

**Contract for Excellence
District 15 Public Meeting, 9/17/09
PS 15, 71 Sullivan Street
Brooklyn, NY 11231
Public Comment**

(Audio begins mid-meeting)

MS. SKOP:

-- point. I promise, as I said, I know I'll be over the (indiscernible). I promise that I will be brief and informative. I have -- we have information for you. If you need to get further information, we have sheets available with the website and places where you can enter feedback. We also have feedback sheets if you'd like to fill them out tonight. Selena, the District Family Advocate is here and will be glad to handle that for you. Your feedback will be anonymous. If you don't even want to write, if you want to wait and e-mail it, we have a website to send you to. So very quickly, let me walk you through this.

The Contract for Excellence is monies that came from New York State. They were originally part of the fight for financial equity for our city as opposed to New York State. The money is used to what is called Contracts for Excellence. This is a year where because of, of course, economic downturns, the funds are used to support specific program issues. They are geared to specific programs. They fund class size reduction, Time On Task, which is AIS extra support for kids, Saturday programs, after-school programs. They bought teacher and principal quality instruction, which in vision is -- which means professional development for teachers, consultants that the schools pick, things like that. They fund middle and high school restructuring, full-day kindergarten, pre-K programs, and model programs for English Language Learners.

The way the funding is written, it is specifically targeted to our neediest students. Kids who are ELL, special needs, low income, all of the pieces -- wait, go back, one more -- students with disabilities, students with low academic achievement or at risk of not graduating. So this money is not just for everybody; it is for specific programs.

The way the money is divided is that there are two types of allocations. One: there are allocations that are discretionary to the schools. The schools decide -- they get a pot of money; they decide how to spend it.

Don't move it yet.

The preponderance of money goes to discretionary funding in the schools. The other pieces are targeting specific programs, such as specific full-day kindergarten programs. We're going to talk about that in a minute.

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If you look at this, you will see the way the funds are allocated citywide, and you will see that that big purple chunk that looks like Pac-Man, that's the part that goes to schools as discretionary funding which the schools decide how they're going to spend it. The orange piece is targeted allocations to specific schools. The blue little triangle is maintenance of effort allocation, which is maintaining what was done so far, and the last piece is districtwide, which really is not the district. It is the district that is the City of New York. So it's not just our district.

Next side, please. Okay, back one.

This is how the city divides it up. The way the money has been spent, predominantly, is class size reduction. We're going to talk about this for two seconds because it's important. You're going to look at class size and say my school may have gotten this money, but classes did not get smaller. What happened? We are in a time when schools -- as you know, I don't have to tell you this -- have massive budget cuts. The class size reduction money and the C4E or Contract for Excellence money was used to fill in some of the budget cuts. So actually, we're just staying the same. We're not reducing the class size, but we're at least keeping the class size as it was. So that's how this is working.

The next piece, you can see Time On Task, principal quality, and others.

Next one. Okay, this is the discretionary funding. Remember, this how the principals decide to spend their money. They decide; they allocate their money.

Next one. Okay, discretionary allocations to the school, 242 million dollars in restricted Contract for Excellence funds were released to 1400+ schools in May of 2009. That's sixty-three percent of the full contract amount. Explains how it went. Remember, the schools can only use it for certain kinds of programs.

Seventy-six million was used for target allocations. There are schools in our district that have full-day kindergartens -- I'm sorry, I keep saying that -- full-day pre-Ks that are specifically funded with targeted Contract for Excellence money. And this is the description of how it's used citywide: sixty-one million, collaborative team teaching classrooms; six million, full-day pre-K; seven million, autism spectrum disorder classrooms; two million, ELL summer school. Some of your children have participated in the ELL summer school programs which are outstanding throughout the city, and this is where the money has come from.

Districtwide amounts are how the city spends their portion of the money. Remember, we said district as in New York City being a district. Seven million dollars are what are called Multiple Pathways to Graduation. There are children who need different kinds of support in terms of alternative high

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schools, in terms of other options to graduation. This money funds that. There are ten million dollars for principals' training. This is the Leadership Academy. Many of you may have heard of it. There are five million dollars for school restructuring initiatives, and seven million dollars geared to the ELL success and middle school success (indiscernible). And finally, ten million dollars is being used for a college and the Advanced Placement preparation program in the high schools so we can help all of our children get ready to go to college and have support along the way, and not just the children whose families can afford the extra tutoring.

Next one. This is the proposed discretionary funding in District 15. There are amounts allocated -- remember, this is money that goes to the schools. It is money that we tell them how to spend. Class size reduction: 1,438,810 dollars. Time On Task: 1 million, 760 dollars and 255 dollars.

Would you like me to repeat that because it clearly was wrong? Can you tell I'm a little nervous?

[applause]

Thank you. I know I have the best district. I knew it from the time we came here.

