptional team of
13 educators. They don't just expertly teach our
14 kids reading and writing - - science and math.
15 They're a team who's invested in every single
16 child. They ensure that every child is happy
17 and succeeding, succeeding in not just the
18 curriculum—I'll be done in one minute. They
19 ensure that they're not just succeeding in the
20 curriculum, but they're learning the ways of the
21 world. They teach them hard work, kindness, and
22 respect.

23 This building, this building is a place
24 where I constantly send my son every single day.
25 I know he's in the care of people who are

1 genuinely interested in his wellbeing. This
2 is something I as a parent cherish. I cannot
3 imagine our family having any other educational
4 experience than Success Academy Cobble Hill.
5 This place right here is a place that we all
6 need, all of us parents, all of our children,
7 not just for now, but for the future, and that
8 includes all the way through fifth grade.

9 Thank you.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
12 Lisette Moniz [phonetic].

13 [Applause]

14 MS. LISETTE MONIZ: Good evening, everyone.
15 My name is Lisette Moniz. And my daughter, Lila
16 Moniz, is in the first grade in HR. I'm here
17 tonight to talk a little bit about why I chose
18 Success. We were the victims of the preschool
19 dilemma back before it was popular to have
20 preschool available. We did not get into a
21 preschool. When it came time for kindergarten,
22 we had several options. We had the new school,
23 we had PS58, we had GNT options. And we visited
24 all of them and I was most impressed by Success.
25 It just blew the other programs out of the

1 water.

2 And since we've been here, my daughter,
3 Lila, has excelled tremendously in math, in
4 reading. And even in her discipline, which is—
5 was the most challenging thing for us, I wasn't
6 sure how she could handle the discipline here.
7 She was always the kid who couldn't sit still in
8 circle time. And somehow she has managed to
9 control herself here at Success. This morning
10 on the way to school, she was asking me to give
11 her number story problems. And I realized today
12 it wasn't just the number stories, that she was
13 asking me for algebra. She said Mommy, ask me
14 what is seven plus X equals 23, and then I have
15 to figure out what X is. You know, that's just
16 so impressive to me because I didn't learn that
17 until high school.

18 The other thing I want to talk about is
19 about her self-esteem, about how when she comes
20 home and she says Mommy, guess what, I shared in
21 class today and how valuable that is for her and
22 for her classmates to see other students solving
23 problems in different ways.

24 Finally, I just want to talk about the
25 demand for Success. One of the things I

1 actually feel about Success now is I feel a
2 little guilty. And the reason I feel guilty is
3 because I see so many people in my community who
4 have children the same age or around the same
5 age as my daughter who don't have the same
6 option and who would like to come to a school
7 like Success.

8 I mean, the numbers say it all. The number
9 of applicants for the number of seats in Success
10 is astronomical. Every student deserves this
11 opportunity. We need to expand Success to the
12 fifth grade here and we need to expand the
13 network to give every New York City child this
14 opportunity.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
17 Rosemary Bright [phonetic].

18 [Applause]

19 MS. ROSEMARY BRIGHT: Good evening. We had
20 a speech prepared, but I'm just going to speak
21 from my heart.

22 I am a very proud New York City public high
23 school teacher for the past 13 years. I love my
24 school - - Manhattan. I love it so much. There
25 is about 3,000 students in my school and there

1 are seven different student schools in my
2 building. When my son, Thomas, was four, no,
3 actually three, he was 3-years old, I brought
4 him into the little preschool that was in the
5 building. And - - crazy, there were high school
6 kids there. How can you do that? Don't you
7 feel like scared? I'm like scared? I love
8 those kids in that school. I had a great
9 experience, he had a great experience. He was
10 lucky to be with me in that building for two
11 years. And we were not sure what we were going
12 to do about elementary school.

