

Contracts for Excellence

District 7

501 Courtlandt Avenue

Bronx, NY 10451

Public Comment

(Audio begins mid-sentence.)

MS. TORRES:

-- free to write the feedback or any questions that you may have on the card.

The other thing is that, as I said, Ms. Quinones, who is the senior budget grants officer, she is here also to support in any way possible, in many ways because she's very good at this too, in terms of the information that we're going to share with you.

So we are about to begin the presentation -- or the hearing, really, for the Contracts for Excellence in District 7. Today, September 17th, 2009.

First of all, as I said before, the chancellor has made it very clear that we need to hold hearings, because it's very important for the community to have an idea of how the Contract for Excellence funds are being used or funded/allocated within our schools.

Now, Contract for Excellence funds are funds that will be -- have been assigned to schools where they have students with high needs. And these students with high needs are English-language learners; they're also students in poverty; you have students with disabilities; and you also have students with low achievement, academic achievement, in -- or at risk.

So the -- at the top part you have the different categories or the components that are being earmarked for these funding sources. You have class size reduction, time on task, teacher and principal quality initiatives, middle and high school restructuring, full-day kindergarten -- or pre-kindergarten, really, programs, and model programs for English-language learners.

Now, what we're going to do is that we're going to show you pie graphs of how these monies, these funds, have been allocated. I also need to make clear to you that the funds have been allocated based on -- this responsibility has been given to the schools alongside with their school leadership teams. They have made decisions in terms of what is the best way to use these funds.

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Now, I also have to preface by indicating to you that we did not receive any additional funds. We -- what happened was that we received the same amount of funding. And also remember that, because of the economic downturn that our nation is going through right now, not having any revenues, that has been one of the reasons for not receiving any additional funds. In addition to that, with teacher contracts and increase in salary, that has also impacted on the funding.

So whatever programs or plans the schools had prior year, those are the same plans that we will have in effect for this coming school year.

MS. SPEAKER:

The plan will be basically for maintenance of effort in terms of what was done the previous year.

MS. TORRES:

Right. So that's what it's called. We're in a maintenance-for-effort status at this point. And we will continue with the approved plan from '08-'09.

MS. SPEAKER:

Right. Now, the next slide will provide data that is basically a proposal (indiscernible), and it is something to change.

MS. TORRES:

Right. As I said before, this is preliminary; that's why we are really asking for your feedback, because based on the feedback that we received, that the DOE receives, citywide, then the DOE will then complete a plan in place.

So here you have the different allocation types. The total amounts of monies for fiscal year '10 is 387 million dollars. And this is the way they have been broken down: Discretionary allocations to schools, which is 63 percent of the funds, are equal to 242 million. Then you have the targeted allocations to schools, which is twenty percent of the funding, seventy-six million, and these are -- the targeted, those are the funds that the schools have allocated that we will look at later on, right? The maintenance of effort that we indicated, thirty million, which is eight percent. And then districtwide initiatives, thirty-nine percent, which is ten percent of the whole funding.

By program area, class size, you have here once again -- these are the different components that we mentioned at the beginning of the presentation. For class size, 39 percent, which equals to 153 million. Time on task, 27 percent, which equals to 103 million. Teacher and principal quality, which is professional development, fourteen percent, which is fifty-six million dollars. Middle and high school restructuring, ten percent, which equals to thirty-nine million. Full-day pre-K -- pre-kindergarten

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classes, six million, which is at two percent. Model programs for English-language learners, seven percent of the funding, which came out to twenty-seven million. And then you have TBD, "to be determined", funding, which as of September 1st had not been allocated by certain schools, but my sense is that they have been allocated; so that's four million, which is one percent of the funding source.

Now, by -- this is discretionary funding or spending by program area.

MS. SPEAKER:

What schools receive.

MS. TORRES:

Okay, schools -- the school --

MS. SPEAKER:

The schools receive a discretionary --

MS. TORRES:

Right.

MS. SPEAKER:

This is not a -- basically earmarked (indiscernible).

MS. TORRES:

Right, and then later on we will see for District 7.