[applause]

Now, this is very interesting. And remember, because it's going to come up in the next slide, but this is discretionary funding. I don't have to tell you that our district is a district that has lots of overcrowded schools. It is not a surprise to you. It may not necessarily be the case in your specific building, but it is the case in many places in the district. So discretionary monies for full-day pre-K were not given to the principals because there's no place for it. However, when we look at targeted monies, you will see -- if I go to the next slide -- that full-day pre-K, we did, in fact, get over 220,000 dollars that went to three specific schools to open full-day pre-Ks, and they do, in fact, have them. This school is one of them.

[applause]

We have three full-day pre-Ks here.

[applause]

PS 1, PS 10, and PS 15. Next slide, please. Class size planning. I want to say, again, a word about this. I will be very brief. People look at class size and they say, my god, our class sizes are so big. They're bigger than we want them to be. They're bigger than everybody wants them to be. Think how much worse it would be if we didn't have this money to compensate to some degree for the cuts that we have. So this is a year where we're doing what we call maintenance of effort. There is no extra funding. This is a

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year of economic downturns, and we are keeping everything together. What doesn't happen is costs don't go up. They keep going up. So experienced teachers cost more every year because of longevity. The cost, this money, may mean that your class is either the same or even a little bigger, but it would be even worse if this money wasn't here to compensate for what was cut. So that's what we need you to understand.

Next. If you -- this is the last one -- if you have any comments, if you want more information, we have sheets that we will give out if you'd like one that shows you the website. You can go on to the website, look at every school's allocation, look at all of the pieces. They're very accessible, and we have the links for you. If you would like to make a comment, we would be more than happy for you to make a comment. We have comment sheets. Again, you can go to this link, ContractsForExcellence@schools.nyc.gov and put in your comments. Comments can be anonymous, comments can be written. If you don't want to write it down, if you don't want to give your name, tell someone you know, she'll write it, it won't even be in your handwriting. Okay?

I thank you so much. It is my pleasure to be here to be your superintendent. I hope we will have a long and happy relationship. [applause]
(Indiscernible).

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Thank you.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Do you have any questions for the superintendent regarding the Contract for Excellence?

MALE SPEAKER:

I have some comments and some questions. First of all, none of this is directed at you personally. I understand what the order is, but I think this should be clear that this presentation is by Central Board as a "hearing". This is not, as far as I'm concerned, you were very careful in our agenda to describe this as a presentation. I think we gave you an opportunity to make that presentation. I don't think that parents, and even this council, has been really given an adequate opportunity to really look at, scrutinize this material in a way to be useful as a -- as what I understand the term "hearing" to be.

Second, I'm not sure I would agree with your representation that the budget cuts put us in a position where we are, at best, maintenance of effort. I think that there is a part of the situation called stim package which we had a substantial increase in Title I school funding. Now, relative -- which basically put us back to status quo and the -- relative to those Title I schools

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such as this school and such as a significant number of schools in the district. Not the school my child attends, but that's another story.

The Contract for Excellence monies was supposed to go as a supplement to those same schools. So frankly, it is not acceptable, as far as I'm concerned, to say that after we take into account stim money, that somehow, Contract for Excellence money, that all we -- all the obligation was was to even this out. So I think that that is working in a framework that I think is highly flawed.

Now, whether in terms of the overall expenditures of money in the district, we understand there are budget cuts. And largely -- and I will say as a parent of a middle, you know, middle class parent of a middle class child, appropriately, a larger percentage of those cuts affected, you know, the middle class schools more than the poorer schools.

Third, we've been unable to really get a handle onto what -- and this is the third year of C4E. And one of the major focuses of C4E, Contract for Excellence, was and is class size reduction. And whether or not class size reduction is being keyed into now, there should at least be a record that we can look at and can be presented clearly that says whether that mandate has been successful or not. And it tends to be obscure. I've tried to fathom from the DOE website, and I'm a moderately sophisticated guy and I know about how to read data, and it confuses the heck out of me. Exactly how we parse the data as to whether there has been success. I know that we were -- a request for data was made anew. We got last year's class size data which still doesn't really give us a means of parsing it out school by school and grade by grade. And I think those are some of the real concerns that we have. Thank you.

FEMALE SPEAKER:

Thank you. Before we go on to our next presenter, I'd like to introduce Lashanta Baptiste again. She's from the Office of Family Engagement and Advocacy. She's the deputy director of Brooklyn North. Lashanta Baptiste.

Our next presenter, Rhonda Kahn (ph.), the director of operations.

MS. KAHN:

Thank you all for coming tonight. Back in the spring, the CEC had had asked for the head of David (ph.) Academy Charter Schools to come and present at one of your future meetings, at a public comment meeting to address some of these concerns --

(End of audio)