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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION - OFFICE OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING
Robeson HS Bus & Tech-K
January 7, 2010**

1 [START 154_488a.MP3]

2 MS. KATHERINE GRIMM: Proceedings will be
3 sent to all members of the councils that are
4 participating here tonight and will also be made
5 available on the Department's website so
6 everyone has access to it. The purpose of this
7 hearing is for you to provide comments about the
8 proposal. And before I describe the proposal, I
9 want to make sure that you are all aware of the
10 opportunity to provide your input. All those of
11 you who wish to speak must sign up in the
12 speaker sign-up area which is located just
13 outside the auditorium. The sign-up list will
14 close at 7:00. That's a little longer than we
15 usually hold it open, but the SLT has asked that
16 we keep it open because I understand people are
17 coming from out of town. So please, if you are
18 here and you want to speak, go out now and sign
19 up so we make sure you've done that.

20 Speakers will be given the floor in the
21 order that they sign up. All comments are going
22 to be limited to two minutes. In addition, we
23 welcome any comments and feedback you may have
24 at any time before the Panel For Educational
25 Policy votes on this proposal at its January 26th

1 meeting. The e-mail address and the phone
2 number where comments may be made can be found
3 on the Department's website under the section
4 for the Panel for Educational Policy. And the
5 website, of course, is schools.nyc.gov.

6 This proposal is something that the
7 Department takes very seriously and has
8 considered in a comprehensive manner. Over the
9 past six years the Department of Education has
10 phased out over 90 schools, and we have opened
11 335 new schools that have demonstrated
12 remarkable success in helping students excel.
13 For example, our new high schools have achieved
14 an average four year graduation rate of 75
15 percent, well above the citywide 60 percent
16 average. Even though these schools serve some
17 of the city's highest need students, this
18 proposal will continue that important work.

19 Now, I want to be clear that the Department
20 is not blaming any individual or group for this
21 situation, but we have determined that it is
22 important to give students the best possible
23 opportunity for long term success. We know that
24 there are a lot of people, many of them here
25 tonight, working incredibly hard every day to

1 support students at this school. But we simply
2 cannot continue doing the same things and expect
3 that we will get different results.

4 I want to talk about the specific criteria
5 we have used now. Robeson's graduation rate is
6 extremely low and it is declining. In 2009 the
7 school graduated 40 percent or only two out of
8 five of its students. And if only region's
9 diplomas counted toward graduation, as will be
10 the case in two years, the graduation rate would
11 be 20 percent or one out of five students.
12 These figures represent a precipitous drop from
13 2008 when the graduation rate was nearly 57
14 percent. Simply put, graduating two out of five
15 students does not meet any standard of success.

16 While Robeson's academic achievement numbers
17 are low, the school's organizational culture and
18 learning empowerment are also deeply troubled.
19 On the 2009 school survey only 64 percent of
20 students said that they felt safe in school. In
21 conjunction with an attendance rate that was
22 among the city's lowest last year, 69 percent,
23 and enrollment that hovers just about a thousand
24 students, down from 1,500 just four years ago,
25 it is clear to the Department that this is a

1 school that is not serving our children well.

2 Clearly, Robeson serves a challenging
3 student population. That said, Robeson is no
4 different from any other school in Crown Heights
5 and Flatbush in that respect. However, it is
6 simply not achieving the same results. At the
7 Bushwick campus, three schools in Robeson's peer
8 group which replaced Bushwick High School, each
9 serves a similar challenge population and yet,
10 each earned an A or a B on its progress report
11 last year.

12 I want to be very clear about the
13 consequences of this proposal and state very,
14 very clearly all students currently enrolled in
15 this school will have the opportunity to
16 graduate from this school, and we will continue
17 to support the school during the three year
18 phase out period. We have no plans right now
19 for a replacement school for September 2010.
20 What we will do over the next year is work with
21 you and the community at large to plan for a
22 replacement school in this building.

23 I want to thank you. I look forward to
24 hearing your comments and questions. Some of my
25 colleagues here have a brief presentation to

1 make. I will ask Stephanie, would you like to
2 make the first presentation? Okay, but first,
3 we have a translator who wants to make an
4 announcement.

5 TRANSLATOR: In Spanish.

6 MS. GRIMM: Thank you. Do we have another
7 microphone? This is - - .

8 STEPHANIE: Good evening. As the school
9 leadership chair, I am going to read a
10 resolution that our school community has
11 created. It's a resolution to oppose the
12 closure of Paul Robeson High School. I believe
13 all of you in the audience have a copy of this
14 document.