13 And Richard, I really how him a huge amount
14 of gratitude. Richard filled out an application
15 for Success Academy. I never knew what it was.
16 I saw like a poster somewhere I think in the
17 subway station. I don't even know. And I was
18 like what do you mean, we got into Success
19 Academy? And I knew the schools here were good
20 schools within the neighborhood. I knew that
21 Global Studies and International Studies were
22 very good schools and I knew that - - had been
23 in this building - - very impressive.

24 And I guess what I wanted to say is that I
25 really love this school and I really hope that

1 everyone does give us the opportunity to have
2 fifth grade here and that you continue to be so
3 peacefully coexisting because it's really
4 impressive - - building.

5 Thank you so much for your time. Thank you
6 so much.

7 [Applause]

8 MS. WATTS: Our next speaker is Edda - -
9 Messner [phonetic].

10 [Applause]

11 MS. EDDA MESSNER: Thank you so much. My
12 name is Edda [phonetic] and I am the mother of
13 Olive Messner over there. She was the second
14 scholar who spoke tonight.

15 I want to say how positively surprised I am
16 because - - to be really in harmony here. I
17 wasn't aware like there were four different
18 schools in this building. I only knew that
19 there was one other one than Success. And now I
20 know, I'm even more impressed. And thank you so
21 much for supporting the proposed plan.

22 And I just want to say everyone saw the
23 scholars here. And it's hard for me to speak to
24 all of you guys here. And all of them came and
25 spoke for themselves. That's the confidence

1 they get at this school. And that's the
2 knowledge, that's the courage, that's the
3 greatness they get at this school.

4 So everyone deserves a good education, I
5 agree, but I'm hoping that, you know, this gets
6 given the chance to continue being the bravest
7 kids in the block.

8 Thank you.

9 [Applause]

10 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
11 Roshanna [phonetic] Bennett.

12 [Applause]

13 MS. WATTS: All right, our next speaker is
14 Alisa Anders.

15 [Applause]

16 MS. ALISA ANDERS: Hi. My name is Alisa
17 Anders. And my son is Antonio Anders, second
18 grade, LIU.

19 [Applause]

20 MS. ANDERS: I was going to say—I had a long
21 speech here, but you know what? After everybody
22 else's comments, I'm just going to bring it down
23 by basics here.

24 I'm a founding member of Success Academy
25 Cobble Hill. This really didn't exist, so I had

1 to make a decision of where my son was going
2 to go.

3 I took a leap of faith. And I had
4 trepidation. There was a lot of negative stuff
5 being said about the school. And I had worries.
6 And by God, am I glad I took that leap because I
7 took a leap right into something magical.

8 Everything everybody is speaking about here
9 tonight is our experience with this school, too.
10 I have never seen anything that is so 100%
11 focused on the wellbeing of our children and the
12 learning and education of our children. That's
13 from the very top starting with our principal,
14 Kerri Tabarcea, every staff member that works in
15 this school, every teacher that works in this
16 school, my God, the bulletin boards down to the
17 very tiles, everything, 100% focused on the
18 wellbeing of our children.

19 And I don't want to say anything about other
20 schools. There's a formula that's working
21 that's magical in this building. Other schools
22 have formulas that are working, that are
23 magical. Some schools do not. We all know
24 that. That's a reality we're all facing in this
25 city.

1 So my bottom line is this. If there's
2 space, it sounds like there's space, and
3 something great is happening and something is
4 working, why would anyone want to get in the way
5 of letting that something continue to work and
6 grow. And that's what we're faced here - -
7 beyond that.

8 I am - - to see the principals of these
9 schools standing up here and saying we welcome,
10 we welcome the expansion of this school because
11 we worry. We don't want to push other kids out.
12 We don't want to do anything that we hear in the
13 press or anywhere else.

14 My time is up, so I'm going to stop, but I
15 support this and I'm so happy you guys support
16 us, too.

17 [Applause]

18 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
19 - -

20 [Applause]

21 MR. KEITH WOOD: Thank you. It's tough to
22 follow Alisa, but I, too - - my name is Keith
23 Wood [phonetic]. I'm the father of three
24 daughters. And I'd like to thank the audience
25 here because this is a far different experience

1 than in 2011, which was actually terrifying, a
2 lot of people yelling at you, a lot of emotions
3 involved.