Class size reduction, thirty-five percent, eighty-five million. Time on task, thirty percent, which is seventy-three million. Teacher and principal quality, nineteen percent, which equals to forty-six million. The model programs for ELL is ten percent, which is twenty-five. We also have the middle and high school restructuring, which is -- I don't see it --

MS. SPEAKER:

It's nine million.

MS. TORRES:

Nine million dollars. Okay. Uh-huh. Four percent, and then the to-be-determined, which are the funds that we spoke about that we think that they have been allocated; those are the four million.

Now, this is an explanation, okay? In other words, the amount -- for example, over 1,400 schools in May 2009 received the Contract for Excellence funds that were released to the schools, 242 million dollars, which came out to 63 percent of the contract amount.

Here, the description is that they looked at the guidance programs to --

MS. SPEAKER:

That they (indiscernible) guidance in terms of using the funds to continue the service that they had last year in the C4E program. Again, we did not receive additional funding, so whatever was there was used to support the existing programs that were initiated last year.

MS. SPEAKER:

Right.

MS. TORRES:

And also, once again, the -- whatever amount was determined by a formula, a student formula, as defined by the state --

MS. SPEAKER:

It's defined by the State Education Department.

MS. TORRES:

And you will see later that -- let's say, for example, also they're looking at the rate, in other words, number of students, and matching it to funding.

The targeted allocations to schools, seventy-six million is the estimate for this category. And the schools that received these allocations, they were chosen based on two categories; in other words, first of all, based on student need but also if they -- the school had the capability, the capacity, to complete the specific program. And if schools that -- were unable to complete a specific program, then they had to look at another program to make a decision in terms of how to use those funds that were allocated for them.

MS. SPEAKER:

So, basically, of the seventy-six million, they went for four major categories: One was for collaborative team teaching, based on student needs in the school; another was for full-day program; another was autism spectrum disorder for classrooms; and the other -- and the last component was ELL summer school.

Again, the allocations we received in 2008-2009 were the same amount in this fiscal year, as long as they retained the population. So, for example, if a school had ten collaborative team teaching classes last year but the student population this year only accounts for eight classrooms, then their allocation would be for only those eight classrooms.

MS. TORRES:

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Okay, districtwide initiatives, these funds, although they do not appear on the schools' budget, the Department of Education has identified certain programs to support schools as well, and this is ten percent of the total contract. So, for example, they have allocated seven million to Multiple Pathways to Graduation initiatives for overage and undercredit students. And that is a major concern also. We need to find a way to continue supporting our overage students because we want to be sure that when they leave our middle schools, when they leave our high schools, they're ready for college.

Ten million for principal training initiatives; five million for school restructuring; and seven million in year-two ELL success and middle school success grants. And I understand that District 7 has two schools that are part of the middle school success grants.

And then, also, the ten million dollars for college and AP preparation for high-needs students in grades 9 through 12, this is something that is new and it replaces the higher allocation for '08-'09 for middle school success.

And then the maintenance for effort that -- of effort that we had mentioned is thirty million dollars, which is at eight percent. And this is maintenance for summer schools -- summer programs. As you know, our programs have been pretty short or small, but we still want to have the funding to support the children who have the lowest academic achievement.

This is something that you should have received; we made copies for you to have. This is the proposed discretionary spending for CEC 7, for our district. If you take a look at class size reduction, 2,389,841, which is the 34.9 percent. Time on task, 1,969,076, which is a 28.8 percent. Teacher and principal quality initiatives, 1,835,518, which is 26.8 percent. Middle and high school restructuring, 206,513, which is a 3 percent. No allocation for full-day pre-K. And model programs for ELLs, 440,402, 6.4 percent. So the total is 6,840,950, which is then the total 100 percent.

Now, notice here that if you want to find out or have information on your individual school, you can go on this link and you will be able then to see the breakdown for your individual schools.

The other thing is that these schools are expected or have already done that where they have included how they are spending the allocated funds from C4E in their CEP, in their comprehensive educational plan. And the district leadership team as well, we are charged with the same responsibility where we have to include all of our schools and show the state how these funding sources are being utilized.

