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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF  
PORTFOLIO PLANNING  
Newtown High School - 04/17/12**

1 [START RECORDING 290\_279.MP3]

2 MR. JESSE MOJICA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Good  
3 evening ladies and gentlemen. Good evening  
4 ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much. Good  
5 evening ladies and gentlemen. My name is Jesse  
6 Mojica and I'm the Executive Director of the  
7 Division of Family of Community Engagement and  
8 I'll be presiding over today's hearing, joint  
9 public hearing. We'll be joined momentarily by  
10 our Deputy Chancellor David Weiner. Once again  
11 my name is Jesse Mojica, Executive Director of  
12 the Division of Family and Community Engagement.  
13 Also a member of the Chancellor's cabinet and I  
14 will be facilitating over this hearing and we  
15 will be joined momentarily by our Deputy  
16 Chancellor David Weiner.

17 This is a joint public hearing of the  
18 Department of Education, Community Education  
19 Council and School Leadership Team to discuss  
20 the proposed closure of Newtown High School,  
21 24Q- 24Q455. An existing district high school  
22 in building Q455, located at 48-01 90<sup>th</sup> Street,  
23 Queens, NY 11373, within the geographical  
24 confines of Community School District 24. It  
25 currently serves students in grades nine through

1 twelve. The DOE is proposing to immediately  
2 replace Newtown High School with New School  
3 24Q366, a new district high school which will  
4 serve students in grades nine through twelve in  
5 building Q455.

6       Tonight's proceedings will be recorded and  
7 transcribed. Before we begin the hearing we ask  
8 anyone who wishes to speak during the public  
9 comment portion of the evening to sign up at the  
10 table in the back, sign up will end at 6:15 p.m.  
11 If you have a question ladies and gentlemen that  
12 you want to be addressed during the Q&A portion  
13 of tonight's agenda please write that question  
14 on the index cards provided on the back and  
15 submit them to a volunteer by the tables. So  
16 the tables are in the back ladies and gentlemen,  
17 if you have a question there are cards in the  
18 back that you could submit your questions to the  
19 volunteers in the back. Only people who have  
20 signed up to speak will be able to participate  
21 in the public comment period. All panel  
22 participants were asked to be here no later than  
23 5:30 p.m. Now that we have started if a panel  
24 participant arrives late he or she will be given  
25 the time to speak at the first opportune moment.

1 We want to be respectful of everyone's time.  
2 There may be elected officials who arrive at  
3 different times throughout the evening, if they  
4 wish to speak we will do our best to accommodate  
5 them at the first opportune moment. Those who  
6 are here at the start of the public comment  
7 section will be asked to speak first. Tonight's  
8 agenda format will include a presentation of the  
9 proposal and presentations by hearing  
10 participants followed by public comment.  
11 Speakers should have already signed up, as I  
12 said before, at the sign up table in the lobby.  
13 Public comments can be no longer than two  
14 minutes each, the time will be strictly followed  
15 and speakers will be informed when their  
16 designated time has ended. I understand that  
17 there are many people who have signed up to  
18 speak and we want to be respectful of everyone's  
19 times. There will be a question and answer  
20 period as I said before, ladies and gentlemen  
21 once again if you have questions there are cards  
22 in the back, you would submit those questions to  
23 our volunteers so that they can be answered  
24 during the Q&A period. Members of the audience  
25 if you have a question--

1           MALE VOICE 1: [Interposing] I have a  
2 question, how can you conduct this meeting  
3 without the representative from the Chancellor's  
4 office? [Crowd applauds] How is it possible  
5 that the DOE is considering closing this school  
6 and yet you don't have the courtesy of sending  
7 and you don't have the courtesy of sending the  
8 person who will be making the decision or who  
9 will be part of the decision making process here  
10 on time. How is that possible?

11           MR. MOJICA: Sir I'll respond to that, I'll  
12 respond to that. If- I'll respond to that, once  
13 again our Deputy Chancellor- sir, ladies and  
14 gentlemen I want to be really--

15           MALE VOICE 1: [Interposing] I'm trying to  
16 pay attention but you know, he's trying to pull.

17           MR. MOJICA: Ladies and gentlemen I  
18 understand the passion in this room. I want to  
19 be respectful of everyone's time and that we  
20 have quite a lot of speakers signed up to speak.  
21 Deputy Chancellor David Weiner will be here this  
22 evening. I am a member of the cabinet- of the  
23 Chancellor's cabinet. No ma'am he does not vote  
24 at the PEP, only the members of the Panel for  
25 Educational Policy vote at the PEP. So what

1 we're going to--

2 FEMALE VOICE 1: [Interposing] Panel for  
3 Educational Policy is the PEP and he's a voting  
4 member.

5 MR. MOJICA: No David Weiner is not a voting  
6 member. Ladies and gentlemen, please please. I  
7 understand, ladies and gentlemen, I understand,  
8 what we are trying to do- David Weiner, once  
9 again ladies and gentlemen, our Deputy  
10 Chancellor- please please. Ladies and gentlemen  
11 I'm really am trying to get to the public  
12 comment portion because I know that many of you  
13 here, you know, have your opinions that you want  
14 to be voiced today. What I'm saying very  
15 clearly is that our Deputy Chancellor will be  
16 here this evening to answer the gentleman's  
17 question. And I- and once again, ladies and  
18 gentlemen please, and once again I started by  
19 introducing myself. I sit on the Chancellor's  
20 cabinet, my name is Jesse Mojica and I am the  
21 Executive Director of the Division of Family of  
22 Community Engagement.

23 Tonight's agenda format will include a  
24 presentation of the proposal and presentation by  
25 hearing participants followed by public comment.

1 Speakers should have already signed up at the  
2 sign in table in the lobby. Please ladies and  
3 gentlemen. Public comments can be no longer  
4 than two minutes each. The time will be  
5 strictly followed and speakers will be informed  
6 when their designated time has ended. Please  
7 ladies and gentlemen. There will be a question  
8 and answer period. At the end of the hearing if  
9 you still have questions we encourage you to  
10 direct them to us by calling the number (212)  
11 374-7621 or sending them to us via email at  
12 District 24, D24Proposals@schools.nyc.gov.  
13 [Crowd chants] Ladies and gentlemen, ladies and  
14 gentlemen. What we will do- give me a moment,  
15 ladies and gentlemen, I will answer that- I will  
16 answer it, ladies and gentlemen if you give me a  
17 moment. All right Deputy- ladies and gentlemen  
18 please if I can have the opportunity to speak,  
19 please. Please ladies and gentlemen if I can  
20 have the opportunity to speak. Our Deputy  
21 Chancellor will be here within 20 minutes. We  
22 can- ladies and gentlemen we have the option  
23 that we can proceed with portions of the hearing  
24 or we can wait until our Deputy Chancellor  
25 arrives. So what we will do, ladies and

1 gentlemen to respect- to respect the request of  
2 all attending what we do ladies and gentlemen,  
3 we will wait the 20 minutes. [Crowd Applauses]

4 FEMALE VOICE 2: [foreign audio]

5 FEMALE VOICE 3: [foreign audio]

6 MR. MOJICA: Ladies and gentlemen many  
7 thanks for your patience really appreciate it.  
8 Thank you very much for your patience, we have  
9 been joined by our Deputy Chancellor and we will  
10 start the joint public hearing. Good evening  
11 everyone, as I said, my name is Jesse Mojica,  
12 Executive Director of the Division of Family of  
13 Community Engagement. And I will be the  
14 facilitator for tonight's joint public hearing.

15 This is a joint public hearing of the  
16 Department of Education, Community Education  
17 Council and School Leadership Team to discuss  
18 the proposed closure of Newtown High School,  
19 24Q455. An existing district high school in  
20 building Q455, located at 48-01 90<sup>th</sup> Street,  
21 Queens, NY 11373, within the geographical  
22 confines of Community School District 24. It  
23 currently serves students in grades nine through  
24 twelve. The DOE is proposing to immediately  
25 replace Newtown High School with New School

1 24Q366. [Crowd chanting] Tonight's  
2 proceedings- please ladies and gentlemen.  
3 Ladies and gentlemen please, I understand we  
4 want to get to the public comment portion so  
5 that everyone has an opportunity ladies and  
6 gentlemen to state their concerns. Tonight's  
7 proceedings will be recorded and transcribed.  
8 Before we begin the hearing we ask anyone who  
9 wishes to speak during the public comment  
10 portion of the evening to sign up at the table  
11 in the back. If you have a question that you  
12 want to be addressed during the Q&A portion of  
13 the agenda please write that question on index  
14 cards located in the back and submit them to a  
15 volunteer. Only people who have signed up  
16 during the- only people who have signed up  
17 during the public comment portion by 6:15 p.m.,  
18 who have signed up in the back will be allowed  
19 to speak during the public comment portion. All  
20 panel participants were asked to be here no  
21 later than 5:30 p.m., now that we have started  
22 if a panel participant arrives late, he or she  
23 will be given the time to speak at the first  
24 opportune moment, we want to be respectful of  
25 everyone's time. There may be elected officials

1 who arrive at different times throughout the  
2 evening, if they wish to speak we will do our  
3 best to accommodate them at the first opportune  
4 moment. Those who are here at the start of the  
5 public comment section will be asked to speak  
6 first.

7         Tonight's agenda format will include a  
8 presentation of the proposal and presentations  
9 by hearing participants followed by public  
10 comment. Speakers should have already signed up  
11 at the sign up table in the lobby. Public  
12 comments can be no longer than two minutes each,  
13 the time will be strictly followed and speakers  
14 will be informed when their designated time has  
15 ended. There will be a question and answer  
16 period. Members of the audience if you had a  
17 question, as I stated before, each of you had to  
18 write that question on a postcard that was  
19 supplied at the sign in table when you arrived  
20 this evening and hand that to one of the  
21 volunteers. While the public comments are  
22 taking place staff members will organize the  
23 questions into categories and get them ready to  
24 be answered. Some questions will be asked  
25 directly and others will be batched under

1 headings in order to avoid repetitiveness.  
2 Even though all individual questions will not be  
3 addressed in the forum tonight, the answers will  
4 be on the website prior to the panel meeting.  
5 If at the end of the hearing you still have  
6 questions we encourage you to direct them to us  
7 by calling the number (212) 374-7621, I'll  
8 repeat that (212) 374-7621 or sending them to us  
9 via email at D24Proposals@schools.nyc.gov that's  
10 D24Proposals@schools.nyc.gov.

11 I would like now to introduce the panel  
12 which has been assembled for this evening's  
13 joint public hearing. On the panel we have our  
14 Deputy Chancellor David Weiner, Principal John  
15 Ficalora [Crowd Applauses]. Members of the  
16 School Leaderships Team, Jessica McDermott,  
17 Shirley Lopez. Members of our Community  
18 Education Council 24, Mr. Peter Vercessi and Mr.  
19 Lamgen Leon. I will now turn the program over  
20 to Deputy Chancellor David Weiner who will  
21 present the proposal.

22 MR. DAVID WEINER, DEPUTY CHANCELLOR: Thank  
23 you Jesse and thank you everyone for coming.  
24 This is obviously a very important and emotional  
25 issue. I apologize for being so late, I was

1 stuck in traffic, so I'm really thankful that  
2 everyone was able to stay and does have time for  
3 your public comment here.

4 This joint public hearing is convened to  
5 discuss the proposed closure and replacement at  
6 Newtown High School. Newtown is located at 48-  
7 01 90th Street, in Community School District 24  
8 in Queens. It serves students in grades nine  
9 through twelve.

10 On March 5, 2012, The New York City  
11 Department of Education published a proposal to  
12 close Newtown and open a New School 24Q366. By  
13 closing Newtown and replacing it with a new  
14 school we are seeking to rapidly create a school  
15 environment that will prepare students for  
16 college, work and life. The new school will  
17 build on the strongest elements of Newtown and  
18 it will incorporate new elements in order to  
19 create a rigorous culture for teaching and  
20 learning. Students will have access to the  
21 higher quality educational option or they attend  
22 this school in this very building. We believe  
23 this process will ensure that all students are  
24 set on a pathway to accomplishment.  
25 Additionally in conjunction with this proposal

1 as a way to support additional school  
2 improvement, the DOE submitted a SIG application  
3 to the State Department of Education to  
4 implement the turnaround model. If approved  
5 this would make the new school eligible for up  
6 to \$1.8 million dollars in additional federal  
7 funding.

8 I want to acknowledge that the students and  
9 families who fell that your son or daughter is  
10 being well served by Newtown right now, tonight  
11 we will hear success stories about what is  
12 happening at Newtown, there are many success  
13 stories. There are many success stories and we  
14 honor those, but we also need you to consider  
15 the many students who started at this school  
16 with your children in ninth grade and have not  
17 experienced the same success. These children  
18 also deserve success in their educational  
19 careers. Despite a number of challenges that  
20 this school has faced, some data indicates that  
21 the elements of Newtown are worth preserving in  
22 a new school. For example while graduation rate  
23 at Newtown remains low, there has been an  
24 increase in the past few years. In 2008 the  
25 school graduation rate was at 52%, it has risen

1 to 62% in 2011. The DOE believes that new  
2 programs and a push to improve teacher quality  
3 the new school can expand its recent  
4 improvements and student outcomes.  
5 Additionally, as many of you are aware, Newtown  
6 High School recently won the Regional Division  
7 of the U.S. First Robotics Competition. We  
8 congratulate the members of those teams and we  
9 expect that the new school will strengthen and  
10 maintain this program. However Newtown's  
11 performance data overall and the fact that pace  
12 of change places Newtown in New York City's  
13 persistently lowest achieving schools, it  
14 suggests that Newtown should be closed and  
15 replaced with a new school with new programs and  
16 additional supplements. Graduation rates have  
17 been consistently low for several years,  
18 although graduation rates have risen to 62% it  
19 still places Newtown in the bottom 1/3 of high  
20 schools citywide. If regent's diplomas were  
21 counted alone towards graduation as they will at  
22 the end of this year unfortunately the  
23 graduation rate for Newtown drops to 48%. The  
24 progress report measures the progress and  
25 performance of students in this school as well

1 as the school environment compared to other  
2 school serving similar student populations.  
3 Overall Newtown earned a grade of C, with a D  
4 grade on student progress and a D grade on  
5 student performance and a C grade on student  
6 school environment. Unfortunately Newtown was  
7 also rated underdeveloped on its most recent  
8 quality review. Quality reviews evaluate how  
9 well schools are organized to support student  
10 learning. Some of the areas in the quality  
11 review that had cited in terms of its concerns  
12 were a need to align resources in ways that  
13 targeted student achievement and a need to  
14 design a more rigorous curriculum that connects  
15 subjects across the curriculum for a coherent  
16 learning experience. First year credit  
17 accumulation is a key predictor of student  
18 success because students who fall behind early  
19 in high school often have trouble getting back  
20 on track to graduate. Last year only 70% of  
21 first year students earned at least 10 credits  
22 which puts them on track to graduate. This rate  
23 of credit accumulation unfortunately puts  
24 Newtown in the bottom 20% of high schools  
25 citywide.

1           Before we hear from other members on the  
2 panel I would like to briefly discuss the impact  
3 of the proposal on current Newtown students and  
4 on families if approved. All current Newtown  
5 students will have a guaranteed seat in the new  
6 school. This includes all current ninth, tenth  
7 and eleventh grade students as well as any  
8 students who did not graduate by the beginning  
9 of the following school year. All incoming  
10 ninth graders who have applied to Newtown and  
11 are matched to it through the High School  
12 Admission process will automatically be enrolled  
13 in the new school. Finally I want to clarify  
14 the process the new school will go through to  
15 hire the best possible staff if this proposal is  
16 approved. There is no quota of staff that must  
17 be removed or retained as a result of this  
18 process. The proposal does not require the  
19 turnover of any set percentage of staff.  
20 Pursuant to the City's teacher contract if the  
21 proposals approved, pedagogical staff who apply  
22 to work at the new school will be reviewed by a  
23 five person school based committee. The  
24 committee will be made up of two DOE members,  
25 two UFT members and the principal. The proposed

1 new leader of the school will develop  
2 qualifications for positions in the new school  
3 and the personnel committee will consider each  
4 candidate who applies. All teachers from the  
5 current school are eligible to apply to work at  
6 the new school. If sufficient numbers of staff  
7 from the closing school apply at least 50% of  
8 the new school's pedagogical positions must be  
9 selected from among the appropriately licensed  
10 most senior qualified applicants. Again there's  
11 no set limit on the number of staff from the  
12 closing school who can be hired to work at the  
13 new school and all decisions will be made by the  
14 Personnel Committee. Thank you and I look  
15 forward to your public comments.

16 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Deputy Chancellor.  
17 Now we will have a presentation by the School  
18 Leadership Team.

19 MS. JESSICA MCDERMOTT: We're joined tonight  
20 by some fellow members of the School Leadership  
21 Team who prepared a PowerPoint presentation.  
22 Ms. Mastrangelo with the English Department will  
23 introduce that.

24 MR. MOJICA: Ladies and gentlemen if we  
25 could please have some quiet so we can listen to

1 the presentation. Please ladies and gentlemen  
2 if we could just have some quiet so we can  
3 listen to the presentation so everyone can hear  
4 the presentation. Thank you, thank you very  
5 much.

6 MS. MELISSA MASTRANGELO: Good evening  
7 everyone, my name is Melissa Mastrangelo and I  
8 am the student- [Crowd Applauses] Thank you. I  
9 am a teacher member of the School Leadership  
10 Team. Today the School Leadership Team is here  
11 to present to you officially all the wonderful  
12 things that we've accomplished here at Newtown.  
13 Our purpose is to let you publically know, for  
14 those of you that have been with us, and those  
15 of you that are coming back to us and those of  
16 you that don't know us, all the wonderful things  
17 that we've managed to achieve together in this  
18 school and all the strides that we have made.  
19 Just so you know the School Leadership Team  
20 consists of students, parents, teachers, a UFT  
21 representative, a CSA representative and the  
22 principal. We meet once a month and together we  
23 talk about all the wonderful things and we talk  
24 about all the things that we need to work on.  
25 The following presentation will be brief but

1 it's here to emphasize all the wonderful  
2 things that we've managed to do here at Newtown  
3 High School. I'd like to begin first with  
4 Jessica who is going to do a presentation on the  
5 numbers and the data that was improved.