15 WHEREAS, Paul Robeson High School has served
16 the Crown Heights and Bedford-Stuyvesant
17 communities for over two decades preparing many
18 generations of students for further education,
19 for citizenship in a democratic society and for
20 productive participation in the workforce; and

21 WHEREAS, the New York City Department of
22 Education has nonetheless announced plans to
23 close Paul Robeson High School beginning
24 September 2010; and

25 WHEREAS, a great expense of time and money,

1 the DOE has created progress reports and
2 quality reviews and has also created a standard
3 based on those accountability tools in order to
4 discern which schools might be candidates for
5 closing;

6 WHEREAS, the school progress report failed
7 to provide a full and complete measure of
8 academic need in high school students and thus,
9 a fair and accurate measure of academic
10 performance for Paul Robeson High School; and

11 WHEREAS, in spite of all the time and money
12 and general public resources devoted to the
13 progress report, the DOE got the formula for
14 high schools dead wrong so that the more high
15 need self-contained special education population
16 go up, the more the grades go down;

17 WHEREAS, at Paul Robeson High School, of the
18 12 A schools in our peer group to which we were
19 compared for grading, eight had special
20 education populations with less than five
21 percent high need self-contained students and
22 four of those had none at all, while schools
23 with Ds had 43 percent and 50 percent;

24 WHEREAS, Robeson with a C, had a special
25 education population wherein 23 percent of the

1 special education students were high need self-
2 contained students so that as these three
3 clauses show, as the student needs went up the
4 grades went down; and

5 WHEREAS, the NYC DOE has concentrated in
6 school, Paul Robeson High School, inordinately
7 large numbers of students with greater academic
8 needs, special education students, English
9 language learners, over age and under credited
10 students, students living in poverty in part
11 because of the closing of neighboring George W.
12 Wingate, Erasmus and Prospect Heights High
13 Schools without providing if the resources and
14 support needed to educate those students; and

15 WHEREAS, for the past three years, three
16 separate independent reviewers have done an
17 intensive two day review of the school at great
18 expense to the city and found the Paul Robeson
19 High School to be either proficient or well-
20 developed;

21 WHEREAS, in announcing these plans the NYC
22 DOE has ignored its own standards for closure as
23 Paul Robeson High School was found proficient on
24 its latest school quality review; and

25 WHEREAS, the DOE has ignored these reviews

1 even though they have created them, included
2 them in their standard and instead, are closing
3 Paul Robeson High School based upon a mysterious
4 quote, unquote, assessment; and

5 WHEREAS, given the NYC DOE's lack of a
6 comprehensive plan for replacement high school
7 seat, the closure of Paul Robeson High School
8 will have a negative impact on neighboring
9 schools, Boys and Girls, Acorn and Medgar Evers
10 High Schools, overcrowding them and diverting
11 large numbers of students with greater academic
12 needs to them; and

13 WHEREAS, Paul Robeson High School has a
14 number of successful educational programs such
15 as the five year federal grant for smaller
16 learning communities, the 20 year partnership
17 with City Group, Reach Out 56 and 15 other long
18 term partnerships that will be eliminated with
19 the school's closing; and

20 WHEREAS, the career and technical education
21 programs, including finance, information,
22 technology and entrepreneurship and new media
23 that exist at Paul Robeson High School, some of
24 which are not available in other schools in this
25 Borough; and

1 WHEREAS, students that are pursuing course
2 sequences in career and technical education are
3 in danger of losing credits they have earned
4 because CTE credits do not transfer from one
5 program to another; and

6 WHEREAS, the NYC DOE has slated Paul Robeson
7 High School for closure despite the fact that it
8 has awarded it school wide bonuses for academic
9 achievement two years in a row; and

10 WHEREAS, all of this shows the dreadful
11 mismanagement perpetuated upon Robeson and other
12 schools by the DOE;

13 WHEREAS, the entire school community of Paul
14 Robeson High, the students, their families and
15 the staff have been outspoken in their
16 opposition to its closure;

17 BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the this
18 community, including the school leadership team,
19 opposes the closure of Paul Robeson High School
20 and calls upon the NYC Department of Education
21 and Chancellor, Joel Kline, to retract their
22 plans for closure and provide the proposed
23 school with the resources necessary for academic
24 success.

25 MS. GRIMM: Thank you, Stephanie. - -

1 MS. VALERIE ARMSTRONG BARROWS: I'm
2 Valerie Armstrong Barrows, and I'm the President
3 of City Wide Council on High Schools. I'm also-
4 -

5 MALE VOICE 1: Can't hear you.

6 MS. ARMSTRONG BARROWS: I'm Valerie
7 Armstrong Barrows, and I'm the President of the
8 City Wide Council on High Schools. I'm also a
9 parent of children in high school and I am your
10 elected official, elected by the parents of
11 those students in public high schools in
12 Brooklyn.

13 On the City Wide Council High Schools, we
14 are very concerned with the fact that schools
15 throughout the city are closing. In hearing
16 what we have heard about Paul Robeson High
17 School, we are concerned that the right
18 initiatives have not been put into place to give
19 the students what they need so they can be
20 successful here.

21 We hear talk about the success at Bushwick
22 High School, the former Bushwick High School,
23 the new schools that have been opened up there.
24 Why haven't those initiatives that were put into
25 place in those small schools put into place here

1 at Paul Robeson to provide out students with
2 what's needed here?