4 But I think I-it's important, this
5 expansion, mostly because I think it's a
6 natural-K-through-five is a natural progression.
7 And if you take away for that fifth grade, it's
8 a very awkward thing to do. And I wouldn't want
9 to do that to this lovely girl over here in the
10 tenth grade. I wouldn't want to take away 11th
11 grade and 12th grade from her. So I think it's
12 kind of a good progression for the students to
13 continue and not look for another location.

14 There's been a couple of concerns about
15 safety. That was always on my list of things as
16 well when coming into a co-located school. But
17 I've kind of grown used to it because it's-I
18 equate it to being just like coming home from
19 school and then walking out of-down the street
20 to a restaurant. They are going to encounter
21 teenagers. It's just natural - - I can't
22 shelter them from teenagers their entire life.
23 So and just-I'm going to trust that the
24 educators and parents will keep them safe.

25 So that's it. Thank you.

1 [Applause]

2 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
3 Monique Ayote Halls [phonetic].

4 [Applause]

5 MS. MONIQUE AYOTE HALLS: Good evening.
6 Thank you for having us and for staying engaged
7 and listening.

8 I feel so strongly about this that when my
9 husband called today and said his flight was
10 delayed, I had to get my father-in-law to come
11 down from Yonkers to take care of my kids so I
12 could be here, so appreciate very much the
13 chance to be heard.

14 You know, I just want to say one thing,
15 which is that I think sometimes it can seem like
16 we only care about our kids, meaning our kids in
17 this building—excuse me—have success. And
18 personally I obviously care very deeply about my
19 own child, who is a kindergarten here and who I
20 want to be able to continue at Success.

21 But I do also care about the education of
22 all kids in our city. And I think there's a
23 false choice about this space issue as though
24 somehow if it weren't for our kids in this
25 building that we someone our kids would

1 disappear from District 15. If we have an
2 issue with space in District 15 across the
3 board, then we've got to—I don't understand the
4 sort of fighting—one school fighting another
5 school about that. We should be asking the city
6 for adequate space for excellent schools for all
7 of our kids.

8 [Applause]

9 MS. HALLS: It is really easy for it to turn
10 into something else. And when you take a
11 broader view and ask what is it going to take to
12 do that, that's the thing I care most about. It
13 is not just two more classrooms and X number of
14 children in each, you know, the ratio of
15 teachers to kids. It is excellence in schools
16 period and how can we increase the number of
17 quality classrooms across the board.

18 And so if we want to take up space issues,
19 I'm all for taking up space issues, but not in
20 order—not sacrificing one school for another,
21 but to say we are—we need - -

22 [Applause]

23 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
24 Jeannette Osalic [phonetic].

25 Our next speaker is Beatrice Escobar.

1 [Applause]

2 MS. BEATRICE ESCOBAR: Hello everyone. My
3 name is Beatrice Escobar. And my son, Elias, is
4 in kindergarten.

5 When he started kindergarten, he did not
6 know how to write his name. So I got a call the
7 first week saying he can't write his name. And
8 I said oh, yeah, he can't do numbers either.
9 And we're okay with that. And the teacher said
10 well, he will need to learn how to write his
11 name because he's going to write it a lot. And
12 two weeks later he was writing his name,
13 numbers, and reading beautifully. We went - -
14 from A to a D in four weeks - -

15 [Applause, cheering]

16 MS. ESCOBAR: What is most impressive about
17 Success Academy Cobble Hill is the diversity.
18 And also this real interest, everybody is
19 completely committed to your child's education
20 in a way that I could never imagine.

21 And when I was in high school, my principal
22 stopped me in the hall and said what are you
23 doing here because I was there after hours. I
24 had just won the physics medal and we were now
25 competing in the Science Olympiad at the state

1 level. My principal didn't know who I was. I
2 graduated fifth in high school. My principal
3 didn't know.