6 MS. JESSICA MCDERMOTT: I'm a lot shorter  
7 than most people, I apologize. My name is  
8 Jessica McDermott, I'm an English Teacher, I'm  
9 the Media Studies [Crowd Applauses], the Media  
10 Studies SLC lead teacher and I'm also the UFT  
11 Chapter Leader, thank you. Our little people  
12 need help too. So I just want to go through the  
13 first couple of slides with you. About our  
14 graduation class, we're not where we need to be,  
15 we accept that, but we are making steady  
16 progress. In 2008 and 2009 our graduation rate  
17 was 53%, it climbed to 57% and we are currently  
18 at 62.4% and we are anticipating a graduation  
19 rate of higher than 65% for August. Through all  
20 of our hard work we've also seen improvements in  
21 terms of our attendance. Our attendance has  
22 climbed from 83.6% to our current year to date  
23 attendance of 85.6%. Ms. Mastrangelo will  
24 continue our presentation.

25 MS. MASTRANGELO: Thank you. As a lead

1 teacher of a small learning community, The  
2 Engineering Aces, I can personally vouch for the  
3 success this year of all nine small learning  
4 communities in this building. It's been an  
5 immense pleasure to work with my colleagues to  
6 begin an opportunity to work together. This  
7 year the small learning communities have managed  
8 to do a lot of really wonderful things. Some of  
9 the things that we've managed to do is increase  
10 personalized support, this year we've reached  
11 out to students like we've never been able to  
12 before. We've also improved student  
13 achievement, we talk about kids every day, we  
14 work on solutions and plans to help our kids  
15 every day. We also looked at implemented  
16 inquiry, we try to figure out problems, what's  
17 going on with our students, what can we do to  
18 improve their success and we make plans and we  
19 set forth those plans in order to allow these  
20 kids to improve, to help our kids move forward.  
21 We also want to celebrate our kids. Our kids  
22 are unique, they're special, they do a lot of  
23 great things and we love to celebrate all the  
24 wonderful things that they've done and every SLC  
25 is committed to providing a celebration fitting

1 each of their particular SLCs. And finally,  
2 although not really finally, but one of the  
3 other major things is we've managed to implement  
4 a personalized elective class. All nine SLCs  
5 have their own personalized elective classes.  
6 Each SLC has really grown and been very unique  
7 this year and we want and need more time in  
8 order to allow these programs and these  
9 decisions to make better results.

10 MS. JENNIFER SCHNEIDER: Good evening, hi.  
11 My name is Jennifer Schneider and I am an  
12 English teacher on the SLT committee here at  
13 Newtown High School and I'm just going to  
14 continue with our presentation and tell you some  
15 of the wonderful things that are going on at our  
16 school. As you know this year we have partnered  
17 with Johns Hopkins University which implemented  
18 early warning indicators to support our  
19 students. What that means is that at least once  
20 a week we have what's called EWI meetings, where  
21 we look at students who are particularly at  
22 risk. Whether it's because they're perhaps  
23 doing poorly in a class or behavior issues or  
24 whatever, we target those students specifically  
25 and come up with interventions as a team to help

1 support those students. We do this every  
2 single week. In those EWI meetings students are  
3 assigned a champion, a teacher or a City Year  
4 member, who will support them, who will speak  
5 with them, who will perhaps speak with their  
6 parents, get them tutoring and help them get the  
7 help that they need to succeed at Newtown High  
8 School. We're very, very thankful for Johns  
9 Hopkins this year and their support. As part of  
10 the Johns Hopkins' diplomas now imitative we've  
11 also given a freshman a freshman seminar and  
12 strategic reading class, double period English  
13 for students and math, for students to help  
14 support them to build up the skills they need to  
15 move on with the rest of their high school  
16 career. And last but not least, we are so  
17 pleased to have City Year Corps members in our  
18 ninth grade classrooms. City Year Corps members  
19 have given up a year of their lives to work with  
20 the students of Newtown High School. They  
21 specifically wanted to come here and work with  
22 our students. And as a ninth grade teacher, I  
23 can't tell you invaluable it has been to have a  
24 City Year Corps member in my class to help with  
25 the teaching, with tutoring, with anything the

1 students need. So we are very pleased with  
2 our partnership with Johns Hopkins University.  
3 Thank you.

4 MR. STEVEN SHPAK: Thank you. My name's  
5 Steven Shpak. I'm an English teacher at Newtown  
6 and more importantly a member of the family of  
7 Newtown that we have here. You said that it's  
8 heard that we don't care about our students and  
9 I'm here to show you that we do. There's a lot  
10 of successful new support systems that Newtown  
11 has started and has been continually doing  
12 helping our students. For one we have the  
13 Queens Community House who are awesome, they  
14 work every day, keeping on track of the  
15 students, making sure they're coming to class,  
16 on top of their attendance. You saw before how  
17 attendance has climbed, that's partially and  
18 mostly because of the Queens Community House.  
19 There's a guitar program for our - - and at risk  
20 students. Those guitar kids give their extra  
21 time in the morning, during school, after  
22 school. If you were early you got to hear how  
23 beautiful some of them got to play, imagine if  
24 you could hear how all of them play. There's  
25 the Achieve 3000 and the ESL and special

1 education programs. I know for a fact that  
2 Achieve 3000 works, students come in every day,  
3 they get to use the computers, they get  
4 differentiated articles, they get to multiple  
5 choice, they get to learn all these skills that  
6 they need to pass the Regents. We just need a  
7 little bit more time to show you that it's  
8 working even better than it already has. How  
9 could you expect to see much improvement in only  
10 one year, imagine what could happen after two or  
11 three. [Crowd Applauses] And then there's the  
12 credit recovery. Students that need their  
13 credits, they have messed up in the beginning  
14 and are now trying their hardest to get their  
15 credits, have their credit recovery classes.  
16 It's brand new, you cannot expect to see any  
17 more growth than we already have, and the  
18 numbers that we have are already amazing and  
19 they're going to be even more amazing after this  
20 year. The credit recovery offers the students  
21 the chance to graduate. Our high graduation  
22 rate because of these programs is only going to  
23 go up. Thank God for credit recovery. These  
24 programs are working, we just need more time  
25 without changing our school to show you that

1 they are working. You sat there and showed us  
2 the increase but then in the next breathe tell  
3 us we have to change. Give us more time.

4 MS. MASTRANGELO: It's also important for us  
5 to emphasize the use of technology. Technology  
6 is an aspect that we've been working very hard  
7 on. In each and every single classroom in this  
8 building we now have smart boards. Teachers  
9 have been provided training for smart boards,  
10 currently 17 teachers are certified trained in  
11 smart board technology. We have also  
12 implemented the use of computer programs such as  
13 Play-Dough and other programs as well. And  
14 technology just does not end at our classroom,  
15 it goes beyond our classroom hence we are the  
16 number one winners of the New York City's U.S.  
17 First Robotics team.

18 MS. LISA JIMENEZ: Hi, I'm Lisa Jimenez.  
19 I'm the - - for Newtown High School. And I  
20 wanted to tell you a little bit about the great  
21 things the students at Newtown are doing. We  
22 have our sports teams, some of them are here  
23 today, they work very hard to show their team  
24 spirit. The Key Club is also here, the Key Club  
25 is involved in community service. We have

1 members from - -, the National Honor Society.  
2 Our Young Governors which is a Queens based  
3 community program that empowers young people to  
4 make the changes they want to see. Our Robotics  
5 team again. Our school has shown amazing spirit  
6 and sense of family this year, they have been  
7 involved in charity events, in school - - events  
8 and dances and field days and constantly showing  
9 how much they love this school. The class of  
10 2012, they do not want to be the last graduating  
11 class of Newtown High School. They want to  
12 leave a legacy that's going to continue so the  
13 remaining students that are here will graduate  
14 from Newtown High School. Finally Newtown is a  
15 family. Students and teachers have built  
16 lasting relationships based on respect and trust  
17 and these relationships take a long to  
18 cultivate. And to take away our school and  
19 possibly our staff would destroy those  
20 relationships and leave our students without the  
21 help that they need to survive. Thank you. And  
22 I'd like to introduce, four of our graduating  
23 seniors have created a video that has received  
24 10,000 hits on YouTube.

25 [Video Roll]

1           MR. MOJICA: Ladies and gentlemen please,  
2 ladies and gentlemen please.

3           MS. JIMENEZ: At this time I'd like to  
4 introduce two of the four directors of our  
5 video, they're members of the Class of 2012.

6           MR. MARK ANTHONY GREEN: I just wanted to  
7 say, well first of all I'm Mark Anthony Green  
8 and this is my buddy Serge. I wanted to say  
9 thank you to the Newtown staff, students-  
10 everyone just helping us out with the video and  
11 personally I think this school's amazing. This  
12 is the best school I've ever been to in all my  
13 life. Do you want to talk?

14          MR. SERGE STANBOLGAN: I just wanted to say,  
15 once again, thanks to everybody that helped out  
16 with the video and thanks also to everybody who  
17 wasn't in the video but of course of us and  
18 supports Newtown being saved because of course  
19 we want that to happen. I mean I'm trying my  
20 best right now not to cry, it's really hard but,  
21 it's really- but I just want to say we're really  
22 a big family, we're all trying to stay together,  
23 we're all sticking together and we really make a  
24 lot of progress, we really stand together and I  
25 feel like as a family we can push through and

1 pull together, all we need is time. Thank  
2 you, thank you guys. Save Newtown.

3 MR. MOJICA: Thank you very much members of  
4 the School Leadership Team. Thank you very  
5 much. Ladies and gentlemen please, ladies and  
6 gentlemen we have many speakers who've signed up  
7 to speak so if we can please allow for the  
8 public comment and the speakers to be heard,  
9 it's very important, thank you, I appreciate  
10 your indulgence. Next speaker is Ms. Jessica  
11 McDermott, UFT Chapter Leader.

12 MS. MCDERMOTT: God it's hard to follow that  
13 video I have to say, so powerful and it says so  
14 much and I'm going try to say what I need to say  
15 without- without sobbing. So good evening and  
16 welcome. I'm so proud of all of you for coming  
17 out here tonight, it means a lot to us and I  
18 know your time is valuable so I thank you for  
19 coming, I thank you for being on time and I  
20 thank you for staying through because this is  
21 your chance for your voice to be heard. I just  
22 wanted to welcome our elected representatives,  
23 our parents, our staff and our students. You  
24 know this is what it's about, we are family.  
25 I've worked at Newtown for 10 years and I've

1 worn many hats here during that time. I've  
2 been a teacher, I've been a yearbook advisor,  
3 I've been a Chapter leader, I've been and SLC-  
4 lots of hats and I could very easily stand up  
5 here and fill my time with the struggles and  
6 successes that have come with those roles in  
7 this building. But tonight I want and I need to  
8 talk about the Mayor's plan for Newtown. You  
9 may remember that we've gathered like this  
10 before, in October of 2010 when the Department  
11 of Education was looking for ways of improving  
12 struggling schools we came together as a family  
13 then, our voices were heard. And as a result of  
14 that process Newtown was designated a restart  
15 school. We would be partnered with an EPO,  
16 Johns Hopkins Diplomas Now. And we would be  
17 given three years, three years to improve,  
18 that's what we were told. Instead of the three  
19 years the Mayor's agreement promised us, we've  
20 been given only six months. Not because the  
21 partnership is failing, Johns Hopkins Diplomas  
22 Now has in fact referred to us as a model site.  
23 Not because there's been no improvement, you  
24 will hear of many of our successes tonight. Not  
25 because the students or the teachers or the

1 parents or the community are apathetic about  
2 our situation. Just look at this crowd, look at  
3 these people who've come out to have their  
4 voices heard tonight. We have been given six  
5 months for one reason and one reason only, our  
6 Mayor Michael Bloomberg. You may hear, you may  
7 hear the Deputy Chancellor tonight try to blame  
8 Mike Mulgrew or the UFT or the teachers, but I  
9 want you all to be clear before you leave, there  
10 is an agreement in place. Newtown High School  
11 is a restart high school and should be allowed  
12 to complete its three years of improvement.  
13 Closing schools is never the answer. It never  
14 was, it never will be. And we need to ask  
15 ourselves what lessons are we teaching young  
16 people through these actions. Are we teaching  
17 young people that a person's word doesn't  
18 matter? Are we teaching young people that the  
19 Mayor's word does not matter? I just- I want to  
20 speak a little bit about our success because I  
21 know Deputy Chancellor Weiner was very nice to  
22 read the EIS to you and I know that they claim  
23 our progress is slow, but I don't think I can  
24 move to another country, speaking not a word of  
25 the language and as an over age student master

1 my language, master my content area and pass  
2 all of my classes in the one year I would have  
3 as a very over aged student. Thank you.

4 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. McDermott. We  
5 will now hear from Shirley Lopez, parent member  
6 of the SLT.

7 MS. SHIRLEY LOPEZ: Good evening everybody  
8 my name is Shirley Lopez, the PTA President for  
9 those who doesn't know me. Okay first of all I  
10 want to say Newtown has been my life since  
11 generation, generation. My brothers came to  
12 Newtown, they all graduated. I came to Newtown,  
13 my kids came to Newtown, and I still have one  
14 son in Newtown. We want Newtown saved. We want  
15 the same staff and teachers, same principal. He  
16 has done a great job until now and he's still  
17 doing it. Save Newtown, save Newtown. Where  
18 will our kids be without Newtown? They'll be  
19 lost, it's like a separation of parents. When  
20 parents separate, what happens? Kids suffer.  
21 Newtown is going through different stuff, same  
22 thing, they going to suffer. They going to  
23 suffer, they know Newtown, they don't know  
24 nothing else, they know Newtown. Save Newtown.

25 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Lopez. Ladies

1 and gentlemen we will be hearing from- ladies  
2 and gentlemen- ladies and gentlemen we will now  
3 hear from Ms. Debra Martinez from the School  
4 Leadership Team.

5 MS. DEBRA MARTINEZ: Good evening everyone.  
6 First I want to- my name is Debra Martinez, my  
7 son is in ninth grade, my daughter graduate here  
8 like four years ago and now she's going to  
9 graduate from college. She was an honor  
10 student, she continued being an honor student  
11 and she was an ESL student when she come to this  
12 school. So my question- then I want to turn to  
13 everybody that is here, parents, kids, teachers,  
14 Mr. Ficalora, everybody because we are working  
15 for our- we are fighting for our rights. We want  
16 to save Newtown. Save Newtown, come on.  
17 Newtown is our second house, when we come over  
18 here we feel that this is our home. Because we  
19 - - feel safe, okay now there talking about- how  
20 can I say- people came from another country,  
21 what they expect? That they have to pass a test  
22 in one year and a half while people that are  
23 here, an American, when they pass a test they  
24 don't pass a test. So they have to give us time  
25 because our community is a lot of Spanish

1 people. We- yes, we have a lot of programs  
2 that other schools doesn't have. We have a good  
3 soccer games, we have a good cheerleaders, we  
4 have a good track players, we have a good music  
5 teacher, so my question now- tonight, is like  
6 Newtown is a home for newcomers, from a lot of  
7 countries, how will the new school be able to  
8 provide the service Newtown provides? And the  
9 only thing that I wanted to say we have to save  
10 Newtown, we have to work for our second house.  
11 Thank you.

12 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Martinez. We  
13 will now hear from CEC24 Vice President Peter  
14 Vercessi.

15 MR. PETER VERCESSI: Good evening, I'll be  
16 very brief. I'm a parent and as well as a  
17 parent I'm a professional educator for about 22  
18 years, mostly in Long Island now. But the  
19 Community Education Council is an 11 parent  
20 member of parents of representing this part of  
21 Queens from - - down to Ridgewood Glendale - -  
22 Village and I can tell you that we are very much  
23 opposed to this plan to close and restructure  
24 the school. The main reason for that and I  
25 thank Ms. McDermott for bringing up just a very

1 valid point. Once again as a professional  
2 educator if a school is given, under an  
3 agreement, a plan of three years to show  
4 improvement and the statistics that came up  
5 about graduation attendance show that there are  
6 gains then that three year commitment should be  
7 honored and only after that should there be  
8 consideration. Now and just my last point  
9 because I know a lot of people want to speak,  
10 Mr. Weiner we appreciate you being here and your  
11 time, but if the school's showing improvement  
12 with the current staff and administration and  
13 your plans just bringing in some innovations and  
14 supports with the new staff, well if the school  
15 is showing improvement we would just simply say  
16 with the current staff and administration share  
17 these supports so the students can continue to  
18 improve. Thank you very much.

19 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Vercessi.  
20 Ladies and gentlemen we have been joined by  
21 various elected officials and now we will be  
22 hearing from our Queens Borough President Ms.  
23 Helen Marshall.

24 MS. JESSICA MCDERMOTT: I think she deserves  
25 a little bit more of an introduction than that.

1 We are very honored and proud that Queens  
2 Borough President Helen Marshall has decided to  
3 join us on very very very short notice this  
4 evening and we are honored to have her here,  
5 thank you.

6 MS. HELEN MARSHALL: Principal Ficalora this  
7 is a wonderful school, it's a wonderful school.  
8 Hold it for just one minute. You know Queens is  
9 the most multi-ethnic county in the entire  
10 United States of America. Also the UN started  
11 in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. The diplomats  
12 lived here and their children went to school  
13 here, alright, and they got a good education. I  
14 know that had specialties here in music, they  
15 had specialties in art and of course in  
16 academics. This school is a fine, it's a 150- I  
17 went to Morris High School was like- it was  
18 almost a 100 years old when I went in the Bronx.  
19 But I feel here, this school the auditorium is  
20 jammed packed, you don't get the whole community  
21 coming out like this for a school, okay. You  
22 don't, you don't. But yet if the school is  
23 doing poorly, the show up will be- the people  
24 who show up will be a small group of people.  
25 There's no empty seats here, do you see empty

1 seats? I don't see any empty seats, okay?

