Contracts for Excellence

District 23

1665 St. Marks Ave.

Brooklyn, NY 11233

Public Comment

MR. CONYERS:

Under state law of the Contract for Excellence, funds must be distributed to schools to benefit the students with the greatest need. And as defined by New York State, it must be spent in six program areas, and these programs are, as you'll see on the PowerPoint: class size reduction, time on task, teacher and principal quality initiatives, middle school and high school restructuring, full-day pre-kindergarten, and the model programs for English-language learners.

Next slide, please.

Just to lie some background, the Contract for Excellence was supposed to phase in over five years with the Department of Education receiving funds each year on top of new funds from the previous year. Because of the economic crisis that we all know about, the state has only funded the first two years of a Contract for Excellence.

Even though we are now in year three, there's only been funding for the first two years. So now that we're in year three, we're just maintaining efforts for programs from last year. And what that means is that we are making certain that we are able to maintain the programs that were previously funded within the schools for the past two years and year three.

Note that this is a proposed allocation because there is a window, an opportunity for comments that will be considered. And this is the proposed allocation described in this plan and contingent upon further analyses and school-based conditions.

This slide represents a global overview of New York City's entire capital -- I mean, Contract for Excellence allocation from the point of how the funds are allocated. There are more detailed descriptions on what these pie wedges mean in later slides, but for the sake of this slide, discretionary funds, which is -- you see 242 million dollars of funds that are distributed to schools based on the formula developed by the state. Schools spend these funds in the best fashion that they feel in order to promote excellence across those C4E areas, those six areas that I listed earlier.

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

The maintenance for effort, these are funds that, under the law, the contract law, the Department of Education is allowed to use -- was allowed to use in fiscal year 2009 to support existing programs. In fiscal year 2009, the funds were used to support summer school programs and it is a recommendation that this year, for fiscal year 2010, the proposal to use the fund -- maintenance of effort funds for summer school again.

Districtwide initiatives are programs that we -- that are funded centrally to benefit the needy students throughout the city.

Next slide, this represents a global view of the -- New York City's entire allocation from the point of view of the program areas. So we have the program areas that you saw during the first slide. You can look at all the funds that were -- that we're proposing as a city to allocate the discretionary allocations and targeted allocations, the maintenance-of-effort allocations, and districtwide allocations. This is how it all breaks out.

This is a citywide view, and for the sake of understanding this slide, the class size reduction is 153 million dollars, or 39 percent of the overall budget. Please note that, as of September 1st, one percent of this entire allocation had not been scheduled by schools at that time. However, this represents the overall proposed allocation.

Yes, sir, next slide.

This slide represents an overview of the subset of our total Contract for Excellence dollars. The discretionary funds that are allocated to schools to use as they deem appropriate within the C4E programs areas are listed or on the screen here. In other words, if you look at how all the schools in New York City budgeted their funds across the six program areas, this is representative of the discretionary funds allocated to be spent by schools.

This slide goes into detail about those discretionary funds and that all schools receive the same allocation as last year. As I mentioned, because of the maintenance of effort -- this maintenance of effort, we expect that the programs will be maintained, that they were started in the school and funded last year. And we expect to maintain these programs and unless we are unable to do so because of changes to the student population. So if you had a population that was being funded last year and that population no longer exists in the school, the discretionary funds can then be moved or shifted within your school's allocation to be utilized for something that is also acceptable within C4E.

Next slide, please.

This slide goes into detail about the targeted funds. And school that received targeted Contract for Excellence allocation in 2008 -- schools that received these allocations will also receive them in 2009, '10, as long as they retained the population necessary to maintain effort.

Funds that were previously in schools that lost that population that needed to be supported, these programs are being proposed for redistribution to other schools. So where you had the discretionary funds and a loss of population, you are able to keep the funds within your school organization. For these targeted funds, you will not be able to do so.

This slide goes into about the districtwide initiatives and the fiscal year 2009 maintenance of effort funding. Here we see the thirty-nine million dollars that was estimated for this category. And these funds do not appear on the schools' budgets; however, the funds are placed and are available to support some of the needy students in districts around the city. So there's money delivered to the district on behalf of schools in this area.

Next slide.

Now we move from the general to the specific. This slide represents the first slide that shows how District 23 schools have allocated their C4E money. Now, again, remember, there's no new allocations for this fiscal year. This is the allocation based upon last year. So if you're looking at this allocation you see that 38.9 percent of the allocation went toward class size reduction; time on task -- I'm not going to read this slide; you can see it.

It's important to note --

MR. SPEAKER:

You're not supposed to --

MR. CONYERS:

But you can. You can stay there.

It's important to note that -- and note that this information will be posted for you. So it's not just quick glimpse and then you won't be able to see it again. Page will tell you exactly, and you may already have the information where you can see this district-personalized information within our District 23 Web site.