4 Two weeks into school Elias got stung by a
5 bee. Ms. Tabarcea said Elias, I'm sorry to hear
6 that you got stung by a bee and on your birthday
7 no less. But this is the community that these
8 students are in.

9 When I got to college—I did very well in
10 high school. But when I got to college, I
11 didn't do all that well. I almost got kicked
12 out of college because I was competing now in
13 the global world with people who went to
14 boarding school and private schools and amazing
15 schools.

16 And what's amazing about Success Academy is—
17 in Cobble Hill is not just that they're going to
18 go to college. They're going to succeed in
19 college. They're going to excel at college
20 because they have all of the foundation that's
21 necessary. And someday these kids are going to
22 be applying to medical school and law school and
23 they will thrive. And it all starts from
24 kindergarten, so thank you very much.

25 [Applause]

1 MS. WATTS: Our next speaker is Juditha
2 Cooper [phonetic].

3 [Applause]

4 MS. COOPER: Thank you. Hi. I'm - - Cooper
5 and this is my son, Bobby Cooper. He's in the
6 third grade here and happy to be here. And I
7 was even saying I was starting to get nervous.
8 And I was like we can go, you know? And he was
9 like no, we're not going. We're staying.

10 So I just want to say I'm really grateful
11 for this school. I didn't expect to like this
12 school nearly as much as I do honestly. When we
13 first applied, I was just applying everywhere
14 because we had a pretty bad experience in our
15 zone school for pre-K, so I - -

16 So anyway, it's been amazing. It's really a
17 special school. And he's thriving. And as you
18 can tell, it's not just him. All of the
19 children here really are just thriving and
20 excelling and they support each other in a
21 really beautiful way. And I think that's why I
22 want the expansion. I want to continue here.
23 And I want not just for my son, but for all kids
24 and all parents that want a great school for
25 their children.

1 So that's it. Thank you.

2 [Applause]

3 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
4 Serge Acupolk [phonetic].

5 [Applause]

6 MR. SERGE ACUPOLK: Good evening. I
7 actually wrote the big document here, but I'm
8 not actually going to go through all of this.

9 My name is Serge. And my daughter, Ava, is
10 finishing up kindergarten at Success Academy. I
11 just want to say a couple of things, really, a
12 few—a couple of things about Success.

13 Success is not an easy school when one—when
14 the parent can be laid back. Success is both
15 nurturing and challenging, not only for kids,
16 but also for parents, because it requires time
17 and effort after an already busy day to sit down
18 with your kids and help them through their daily
19 homework. You have to read through them. You
20 have to read them. You have to hear them read.
21 And you have to challenge them with material for
22 the upcoming classes.

23 Now I think this is very unique. In this
24 school, even parents get unhappy faces - - back
25 on your kid's homework, right.

1 A couple of things that make Success
2 unique is the fact that teachers call you not
3 only when your kids misbehave, but also when
4 your kid's like excelling, okay. This is not
5 something that I've heard when I was in high
6 school. My teachers certainly never called my
7 mother.

8 In this school, the principal is standing
9 outside every single day and is greeting every
10 single kid by their first name. Who can say the
11 same thing about a public school?

12 Thank you.

13 [Applause]

14 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
15 Sarah Pharoah [phonetic] - -

16 Okay, Shawana House [phonetic].

17 [Applause]

18 MS. SHAWANA HOUSE: Good evening. My name
19 is Shawana House Mascalla [phonetic] - - my
20 experience with the Success Academy has been a
21 wonderful experience. I started off with public
22 schools. And I was told by a teacher that she
23 would have a learning disability, but there was
24 nothing else given. She didn't offer any kind
25 of oh, we'll let you do tutoring or let me do