2 And the children, the parents and the faculty of

3 this school are working very hard, I think that

4 you did a tremendous job already in one year and

5 you should be given the full three years. The

6 mind- by the way I am a teacher, I'm a teacher

7 and I teach young children. I did teach them

8 for eight years and I could tell you the minds

9 of our children are precious, we won't have a

10 future unless our children are educated. I

11 don't like this business of closing schools, I

12 work so hard to build schools, I have a war room

13 on school construction. My children grew up

14 here, they went to 127 they went onto- well many

15 of the kids from my area- I'm over in East

16 Elmhurst, many of our children came here. And

17 our schools have always been a very special

18 place for children to nurture them. Our future

19 depends upon our children and right now- yes the

20 kids are screaming and yelling but that's what

21 you do, I did that too when I was in high

22 school, okay? But it's not a protest, it's a

23 wonderful feeling that this is our home, please

24 let us stay here and please let us continue to

25 grow and learn. I am definitely opposed to the

1 turnaround school- oops sorry - - school, all  
2 these different titles they give to the schools,  
3 but it really- I'm not pleased with that because  
4 I don't think that we're really do all that we  
5 should for our children with that. What you're  
6 doing right now is what they would hope you  
7 would do later on, okay, after they got finished  
8 but it's not working that way. But one thing it  
9 does, it brings us all together, the students,  
10 the children, and the community to save this  
11 school.

12 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Madam Borough  
13 President. Thank you Madam Borough President.  
14 Ladies and gentlemen we've also been joined by  
15 Councilman Daniel Dromm. Council member.

16 MR. DANIEL DROMM: Thank you very much.  
17 Unfortunately I've been at a number of these  
18 rallies and it's really unfortunate that we have  
19 to continue to fight the Department of Education  
20 on the closure of our schools, especially a  
21 school as so good as this school that has shown  
22 such tremendous improvement over the years. And  
23 if I recall correctly two or three years ago  
24 bonuses were given to the teachers and to the  
25 administration and the school for the excellent

1 job that they did. But I hear that the fix is  
2 in and this is a decision that may have already  
3 been made. And listening to the Deputy  
4 Chancellor, I think that that may be the truth.  
5 And despite the fact that we have had such a  
6 strong turnout from members of the community and  
7 from our students, this is what education is  
8 really all about and you can see the proof of it  
9 right here in this auditorium tonight. Now I  
10 was a New York City public school teacher for 25  
11 years before I got elected to the City Council  
12 and I can tell you to get this number of people  
13 out it must be something that's very, very  
14 important to the community. It's time that the  
15 Mayor and the Chancellor and our Deputy  
16 Chancellor start listening to our communities.  
17 This is politics at its worst. Education is not  
18 a business Mr. Chancellor. What this is about  
19 is the Mayor's attempt and the Chancellor's  
20 attempt to cover up their failed educational  
21 policies for the last 10 years. The Mayor and  
22 the Chancellor sets out to demonize teachers and  
23 principals and school staff and personnel and  
24 make them look like they are the problem. The  
25 release of the evaluations was a disgrace to the

1 New York City Department of Education. It  
2 demoralized teachers and puts the blame on them  
3 where it does not belong. What's at fault with  
4 our school system is the way in which this  
5 administration has approached education and not  
6 given the resources, they have told the truth  
7 and in this particular case in this school they  
8 were told that this school was going to be a  
9 restart school and as soon as the evaluation  
10 issue came up and the negotiations with the UFT  
11 were going on, you decided as the administration  
12 to play politics with these children's lives and  
13 to make it a turnaround school. The fact of the  
14 matter is that the Chancellor at hearings at  
15 which I was present, said that half of the  
16 teachers would be in and half of the teachers  
17 would be out. As a matter of fact the Mayor  
18 goes around and says he's going to keep the  
19 effective teachers and get rid of the  
20 ineffective teachers and nothing could be more  
21 further than that from the truth. Many of the  
22 teachers who would be affected by this change  
23 will in fact receive satisfactory ratings but  
24 they're going to be put on the market, the free  
25 market as you like to say, to find jobs and to

1 survive on their own. At a time when teachers  
2 should be preparing their students for the  
3 future, they are at home writing resumes and  
4 trying to find a job for themselves. But I'm  
5 glad to report to you that we only have a year  
6 and a half left of this administration. And as  
7 we move forward we will make sure that the  
8 dismantling of the public school system, as we  
9 know it, does not occur any longer. What's  
10 going to replace this administration is people  
11 power and people power will give the power back  
12 to the people and make public education public  
13 once again. Thank you very much.

14 MR. MOJICA: Thank you councilmember, thank  
15 you. Thank you Councilman. Ladies and  
16 gentlemen. Thank you councilmember. Ladies and  
17 gentlemen, please ladies and gentlemen. Ladies  
18 and gentlemen we will now be hearing from Ms.  
19 Katherine Mooney on behalf- who has a statement  
20 to be read on behalf of councilmember Elizabeth  
21 Crowley, Ms. Mooney. Is Ms. Mooney here? She  
22 left? Okay. I also want to acknowledge Deanna  
23 Foote who is here on behalf of Senator Jose  
24 Peralta. Now we will be hearing from Ms. Rona  
25 Freiser who has a statement from UFT President

1 Michael Mulgrew.

2 MS. RONA FREISER: Hi, I'm Rona Freiser the  
3 Queens Borough rep at the UFT and I am tonight  
4 representing Michael Mulgrew the President of  
5 the UFT, who would have loved to have been here  
6 but he's at one of the other schools because  
7 we're all over the City doing this. We are  
8 outraged, outraged. I got to look at you, I  
9 have to look at everybody, it's hard for me to  
10 do this, I'll wait. Thank you. The speakers  
11 that have come before me have actually told you  
12 exactly what this is about. This is political.  
13 This is not about Newtown statistics, this is  
14 not about the statistics of any of the eight  
15 schools here in Queens. When we watched that  
16 PowerPoint we saw your successes. The Deputy  
17 Chancellor can sit up there and tell us where we  
18 are failing but I am telling you, each and every  
19 one of you, you are all success stories. What  
20 we are hearing, what we are seeing with this  
21 Mayor is the worst case of bullying. This is  
22 the fight- this is the fight in the playground  
23 that he lost during evaluations with the UFT, if  
24 this school was so terrible why weren't you  
25 closed a year ago? Why the decision to close

1 this school after negotiations was broke down  
2 with the UFT? This is political. The last thing  
3 before I sit down, what I need, is I would  
4 really love to see the staff of Newtown High  
5 School stand up, we have lots- look at this.  
6 This is what this is about, this is the spirit  
7 of Newtown High School and we say shame on you,  
8 keep this school open.

9 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Freiser. We have  
10 been joined by our Queens Representative to the  
11 Panel for Educational Policy Mr. Dmytro  
12 Fedkowskyj. Mr. Fedkowskyj.

13 MR. DMYTRO FEDKOWSKYJ: That's alright,  
14 we'll make this work. My name is Dmytro  
15 Fedkowskyj. I am your representative on the  
16 Panel for Educational Policy, appointed by your  
17 Borough President Helen Marshall. I do  
18 apologize for being late but I was over at Long  
19 Island City High School's public hearing and I  
20 had to get over here as soon as possible. I do  
21 thank you for this time. I do want to let you  
22 know that this school has been- let me start  
23 over again. My name is Dmytro and I graduated  
24 from Grover Cleveland High School in 1984 and  
25 that school is on the close out list and I

1       oppose that proposal and I oppose this  
2       proposal and I oppose the other 24 proposals  
3       that the Mayor's going to put forth. We can't  
4       look at these proposals as a business deal, as  
5       some kind of widget factory, these institutions  
6       are charged with instruction for the young  
7       students of our City who will be the leaders of  
8       our City in the near future. We have to treat  
9       this and use a model that's going to sustain  
10      long term gains. Not some turnaround model  
11      that's going to phase out in a couple years and  
12      we'll be back here doing this all over again.  
13      We need a real plan and we had a real plan in  
14      here in September and it was taken away from you  
15      and that folks is unacceptable. We need to  
16      voice our opinions, we need to come out on April  
17      26<sup>th</sup>, tell the Mayor this is unacceptable, we  
18      want our plan back, we want our teachers back,  
19      we want everything back the way it was. On  
20      April 26<sup>th</sup> I will be sponsoring a resolution that  
21      abandons the turnaround model that will be voted  
22      on during the PEP meeting. I employ you to come  
23      out to speak to that, I employ you to support  
24      that and thank you very much for this time.

25               MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Fedkowskyj.

1 Ladies and gentlemen that concludes the formal  
2 presentations and we are now going to commence  
3 to public comment. You're reminded that public  
4 comment must be limited to two minutes, time  
5 will be kept, and we will signal you when you  
6 have 30 seconds remaining and when your time is  
7 up. We have many people signed up to speak  
8 ladies and gentlemen and we want to get to  
9 everyone and we want everyone heard. There were  
10 two signup sheets ladies and gentlemen that were  
11 signed into, one green, one white. I will be  
12 calling up the numbers by the colors, so numbers  
13 1-5 green if you could make your way to the  
14 microphone, 1-5 green. And we will first be  
15 hearing from Mr. Bernard Lopez. Mr. Lopez. Mr.  
16 Lopez sir?

17 MR. BERNARD LOPEZ: Yes, good evening Mr.  
18 Weiner and Mr. Ficalora, School Leadership Team  
19 and the Newtown community. Let me say Mr.  
20 Weiner, your lateness is not exemplary, it's  
21 disrespectful to this community. One of the  
22 cardinal rules of educators is that you get to a  
23 place on time, we expect that from our students,  
24 we expect that from our teachers, we expect that  
25 from our administrators, not a very good example

1 Mr. Weiner. The New York City's Department's  
2 latest attempt to close 27 schools which are  
3 already in the process of a three year reform  
4 program, is a political maneuver that is not  
5 rooted in sound educational practice. Rather it  
6 began as a ploy designed to avoid negotiations  
7 with the CSA, the Council for School  
8 Administrators and the Supervisors of the  
9 Administrators and the UFT, over new principal  
10 and teacher of evaluation systems. The  
11 motivation behind that ploy was to follow a  
12 turnaround model. A model that does not require  
13 principal and teacher evaluations and allows the  
14 City to close and immediately reopen schools  
15 under new names. What else would be new about  
16 them? 50% of the teachers would be new, while  
17 50% of the former teachers would be put into  
18 excess. There is nothing educationally sound  
19 about this intervention plan. It's being  
20 introduced for cynical reasons not to help  
21 children. It will not contribute to the  
22 development of sound principal and teacher  
23 evaluation systems. Furthermore in removing half  
24 the staff from these schools and recruiting  
25 replacements from other schools, the New York

1 City Department of Education will destabilize  
2 schools throughout the system. One after the  
3 other like dominoes. While these human costs  
4 are the most important ones, there are physical  
5 costs too. Removing 1800 teachers and forcing  
6 them into the ATR pool where they will work as  
7 substitutes at full salary, will cost the City  
8 approximately \$180 million dollars annually.  
9 Thank you for your time.

10 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Lopez. We will  
11 now hear from Mr. Mark Reuben. Mr. Reuben.

12 MR. MARK REUBEN: I've had the privilege of  
13 teaching history in this school for over 15  
14 years and teaching in New York City. I have the  
15 privilege of sitting in their classroom where  
16 for 110 years the best of Americanism has been  
17 shown to the entire country. I had the  
18 privilege today to teach some American history  
19 to a group of students, 6-7 different religions,  
20 from 15-16 different countries, I wouldn't trade  
21 that for a Presidency, I wouldn't trade it for a  
22 Mayoralty, I wouldn't trade it a job, an  
23 appointment on Dennis Wolcott's committee, I  
24 would not trade that for a - -. The staff here  
25 is tremendous, they work very very hard, now I'm

1 going to speak very quickly as a tax payer. I  
2 do not want to be personal to the two gentlemen  
3 that came here from the Chancellor's office,  
4 this is not personal, but my question is to all  
5 those who at Tweed and the Chancellor. Do you  
6 really think you did more today to help the  
7 children of New York than any teacher or anybody  
8 who came here today to New York City? My guess  
9 is that you do, the hubris and arrogance of  
10 Tweed and the politicization of the school  
11 system here as a tax payer I am outraged. I  
12 hope that these two gentlemen realize that what  
13 you do is very unimportant compared to all the  
14 teachers in New York City and Newtown, all the  
15 aides, all the people that work here, I don't  
16 want to make it personal but as a tax payer I  
17 want 9 of every 10 people at Tweed to be fired  
18 because it's a waste of money.

19 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Reuben. We will  
20 now be hearing- we'll be hearing from Ms. Cindy  
21 Cohen. Ladies and gentlemen please. Ms. Cohen.

22 MS. CINDY COHEN: Good evening everyone, I'm  
23 Cindy Cohen, science teacher here at Newtown  
24 High School. I have some words from some  
25 current and former students and a few words of

1 mine and I hope to get in as many as possible.  
2 This is from Kenneth Evans: They shouldn't close  
3 the school down because they're good teachers  
4 and good kids. And the school won the Robotics  
5 state champion and our guitar program is number  
6 one in the state and the kids have good bonds  
7 with their teachers. Someone else was a little  
8 more cynical: Even if they restart the school  
9 it's going to be the same. It will probably be  
10 even worse because there will be new teachers  
11 who don't know us. That is from Mofisore  
12 Rockman [phonetic]. This is from Mr. Jason Tom  
13 [phonetic], a former Newtown student: Newtown is  
14 the place where a naïve teenager finally got his  
15 act together and embraced both the joys and set  
16 backs of life that one must enjoy in order to  
17 succeed. This is the place where the foundation  
18 was laid that led me to my eventual career as an  
19 attorney at law New York City and later to an  
20 international legal career in Hong Kong and - -  
21 with Thomas Reuters. This is from a current  
22 student name Carmen Surring [phonetic], who to  
23 the best of my knowledge has only been in this  
24 country for about a year: Recently we have had a  
25 lot of great achievement and everything has been

1 progressing greatly. So we deserve a chance to  
2 run our school for at least another year and  
3 talk about matters later. And my quote, a  
4 school is like a family. Break up a family, the  
5 children suffer. Break up a school, the  
6 students suffer.

7 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Cohen. We'll now  
8 hear from Mr. Richard Questel [phonetic] and as  
9 Mr. Questel gets to the microphone if we can  
10 have speakers with numbers 1-5 white please  
11 approach the microphone, thank you. Mr.  
12 Questel.

13 MR. RICHARD QUESTEL: Ladies and gentlemen,  
14 member of the panel, my name is Richard Questel.  
15 Newtown High School is reaching history. If we  
16 get disrespect for those who graduate there in  
17 the past 115 years, every student who graduated,  
18 got a job or graduated from college to be  
19 successful, it would be a shame to change the  
20 name of the school after 115 years of which she  
21 stands. Some notable alumni, some notable  
22 alumni- Kevin Dobson, actor. Richard Grasso,  
23 former chairman and Chief Executive of the New  
24 York Stock Exchange. Estee Lauder, Cosmetic  
25 company founder. Andreas Gerasimos

1 Michalitsianos, NASA astronomer and  
2 astrophysicist, class of 1965. Carroll  
3 O'Connor, Actor. Smush Parker, NBA Player. Don  
4 Rickles, Comedian. Zoe Saldana, Actress. Otto  
5 Sanchez, American actor, with roles in Bad Boys  
6 2, HBO's Oz and others. Gene Simmons, a member  
7 of Kiss. Rise Stevens, American mezzo-soprano.  
8 Charlie Villanueva NBA Player, Detroit Pistons.  
9 Gary Mokotoff, Genealogist. Joe Katz, bass  
10 player of The Mumps. I can go on and on and on.  
11 Don't change the name, don't change the name,  
12 don't change the name, Newtown, Newtown,  
13 Newtown, thank you.

14 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Questel. We will  
15 now be hearing from Washington Sanchez, Mr.  
16 Sanchez. Washington Sanchez? No? Washington  
17 Sanchez?

18 MR. WASHINGTON SANCHEZ: Thank you, thank  
19 you very much sir for allowing me to speak. My  
20 name is Washington Sanchez. I'm a  
21 representative of the United Federation of  
22 Teachers. I'm a graduate from Newtown High  
23 School, class of 1987. I was a teacher here for  
24 13 years and I have to tell you that I'm really  
25 really, sorry that I don't know many of you

1 because you really seem like a great crowd. I  
2 really appreciate it. Mr. Weiner you were 30  
3 minutes late, 30 minutes late. I don't know  
4 what happens to you when you're 30 minutes late  
5 to your class, but really it's a great deal of  
6 lack of respect for this community. I know the  
7 teachers here, I know how hard they work, I know  
8 the families that live in this community. I  
9 lived in this community, I came to like many of  
10 you from another country. Like Mr. - - I was in  
11 ESL I. And I know I'm not the exception here.  
12 I am one of many, many, many successes that  
13 happened in this school. We deserve to stay  
14 open. If you want to say that we're not doing  
15 the job then come and close us. But it's not  
16 about us not doing the job here this is, like  
17 you know many other people have said, this is  
18 purely political. This is about a fight that  
19 Mayor Bloomberg is having with the Union that  
20 represents the teachers. And because of that  
21 you have decided to close this school, because  
22 it's already been decided. Please go back to  
23 the Mayor tell him that you met an auditorium  
24 full of people who want to keep this school  
25 open. We deserve to keep this school open, we

1 deserve to keep it open right? Thank you.

2 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Sanchez. We will  
3 now be hearing from Mr. Alan Tobin. Mr. Tobin.