This slide represents how the schools in our district have proposed to spend the discretionary dollars. Again, going along the side you have the first three of the six program areas. And you see the citywide total, for example, for class size reduction, seventy million. Of that 70 million, District 23 schools have allocated and targeted 1,058,747 dollars. So under class size

reduction, the total dollars amount allotted to District 23 are a little over two million dollars.

And you see time on task. You see teacher and principal quality initiatives; followed by middle and high school restructuring; full-day pre-K; and model programs for ELLs.

And here's a special note relative to class size planning and as it relates to reduced class size. It is a reality that teacher salaries are rising in terms of their contractual agreement. More funds are required to maintain the same number of teachers as the school had last year. And the schools being impacted by register changes and the average teacher salary is possible. And it's probably likely that the class size reduction that the schools realized last year will be slightly changed, that you won't see as much or you'll see a difference in the class size reduction due to the economic downturn faced by the state and the nation where there is a -- there was an average 4.9 percent cut to schools, which, as you know, caused a shift in terms of delivery of services and impact on class size included.

And this is the part where it is very important, and I'm a little disappointed that most of the audience -- or a lot of the audience chose to leave. This is where we weigh in. This is where we have the ability to have our voices heard, to have questions answered. You have a deadline of October the 8th, which is not thirty days from this presentation, but we have up till now through October the 8th to comment on any aspect of the C4E and maintenance of effort, how schools are planning to spend their discretionary funds, how the DOE is allocating the targeted contract funds that we saw in the PowerPoint, and how the DOE is allocating the districtwide initiatives.

And just to make a public comment about the Contracts for Excellence, we do have an e-mail address where all are invited, educators, parents and concerned members of the community, to provide feedback with an e-mail, at ContractsforExcellence@schools.nyc.gov.

The New York City Department of Education Web site, which is schools.nyc.gov, which is New York City Department of Education's Web site, if you go there, and right on the first page, the home page, you'll see a link for Contracts for Excellence. There is -- there's lots of information, lots of information for you to see, to read, to digest. And you also have the ability from that Web site to ask questions via e-mail.

In addition to that, we provided and set up, in its infant stage, a District 23 Web site to provide information, where you will see tonight's PowerPoint that you will be able to download to look at again, which has the specific information, starting on pages 10, 11 and 12, relative to the district spending. So it's not one glimpse here and you won't be able to see it again. That Web site is www.district23brownsville.org.

www.district23brownsville.org. It's not case-sensitive; it is one -- once again, www.district23brownsville.org. We also have set up an e-mail address so that your questions, your concerns -- so you don't ever have to feel that your concerns will go unheard; it is askdistrict23@gmail.com. Once again, askdistrict23@gmail.com.

And at this time we're going to begin the questions relative to the Contract for Excellence, relative to the presentation. Or if there are any comments that you need to make about this Contracts for Excellence, I'm going to ask that you come down front and respect time in terms of your presentation so that we don't have a long -- that you leave room and time for the next speaker. We'd ask you to come to the mic, say your name, state your question or your comment.

Is there anyone that wants to offer a comment on the Contracts for Excellence?

(No response)

All right, I'm going to ask one more time. Just in the interest of fairness, is there anyone that wants to make a comment about our Contracts for Excellence? And I will make the comment again for the record that this information is available on New York City Department of Education's Web site, as well as the personalized District 23 PowerPoint, at www.district23brownsville.org.

Yes. So would you come to the microphone, please for the question? And state your name for the record.

MS. SMITH:

Just a quick question.

MR. CONYERS:

That's all right. Take your time. State your name.

MS. SMITH:

My name is Cheryl Smith. I sit on the CEC court. I want to know how many children are supposed to be in the classroom, because where I'm at it's overcrowded. We have kids snatching chairs from under each other, needing a seat, they're sitting in the window sill, all over the place. We need desks, we need chairs, it's overcrowded, it's a stressful and dangerous situation.

MR. CONYERS:

That's a great question. And I'm really -- I really don't want to seem insensitive, and I'm asking for questions at this time about Contract for

Excellence. And there is a tie-in. I will use the tie-in to reduce class size. I will also go back to the last slide before this, which also speaks about the realities of the class size reduction being changed because of the funding problem that we have, which is almost at five percent. I'll then add to that the sensitivity about students being able to come to school to receive their education.

So as you know, as school -- as the days of school progress, there'll -- a couple of things will happen. There'll become a leveling off of classes. There will also be a time where, if there are enough students that will generate yet another class, there'll be consideration given by the appropriate agency to fund yet another class.

So I know -- I understand what you're -- what you've asked; it's a very good question. I'm not insensitive to it, but I do want to say that, at this time, within the bounds of the Contract for Excellence, there's not really much that I can answer as a response to that. Thank you, though.

Any more questions about the Contract for Excellence?