1 extra work. She would—when she was in pre-K,
2 her teacher would say well, the - - I offered
3 five separate times give me the work. I will
4 copy it for you. Never once did she give me the
5 work to copy. I have been late maybe two to
6 three times. This - - offer every morning at
7 4:00 I get up and make a call, every morning, so
8 my daughter won't be at school. Yes, it's
9 challenging for me to get up early in the
10 morning to bring her here by 7:15, but it's
11 worth it because she had an issue with learning.
12 And I saw that issue that she had with learning.
13 And I contacted Success and I said I want her to
14 be tested. It was tested that she did have a
15 learning disability. She's in IAP [phonetic]
16 school. She's doing great. She's doing better
17 this year than she did last year. And she had
18 to repeat a year. But I was glad that she did
19 that first grade year over because now she's
20 prepared because I work for Columbia University
21 and it's a lot of adversity, it's a lot of
22 diversity, it's a lot of struggle, it's a lot of
23 strategy, and it's a lot—it's not a lot of
24 community. Here's it's community. The parents
25 get together. We even go out. We have parties.

1 We entertain. The teachers are there to
2 support, the principal is there - - all of the
3 parents are there - - I bless and I pray that
4 God would have room for each and every one of
5 us.

6 And it was also mentioned about the - -
7 being scared. You learn, you know better, you
8 teach better. You are always in a place where
9 you can teach. The older ones always teach.
10 I'm a parent who don't only speak. I live by
11 example.

12 Thank you.

13 [Applause]

14 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
15 Edward Foster.

16 [Applause]

17 MR. EDWARD FOSTER: Thank you. Good
18 evening, everybody. I was just about to leave,
19 but I'm glad I didn't. Bless - - Success
20 Academy, that's what that means. Growing
21 together requires sacrifice - - is an
22 adjustment, not fear, not envy or jealousy.

23 I wish Success Academy will go all the way
24 to college, but for now, I will take the fifth
25 grade expansion - - Success Academy is doing is

1 preparing our children at a low—at a small age
2 to take them all the way to college. But I wish
3 it was all the way to college.

4 I have two children in the school right now.
5 I'm very proud of them, but most of all I'm also
6 proud of the teacher being a parent when we're
7 not around - - structured a politeness that they
8 respect and I believe that there's room for
9 everybody. There shouldn't be, you know,
10 because Success Academy is growing and being
11 blessed and expanding, nobody should feel any
12 way because it's making room for all of the
13 people who desire to come in. And so I'm proud
14 of Success Academy and I'm proud of the rest of
15 the school that is here. But I believe that we
16 can share and exist together with another school
17 expanding in such as Success Academy.

18 [Applause]

19 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
20 Melissa Griffin.

21 [Applause]

22 MS. MELISSA GRIFFIN: Good evening - -
23 Melissa and I'm glad everybody that stayed
24 stayed. My daughter spoke earlier. I'm going
25 to be very blunt. I don't know whose decision

1 it was to have four schools in this building.
2 Once upon a time way back I came here as a
3 junior high school student when it was only a
4 junior high school.

5 I have to be honest and say I'm disappointed
6 that there are four schools like another parent
7 said she was unaware that it was that many
8 different schools in this one building. I was
9 aware of three. I was surprised to hear there
10 was actually four, okay.

11 I'm very disappointed by that. I'm very
12 disappointed. I'm proud, I'm happy, I'm
13 ecstatic to hear that Success is doing so well,
14 but, yeah, you can - - but common sense I would
15 feel if you're growing or needing to grow that
16 much and you're being so successful, you need to
17 have a space all of your own so you can continue
18 to flourish and grow and become more beautiful
19 than you have already become.

20 There was a lot of positive things said. It
21 seems like my high school student is the only
22 one here. I'm very disappointed about that,
23 but, okay, that's something to the side.

24 But I'm going to try to quickly say some
25 truthful things that I've heard from her. When

1 she first came here, she was not excited about
2 coming here. It was, you know, small, didn't
3 know very much about Global or International.