4 MR. ALAN TOBIN: I'm Alan Tobin, history  
5 teacher. I have a brief statement from a  
6 student who's a junior. He says I think Newtown  
7 should stay open because it has been my second  
8 home for three years, I want my last year of  
9 high school to be in Newtown and not some new  
10 school. Newtown is full of great students,  
11 staff and teachers who help me learn the things  
12 that I need to succeed in life. I had some  
13 other things to say but looking at the prepared  
14 speech that you gave or the handout that you  
15 gave to everybody, I found that it was  
16 incredulous that you didn't add that this school  
17 has 120 different cultures that you don't have  
18 anywhere else in the City and to expect 120  
19 cultures to come like we have had for- I've been  
20 here now 21 years, and I think that that's been  
21 an awesome achievement that has not been  
22 acknowledged by anybody in Tweed or anybody  
23 else. And I also think that after we did win  
24 the Robotics I was looking for some  
25 acknowledgement from Tweed, from the Chancellor,

1 from the Mayor and I don't see any  
2 acknowledgment of that. Even though that this  
3 has now been planned to close, I still figure  
4 there should have been some acknowledgement that  
5 Newtown won the regional. Now Stiverson, not  
6 Brooklyn Town, not Bronx Science, Newtown won  
7 the damn thing. So I think that the Mayor and  
8 then Chancellor and whoever else on the  
9 committee, I do hope Deputy Weiner that you go  
10 back and you tell them that Newtown has been  
11 here for 115 years, that we have achieved  
12 before, we are achieving now, we will achieve in  
13 the future as Newtown, there's no reason to  
14 change the name.

15 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Tobin. We will  
16 now be hearing from Ms. Sylvia Lutski. Ms.  
17 Lutski.

18 MS. SYLVIA LUTSKI: Hi. My name is Sylvia  
19 Lutski and I'm a secretary at Newtown High  
20 School and I'm one of three of four who did not  
21 graduate from here. However I spent over 20  
22 years in this building and I love this school  
23 and I feel very strongly about it. And I'm not  
24 going to say what's been said so eloquently  
25 before and what will be said so eloquently when

1 I leave this microphone but Newtown is like a  
2 fine wine. We've got all the ingredients here,  
3 we've got the staff, we've got the kids, but we  
4 need the time. When you grow grapes they need  
5 time then you've got to- well I don't know what  
6 the process is but they've got to go to barrels.  
7 They tell us six month when they promised up  
8 three years, like wine we need that time. And  
9 we deserve that time.

10 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Lutski. We will  
11 now be hearing from Ms. Beverly Schenker. Ms.  
12 Schenker.

13 MS. BEVERLY SCHENKER: Hello everyone. I  
14 have started and have been in Newtown longer  
15 than anyone else in this room, isn't that right?  
16 Who? No- I was here in 1968. I was in college,  
17 graduating from Queens College and I student  
18 taught here and I learned how to teach here.  
19 And there's one of my students, '74. It was  
20 very good back then, I got my Masters in one  
21 year, when I showed up all of a sudden I was  
22 teaching ESL, I never heard of the ESL. I came  
23 from a different background but I learned fast.  
24 Some of those issues of the many languages and  
25 the cultures, yes they're good, but there are

1 other issues which have to be addressed. Some  
2 of the other issues are a lot of the students'  
3 needs tutoring, need home intervention, need  
4 attendance follow up. I was a counselor for 23  
5 years after being a teacher for 15, I can't go  
6 run everyone's private life 24/7, can anybody do  
7 that? So don't throw out the baby with the bath  
8 water. The good things in Newtown are still  
9 good. The teachers you saw, you saw. Mr.  
10 Ficalora, the other supervisors, but the other  
11 issues need to be addressed. I don't know about  
12 the politics stuff. I had Omar Minaya as my  
13 student and I had to help him pass Spanish. And  
14 he graduated in 1978. Thank you.

15 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Schenker. We  
16 will now be hearing from Mr. Richard Poganik.  
17 And Mr. Poganik as you get to the mike, we've  
18 had a request from four of our students if they  
19 can make a statement- Ladies and gentlemen  
20 please. Mr. Poganik just one moment, I just  
21 want to make a quick announcement. We've had a  
22 request from four of our students if they can  
23 make a statement together after the next two  
24 speakers, we want to honor that, so if students  
25 with numbers green 8 & 9 and white 11 & 12 could

1 you approach the microphone. Thank you Mr.  
2 Poganik.

3 MR. RICHARD POGANIK: Yeah sure. Hi.  
4 Excuse my back, I'd like to talk to everyone in  
5 the audience. Good evening, first of all like  
6 you heard my name is Richard Poganik. I'm a  
7 technology teacher, I'm in my 14<sup>th</sup> year in the  
8 technology department and I think you've heard  
9 already that our Robotic team has won U.S. City  
10 Regional. Seven out of the last eight years,  
11 and excuse me I'll be brief, I've been coaching,  
12 mentoring and teaching the Robotic team and it's  
13 been a tremendous accomplishment. Tremendous  
14 accomplishment, I don't want us to take any of  
15 the credit for this, I want to at one point show  
16 you the kids that actually did this from all  
17 different places in the world, kids who took ESL  
18 I, kids who struggled and kids who have  
19 achieved. Before I take any further credit from  
20 them, I'd like to remind you of another thing  
21 that should not change here. I believe, as well  
22 as you believe, that Mr. Ficalora could not be  
23 more invested in Newtown High School than he is.  
24 Thank you for your time.

25 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Poganik. We will

1 now be hearing from Mr. Frederico Vasquez.

2 MR. FREDERICO VASQUEZ: My name is Fred  
3 Vasquez. I am a- I teach music and guitar here  
4 at Newtown. I'm also a student and graduate of  
5 Newtown High School. In 1998 with the help of  
6 Mr. Ficalora and the administration, students,  
7 parents, I started a guitar program here that  
8 has since become number one in New York City and  
9 going national. I say that I'm a teacher but  
10 I'm really a student here. Every day I'm taught  
11 by my students through the guitar, they teach me  
12 about their culture, they teach me about their  
13 music, I'm honored to be their student every  
14 day. Last year- last year Queens Public  
15 Television came to Newtown High School and taped  
16 a show called the Multicultural Guitar where  
17 students played music from their countries and  
18 talked about their culture. It won first place  
19 in the Northeastern United States Regional Film  
20 Festival. First place. Last year freshman  
21 guitar class won first place in the local talent  
22 show. State Senator Jose Peralta came to Newtown  
23 to honor these kids. We went on to play for Ms.  
24 Helen Marshall last year, DA Richard Brown, I  
25 can't say more about all of that except thank

1 you for listening and thank you for being-  
2 giving me the honor to be your student.

3 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Vasquez. Thank  
4 you sir. Now hearing from our students.

5 MR. CHEN QING TIAN: Good evening ladies and  
6 gentlemen, my name is Chen Qing Tian, I am the  
7 captain of the Robotics team. And the President  
8 of - -. Our team is very diverse, they are most  
9 immigrants, they try their best to learn new  
10 things. Our team compete in competitions that  
11 involve robots shooting basketball and balancing  
12 on a bridge. We only have six weeks to build  
13 the robot, we work very late every single night  
14 and willing to come to school on Saturday and  
15 Sunday to finish the robot. These competitions  
16 include 65 other team from in and out of the  
17 U.S., this is a very hard competition because it  
18 includes the most prestigious high schools in  
19 New York City. Even with those odds we were  
20 able to overcome this challenge and obtain the  
21 first place. With this historical winning for  
22 our school we can honor to participate a first  
23 champions that include 344 teams all of those  
24 teams are the best around the world that have  
25 won their own Regional's. There is many so many

1 good things going around in Newtown, but  
2 people just don't look at Newtown through the  
3 right window. For me as an immigrant, I've been  
4 in the U.S. for five to six years, Newtown  
5 provides us so many great opportunities, we know  
6 that English is not key to success but we just  
7 need a little more time to achieve it. Thank  
8 you.

9 MS. STEPHANIE LI: Hi, my name is Stephanie  
10 Li and for me winning the New York City Robotic  
11 Regional's was a great accomplishment. It made  
12 me feel so proud of the school we came from,  
13 however it wasn't easy. At times having a  
14 variety of cultures and people from different  
15 countries made it difficult to understand each  
16 other. Like many others in the school some of  
17 our team members came from other countries to  
18 look for a chance here in the United States.  
19 Only Newtown High School gave them that chance.  
20 But having to learn English in a four year span  
21 wasn't easy. Some students here struggle  
22 because of how harsh our State education  
23 requirements are. Those they excel in various  
24 subjects, English class is always the most  
25 difficult. These students are trying really

1 hard to graduate on time and as they show  
2 strong determination to keep going and not give  
3 up, we cannot give up on them. Don't give up on  
4 us, thank you.

5 MR. JAVIER ZAVALETA: Hello my name is  
6 Javier Zavaleta. I've been on the team for four  
7 years and I love every year of it. I think  
8 Newtown is a great school, don't we all right?  
9 What I hate to see is these politics, lied to us  
10 with all this three years promises but now they  
11 want to change it to us? I like honesty but why  
12 do they not give us honesty? What's with this  
13 politics game? This school has been open for  
14 115 years, longer than any of us have been born  
15 and I believe seeing this school our second home  
16 would be a tragic- being closed would be a  
17 tragedy. I want Newtown to be open but I want  
18 it to be open with the old- with our name  
19 Newtown High School. To raise the bar in  
20 history- raise the education history and the  
21 bars, I'm sorry. Keep Newtown open.

22 MR. MOJICA: And ladies and gentlemen as we  
23 wait for our next speaker if we could just have  
24 speakers green 6, 7, 10, 11 and 12 to approach  
25 the mike, thank you.

1           MR. KEVIN ORTIZ: Hello. My name is Kevin  
2 Ortiz and I am part of the Visionary Aces SLC  
3 here in Newtown High School. I am a senior and  
4 from my four years here in the technology  
5 department I can say that it is one of the best  
6 in the state. Like my former team mates and  
7 students and friends, I could also call them a  
8 family here on the robotics team. We seriously  
9 spend every single minute after school together  
10 working on the robot, fundraising for the St.  
11 Louis Nationals coming next week and I'm sorry  
12 I'm not really good at this. Here in Newtown I  
13 learned through the robotics that we all working  
14 together can actually achieve greatness as you  
15 can see as us winning together. I have 30  
16 seconds left but I seriously have nothing else  
17 to say, I'm sorry.

18           MR. GUS MACHERAS: Hi my name is Gus  
19 Macheras, I don't go to this school but I am the  
20 mentor of the robotics team. I work for a  
21 company called Alliance Bernstein which is a  
22 financial company in the City. We've provided  
23 the sponsorship for this team and the human  
24 capital as a bunch of mentors to help these kids  
25 out. This is my second year. I remember coming

1 last year and seeing the team, 95% of these  
2 kids had no clue what a screwdriver was. This  
3 year we won the New York City Regional  
4 Championship that was the biggest event in my  
5 life. I can't imagine how these kids felt. So  
6 one thing that we cannot change the name of this  
7 school is because we have to defend our name and  
8 our title next year. Newtown champions.

9 MR. MOJICA: Thank you very much. Our next  
10 speaker Mr. Edwin, I'm sorry sir Mr. Edwin Domm?

11 MR. PAT TORNEY: Has my two minutes started?  
12 No? Wait, wait, wait. I only get two minutes so  
13 I got to make the most of it. I wrote a whole  
14 page of what I wanted to say and then they took  
15 it all. So then I wrote another page and they  
16 took that too so I'm just going to have to wing  
17 it. It would have been easy- first of all I've  
18 been here 25 years. My name is Pat Torney, I  
19 teach physical education here at Newtown. I  
20 coach the soccer team, I coach the boys  
21 basketball team, I've coached girls cross  
22 country here. 25 years of my life I've spent  
23 here, this is my house, this is my home. I  
24 spend more time here than I do at home. When I  
25 got to this school it was 5500 students, Mr.

1 Ficalora was the math chairman at that time if  
2 I remember correctly, 1987. When I started  
3 talking about four year graduation rates and  
4 that we were not doing well, there was a simple  
5 answer back then, all we had to do was cheat, we  
6 could have just fudged the number, how many  
7 schools have done that and they are being  
8 investigated but they're not being closed.  
9 We're being closed, we did the right thing, we  
10 brought our numbers up, we have integrity, we  
11 have pride in what we do but yet we're being  
12 closed, there's something wrong with that. You  
13 should close the schools that fudged their  
14 numbers because those are the people that don't  
15 have integrity, Newtown has integrity. Look at  
16 what you see out here, people care about what  
17 we're doing. This is what counts, this is the  
18 Newtown family, this is the pride we have,  
19 that's why this school should continue. I don't  
20 need two minutes, thank you very much.

21 MR. MOJICA: Thank you sir. We will now be  
22 hearing from speaker 7, Ms. Carry Patai  
23 [phonetic]. Ms. Patai.

24 MS. CARRY PATAI: Okay Mr. Torney I don't  
25 know how I am going to follow that but I'm going

1 to try. Thank you. My name is Carry Patai,  
2 I'm an art teacher here in Newtown. I'm also  
3 one of the lead teachers in the forensics SLC.  
4 I prepared something that I'm going to read so  
5 that I don't forget anything and some of the  
6 stuff you've heard already tonight so I  
7 apologize but maybe you need to hear it again.  
8 I am disheartened at the possibility that the  
9 class of 2012 will be the last one to get a  
10 diploma with the Newtown High School seal. The  
11 day the news broke of the Mayor's proposal I saw  
12 an urban pioneer student who was proudly wearing  
13 her Newtown class of 2014 t-shirt and I choked  
14 up and it hit me what the Mayor was about to do  
15 to our Newtown family and our home. Yes I  
16 consider this school my home, I've spent more  
17 time here in the past 14 years than the one I  
18 pay a mortgage for. What will happen to the  
19 history of this glorious school? How many  
20 people through the years have built an identity  
21 with this school as alumni and as staff. My  
22 first introduction to Newtown I was struck by  
23 the many reproductions of master paintings that  
24 were displayed around the halls of the school.  
25 I immediately felt comfortable and knew this was

1 a place where I could feel at home. I was  
2 deeply touched after reading the plaque in the  
3 hall that stated the reproductions hung in the  
4 school were donated by graduating classes in  
5 honor of Newtown alumni that died in World War  
6 II and the Korean Wars. I have used this plaque  
7 again and again for homework assignments for my  
8 students to discover and appreciate for art but  
9 also gain a respect for the students that came  
10 before them. The Newtown students that I have  
11 had the pleasure to work with are imaginative  
12 and their cultural diversity has influenced each  
13 of the creative to further explore their  
14 artistic talents. I am proud to have been their  
15 teacher, advisor, guide and mentor. I am  
16 thrilled when a student comes back to visit the  
17 school and fills me in on how they are doing.  
18 What will happen now when they return to a  
19 school that no longer exists? How many of us  
20 will be here or no longer be here to greet them.  
21 I'm sorry I just have two sentences. What's in  
22 the name of the school some will argue, what is  
23 the big deal if the DOE changes the name but  
24 keeps the commitment and passion of the students  
25 and staff? Everything I say. How can the name

1 of the school be anything but Newtown? Given  
2 the population of the school for many of the  
3 students.

4 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Patai. We will  
5 now be hearing from Mr. Mitchell Friedman. Mr.  
6 Friedman?

7 MR. MITCHELL FRIEDMAN: Yes sir. Hello. My  
8 name is Mitchell Friedman. For 27 years I have  
9 been a teacher of English in the New York City  
10 school system. 20 of those years here at  
11 Newtown. I first set foot in Newtown High  
12 School in September of 1992 having transferred  
13 from the South Bronx. By the end of that first  
14 day I had already been made to feel accepted  
15 into the Newtown family and that is what we are  
16 here, a family. In 20 years I have never ceased  
17 to be impressed by the talent that I have seen  
18 in this school. Anyone who has ever attended  
19 one of our Spring concerts cannot help but be  
20 amazed at the talented musicians and singers  
21 among our student body. Our annual sidewalk art  
22 show is a tribute to our gifted young artist and  
23 this year our robotics team won the New York  
24 Regional's and will be going to St. Louis to  
25 compete in the Nationals. Clearly Newtown has

1 much to offer to its students, not the least  
2 of which is the dedication of my esteemed  
3 colleagues. Shakespeare wrote what is in a name  
4 that which we call a rose by any other name  
5 which smell as sweet. Shakespeare was wrong, a  
6 name is not merely a label. It is an identity.  
7 A name speaks of who you are and what you value.  
8 To me Newtown speaks of dedication, talent and a  
9 drive to excel. It saddens me deeply to think  
10 that we are facing the loss of our home and the  
11 dissolution of our family. I implore you do not  
12 do this to our community and to our students.  
13 Thank you.

14 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Friedman. We  
15 will now have Ms. Jerrica Nicoloa. And as the  
16 next speaker gets prepared to speak if we can  
17 have speakers 6-10 white, numbers 6-10 white.

18 MS. JERRICA NICOLOA: My name is Jerrica  
19 Nicoloa, I'm also former student here. I've  
20 taught here for 15 years now, it's been a  
21 learning experience and I've struggled and I've  
22 accomplished I think a lot. My students are  
23 here and last year I had 91.6% of my honors  
24 chemistry class passing the Regents exam. They  
25 doubted but they will do it too. I have another

1 chemistry class this year in addition to two  
2 inclusion classes. Last year 81.6% of my  
3 inclusion class passed the Regents exam in  
4 living environment. Now I would like to select  
5 a couple of passages that my students wrote. A  
6 couple of them Fasia [phonetic] who is not here  
7 and who else- Koal [phonetic] who's here, and  
8 Maisa [phonetic] as well. Newtown is a simple  
9 seven letter name for a high school. But it's  
10 more than a simple school, it's a second home to  
11 me. I spend a lot of time in Newtown and I have  
12 to say I enjoy it. Sure the building is old and  
13 not in the best shape but it is strong and  
14 alive, it is not only alive in the hearts and  
15 minds of students, teachers and the principal  
16 but even its custodial staff. I want people to  
17 know, I want people to know I graduated from  
18 Newtown, not some other school. I don't want all  
19 these great teachers who thrive and to motivate  
20 us every day to become extinct from our lives.  
21 Thank you.