All funds by program strategy, and, once again, these are the different components: creation of additional classrooms, 2,015,906, which is an 18 percent; reducing teacher-to-student ratio through team teaching strategies,

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2,122,900, for 19 percent. And that adds up to 4,138,806, which is a 37 percent.

On the time on task, before- and after-school programs, we have 1,278,280, 11.4. Summer school programs, 36,948, for a .3 percent. Dedicated instructional time, 1,626,032, 14.6. And on individualized tutoring, 111,723, for a 1 percent. When you add all that up, it should be 27.3 percent of the allocation, which comes out to 3,052,983.

For teacher and principal quality initiatives, for example, one of the things is that the teachers need to be considered highly qualified. In other words, by the state they need to have all of the credentials. And I'm happy to say that District 7 is at 99.7 percent of teachers that are highly qualified. So 114,751, for 1 percent. Professional mentoring for beginning teachers and principals, 200,452, 1.8 percent. Instructional coaches for teachers, 1,503,779, for 13.5. And leadership coaches for principals, 367,610, for 3.3.

And it's also very important for you to understand that new teachers do need the support, new principals also need the support, from experienced instructors.

So this came out to 2,186,593, for 19.6.

Middle and high school restructuring, instructional changes, 910,896, for 8.2 percent; structural changes, 103,256, for a .9 percent; which totals 1,014,152, 9.1 percent. And then for full-day pre-kindergarten classes, 264,667, for 2.4 percent. And model programs for ELL, innovative programs for ELL, 515,071, which adds up to 4.6.

And that is the total. So the Contracts for Excellence for District 7 we have a total amount of 11,172,273, which adds up to the 100 percent of the funding source for District 7.

MS. SPEAKER:

That eleven million includes all of the allocations from the districtwide initiative, the maintenance of effort, the targeted allocations and discretionary that went directly to the schools. So that eleven million includes all the funding sources that are available through C4E that went to the schools in support of all the initiatives.

MS. TORRES:

Those are all the pie charts that you saw at the beginning, broken down.

So a note: As teachers' salaries rise, you know, more funds will be required as well to maintain the same number of teachers as last year. Impacted by register changes and average teacher salary changes, even schools that allocate the same amount of money year over year to class size reduction

activities may experience slight increases in class size or pupil-teacher ratio. And because of the economic situation and which we are facing as a nation, this required the schools, once again, an average of 4.9 percent cut to the schools, causing, you know, many schools to cut down on teaching position or anything that then impacted on class size, depending on whatever position it was.

So that's why, you know, it's very important that you understand the severity of our situation and how our principals and school leadership teams, of course involving you too, why it's so important to have this communication, so that you see what the schools are trying to do in order to continue moving forward with the education of your student -- of your children.

And then, also, many schools also chose class size reduction or pupil-teacher ratio strategy to avoid increased class size.

The last slide, as I said at the beginning, we welcome any feedback. We're going to open it up if you have any questions or any feedback. And this is something that we're doing schoolwide. Once again, we want to continue developing a maintenance of effort Contract for Excellence plan. Once again, this is preliminary because we want to hear from you. And the deadline for public comment is October 8th.

There is a link, which is the ContractforExcellence@schools.nyc.gov, that you can, what is it, go into, and you can also give feedback to the Department of Education. The comment may be on: how the schools are spending the discretionary funds with the different programs that we shared with you; how the DOE is allocating the targeted contracts to fund the schools; how the DOE is also allocating the funds for districtwide initiatives; or any other comment that you might have or question that you might have about the whole process.

So, once again, if you have any questions or any comments, we're now opening the floor.

MS. SPEAKER:

(Indiscernible) questions, raise your hands and I'll pick them up from you.

MS. TORRES:

Right. If you have any -- if you have written any comments or feedback, we're really encouraging your feedback. So if you can just raise your hand and we'll collect the cards. Any questions? Any feedback?

MS. SPEAKER:

Yes, she has --

MS. TORRES:

Question.