4 But she tells me every day, every other day,
5 about the fight for space. There's a new dance
6 room that they got for the dance students. And
7 she tells me about them fighting for gym space
8 and, you know, the dance room and they're—now
9 one spoke about that tonight. I don't know if
10 it's because it wasn't any high school, junior
11 high school students here, but whatever.

12 That's a little bit that we all have to
13 consider, like another parent has said. We
14 shouldn't be fighting each other for this space.
15 We should be going to Board of Ed and saying
16 hey, what's going on? Success is doing so
17 awesome. We need a space of our own instead of
18 trying to fight to take space from the other
19 three schools that are in here, okay?

20 I'm going to leave it at that. It's late.
21 Thank you, everyone, for coming out here.

22 [Applause]

23 MS. WATTS: Thank you. Our next speaker is
24 Ellen Levine.

25 [Applause]

1 MS. ELLEN LEVINE: Thank you. Hi. I am
2 the parent of an incoming International Studies
3 sixth grader. There's also another group of
4 parents in the same position as I am right back
5 there. I know I speak for them as well.

6 We're excited, very excited. I don't think
7 you've heard much of this this evening, about
8 the prospect of a small, high-quality,
9 academically-demanding middle school in this
10 district. There aren't enough of those and I
11 think we're all going through this decision
12 point that I think many people in this audience
13 haven't faced yet. International is going to
14 have an IB, an international baccalaureate
15 program, that's incredibly exciting, a dual
16 language French program, and more.

17 We need that in this district. I think
18 every parent here knows how important that is.
19 It's critical that International has the space
20 and like everyone else and the resources to do
21 this for our district.

22 My understanding is that this plan as
23 written does do that and maintains the amount of
24 space that the middle school needs. And I'm
25 hoping that the panel will approve this plan,

1 but also maintain the space for the future. I
2 was a little surprised to hear this discussion
3 about competition for space and I hope that
4 doesn't need to happen and I think it's really
5 important that the panel make sure that the
6 future maintains the plan as it is now and
7 doesn't impinge on anybody's ability to have
8 those resources for their children at all ages.

9 Thank you.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. WATTS: Our next speaker is Jim - -

12 [Applause]

13 MR. JIM DEBORG: Hi. I'm Jim DeBorg
14 [phonetic], past president of the Community
15 Education Council for District 15.

16 And even though I'm not—have not been - -
17 wearing an orange t-shirt, I rise in qualified
18 support of the co-location, of the extension
19 rather of Success Academy from a K-to-four to K-
20 to-five.

21 I do that in part because that configuration
22 easily affords an opportunity for Success
23 Academy children, graduates, to go to middle
24 school in much the same way as all other
25 children in District 15 schools. I think

1 there's a need for that right now and I think
2 it makes sense not to create different
3 articulations once between charter schools and
4 public schools.

5 [Applause]

6 MR. DEBORG: That's probably the only point
7 that I would make that will get applause from
8 the orange shirts in the audience.

9 [Laughter]

10 MR. DEBORG: It's still the truth. It's
11 worth noting that the underutilization in
12 question is due to the deliberate machinations
13 of former Deputy Chancellor Mark Sternberg - -
14 mightily in pursuit in the original co-location
15 and - - transforming a school originally
16 chartered to educate at-need school children
17 into one that clearly prefers serving middle
18 class school children in Brownstone Brooklyn.

19 Even worse, that same deputy chancellor - -
20 to sabotage those - - in an essentially
21 unsuccessful endeavor to mandate the mass firing
22 of at least 50% of the teaching staff on that
23 school.

24 Thus while his scheme was ultimately foiled
25 by an arbitrator, who was upheld by the courts,

1 Sternberg's dedication to loudly and
2 publically disparaging Global Studies did result
3 in the drying up of virtually any applications
4 to Global Studies and the resulting massive
5 shrinkage of that school to the ultimate and - -
6 predictable advantage of Success Academy. It
7 also, by the way, cost the city of \$20 million
8 in lost - -

9 Look - - continue to speaking - - near the
10 end of my - - people, don't kid yourself that
11 somehow you this that Success Academy didn't go
12 out of its way to rise at the expense of other
13 children in this school. It did. Unfortunately
14 that reality has occurred and is not likely to
15 be changed.