22 MR. MOJICA: Thank you ma'am. Our next  
23 speaker is Ms. Terry Paglia. Ms. Paglia.

24 MS. TERRY PAGLIA: Good evening everyone.  
25 My name is Terry Paglia and I am a retired

1 assistant principal of ESL but I do have a  
2 very long history at Newtown. I was a student  
3 here, I was a para-professional in the first  
4 bilingual ESL program in 1975, I then became a  
5 teacher from 1984-1998 of ESL and then I was  
6 assistant principal from 1998 until last year  
7 2011. But I just wanted to say something on  
8 behalf of the ESL department which was so  
9 important and such a part of Newtown, that when  
10 I was a teacher, and also AP, we had one of the  
11 largest ESL departments, we have many L's,  
12 English language learners, we had 800+ of those  
13 students as one of the largest departments in  
14 the City, the largest populations, we were a  
15 model for other schools, we had the best  
16 materials, the best textbooks that were  
17 available and I had a great boss Mr. Gene  
18 Ashwasberg [phonetic] who got us the best  
19 materials that were available also. When I  
20 became AP I had a very good boss Mr. Ficalora  
21 who allowed the ESL kids, we were the first to  
22 have laptops in the ESL department and he really  
23 wanted that so we did get the jump on  
24 technology. And also I just want to say that  
25 Newtown is a family and I hope that Charlene - -

1 will continue her excellent work and that all  
2 the other teachers will continue. Thank you.

3 MR. MOJICA: Thank you ma'am. Now we will  
4 be hearing from Mr. Wayne Crawford. Mr.  
5 Crawford sir.

6 MR. WAYNE CRAWFORD: Hello my name is Wayne  
7 Crawford and I am an English teacher and coach  
8 here at Newtown High School. Thank you I love  
9 you guys. Very important Ms. Paglia mentioned  
10 she had a great boss when she started here and  
11 so did I. When I came here I taught ESL I and I  
12 had the pleasure of working with Ms. Paglia. I  
13 have a book on my shelf in my classroom D-59  
14 right now with a note that says on it, try this  
15 Crawford from Ms. Paglia. It was grammar, I  
16 came from Richmond Hill High School, mine was  
17 terrible, thanks to her efforts now I'm okay.  
18 Newtown is not brick and mortar. It is people,  
19 it is the faces I see each and every day who  
20 smile and say hello to you. It's Ms. Charles at  
21 the front desk, it's every student that I pass,  
22 it's every student in my building. We talk  
23 about things like loyalty, we talk about things  
24 like history, and we talk about things like  
25 tradition and we replace them with the word new.

1 I'm here to tell you about loyalty. We can't  
2 get rid of Newtown graduates, we have Mr. Grant  
3 in the music department, we have Vicki Lee our  
4 dean, we have Ms. Paglia who came here on her  
5 retirement time to speak to us, we have Tom  
6 Tilitz [phonetic] in the back who graduated from  
7 here. We have Ms. Haught, we have Coach Kinola  
8 [phonetic], we have Alex Martinez, we have  
9 Austin - - and we have John Ficalora. I carry  
10 the banner today for Mr. Ficalora. Mr. Ficalora  
11 has spent much of his adult life in this  
12 building, we cannot get rid of him. We talk  
13 about tradition, we are standing in Billingham  
14 [phonetic] Hall, he was our first principal of  
15 Newtown High School not new school 4852XW7. We  
16 have a family tree in the hallway that are for  
17 Newtown graduates, we have a hall of fame in the  
18 lobby that is for Newtown graduates. Their name  
19 leaves with it. Names like Howie Ranza  
20 [phonetic], Kathy Nordy [phonetic] and Demna  
21 Joyce [phonetic]. All who will be honored this  
22 May by having memorial scholarships in their  
23 name. Do not let their names and the history of  
24 this building go by the wayside. Thank you very  
25 much.

1 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Crawford. Next  
2 we will have Mr. Bill Comaras [phonetic]. Mr.  
3 Comaras sir.

4 MR. BILL COMARAS: Okay. Good evening  
5 everybody. There's still a lot of people here  
6 it's great. I'm here tonight- I actually  
7 graduated from Brooklyn College in 2008, I'm a  
8 phys ed certified teacher. I haven't really  
9 been appointed a position yet, I kind of bounce  
10 around every day, different schools, I've been  
11 in about 15-16 different high schools in the  
12 Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, all schools. I did my  
13 student teaching at Bryant, you don't know what  
14 I go through every day but I don't complain, I  
15 just go about my business. Again I'm a phys ed  
16 certified teacher, I substitute every day. I'm  
17 here today for Ficalora, I'm here for Levington  
18 [phonetic], I'm here for Susan, the secretary  
19 Maria, I'm here for upstairs, I'm here for the  
20 kids that wouldn't put their phones away, I'm  
21 here for the kids that didn't put their hats  
22 away, I'm here for kids that talk back to me and  
23 said things that I probably might not have said  
24 myself, but you know what at the end of the day,  
25 we're high school, we're high school kids all

1 right? Now I wrote some things down, I would  
2 like to have some more time. Again, I worked  
3 across the city, there are a lot of different  
4 schools, all right, I have a habit of repeating  
5 myself but this is just because it's from my  
6 heart right now, I'm a little ticked off. Let  
7 me drop this, all right. Again, I've subbed in  
8 different classes though, you might have seen  
9 me, I've done special ed, I've done phys ed,  
10 I've done math, I've done English, so I've been  
11 in all different classrooms, I haven't just been  
12 in one specific classroom so I've got the  
13 experience of being in different classrooms in  
14 this school. I'm not one specific phys ed  
15 teacher, so what I'm trying to say is I know a  
16 little bit about this school and the heart of  
17 these teachers and the way that you're treating  
18 these teachers, you know that's your mom, your  
19 dad, your sisters, your daughters and you're  
20 treating these people like nothing. You know  
21 again, I'm not even an appointed teacher. Every  
22 day I wake up in the morning, I get a call at  
23 5:45 a.m. or 6:00 a.m., Mr. Comaras can you come  
24 in today we need a teacher for- no problem. I  
25 never struggled, I never complained about coming

1 here, I was thankful I got called every day,  
2 until this day I'm procession. No benefits,  
3 people don't know me, but you see me here I'm a  
4 classy guy. I come, I do my job and that's it  
5 and listen I'm here for everybody here, let's  
6 not close this school.

7 MR. MOJICA: Thank you sir. Next we will be  
8 hearing from Mr. Ramon Kinela. Ladies and  
9 gentlemen before our next speaker if we could  
10 have numbers 13-17 green approach the mike.  
11 Thank you very much.

12 MR. RAMON KINELA: My name is Ramon Kinela.  
13 And I'm a graduate of Newtown High School. At  
14 the moment I work here as a college counselor  
15 and as the varsity baseball coach. I decided to  
16 speak to represent the thousands of new  
17 immigrants that come through the doors of this  
18 wonderful school. You see very few people know  
19 what it is to come to a new country and go  
20 through the adjustments of a new culture and a  
21 new language and a new educational system. I  
22 can speak of this subject because when I came to  
23 New York at the age of 15 I was one of those  
24 students. I did not speak a word of English, I  
25 was enrolled in Newtown High School, a school

1 that I knew very little about after another  
2 school rejected me for not speaking English.  
3 From the moment I stepped into this building I  
4 felt supported. My biggest question before I  
5 started was how I was going to learn English. I  
6 was very scared of not being able to succeed  
7 academically. My teachers at Newtown and many  
8 of them are still here, Mr. Torney, Ms. Aguirre,  
9 Mr. Maglio- gave me the confidence that I needed  
10 to not only learn the English language but also  
11 to move onto to college and be a successful  
12 college student. Now that I work here in this  
13 wonderful school as a college counselor I see a  
14 high school that is going through a  
15 transformation. For the past three years our  
16 graduation rate has been going up, our  
17 attendance rate is higher than ever and as the  
18 college counselor I can tell you that this year  
19 89% of our seniors have already applied to  
20 college. More and more of our students are  
21 taking the SATs and as a result more and more of  
22 them are getting accepted to four year colleges.  
23 Newtown is a high school that the Department of  
24 Education should be proud of, not a school you  
25 should be trying to close.

1 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Kinela. Our  
2 next speaker is Imra Rafik. Mr. Rafik.

3 MR. IMRA RAFIK: Okay thank you. Hi I'm  
4 Imra Rafik, I've been an ESL teacher here for 12  
5 years and a New York City high school teacher  
6 for 16. Newtown is a place that has symbolized a  
7 community, and that's community's aspirations  
8 for its children for generations. It is a name  
9 and an institution to be proud of. Names like  
10 Christy Tai [phonetic], Qing Tian Chen and  
11 Movina Veloch [phonetic] do not resonate with us  
12 today, they should when we realize that they  
13 were immigrant students who won New York Times  
14 college scholarships in large part due to the  
15 Newtown education that they received. Yes  
16 Newtown is a place where great things have  
17 happened and do happen. It's attendance rates  
18 and student academic progress data has improved  
19 since last year. When the New York City  
20 Department of Education calls its plans for  
21 Newtown's turnaround, it betrays a fundamental  
22 disrespect for the Newtown legacy. As embodied  
23 in its historical name, it's administration, its  
24 students past and present and it's faculty.  
25 Instead of acknowledging the wonders the Newtown

1 family has worked with meager resources and an  
2 academically diverse student populations, the  
3 New York City Department of Education has put a  
4 negative spin on these accomplishments by its  
5 proposals to replace faculty and consigned the  
6 Newtown name to history. We deserve more than  
7 to have our very name obliterated. A name that  
8 stood for so much to be proud of and still does.  
9 It takes years of hard work to create a legacy.  
10 It takes unimaginative bureaucracy and  
11 politicians a few months to try to undo it.

12 MR. MOJICA: Thank you sir. Our next  
13 speaker is Mariness Juarta [phonetic]. Ms.  
14 Juarta.

15 MS. MARINESS JUARTA: Go ahead and say your  
16 name and you're going to say what you wanted.

17 MR. LEE: My name is Lee, I'm shy.

18 MS. MARINESS JUARTA: Okay. What is it that  
19 you wanted to say?

20 MR. LEE: All right. My name is Lee, I'm 5  
21 years old. When I grow up I want to be in  
22 Newtown. That's all.

23 MS. MARINESS JUARTA: Thank you. For those  
24 of you who don't know who he is, he's Mr.  
25 Herrera's [phonetic] son. And you excited him

1 enough that he wants to go to Newtown. My  
2 name is Mariness Juarta and I currently teach  
3 mathematics for about 10-12 years, but before  
4 that I taught in special ed for 10. And in  
5 between I went to work for the former Prince  
6 High School superintendent's office. I chose  
7 this school twice. The first time because the  
8 population was mostly bilingual and I figured  
9 that my talents and my abilities and my  
10 knowledge would be better put to use here.  
11 Thank you. Then after I came back from the  
12 superintendent's office, I was asked what school  
13 do you want to go to and I chose Newtown again.  
14 So this is my home school. I was away and I  
15 came back and I am here to stay and I hope to  
16 retire from Newtown. I have a couple of  
17 statements to read, I collected statements from  
18 students and I also had the luck of- I was  
19 number 35 and a student got mine said I need to  
20 leave, I'll leave you my statement please take  
21 my number and I thank you for honoring it. His  
22 statement says: *The only thing that I could say*  
23 *is to save Newtown for this school has given me*  
24 *open doors and it is like a second home and*  
25 *every day it helps us to get better and better*

1     *and to leave on the side all the fear and*  
2     *achieve our dreams. And the best of all is that*  
3     *in this school they teach us that everything can*  
4     *be achieved in life. This morning a current*  
5     student of mine said to me are you going to be  
6     there tonight and I said yes I will and I asked  
7     her will you. And she said well I don't know  
8     and she said will you read what I wrote. This  
9     happened to be a student who came about three  
10    months from Florida. In a school where she was  
11    having very dynamic grading, very up to date  
12    things and she wrote something that actually  
13    sent chills up my spine. And of the whole  
14    thing, given the time I have allotted, I would  
15    like to read a couple of sentences that she had.  
16    She said Alexander the Great did not win every  
17    battle but we still call him the great.  
18    Everyone has to have time to grow, Einstein  
19    failed in school and today we teach what he  
20    discovered. Another statement from another  
21    student because I went around asking, I want the  
22    students to be heard but many of them don't want  
23    to come to the microphone and frankly what I  
24    have to say it's too angry for me to say. So  
25    this one says, I came from catholic school and

1 this is better and I said why? There are more  
2 opportunities and more advantages. We have a  
3 very dedicated staff as you have seen staff and  
4 faculty. The building usually has people here  
5 until after hours, well after hours and people  
6 are here well before the hours. Some people  
7 come from different states, some people take two  
8 busses or three trains to be here and they do it  
9 gladly because they know that the seed that  
10 they're planting in here will germinate one day.  
11 Please keep Newtown open. Thank you.

12 MR. MOJICA: Thank you ma'am. If speakers  
13 13-17 white can approach the microphone. Also I  
14 want to confirm we had called speakers 13-17  
15 green, I just want to confirm Ms. Shara  
16 Burkowitz. Okay Ms. Burkowitz your next, yes  
17 ma'am your next.

18 MS. SHARA BURKOWITZ: My name is Shara  
19 Burkowitz and I have been an ESL teacher in  
20 Newtown for 18 years. This is Newtown right  
21 here. I'm the advisor of Arista and Key Club  
22 and these are the students I got the honor of  
23 working with. They exemplify all that is good  
24 in our community. Arista is our National Honor  
25 Society. Our students strive for excellence in

1 so many ways. They study and achieve  
2 exceptional grades, they are leaders in  
3 scholarship service and character. Many of our  
4 alumni have gone on to become extremely  
5 successful professionals. Including Christina  
6 Jimenez, the managing director of the non-profit  
7 United We Dream, an organization dedicated to  
8 achieve equal access to higher education for all  
9 people regardless of immigration. As a student  
10 in Queens College she was one of the pioneers of  
11 the Dream Act. Key Club is our community  
12 service organization a division of LaGuardia  
13 Airport Kiwanis Chapter. I have been so touched  
14 by all of their enthusiasm, compassion and team  
15 work. They tutor newcomers in English in  
16 Newtown Saturday Academy. Every year they  
17 participate in park clean ups, school  
18 beautification programs in New York Cares, they  
19 volunteer at the breast cancer walk, the  
20 juvenile diabetes walk, etc. We have also had a  
21 partnership with Elmer's Hospital for more than  
22 30 years. Every holiday we assemble and  
23 distribute fruit baskets to every patient and  
24 staff member in the hospital. Our leader, a  
25 volunteer Doris Fogel [phonetic], is 96 years

1 old and she has been running that program all  
2 along, and every time I see her, Thanksgiving,  
3 Christmas, Easter she said what am I going to do  
4 without Newtown Key Club, what's going to happen  
5 next year and every single year I say I don't  
6 know.

7 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Burkowitz. Our  
8 next speaker is 14 green, Joen Chen [phonetic].

9 MS. JOEN CHEN: Thank you, good evening.  
10 When I first heard that City decided to close  
11 down Newtown High School and reopen at a same  
12 building, same students but just a different  
13 school name as the new school to help the  
14 students. I wonder how we're being help. After  
15 a few days of thinking I found it. Is where we  
16 filling out the form and for the school title we  
17 all need to write new school instead of Newtown  
18 High School. A fewer letter apparently saved us  
19 some pen ink. But then I was informed that a  
20 new name was unsure, goodness we will probably  
21 lose that tiny benefit also after we lose the  
22 history of 115 years. Later I found out that  
23 about 50% of the staff will be replaced. Oh just  
24 the staff who are ineffective will be replaced  
25 by the new talent to help improve academic

1 performances. As a student a question, what  
2 makes the City so confident that new teachers  
3 will be more effective? Last year the  
4 graduation rate of Newtown High School increased  
5 by 5%. 5% do you know what kind of idea that  
6 was, that's about 120 students. And let's look  
7 at some numbers from other global events, China-  
8 China used more than 30 years to be recovered  
9 from - - too, another 30 years to get connection  
10 with the world and here in Newtown High School  
11 where we believe education will be delivered to  
12 everybody, where we accepted over 900 ESL  
13 students in the past few years and we're the  
14 only one school years which is actually a month,  
15 120 more student graduated, successfully  
16 graduated, is that ineffective? And I'm  
17 enrolled in Newtown High School 2009 fall as an  
18 ESL student. Learning English which was never  
19 my mother town and after 2 ½ years now here I  
20 stand tonight as the Arista leader and  
21 delivering this message to you fluently English  
22 as a student in Newtown High School not in the  
23 new school, Newtown High School, is that  
24 ineffective?

25 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Chen. Our next

1 speaker 15 green Kareen Shama. 15 green  
2 Kareen Shama.