Well, let the record show -- is this a question?

MS. SPEAKER:

(Indiscernible) Contract for Excellence (indiscernible).

MR. CONYERS:

This is not a question for Contracts for Excellence, so -- and I appreciate all the questions because that's how we get our information, but I really have to stick to this presentation in this format.

So it is now 7:45 p.m. on September the 24th. Let the record show that --

MS. SPEAKER:

(Indiscernible) asked a question, I'm sorry.

MR. CONYERS:

I did not answer that question because that question does not fit into the Contract for Excellence directory. What I did say was that there is a -- there was a slide that spoke about the likelihood of class size reduction being a little stressed because of the lack of funds. And then I also answered the question by saying that as -- in our experience with school as the days progress that the numbers begin to level off and, also, that if a class becomes that large where it is -- we have a contractual obligation to now -- to try to seek funds to open up yet another class or so we could put another individual in that class or reduce class size. The appropriate agency and the principals -- all principals understand and know where the

appropriate agent is within their work team to inquire about those funds if they would be made available. That is the answer that I'm -- that I can give you. And I apologize to you if that is not acceptable, but that is the answer at this time.

MS. O'BRIEN:

Can I ask a question? (Indiscernible).

MR. CONYERS:

We're -- this is a formal hearing, so you need to come to the mic.

MS. O'BRIEN:

Oh.

MR. CONYERS:

Is it about Contract for Excellence, ma'am?

MS. O'BRIEN:

Yeah.

MR. CONYERS:

Thank you. State your name.

MS. O'BRIEN:

Good evening. My name is Rita O'Brien. I'm from Public School 631. My daughter's in kindergarten. So since I'm a new parent, I'm a little bit confused. The Contract for Excellence is something that you and your staff decides for where the funds go to, not from what is given to you from the district (indiscernible) you and somebody else that breaks it up?

MR. CONYERS:

Good question. The question was, if I may restate it, how -- who decides on the Contract for Excellence dollars in terms of their allocation and disbursement? Each school -- was that your question? Each school organization determines within the six programmatic areas --

Would you go back to those areas.

Those -- across those six areas, the school determines where they want to allocate the funds given them via Contract for Excellence.

So the school determined that, not the district level, not the superintendent, in terms of discretionary dollars.

Slide 10 speaks to --

Would you go to slide -- go forward, I'm sorry. Slide 11. Go back.

Slide 11 speaks to how the district did in terms of its allocation across those six program areas. But these dollars are the dollars that are represented in all the individual schools, twenty-five schools together, that applied their monies to class size reduction or to time on task. So this is how the district view of these dollars under discretionary funds -- those are the funds that schools have the ability to allocate discretionary funds, and that's where that allocation comes from.

MS. RUSK:

Okay. I have --

MR. CONYERS:

Come to the mic, please. State your name.

MS. RUSK:

Lashawn Rusk (ph.). You state schools. Where does the parents fit in?

MR. CONYERS:

In terms of?

MS. RUSK:

The school. You said we -- the schools strategize and put the money in. Where does the parents have a say-so as far as the money?

MR. CONYERS:

Question: Where do the parents have input in terms of the allocation of these dollars under C4E?

As (indiscernible), that is a school decision. Unless there is something else that you can offer, I believe that is a school decision which (indiscernible).

MS. TUKUM:

My name is Hukfarai Tukum (ph.) from the Brooklyn ISC. In reference to your question, I respectfully -- principal discretion. (Indiscernible) --

MS. RUSK:

Okay.

MS. TUKUM:

-- because there is a plan. C4E funds are still based on our plan. And so if that is the proper way to do a plan, it will be complicated.

MS. RUSK:

So (indiscernible) put the budget together.

MS. TUKUM:

Yes.

MS. RUSK:

So the parents can see that the same way they see the budget?

MS. TUKUM:

Oh, yes. You -- C4E funds -- the C4E program is on the Web site, as he said --

MS. RUSK:

Okay.

MS. TUKUM:

-- as public information. You can go on the DOE Web site also and type in "C4E". All our information will be included, yes.

MS. RUSK:

Okay. Thank you very much.

MS. TUKUM:

You're welcome.

MR. CONYERS:

In a comment that I'd like to make, it is my hope and my understanding that every principal within these buildings will be making decisions in the spirit of ensuring that there is continuity and that there is improvement of processes and the learning experience. So I wouldn't expect a principal to misallocate.

And it is my hope that that is what's going on with the C4E funds.

Any other questions?

(No response)

All right. Let the record show that it is now 7:50, and we are going to terminate this portion of the Contract for Excellence, and we're going to go back to the question section relative to the District Planning Committee and on the information that my two colleagues presented.

If you do have a question, please -- you have something? And we will be answering at this time questions that deal with this particular area of concern: the District Planning Committee new school prospects within --