MS. SPEAKER:

Okay, my question is, I understand the slide and I understand exactly what you -- okay.

I saw the slide just like everyone here, and my question is, being that we see where the money's being allocated and the percentage and everything like that, as a parent my question is what questions do we ask? Like, should we be asking okay, where's -- like, the funding should go here? Because I understand you're opening up the floor to ask parents what do they want to know, but everything seems to be in place. So my question is how can we question that? You understand what I'm saying? Because I'm --

MS. SPEAKER:

(Indiscernible).

MS. SPEAKER:

Like, you know, because I understand what's going on, but my thing is, like, what if we want to say, well, we want more of this and we want more of that, and the money's already allocated to where these are going? At the end of this whole presentation, how can we ask the question to say anything, because everything's already where it is -- where it's going? So how can we ask a question? That's what I'm trying to figure out, because I just thought it was me, but I just --

MS. TORRES:

Well, first of all -- I mean, it's a valid question. First of all, these monies -- you know, they're strict in terms of the guidelines, and those are the six components that these funds need to be zeroed into.

MS. SPEAKER:

(Indiscernible).

MS. TORRES:

Right, right. But also with the understanding that if the schools do not have the capacity, right, or the capability of being able to use the funding for a certain specific area, they can then choose to use the funds within another area that is very specific to those six.

MS. SPEAKER:

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All right, now, with that being said, as a parent -- like, I'm still trying to understand. Now, wait, all right, the money could be used in the class reduction size and whatnot, but where -- like, where -- as a parent asking a question, where can we come in to ask anything on what's going on with the money? That's my thing. Like, how can --

MS. SPEAKER:

(Indiscernible) every school?

MS. SPEAKER:

Yeah, for either individual school or just hearing this whole thing. Like, you know, I know parents may want to know something, but I feel like maybe we're not getting it to the point to say okay, like, can we ask about this or can we ask about that, because we don't want to just ask a question and we're, like, (indiscernible) here, like, okay, we already told you that, it's going here, here, here.

So how can we ask a question in regards to what you just showed us in class reduction and all these things? What can a parent's concern as far as asking questions to the monies -- what can they say? What can we say to this as a parent? That's just my question.

MS. SPEAKER:

I think that's a more general question, not just specifically for C4E spending, because the question is where do my children need improvement, academically how are they doing, and if they're not doing well in certain subject areas what are you doing to help my child improve in those areas.

So I think those kinds of questions should be discussed at the school level and at the school leadership team. It's not necessarily that it's just C4E funding; it's how are my children doing and what can you do to help them.

MS. TORRES:

If I may. Yeah, please understand that this is one specific pot of money, okay? There are other pots of monies too, but through the school leadership team you can then see the budget. I mean, that's public information in terms of the different budgets for the schools.

So it's -- you know, you earn all your right to ask.

MS. SPEAKER:

We got it.

MS. TORRES:

You got it?

MS. SPEAKER:

Is, basically, her question was we understand what you're saying. This is, like, an overall -- I mean, (indiscernible) and these are the ways --

MS. TORRES:

For this specific category. For --

MS. SPEAKER:

Yeah.

MS. TORRES:

Uh-huh.

MS. SPEAKER:

But in order for -- what she's saying is, like, what I'm saying, that we want to know, like, it would have to come from the leadership team because they would have to show us, like, say, forty-nine, we want to know what's ** forty-nine, what **, if you had this money here and you don't need it here, you have forty-nine, you could do it that way. It would be basically asking the leadership team to see how --

MS. TORRES:

Okay, but then you're talking about other funding, right? Other fundings. Yeah. I mean, you know, it's public information and you need to inform yourself when the school leadership team meets so that you can ask those questions. Also, as I said before that the slide -- number 10, was it? -- where you have then the link so you can go into the DOE Web site and see the funding for your specific schools as well. Okay?

MS. SPEAKER:

I have two parts, two questions. One is -- it's two questions in one **. And the first question is does this information include high school along with middle/elementary school? And how many schools attended the SLT meeting today?

MS. TORRES:

The DLT meeting, there were about five members.