3 MR. KAREEN SHAMA: Hello. My name is Kareen  
4 and I'm currently a junior at Newtown High  
5 School and I want to speak- three years ago  
6 coming into Newtown I really didn't understand  
7 the true meaning of priorities and I had no idea  
8 what I wanted to do after my chapter of high  
9 school. Coming into the school fearful of the  
10 college leveled four year engineering program, I  
11 was embraced by the knowledgeable and honest  
12 representative in Ms. Roberts and Mr. Palino.  
13 Taken under their wing I was able to discover a  
14 new hobby, skill and career path that will  
15 hopefully shape my future in the field of  
16 engineering. But the efforts to help me excel  
17 didn't stop in the classroom, thanks to these  
18 adults who you may feel are not needed next year  
19 in the continuous process of turning around  
20 Newtown High School are the main reasons why I  
21 can say I have participated and succeeded in  
22 engineering competitions across New York City.  
23 I will be proudly interning at the School of  
24 Construction of Authority. But in a school of  
25 3000 students my experience is not uncommon

1 among many classmates. Take for example the  
2 Newtown robotics team, going against 65 other  
3 teams including the 34 top ranked school in the  
4 country, Stiverson High School, we were able to  
5 tower about the rest and become City champions.  
6 Now preparing to go to St. Louis and facing  
7 another 334 teams across the globe our students  
8 will continue to strive for success. So now if  
9 your solution for turning around this so called  
10 failing school is to take out the successful  
11 teachers who have been with me every step of the  
12 way, I ask you now, how am I expected to excel  
13 now without my mentors by my side? And also one  
14 more thing, a lot of these students here, they  
15 may not be the best students, they may not be  
16 the smartest kids in Queens or in New York City  
17 but these students have heart. These students  
18 they have a dream that they want to take. These  
19 students may have a dream that they want to  
20 excel in and there's not one person in this  
21 Newtown staff who has ever put them down. We  
22 have people in the baseball team, in the  
23 softball team they have dreams of making it. We  
24 have people on the robotics team who have dream  
25 of becoming an engineer and no one stopping

1       them, they're number one in New York City and  
2       they're trying to become number one across the  
3       globe. For you to say Newtown deserves to close  
4       down, it's not fair, it needs to stay open.

5               MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Shama. Our next  
6       speaker green 16 Lin Fang Zang. Lin Fang.

7               MR. LIN FANG ZANG: Hello everyone, my names  
8       Braden Zang, I'm a junior at Newtown High  
9       School. I have been in this country over two  
10       years, when I came to school I couldn't speak  
11       any English at all. But with the help and the  
12       encouragement and the support from the teachers  
13       and the school I gradually learned how to speak  
14       English and how to write English and I feel  
15       really fortunate to be able to stand here and to  
16       become a student in this school. And then also  
17       to have so many amazing teachers, especially my  
18       chemistry teacher Ms. Buchanan and my English  
19       teachers Mr. Schneider and Mr. Francisco. And  
20       my global history teacher Ms. Lee and definitely  
21       my guidance counselor Ms. Chen. I receive  
22       motivations and motivations and inspiration from  
23       them and because of them I start working hard on  
24       my work and tried to accomplish my school work  
25       and - -. I also want to say I believe all the

1 teachers, all of the principals and the  
2 college advisor and the guidance officer are  
3 amazing. They really do their best and they are  
4 dedicated to the school and they try to help  
5 each one of us to build the academic foundation.  
6 So personally I think Newtown is more like a  
7 place, it's not just only the place for me to  
8 obtain, to learn the knowledge for academic  
9 field but also offer me a sense of a family, a  
10 sense of union, so I really proud of being part  
11 of Newtown. Thank you so much, I love Newtown.

12 MR. MOJICA: Thank you sir. Next speaker is  
13 17 green. Suzall [phonetic]?

14 MR. CHAVIE: My name is Chavie [phonetic]  
15 and I have been in this country for five months.  
16 Before I came to Newtown High School I could  
17 barely speak English so I was afraid to make  
18 mistakes. But the teachers encouraged me to  
19 speak more and taught me how to study and learn  
20 English. Now my English has greatly improved.  
21 I firmly believe Newtown is a great high school  
22 and closing Newtown High School is a - - in fact  
23 terrible decision. There is one question I want  
24 to ask, how do you judge your teachers as good  
25 or bad, how can you make sure that new teachers

1 are better than our Newtown teachers? Many  
2 say that currently of America's education is  
3 getting worse. The - - is closing your so  
4 called academic - - low performance school at a  
5 risk of currently of education of students, the  
6 only solution is just solve this issue. How can  
7 you make sure the new school will do better than  
8 our Newtown High School. Don't close Newtown  
9 High School.

10 MR. MOJICA: Thank you sir. 13- 13 white  
11 Mr. Daniel Conway, Mr. Conway.

12 MR. DANIEL CONWAY: Hello I'm Daniel Conway,  
13 I've been an ESL teacher at Newtown for 13  
14 years. Recently there have been a lot of  
15 changes here at Newtown, and this is good. It's  
16 good for our students and it's good for us as  
17 teachers, we embrace change. However the most  
18 important, the most fundamental and enduring  
19 qualities that make Newtown what it is and what  
20 it has always been have not changed. Newtown is  
21 a community of immigrants, people who have come  
22 from all over the world and who have somehow  
23 managed to create a thriving community. They  
24 have not changed and they cannot be analyzed on  
25 a spreadsheet or with a rubric. We have no code

1 that signifies incredible spirit. For my  
2 student who works full time at a local grocery  
3 store in the hopes of one day bringing her  
4 husband and her son here to live in the United  
5 States. There's no code, we have no code for  
6 great heart, for my student who struggles in  
7 school yet who somehow manages his family  
8 business. If viewed as numbers or statistics  
9 these students would be unimpressive but to us  
10 they are all world. Every day we add new  
11 members to the Newtown community, many of whom  
12 do not speak a word of English but we take  
13 everyone and happily. We provide all the  
14 services we possibly can to help them succeed in  
15 this strange new world yet somehow they manage  
16 in their own unique way to leave us richer. It  
17 is Newtown High School for 115 years that have  
18 made this strange and wonderful convergence  
19 possible, thank you.

20 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Conway. Next  
21 speaker Marcia Acquantia [phonetic]. Ms.  
22 Acquantia.

23 MS. MARCIA ACQUANTIA: My name is Marcia  
24 Acquantia and I'm a bilingual Spanish guidance  
25 counselor here at Newtown. I have held the

1 position of bilingual Spanish guidance  
2 counselor here for the last 10 years. It has  
3 been a privilege and an honor to do so. The  
4 students I work with have brought the rich  
5 diversity of their culture, language and  
6 individual experiences that Newtown is wildly  
7 known for. Together with these wonderful gifts,  
8 this group of students that I cherish so greatly  
9 bring challenges and face obstacles both  
10 personal and academic. That can make graduating  
11 in four years extremely difficult for some.  
12 Imagine if any one of us was transplanted to far  
13 away city in a foreign country at the age of 16,  
14 17 or even 18. Often quite close to graduating  
15 high school in his or her country. Or on the  
16 other hand with a very interrupted education  
17 preparation. Imagine if we arrived in this land  
18 without knowing how to speak a word of English,  
19 without knowing how to speak a word of language  
20 of that new country, with no knowledge of the  
21 cultural morays or systems of that new city.  
22 Often without all or at times without any of  
23 their immediate family members. How would we  
24 fair? Would we survive the transition in tact?  
25 Would we not make any errors in judgment that

1 might slow our progress towards education?  
2 Would we complete our high school education on  
3 time in four years? Be brutally honest  
4 everyone. I think many of us could not in truth  
5 say resoundingly I could achieve all of that  
6 without a doubt. Without question, graduating  
7 students in cohort is the commitment of every  
8 member of a school's community however  
9 penalizing Newtown High School for closure for  
10 nurturing it's nearly 1/3 ESL and bilingual  
11 program student population for opening its doors  
12 regardless of language or country of origin or  
13 academic level and helping these students to  
14 graduate in a realistic time frame is  
15 scandalous. Save Newtown, its history, its  
16 integrity, the respect it has shown for the  
17 beautiful multicultural mosaic.

18 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Acquaintia. Our  
19 next speaker 16 white, Mr. Martin Rosenthal. 16  
20 white, Mr. Martin Rosenthal. Mr. Rosenthal?  
21 Number 17 white Sarah Obahovime [phonetic]. My  
22 apologies ma'am if I mispronounce your name, my  
23 apologies. And then ma'am I'm sorry, before you  
24 speak I just wanted to call up speakers 18-22  
25 green if they could come to the mike.

1 MS. SARAH OBAHOVIME: Hello everybody.  
2 Actually you know what, I've spent the last  
3 three hours trying to like perfect this but  
4 words don't really tell you know how I feel  
5 about Newtown so I'm just going to remove this.  
6 Can you hold this for me, thank you. My name is  
7 Sarah and I'm a senior at Newtown High School,  
8 I've spent four years here. I've learned a lot,  
9 when I was 7 years old my parents moved to  
10 Morocco and they moved me there and which I  
11 learned several languages including Arabic,  
12 French. And when I came back I was about 13  
13 years old and I kind of forgot about the  
14 language because I was so young when I went  
15 there and it was a real struggle for me to kind  
16 of like get back and you know cooperate with  
17 other individuals. However because of the  
18 people in Newtown High School that took care of  
19 me like Mr. Shpak, where is he? Where's Shpak?  
20 Ms. Lamb who is no longer with us and other  
21 individuals that really helped me, Mr. Syus  
22 [phonetic] I had him freshman year and senior  
23 year, where's Mr. Syus. It really is horrible  
24 closing this school, I mean I've learned so much  
25 and people have done so much for me. And I just

1 think it's wrong I really- and for one thing  
2 Mr. Weiner, I will not be the last graduating  
3 class of Newtown High School. I will not be the  
4 last graduating class of Newtown High School.  
5 When I say save, you say Newtown. Save.

6 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Miss. Next speaker  
7 18 green, Mr. Ryan Herrera. Mr. Herrera.

8 MR. RYAN HERRERA: My name is Ryan Herrera  
9 and I'm a senior at this school, I've been here  
10 since freshman year and each and every year I  
11 have a lot of fun, I learn a lot in this school,  
12 have a lot of fun with my friends and teachers.  
13 Out of the programs in this school, like Mr.  
14 Vasquez' guitar program I love that program a  
15 lot, the phys ed department you know, you can  
16 tell I'm that nervous right now. At Newtown a  
17 lot of people discover their dreams whether you  
18 believe it or not. And I happened to be one of  
19 them and call it crazy but it actually started  
20 in gym class, it really did. We had this little  
21 football tournament right, and I happened to do  
22 it and I had a lot of fun with it and I then  
23 realized that I'm pretty good at this sport and  
24 I might as well pursue my dream in it, I want to  
25 go to college and play college football and end

1 up in the NFL and that started here in  
2 Newtown. I transferred from this school to go  
3 to Cardozo [phonetic], but it had nothing to do  
4 with Newtown at all, nothing. But it started  
5 from Newtown, this football dream, I went there  
6 to go play and I was under a lot of pressure and  
7 I had like yo, why did I do that, so you know  
8 what, I ended up transferring right back to  
9 Newtown, I missed all my friends, teachers. I  
10 wanted to graduate with the people I started  
11 high school with you know, go to prom, graduate.  
12 I woke up one day a Newtown senior and I want to  
13 wake up you know, like about a year or two from  
14 now knowing that yo, I want to come back and  
15 visit Newtown the way it is, the way I started.  
16 I want to be able to say in college and in my  
17 future as an adult, as a father or grandfather  
18 or whatever, like when somebody asks you what  
19 high school did you went to, I will be proud to  
20 say I went to Newtown High School. Time may be  
21 up but not for Newtown it's not.

22 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Herrera. Next  
23 speaker will be Mr. Pat Torney, Mr. Torney. Oh  
24 he did? Okay. Then our next speaker will be  
25 Mr. Jonathan Velez. Mr. Velez.

1           MR. JONATHAN VELEZ: Hi, I'm Jonathan  
2 Velez and I came to Newtown at first as a  
3 freshman I didn't really know much about this  
4 school. In fact I was kind of nervous, I was  
5 really kind of an anti-social, but knowing the  
6 people, the students, the teachers, they really  
7 encouraged me to keep on going. And to see that  
8 all thrown away, to see Mayor Bloomberg just  
9 hold us hostage and just close us down, it  
10 really irritates me and I would not really want  
11 to see that. That's terrible, terrible. We're  
12 all one big family and I believe that we should  
13 all keep still being a family, 115 years of  
14 information, knowledge keep going, we got this.  
15 Thank you.

16           MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Velez. Next  
17 speaker Mary Parisson. Ms. Parisson.

18           MS. MARY PARISSON: Good evening everyone,  
19 my name is Mary Parisson and I have been working  
20 at Newtown for the last 15 years as one of the  
21 librarians. The library is the central focus  
22 room in this entire school. We collaborate with  
23 teachers, we see all different students from  
24 every background and what I want to talk is a  
25 little bit about tradition. When we think about

1 somebody wearing black, we think about  
2 somebody that is mourning. And I'm mourning  
3 presently for the possibility that Newtown may  
4 be closing, but I've always maintained a very,  
5 very positive outlook and I've always said you  
6 have to believe and you have to remain positive  
7 and you have to have a great deal of gratitude  
8 and as a parent and as an educator I've always  
9 learned to encourage. Encourage my daughter,  
10 encourage the students and what is the  
11 Department of Education doing now, what is the  
12 Mayor doing to us, we have made strides, we have  
13 increased our graduation rate, our attendance  
14 rate. All of these programs that have been in  
15 place with Johns Hopkins, with City Year, we  
16 have made these strides and so we are not  
17 getting any sort of acknowledgment saying great  
18 job, great job. And the last thing I do want to  
19 say is that when I think about communication  
20 I've always said the most important thing is  
21 trust and I find and I believe that our Mayor  
22 has not given his trust in telling us that we  
23 would have three years to turn ourselves around  
24 and we've shown the improvement and in six  
25 months he's taken that away from us. So we'd

1 like to give Newtown a chance, please bring  
2 that forward.

3 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Parisson. Next  
4 speaker is Ying Chen. Ms. Chen. And if  
5 speakers with number 18-22 white if they could  
6 approach the microphone.

7 MS. YING CHEN: Hi guys, my name's Shoying  
8 Chen. I'm a student at Newtown High School, I'm  
9 a junior right now. Newtown High School is  
10 really amazing which helped me a lot. Actually  
11 I came from China three years ago. When I was  
12 new here I couldn't even speak English well and  
13 I had no friends here, everything was like  
14 different in my country. I believe many of you  
15 guys have the same experience as me right?  
16 However in Newtown I found my place. I have  
17 make friends here, learn English and the  
18 teachers here are really nice to me. They used  
19 to give me extra help which they don't have to,  
20 so- like Mr. Shawn, he used to give me physics  
21 tutoring in the library. So Newtown's really a  
22 good place so save Newtown, give Newtown a  
23 chance. Thank you.

24 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Chen. Our next  
25 speaker 18 white Melanie Dufoe.

1 MS. MELANIE DUFOE: Good evening to you  
2 all. I wanted to tell you that Newtown does not  
3 stand alone. My name is Melanie Dufoe and as  
4 you say in Filipino [Foreign language]. I work  
5 with youth of color at the Outreach Community  
6 Health Center and I'm also a volunteer social  
7 worker at the Philippine forum, where we have  
8 provided a space for Philippine immigrant youth  
9 to understand their rights, roots and  
10 responsibilities. A lot of our youth in our  
11 community go to Newtown High School and we want  
12 to say as the previous speakers have said, they  
13 face many challenges as migrant youth of color.  
14 Having to make new friends, having to adjust to  
15 a completely new culture, they face not only  
16 these natural barriers but the barriers of a  
17 hostile host society. A society that makes  
18 anti-immigrant laws, a society that profiles  
19 youth of color like Trayvon Martin, we know and  
20 you know that despite the pretty words in this  
21 proposal, the rights of students as the rights  
22 of teachers are being attacked in the name of a  
23 corporate sense of cost efficiency and an even  
24 more sinister agenda of privatizing public  
25 education. What is the use of breaking down a

1 school if the larger cultural of profit as  
2 bottom line still prevails. Education and health  
3 care are still the first things being cut in the  
4 budget and social services are always the first  
5 to suffer in a recession. What is the use of  
6 trying to treat the symptoms when the roots of  
7 the issue have not been touched. Students of  
8 Newtown, your parents brought here to the U.S.  
9 for a better life, but you know in your hearts  
10 that better life is something you must fight  
11 for, it is something you must struggle for. I  
12 am humbled, I am humbled to see youth standing  
13 up and speaking out and I salute you students,  
14 teachers and parents of Newtown. And know that  
15 the Philippine Forum stands with you in  
16 solidarity to defend the right of equitable  
17 education. And I invite you all to come out on  
18 Tuesday on May 1<sup>st</sup> at 12:00 p.m. at Union Square  
19 with the May 1<sup>st</sup> coalition and make yourselves  
20 heard. Thank you so much.

21 MR. MOJICA: Thank you ma'am. Next speaker  
22 Matthew Cheris.

23 MR. MATTHEW CHERIS: So I'm going to keep  
24 this real short I wrote something before. Okay,  
25 good evening. My name is Matthew Cheris and I

1 am one of the lead organizers for - - in New  
2 York, a progressive Filipino Youth Organization.  
3 - - as well as myself, we are here tonight in  
4 support of the parents, the teachers and all of  
5 the students of Newtown High School in their  
6 struggle to keep their school open. I don't  
7 know if you can tell this but I'm not exactly a  
8 high school student anymore. I graduated in  
9 2005 from a school that was actually closed  
10 while I graduated and so I know exactly what you  
11 guys are going through. What did I have to go  
12 back to when I decided to visit my high school?  
13 Overcrowded school, all right you had too many  
14 students in really small classes with not enough  
15 teachers with no funding. So why should the  
16 students of Newtown have to go through this? I  
17 mean really do you guys want to do this? So  
18 then all I really have to say to the people up  
19 front is keep Newtown open. Thank you.

20 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Cheris. Next  
21 speaker 20 white, Patricia Gerat. Ms. Gerat.