16 But that matters. And usually giving some
17 thought to that as I heard - - by the way,
18 apparently some people are under the
19 misapprehension that this is a-going into a
20 middle school configuration. I mean, District
21 15 is in every public elementary-or public
22 school in Brooklyn, middle school starts in
23 sixth grade, not in fifth grade.

24 So as I've said, I-again, I am all for K-to-
25 five because that continues the elementary

1 school. But one other issue I do want to
2 raise and this is an important one. This was
3 mentioned parenthetically in the announcement is
4 the preschool, is the prekindergarten.

5 Again, even though that--there's nothing that
6 says that that had to be administered by the
7 Success Academy, and, in fact - - proposals
8 created an independently-administrated pre-K
9 four years ago before she was chancellor.

10 MALE VOICE: I think a point of order is, I
11 mean, because we all - -

12 MR. DEBORG: - - I don't know. You got up.
13 The point of order, sir, is that you
14 participated in the engagement of child abuse,
15 of having a bunch of children come up here and
16 speak who didn't even really know what they were
17 speaking about.

18 MALE VOICE: - -

19 MR. DEBORG: One person couldn't--I haven't
20 insulted you, sir. You really don't know--

21 [Audience participation]

22 MR. DEBORG: All right. All I'm saying at
23 this point--

24 [Audience participation]

25 MR. DEBORG: No, they didn't limit

1 themselves to two minutes.

2 [Audience participation]

3 [Crosstalk]

4 MR. DEBORG: My time is being extended by
5 your interruptions, sir. Keep going.

6 MALE VOICE: You exceeded the limit - - and
7 you continue to do so - -

8 MR. DEBORG: I am 31 on the list. Does that
9 include the fact that parents and children each
10 got two minutes? Was that inappropriate? Was
11 that appropriate? Or unless the children were
12 disagreeing with the parents - -

13 MALE VOICE: - -

14 MR. DEBORG: [Interposing] But let's go back
15 to what I'm saying. The point is-

16 MALE VOICE: - - the limit.

17 [Crosstalk]

18 MR. DEBORG: All right. I won't even speak
19 until you let me finish what I have to say, sir.
20 Let me finish what I have to say, sir. Do you
21 really want to make everybody here impatient by
22 them seeing me yelling?

23 MALE VOICE: - - if there are no additional
24 limits, it doesn't seem fair that he should have
25 additional time.

1 MR. DEBORG: - - talk for one more minute,
2 sir, but if you-

3 [Audience participation]

4 MR. DEBORG: One moment, thank you.

5 The point as I've been trying to make is
6 that the prekindergarten should be administered
7 entirely separately from the K-to-five school.
8 That means that there should be no special
9 preference given to those children who have been
10 to the prekindergarten who-going into Cobble
11 Hill Success Academy - - backdoor mechanism to
12 turn that into-and turn Success Academy into a
13 Brownstone Brooklyn public school. And many of
14 you parents should be equally concerned about
15 that. The - - District 15 parents by law under
16 the Charter School Act.

17 If you folks don't think that the intention
18 of Eva Moskowitz is to keep the folks who are
19 outside of this district from overwhelming that-
20 this school, you have another guess coming and
21 you haven't read what she's written.

22 Thank you.

23 [Applause]

24 MS. WATTS: Thank you. The speaker list is
25 now exhausted. Again, we welcome any comments

1 and feedback prior to 24 hours before the
2 Panel for Educational Policy votes on this
3 proposal at its meeting Wednesday, June 10th.

4 The email address and phone number where
5 comments may be made are
6 d15proposals@schools.nyc.gov and (212) 374-0208.

7 Thank you for your participation. This
8 joint public hearing is now closed.

9 [Applause]

10 [END RECORDING]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

1
2 The prior proceedings were transcribed from
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11 Date June 4, 2015
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