MS. SPEAKER:

Yeah, we have the UFT, we have CEC 37 --

MS. TORRES:

CSA.

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MS. SPEAKER:

-- CSA. That's three or four. District family advocate.

MS. TORRES:

Uh-huh. And then we had two parent members who were ill.

MS. SPEAKER:

And the liaison, Elizabeth. I don't know --

MS. TORRES:

Right, right. The middle school -- the high school --

MS. SPEAKER:

There's a high school and middle school restructuring piece, but I'm wondering if the question is did the middle schools and high school receive C4E allocation. Is that the allocation?

MS. SPEAKER:

That's the question.

MS. SPEAKER:

And that -- and, yes. The answer's yes.

MS. SPEAKER:

Okay, the question is I want to know how schools are participating, because the school -- the district SLT was today; school just opened. So I want to know how did the parents know SLT from all the schools that represent District 7, how **. That's why I asked how many schools attended.

The other question was I want to know, this information --

MS. TORRES:

Yeah, well, let's take it one at a time.

MS. SPEAKER:

The plan is part of a comprehensive education plan, which the school leadership team works on and votes on and actually signs off in terms of the plan before it's submitted for approval to the state. So the C4E plan is in there already; it's just being implemented right now.

Okay, so that was a task that was worked on as part of the team, the school leadership team.

MS. SPEAKER:

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So this is last year's ** now?

MS. SPEAKER:

Well, it's a maintenance of effort now this year. Last year was funded, and this year's a continuation of that fund at that same level.

MS. SPEAKER:

Right, it's the same -- right.

MS. SPEAKER:

There's no extension.

MS. SPEAKER:

So you're basically asking us to ask questions on things that are implemented from last year.

MS. TORRES:

Well, there were things that we implemented last year, but we want your feedback, because this is a preliminary plan. What is happening is that, because of the funding issues, there's no additional funds to create new initiatives. We just ** whatever was in place last year.

MS. SPEAKER:

All right, and my reason for asking it is, is that in connection with the high school -- I know we have a high schools that are ** reconstructed or something that's being made up to deal with high schools. But since we deal with elementary and middle schools on this level, and many of us have high schools, and we invite high schools to attend a CEC meeting, so I thought I should ask, is high school information improving in this --

MS. SPEAKER:

Yes. And if you can go -- if you go into the Web site, you can get school-specific information, including information from the high schools.

MS. SPEAKER:

So with that being said, how many high schools participated, came to the DSLT meeting today? Were any representatives here?

MS. SPEAKER:

No. The school leadership team meeting, okay, that's for the community schools. And, as I said before, there were two parents that were ill. So we had the representatives from the different unions as well as Ms. Torres and myself.

MS. TORRES:

And the high school superintendent.

MS. SPEAKER:

Oh, yes, and -- I'm sorry, and Joel Dibartolomeo was there, the high school superintendent. He's always there.

MS. SPEAKER:

Thank you.

MS. SPEAKER:

Um-hum.

MS. SPEAKER:

The -- another question, and the last one that I have, is from a father who is asking, "My son attends PS 157. How can I, as a parent, help to improve the school so they can get better and more funding?"

MS. SPEAKER:

Well, your participation is extremely important. We cannot do this by ourselves. We need your support. And, you know, that communication is of extreme important to all of us.

In terms of funding, well, you know, we're living in very difficult times. What we are doing is we're reaching out to grants, you know, writing grants, proposals. We have representatives from the borough office, from the borough president's office, who also takes back feedback or information in terms of the needs.

I also have been speaking with universities. Like, for example, there's a gentleman that I've been speaking with to see if we can get laptops, because I would like to create, like, a mini technology center for parents to go in so they learn more about parent-ARIS link.

So it's about participating and, you know, working together and really becoming like a think tank in different ways that we can better support our schools.

MS. SPEAKER:

Any more questions?

That's it.

MS. TORRES:

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Okay, so the hearing is closed for the C4E, or Contracts for Excellence presentation. I thank you for that. And two more things and then I will --

(Audio ends mid-sentence.)