22 MS. PATRICIA GERAT: Hi I didn't come here  
23 tonight to speak because I just came here to get  
24 my high school transcript and hung around and I  
25 showed up, okay. Of the people, by the people,

1 for the people where is your petition? Class  
2 of 1974, Aristar, - -, scholar athlete, I'm a  
3 911 first responder, I'm a female veteran, I  
4 live in a veteran's residence in Manhattan. I  
5 spent 10 days on disaster relief in New Orleans  
6 after hurricane Katrina. I know about community  
7 trauma, I'm a PTSD survivor, I know about  
8 community trauma and what's happening here is  
9 exactly what's going on. And you people are  
10 being victimized and I have to say that because  
11 you're being victimized because I think you're  
12 being duped. I'm not pointing any fingers and  
13 I'm not making any accusations. I live in  
14 Manhattan, I have a car, I drive around and I  
15 see all the real estate development. Okay I  
16 know what's going on with the government, the  
17 highline, the affordable housing programs and  
18 this school should not be a sacrifice. Because  
19 I want- I have to say this but I'm not stupid  
20 what is Newtown field worth in real estate, in  
21 terms of development because there are future  
22 plans for that property and you don't know it  
23 and I'm going to end by saying that I saw what  
24 happened to Saint Vincent's Hospital and the  
25 community in the West Village, I saw what

1 happened to Saint John's Hospital and I have  
2 the right to ask questions and to wonder. And I  
3 don't want to see us here victimized, I don't  
4 want to see you victimized so please use your  
5 power of expression and voice, okay demand  
6 answers and find out what's happening in the  
7 future because there are answers for there. Not  
8 this school, other schools but not this one.

9 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Gerat. Next  
10 speaker 21 white Richard McNally. Mr. McNally.  
11 And as Mr. McNally gets to the microphone if we  
12 could have speakers 23-27 green approach the  
13 microphone, thank you.

14 MR. RICHARD MCNALLY: My name is Rich  
15 McNally. I haven't been in Billingham Hall here  
16 since I guess I graduated in 1968. I'm an  
17 Elmhurst guy so is my dad, I believed he  
18 graduated from Newtown in 1929 but I could be  
19 off by about a year. I know he did graduate  
20 from Columbia in 1933. Anyway, I read about  
21 this issue in the Queens Courier in May 8<sup>th</sup>, a  
22 free newspaper you pick up in the ATM's at  
23 Citibank. I said what is this, what is Mayor  
24 Mike doing now? A couple days later I show the  
25 article to my friend Ira who graduated from

1 Flushing High School, Ira's a white stone  
2 guy. Ira says to me when I asked the same  
3 questions, privatization Mac, it's all about  
4 privatization. This is an outrage what's  
5 happening to our city high schools, all our  
6 public schools, what Mayor Mike is doing and you  
7 heard some of the other speakers tell you. It's  
8 not about 58 or 60 million dollars in turnaround  
9 funds, that is just the excuse that is not the  
10 reason Mr. Weiner, that is just the excuse. And  
11 you're here an half an hour late, what's the  
12 reason you're late? Only 30 seconds, I have a  
13 lot more to say in 30 seconds. I read about the  
14 PEP, I googled it, what the heck is the PEP?  
15 I've never heard of it before. The Panel on  
16 Education Policy is a 13 member panel, 8 of whom  
17 are appointed by Mayor Mike and 5 by the Borough  
18 Presidents. When I read that I said to myself,  
19 this is not good. I read an article in another  
20 Queens newspaper dated yesterday and it talks  
21 about the Panel for Education Policy. The  
22 article was please don't close our high schools  
23 and it mentioned that the Panel on the Education  
24 Policy is basically a rubber stamp for Mayor  
25 Mike because they have never gone against what

1 Mayor Mike has wanted up until right the  
2 present, never.

3 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. McNally, your  
4 time is up. Thank you sir.

5 MR. MCNALLY: I have a lot more to say.

6 MR. MOJICA: Next speaker 22 white Wang Wei  
7 Zhu. Wang Wei Zhu. She's coming? Okay.

8 MS. WANG WEI ZHU: Hello everyone, my name  
9 is Wang Wei Zhu. I am 11<sup>th</sup> grade student in  
10 Newtown High School. I have been in Newtown for  
11 almost two years. Two years before I came to  
12 the U.S. as a newcomer. I couldn't speak  
13 English well, I was afraid of speaking English,  
14 but in Newtown High School I met many people  
15 they help me a lot with the language. And the  
16 Newtown High School has a special program which  
17 is a bilingual class. It lets me learn lots of  
18 knowledge without a language program. All of my  
19 teachers are very nice to me so I'm so glad to  
20 be here. Please don't close Newtown. Thank  
21 you.

22 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Miss. Next speaker  
23 23 green Joanne Chen. Ms. Chen.

24 MS. JOANNE CHEN: My name is Joanne Chen,  
25 bilingual Chinese guidance counselor. I'm

1 gravely disappointed and disturbed by the  
2 Mayor's decision to take back the restart model  
3 and force Newtown High School to be closed. I'm  
4 also deeply concerned about the proposal of  
5 opening a new school in 2012 and then opening  
6 another new school, which is predominantly a  
7 transition of bilingual school in 2013. You  
8 have heard so many wonderful stories from our  
9 years of staff and students, the ESL and  
10 bilingual education program in Newtown has been  
11 serving like a backbone to the whole school. So  
12 I would like to give you just a couple examples.  
13 We are celebrating our robotic team's winning  
14 championship, however how many of you noticed  
15 that there are 16 out of 23 students in our  
16 robotic team who are currently or current  
17 bilingual ESL students or former ESL students?  
18 And that's about 70% of the students, the  
19 robotic members that have been benefited by the  
20 ESL and bilingual education along the years when  
21 they have been at Newtown. And similar cases  
22 have been to our AP classes and other high level  
23 classes. I do hope these services and  
24 contribution of our bilingual staff, ESL  
25 teachers will not be ignored so my opinion is

1 say we're getting the bilingual and an ESL  
2 population is definitely not a solution to  
3 prepare such a group to be college ready and  
4 definitely will not benefit the whole school.  
5 So please keep Newtown remaining as a restart  
6 and allow our ESL population to continue and  
7 reaching our big family at Newtown High School.

8 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Chen. Next  
9 speaker Meijou Chen.

10 MS. MEIJOU CHEN: Hello everybody. I've  
11 been in Newtown for two months. It's quite a  
12 short time however I love it. When I first come  
13 to country I was really shy, I have no friends  
14 and my English was poor, I didn't want to talk  
15 to anybody. My teacher encouraged me and the  
16 classmates cheer me up, when I do something  
17 wrong they never laugh at me, they always try  
18 their best to help me. Newtown not just a  
19 school it's also a big family. I have no more to  
20 say but please keep Newtown open.

21 MR. MOJICA: Thank you. Next speaker 24  
22 green Nguyen Hu. 24 green. 24 green. 25 green  
23 Joseph Doyle. Mr. Doyle.

24 MR. JOSEPH DOYLE: Hi I'm Joe Doyle. I've  
25 taught history at Newtown since 1999. Mayor

1 Bloomberg's effort to close down Newtown High  
2 School is a crime in progress. Mayor Bloomberg  
3 wants to close down a school that has its own  
4 Newtown subway stop. He wants to close down a  
5 school whose tower can be seen five miles away  
6 on a Brooklyn Queens Expressway. What do our  
7 Newtown's need? First smaller class size. When  
8 our Newtown students speak to their parents at  
9 home, very few of them are speaking in English.  
10 Second Newtown students need mentors, members of  
11 the greater New York metropolitan community who  
12 are success in life, who can spare some time in  
13 their busy schedule who can speak to Newtown  
14 students who need positive role models.  
15 Attention from a caring adult and an internship  
16 to put on their resume. Third Newtown students  
17 need college scholarships. Financial help to  
18 get a college education and the encouragement a  
19 scholarship represents to push Newtown students  
20 to excellence. Where can we find money to  
21 decrease class sizes, money for scholarships,  
22 role models and mentors for our Newtown  
23 students? We already have those resources. In  
24 our 115 years of Newtown alumni, in our tens of  
25 thousands of Newtown graduates. Some of them

1 multi-millionaires, judges, authors and  
2 entertainers. I'll only mention two, William  
3 Leuchtenburg, one of the greatest living  
4 American historians and Estee Lauder, the most  
5 successful business woman in American history  
6 and whose cosmetic fortune endows a  
7 spectacularly well-funded Estee Lauder  
8 foundation. Mr. Bloomberg wants to throw away  
9 115 years of Newtown graduates. He wants to  
10 clear out our trophy case, he wants to throw  
11 away our 1930 Penn relays championship trophy in  
12 the trash. He wants to rob our Newtown robotics  
13 team of their New York first prize, he wants to  
14 silence Fred Vazquez' glorious guitar players,  
15 he wants to permanently bench our baseball  
16 players and all those beautiful students you've  
17 heard in this classroom today. Mayor Bloomberg  
18 is committing a crime, arrest him.

19 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Doyle. Next  
20 speaker Ms. Velfre Plasensia [phonetic]. Ms.  
21 Plasensia. And as the next speaker approaches  
22 the microphone if we can have speakers with  
23 numbers 23-28 white approach the microphone,  
24 thank you.

25 MS. VELFRE PLASENSIA: All right so first of

1 all I would want to thank each and every one  
2 of us here who stayed for like say three or four  
3 hours now, this is all worth it. We know that  
4 it has been a long day for everyone we know.  
5 But what we are here for is worth it, it's worth  
6 it. What are we here for. October 2010 it was  
7 my first year here in Newtown High School, I  
8 came here two years ago. I was signed up in the  
9 journalism class which by the way was like the  
10 best class I've ever had, yes, and I would want  
11 to credit Ms. Tremble [phonetic] for that, but  
12 she's not here I think she left. But anyway, in  
13 October 2010 I participated in one Newtown  
14 rally, it was November 2010 and I remember it  
15 and that was Black Friday, the day after  
16 Thanksgiving. A little less than 100 Newtown,  
17 not just students but staff and supporters went  
18 on that rainy day I remember. It was Black  
19 Friday of course- it was- we went around the  
20 Newtown field we stood there in the rain, not  
21 minding the sale tags on the - - Mall just right  
22 beside us and then I think it was this year,  
23 sometime this year, we went on to another Save  
24 Newtown Walk again, it was another rainy day as  
25 well. I just have to question myself on each

1 and every one, is it all worth it, what we  
2 have been doing are those worth it? Are those  
3 worth it? On rainy days we stood up, we had  
4 those flash card signs and pickets just to  
5 promote our support to school. The Panel of  
6 Education Policy members I tell you this whole  
7 experience here, people who left here stood,  
8 we're the last man sitting, just because we have  
9 this purpose of really advocating what we want  
10 you to hear. Nobody wants, okay save Newtown,  
11 that's it.

12 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Plasensia. Next  
13 speaker 27 green Nimra Shabir [phonetic]. Ms.  
14 Shabir.

15 MS. NIMRA SHABIR: Hi, I'm a senior at  
16 Newtown High School. My name is Nimra. The  
17 first I step I took in this building as a  
18 freshman I took it with resentment. I despised  
19 the school because I was pushed by my father to  
20 come here because it was very close to my house.  
21 From the first day of school I assumed I was  
22 doomed because I had to build my education in a  
23 school that had such a negative reputation  
24 statistically. I remember hearing stories in  
25 junior high from teachers and students about

1 stabbings and shootings and events like that  
2 that occurred at Newtown. But when I gradually,  
3 I spent a full year at Newtown and I studied  
4 hard, I became involved in student activities  
5 and I realized that I couldn't have had a better  
6 experience, better at quality of enrichment at  
7 any other high school than Newtown. Taking into  
8 consideration my experience at Newtown, I asked  
9 where is the reputation that I once heard about  
10 outside of the school, where is it? It flew off  
11 somewhere because I don't see it anymore, not in  
12 this school. All I see in here is a community  
13 consisted of dedicated teachers that are always  
14 here to help me when I need help in math.  
15 Counselors that I can trust whole heartedly and  
16 - - to answer questions about this really  
17 perplexing college process and other peers that  
18 are kind enough to stop for me and guide me  
19 through these important steps of my life. What  
20 I learned is that you really have to be in this  
21 school to understand what this school has to  
22 offer to the students. I once made the mistake  
23 of judging it from the outside and I request  
24 anyone else here that is doing the same to look  
25 around the auditorium at these few remaining

1 people that really care and know that we  
2 shouldn't be invisible or ignored. Because we  
3 have a kind of spirit loud enough that says this  
4 school has offerered us everything we have asked  
5 for. Thank you.

6 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Shabir. Next  
7 speaker 23 white Denise Hernandez. Ms.  
8 Hernandez.

9 MS. JANET MILES: Actually I'm not Ms.  
10 Hernandez, Ms. Hernandez had to leave a long  
11 time ago to take care of her little children so  
12 she asked me if I would read this statement. My  
13 name is Janet Miles. I'm in the physical  
14 education department. This is mostly Denise's  
15 words there's a couple little commentaries from  
16 me because I had to kind of make it me too.  
17 Many may think that we the Newtown High School  
18 community are against the closure of the 115  
19 year old Newtown High School because we're going  
20 to be pulled out of our comfort zone or have to  
21 go job hunting. Please stand corrected, we are  
22 not afraid of change. John you have given us  
23 more change in the last six or seven years than  
24 we can possibly handle. We have grown but we  
25 have done it in most all of our classes. I walk

1 into my colleagues classes and I see  
2 decoration, I see posters, I see everything  
3 everywhere that just advertises what we're doing  
4 in our classes. I see student work. When I  
5 first started here 16 years ago these classrooms  
6 were empty. I even have 7 bulletin boards in my  
7 gym that have words on them too. The  
8 premeditated- so we are not afraid of change.  
9 We constantly implement data driven changes and  
10 this premeditated closure of our 115 year old  
11 institution is clearly not a data driven change  
12 as has been demonstrated over and over tonight.  
13 It is a change that we the Newtown High School  
14 community do not support. The proposed new  
15 school which already has a proposed new  
16 principal, even- okay thank you- even though the  
17 closure decision is next week, will have more  
18 money given- so give it to Newtown High School.  
19 With that money we could continue to implement  
20 new programs that will increase teacher quality.  
21 The out with the old, the in with the new model,  
22 and I'm one of those old going out, does not  
23 necessarily mean equal equality. And as for our  
24 school grades they are produced by quality  
25 review and state visitors who sat in the back of

1 our classrooms on their cell phones. Thank  
2 you.

3 MR. MOJICA: Thank you ma'am. Next speaker  
4 25 white Clarise Barraga.

5 MS. CLARISE BARRAGA: Hello my name is  
6 Clarise Barraga and I'm graduating from this  
7 school in June. Even though it would be  
8 expected for a senior not to care about the  
9 future of this school, I do. It saddens me to  
10 know that my alma mater is going to close down  
11 and start under a new name, principal and staff.  
12 Newtown High School has been engraved not only  
13 in plaques and stones which date back 115 years  
14 ago but also in the hearts of the past and  
15 present students. Four years ago I walked the  
16 crowded hallways of Newtown High School knowing  
17 only my brother. It was hard for the both of  
18 us, nevertheless we felt the love in this school  
19 because we realized we are not alone. There are  
20 so many other students just like us who came  
21 here from another country not knowing anyone.  
22 Because Newtown opens its doors to everyone from  
23 every corner of the world, it created a diverse  
24 welcoming environment. My friends come from  
25 different countries, belong to different

1 cultures and practice different traditions.  
2 Every day I learn a piece of each of their  
3 cultures. This school have been an avid support  
4 of enlightening the minds of the students about  
5 diversity. Our annual multicultural show is the  
6 best example. The school gets a taste of many  
7 cultures through music and dance showcased by  
8 students in just one night. There's a lot more  
9 that I can tell about the school but there's one  
10 last thing I would like to say. This school is  
11 a trailblazer for many foreign students like me  
12 and my brother. The path were shown to us by  
13 teachers and staff that no matter how lost we  
14 are in this new world we can soar high just as  
15 American born individuals can. I can also say  
16 that once our class of 2012 toss their  
17 graduation caps in June we are forever grateful  
18 to teachers and staff we were honored to meet  
19 because they have helped us be the persons we  
20 are today. So long live Newtown.

21 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Barraga. Next  
22 speaker 26 white, Pui Mou[phonetic]. My  
23 apologies if I'm mispronouncing your name. My  
24 apologies.

25 Good evening everyone. My name is Pui Mou.

1 I am currently a senior in this school. And  
2 I'm here to speak to all of you today because of  
3 my earnest desire to - - to you. This school  
4 has become my second home, not just me, but to  
5 most of the people who gathered here with us  
6 today. It's only logical that one would think  
7 that I could care less about this public hearing  
8 since I'm graduating anyway. But I choose not  
9 to because this town has shaped too much of my  
10 life. I came to this foreign land four years  
11 ago from Malaysia speaking limited English. Now  
12 I'm standing here with more confidence. As an  
13 immigrant I started school with a daunting  
14 feeling. I was very fortunate to have gone to a  
15 regular ninth grade English the very first day  
16 of school. The following years I was selected  
17 to an honor tenth grade English class and then  
18 into my junior my grade college counselor Mr.  
19 Kinela who inspired me to take an AP language  
20 and compositions class, I never imagined myself  
21 taking an advanced placement class with my  
22 limited knowledge of English. But remember,  
23 remember him saying that you have to always  
24 challenge yourself in life, so I ended up taking  
25 two more AP classes along with the AP language

1 and composition class. I know this school  
2 had taken a risk in a way when I was entered in  
3 that AP class because I may be the one who could  
4 possibly drive the passing rate down but my  
5 teachers still let me take it because they  
6 believe in the potential of the students. And  
7 all of this means that immigrants are also  
8 capable of learning the English language similar  
9 to the way the natural born students are with  
10 hard work and dedication. In a little more time  
11 I was able to accomplish what native speakers  
12 have accomplished, not just that through the  
13 help of Mr. Figalis [phonetic] my artwork was  
14 selected over 800 entries and was exhibited in  
15 Metropolitan Museum last year. I'm sorry, wait.  
16 As I put on my cap and gown at graduation I will  
17 probably tell the world that I graduated from  
18 Newtown High School under the leadership of our  
19 great principal Mr. John Ficalora. And last but  
20 not least I actually believe that we tower above  
21 the rest, thank you.

22 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Miss. Next speaker  
23 27 white. Wayne Crawford. Mr. Crawford. Okay.  
24 Next speaker 28 white, David Cruz. Mr. Cruz.  
25 And as Mr. Cruz gets to the microphone if we

1 could have speakers 28-32 green approach the  
2 microphone. Thank you.

3 MR. DAVID CRUZ: I just going to speak  
4 briefly whatever I wrote right now. My throat  
5 is kind of sore right now. I think Bloomberg  
6 should step out of office and retire instead of  
7 our highly talented more respectful teachers who  
8 are part of me for giving me the strength and  
9 knowledge and power I need to get ahead in life.  
10 They are my high school family and I am so  
11 familiar with every one of them as well as the  
12 staff in this school. Students have always  
13 been involved with something whether it's for  
14 sports, arts, music and especially robotics. We  
15 tower above the rest and each year we are  
16 getting better. Newtown has made me decide and  
17 build up on what I would like to do in life.  
18 And if it weren't for Mr. Grant for teaching me  
19 how to play music, Ms. Rosenberg for helping me  
20 become a better artist, I wouldn't have been the  
21 person I am today. And it breaks me apart  
22 hearing the news that somebody wants to close  
23 our school. I say no to that actually. And  
24 thanks to this school I have made up my mind  
25 about becoming a United States Marine Corps

1 officer. I would like to come back in that  
2 uniform and revisit my teachers and tell them  
3 thank you for helping me out. Thanks.

4 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Cruz. Next  
5 speaker 28 green Taleia Reef. Taleia Reef.

6 MS. TALEIA REEF: Hello my name is Taleia  
7 Reef and I will be graduating from Newtown in  
8 June 2012 and I will not be the last class to  
9 graduate. When I first stepped foot into the  
10 doors of Newtown High School in 2008 I remember  
11 being upset because I didn't want to attend a  
12 school which was known to be a horrible school.  
13 I hesitated to give Newtown a chance but my four  
14 years at this wonderful school has made me  
15 realize that judging a book by its cover is  
16 dangerous. Because you may miss out on an  
17 awesome experience due to negativity. If I  
18 hadn't given Newtown a chance I would have never  
19 noticed all the positives it holds within its  
20 staff, students and classrooms. Looking at  
21 Newtown from a far distance isn't the same as  
22 attending Newtown High School and being a part  
23 of this loving family. I will never regret my  
24 years at Newtown neither will I regret giving  
25 Newtown a chance and I ask you to give Newtown a

1 chance too. Before making a decision to  
2 close down our school ignore the negatives you  
3 have heard about Newtown and see us for who we  
4 really are. Thank you.

5 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Miss. Next speaker 29  
6 green Ms. Helen Cohen. Ms. Cohen.

7 MS. HELEN COHEN: Good evening everybody,  
8 thank you all for staying so late. I appreciate  
9 it. People who have gone before me have pretty  
10 much said what I wanted to say, it's been a long  
11 night but still I want an opportunity to say my  
12 peace. I was a high school English teacher in  
13 my other life and at the time I used to read the  
14 high school directory when it wasn't filled with  
15 numbers and statistics. And I remember the  
16 Newtown page said Newtown had students from over  
17 100 countries. 14 years ago I had the privilege  
18 of being assigned her as an attendance teacher.  
19 As an attendance teacher I visit the homes of  
20 truant students. Over the course of these years  
21 I have been able to work with the students from  
22 over 100 countries, additionally Newtown has  
23 become my home and my family. I have to repeat  
24 that. Newtown has become my home and my family.  
25 My job is very interesting, I try to help as

1 many students as I can. While I've had  
2 success with many students and families, many of  
3 them have problems that are way beyond the areas  
4 of my expertise. Closing Newtown and opening  
5 another school in its place will not address the  
6 issues facing the students of the population we  
7 have here nor will it be wise to change the  
8 teachers and administrators. The faculty and  
9 staff here at Newtown are extremely caring and  
10 compassionate. Working with students from so  
11 many different cultures and countries is a  
12 daunting task as best. What is needed here is  
13 more support and resources for our students and  
14 families, not a new school. Newtown High School  
15 is 115 years old, I don't think any of us are  
16 115 years old. Keep Newtown open, let the  
17 Newtown legacy go on and the Newtown family go  
18 on for another 115 years. Thank you so much.

19 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Cohen. Next  
20 speaker 30 green Mr. Tom Tilitz.

21 MR. TOM TILITZ: My name is Tom Tilitz. I'm  
22 a graduate of Newtown High School class of 1969.  
23 I later became a teacher at Newtown High School,  
24 worked here from 1979-2009 and now teach history  
25 at the City University of New York. And I'm

1 coming here at the end, I'm overwhelmed by  
2 the spirit and the kind of feeling that I gained  
3 from this group and I'm looking at the stage and  
4 I'm wondering if that spirit is contagious  
5 enough to have infected some of the members that  
6 are going to make this decision. And they have  
7 a report, this report indicates that there are  
8 problems that weren't expressed in all of the  
9 speakers tonight, that these problems maybe lead  
10 them to believe that they know better, that they  
11 know better because they see it in the report.  
12 And to me that is very unpersuasive. It seems  
13 to me that this group tonight represents a  
14 spirit and the reality of Newtown High School  
15 that goes way beyond anything that's in this  
16 report or any of the shortcomings that they  
17 perceive in this report. But if they insist on  
18 saying that they have a professional and more  
19 insightful view than this emotional and heart  
20 rending meeting well there are others that have  
21 similar views and their challenging their views,  
22 if you read the New York Times today you know  
23 that there's an organization called the Working  
24 Group on School Transformation. This Working  
25 Group on School Transformation is going to come

1 up with a negative report on what smaller  
2 replacement schools do for students in schools  
3 that have been closed like Newtown. This group  
4 contains Carmen Farina [phonetic], for all I  
5 know someone who was once your boss. And so  
6 this group must be taken seriously. Now the  
7 organization that makes the decisions on this  
8 has been called a puppet organization. Now I  
9 don't want you to go along with that, I want you  
10 to not be puppets, but you know what I want you  
11 to be a robot. And some people think robots and  
12 puppets are the same thing. But I don't want  
13 you to be any robot, I want you to be Chen Lin  
14 Junior. That's the name of the Newtown prize  
15 winning robot and that robot is responsive,  
16 resourceful and ready to make the decisions that  
17 need to be made for justice in this community.  
18 Thank you.

19 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Mr. Tilitz. Next  
20 speaker 31 green Chris, my apologies I'm having  
21 trouble reading the last name. Side? Sorry  
22 sir.

23 MR. CHRIS SIDE: That's good because I got  
24 to read somebody else's thing too who got cut  
25 off. This is from Carry Patai. What's in the

1 name of the school some will argue, what's  
2 the big deal if the DOE changes the name but  
3 keeps the commitment and passion of the students  
4 and the staff in tact? Everything I say. How  
5 can the name of this school be anything but  
6 Newtown? Given the population of the school for  
7 many of the students and alumni of this school  
8 have come to a new country, a new community, a  
9 new culture, a new town. It is fitting  
10 therefore that the name of the new school be  
11 Newtown. Okay now I got my stuff. Wow I've  
12 always wanted to close something it's like a  
13 closing argument of a trial. And I'm sitting  
14 there and I look at trial has facts and we've  
15 heard all kinds of great facts supporting the  
16 argument not to do this. Almost every fact that  
17 I heard that was given by the City is pretty  
18 much not supported, there was no cross  
19 examination, no questions why some of the things  
20 in the document that Mr. Tilitz held up are  
21 false. So I sit there and say, how do you close  
22 this out? Well I thought of a great thing that  
23 an educator said, one of my favorite educators  
24 he said, oh see now look at that I'm forgetting.  
25 He said great moments are born out of great

1 opportunities. The Panel when they make the  
2 vote in a few weeks, has an opportunity to do  
3 the right thing, not to do the rubber stamp. To  
4 sit there and say hey you know what, this is the  
5 right thing, great moments, and we'll see what  
6 happens. Thank you.

7 MR. MOJICA: Thank you sir. Next speaker 32  
8 green Christian Sykes. And if speakers with  
9 numbers 30-35 white if they can approach the  
10 microphone, thank you.

11 MR. CHRISTIAN SYKES: Hello my name is  
12 Christian Sykes. I'm a 1964 graduate of Newtown  
13 and a math teacher on leave right now. I want  
14 to tell you a little bit about myself and I  
15 graduated Newtown and my education foundation  
16 was developed here. Not in elementary school,  
17 not in college, the foundation was here. And  
18 when I graduated from college I decided to work  
19 for Groman [phonetic] Aircraft as an aircraft  
20 design engineer. I got my first job there  
21 because previous Newtown engineering students  
22 who had graduated had jobs there and there was a  
23 connection and their boss interviewed me and  
24 said you're from Newtown, you've got a job. And  
25 I worked there for seven years. I worked on the

1 - - that went to the moon, I worked on the  
2 space shuttle, I worked on F-14 fighters and  
3 every time I was there Newtown people had that  
4 connection that we helped one another. They  
5 helped me get my professional engineering  
6 license, they helped me get a Masters through  
7 the company sponsored free because Newtown  
8 people supported Newtown people. And later on  
9 when the company closed I looked for something  
10 to do and I decided I was going to try teaching  
11 and I tried to get into Newtown. No openings  
12 for six years, no one leaves Newtown. They stay  
13 here, you have to shoot them or do something to  
14 get rid of them. The point is there is  
15 something here at Newtown, among the teachers,  
16 among the students, among the staff, you can't  
17 destroy that. If you close us and you take our  
18 name away, make us new school two years from now  
19 we're going to come back and add on town again.  
20 It will be Newtown again after Mayor Bloomberg  
21 leaves. I have two questions to present to  
22 Mayor Bloomberg. One, instead of reorganizing  
23 these schools please come here and solve our  
24 overcrowded student situation. Number two,  
25 Newtown High School needs \$20,000 to go for our

1 robotics team. Please ask him to stick his  
2 hand in his pocket and support us. Thank you.

3 MR. MOJICA: Thank you sir. Next speaker  
4 with number 30 white Jocelyn Cordero. 30 white  
5 Jocelyn Cordero. Ms. Cordero? Okay 31 white  
6 Lucy Schillero.

7 MS. LUCY SCHILLERO: Good evening and I'll  
8 make this quick. My name is Lucy Deangelo  
9 Schillero. I grew up here all my life in  
10 Elmhurst, I'm a graduate of Newtown High School.  
11 I'm not going to mention the year. I hate to  
12 repeat what was said tonight and so I'm going to  
13 just say this. The teachers of this school  
14 never abandoned its obligation to the students  
15 that came to at this school. That means the  
16 students that came from all over the world that  
17 says something about the teachers. So you know  
18 and I know that this proposal was meant to fail  
19 no matter what, to the students that are here  
20 tonight you will never fail. When you have that  
21 kind of dedication from a teacher and a  
22 principal such as this man, you will take that  
23 with you forever. You're speaking to someone  
24 right here who graduated from this school. We  
25 need to keep the name of the heritage of the

1 school so you can carry that on to your  
2 students, to your friends and especially to your  
3 family. Displacing students, and this is for  
4 Bloomberg, displaces a generation of fruitful  
5 citizens. Take that back to him, thank you.

6 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Schillero. Next  
7 speaker 32 white Ms. Rosa, and my apologies for  
8 the mispronunciation, Coreri. Sorry Rosa Coreri,  
9 my apologies if I'm mispronouncing that.  
10 Speaker number 32 white. Okay we've heard from  
11 speaker 33. Speaker 34 white Anthony Ferrina.  
12 Sir.

13 MR. ANTHONY FERRINA: Good evening everyone.  
14 My name is Tony Ferrina. I'm a school aide, 13  
15 years at Newtown High School. I don't want to  
16 repeat anything that was said tonight. I'd like  
17 to applaud all the students that showed up, also  
18 all the students that did speak. It's a  
19 testimonial to the great education they got at  
20 Newtown High School, the purpose of why we're  
21 here and the great leadership through Mr.  
22 Ficalora and Eric Levitan [phonetic]. Right?  
23 That will just continue the legacy of this great  
24 school. I also want to thank Mr. Ficalora and  
25 Mr. Levitan on the school aide shop steward, I

1 represent all the school aides in this  
2 school, I want to thank them for their  
3 leadership making us very comfortable here and a  
4 family here and continuing their great work. I  
5 want to address one thing about this school,  
6 this school is a community school, this school  
7 was paid by the tax payers of East Elmhurst.  
8 This school belongs to this community, served  
9 this community for 115 years. In 2002 when  
10 Bloomberg won Mayoral responsibility for the  
11 education, he is the one that changed  
12 everything, he's the one that made us a failure.  
13 It wasn't the teachers, it wasn't the students  
14 and it wasn't the community. This school  
15 belongs to the community, not Bloomberg, keep it  
16 open.

17 MR. MOJICA: Thank you sir. If we can have  
18 speakers with numbers 33-36 green approach the  
19 microphone. Speakers with numbers 33-36 green.  
20 And first speaker is 33 green Felix Augustine,  
21 Felix Augustine. 34 green Jiselle Pena, Ms.  
22 Pena.

23 MS. JISELLE PENA: My name is Jiselle Pena  
24 and what I would like to share with you guys is  
25 that we have great teachers here who have

1 supported me and they see the improvement  
2 that I have made and they have supported me so  
3 much and I am so proud of myself for being who I  
4 am today, I have matured, I have a job, I just  
5 had a video- I got videotaped by PBS because of  
6 our GPS program in our school. I had to do  
7 credit recovery and all this stuff because yes I  
8 had messed up at the beginning but due to our  
9 programs at the school it helped me and I am  
10 graduating on time in my class of 2012. Save  
11 Newtown.

12 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Ms. Pena. Next  
13 speaker 34 green Aris Stoble [phonetic], Aris  
14 Stoble. 36 green Felix Ramos. Felix Ramos.  
15 Okay ladies and gentlemen that concludes the  
16 public comment portion of our meeting. We will  
17 now begin the question and answer period. There  
18 will be some individual questions and others  
19 will be bucketed into categories where we will  
20 have representative questions asked. Any  
21 question ladies and gentlemen that is not  
22 answered here tonight will be answered on the  
23 website. If you have any additional questions  
24 at the conclusion or at the end of tonight's  
25 proceedings we encourage you to direct them to

1 us by calling the following number, (212)  
2 374-7621 that's (212) 374-7621 or by sending  
3 them to us via email to  
4 D24proposals@schools.nyc.gov, that's  
5 D24proposals@schools.nyc.gov and at this point  
6 in time I will turn it back over to Deputy  
7 Chancellor Weiner.

8 MR. WEINER: Thank you, thank you. I  
9 appreciate everyone's comments here. It really  
10 was amazing how many students came up and spoke  
11 that have been in the country for such a short  
12 period of time, I think one little girl spoke  
13 and she said she had been here only two months,  
14 that takes extreme courage and bravery. So we  
15 thank everyone for coming and speaking their  
16 minds and make sure their comments were going to  
17 be part of the public discussion.

18 Okay we've got several questions here so I  
19 just want to get through all of them. First  
20 question is where will the new incoming students  
21 go or attend? All incoming ninth grade students  
22 who have applied to the current school and are  
23 matched to that school by the high school  
24 admissions process will be automatically  
25 enrolled in the new school if the proposal is

1 approved. The next question is, is there a  
2 new high school being built? No, this proposal-  
3 the proposed new school will be in this same  
4 building. Question three is what engagement did  
5 the Department of Education do with the schools?  
6 Last spring the Department held meetings to  
7 begin and continue conversations with all PLA  
8 schools and their communities about the school's  
9 performance and possible improvement strategies.  
10 In January 2012 after taking into account a  
11 number of factors the DOE decided to implement  
12 an actual plan for PLA schools that was  
13 different than the one that was previously in  
14 place. At that time superintendents and members  
15 of the network staff met with the school  
16 communities to talk about the DOE proposal to  
17 close or replace the schools. And between  
18 January and now the DOE has been collecting  
19 feedback from school communities about its  
20 proposal including this hearing. The next  
21 question is why did the Department of Education  
22 switch my school's SIG model? In the Spring of  
23 2011 the Department of Education applied to the  
24 State to place this school in a new model, SED  
25 approved the application contingent upon the DOE

1 and the UFT reaching an agreement by January  
2 1<sup>st</sup> of this year to implement a new teacher  
3 evaluation system. Unfortunately the DOE and  
4 the UFT failed to reach an agreement on the  
5 elements of a new teacher evaluation system. In  
6 the wake of not coming to terms on a new  
7 evaluation system in these schools, the DOE  
8 reassessed the viability of transmission restart  
9 as a viable intervention model. And there was a  
10 determination made that a more intensive  
11 intervention was needed to achieve the kind of  
12 student outcomes that are acceptable for current  
13 as well as future students. Closing the school  
14 and creating a new school to replace it was the  
15 only way to get the implemented reforms.  
16 Finally the last question that overlaps a little  
17 bit with the previous question is why is New  
18 York City seeking to close and replace this  
19 school? The Department is proposing to close  
20 and replace this school because we believe that  
21 doing so will provide a better educational  
22 opportunity to current students as well as  
23 future students that enter this school and will  
24 more rapidly and with more certainty than the  
25 current interventions be able to allow students

1 to achieve success. That's all the questions  
2 that we had.

3 MR. MOJICA: Thank you Deputy Chancellor.  
4 Ladies and gentlemen we deeply appreciate your  
5 feedback and contributions to this hearing and  
6 your patience throughout this hearing is deeply  
7 appreciated. The information that was gathered  
8 at today's hearing will be shared with the Panel  
9 for Educational Policy which will have its  
10 hearing on April 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at the  
11 Prospect Heights Campus at 883 Classon Avenue,  
12 Brooklyn, New York to vote on the proposal.  
13 Please also as I mentioned before call the  
14 number (212) 374-7621 or email  
15 D24proposals@schools.nyc.gov if you have any  
16 other questions or concerns. Thank you all for  
17 coming. This joint public meeting is officially  
18 adjourned.

19 [END RECORDING 290\_279.MP3]  
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C E R T I F I C A T E

1  
2           The prior proceedings were transcribed from  
3 audio files and have been transcribed to the  
4 best of my ability.

5  
6           Signature



7           Date April 19, 2012

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