3 In the past, other high schools in the
4 community have closed and the result has been
5 that those students have come here. When this
6 school close, as they propose to do, our
7 students here will go to other schools and the
8 cycle will continue. That does not address the
9 fact that we have out students without
10 graduating going into the world. We need to
11 have it that DOE does something, not put it on
12 the back of our students by saying the school is
13 failing, but that DOE is failing the school.

14 When the school has a large percentage of
15 students that are special needs, English
16 language learners and other students of high
17 risk, we know that more funds are needed in
18 those schools. We know that more programs and
19 more certified, qualified teachers are needed in
20 that school. We know there is a shortage or
21 resources across the city, however, we have to
22 figure out how is the best way to put those
23 resources where it's needed and not just put a
24 band aid on the issue.

25 Closing the school does something, all it

1 does is create a situation with students who
2 are left feeling that they have failed. I want
3 to say to the students, you have not failed. We
4 have failed you. And if we do not stand
5 together and make sure that every effort is
6 taken to make sure that you have a brighter
7 future and things are put into place, then we
8 continue to fail you, and hold us to that.
9 Thank you.

10 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much, Valerie. I
11 would now like to ask, we have some elected
12 officials here. Our distinguished Borough
13 President, Artie Markowitz, would you like to
14 say a few words?

15 MR. ARTIE MARKOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you
16 very, very much. I must add at the outset, I
17 served Paul Robeson High School for 10 years as
18 a state senator, before that, Alexander Hamilton
19 and since 2002 as Brooklyn Borough President,
20 and I've been pleased to provide capital funds
21 here as well and know of this school and its
22 potential.

23 Katherine, I must tell you, Deputy
24 Chancellor, there's nothing more important than
25 insuring that all our children in Brooklyn and

1 New York City have access to the best quality
2 education possible. After all, these young
3 people are the ones we're counting on to lead
4 this city, nation in the years to come. They
5 depend upon us to give them the necessary tools
6 to fly as high as their wings can carry them and
7 reach the Zenith of their God given ability.
8 Because of this duty, we understand that our
9 public schools must be held to rigorous
10 standards.

11 Let me make it clear that the DOE officials
12 believe that they are doing what's best for the
13 kids. We believe we are also doing what's best
14 for the kids. We all understand that sometimes
15 we must apply tough love to our schools when it
16 becomes clear that some schools may not be
17 meeting the necessary standards, but providing
18 the best quality education. And that all steps
19 have been taken to help to meet those standards,
20 it may be necessary at times to close the
21 school.

22 In the case of Paul Robeson High, I believe
23 strongly that it is way, way too premature to
24 close. Robeson, himself, Paul Robeson, himself,
25 was a powerful example of how an excellent

1 education can propel someone in life. He once
2 said this is Mr. Robeson. Through my singing
3 and acting and speaking I want to make freedom
4 ring. Judging from the turnout, enthusiasm
5 tonight, it's clear that all of us want to make
6 the school bells of Paul Robeson High ring for
7 the many years to come.

8 Now, I've seen firsthand as a senator and as
9 borough president the enthusiasm of the students
10 and faculty and staff. The kids here want to
11 learn and the teachers want to teach, but the
12 school does not have the necessary tools to make
13 this happen. The answer is not to close the
14 school. What we need is to give them the extra
15 resources necessary to keep it open. The answer
16 is not to give up on the school, but rather help
17 see its way to a brighter day.

18 Now, I've got to tell you something, I grew
19 up in poverty and I grew up in public housing in
20 - - and I know that in poverty there could be a
21 great strain to an obstacle to a child's
22 education. I understand that. At Paul Robeson
23 High, 91 percent of the students live in
24 households below the poverty line. The desire
25 to escape poverty makes a quality education even

1 more necessary and believe me if I didn't get
2 that quality education, I could have never
3 become a borough president or anything else in
4 my life. This school doesn't cherry pick its
5 students. Many of them are products of the
6 harsh city in a life that we know that many of
7 us face. When these kids succeed, Deputy
8 Chancellor, we all succeed in New York City.

9 Paul Robeson High is taking the necessary
10 steps to better serve its students. As you
11 know, you've hear the school is a recipient of
12 five year federal grant work several hundred
13 thousand dollars to great small learning
14 communities. They are presently in the second
15 year of that grant, Deputy Chancellor. It's
16 imperative and only fair to the school that we
17 give it the opportunity to use all five years of
18 the grant. Paul Robeson High is a victim of
19 DOE's inconsistent and erratic process of
20 evaluating problem schools.

21 Although I do not wish to minimize the
22 problems the school faces, I strongly recommend
23 that it remain open at least for the next three
24 years. I am convinced, Deputy Chancellor, I
25 know the faculty here, many of them. I know the

1 administrators. They are to use the term we
2 use in Brooklyn, fired up. They are fired up to
3 provide the best quality education, what they
4 need. Don't close it, keep it open, give them
5 the resources and let them teach our kids. Paul
6 Robeson could become the gem, the gem of high
7 schools in Brooklyn and New York City. Thank
8 you.

9 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Thank you
10 very much, Mr. Borough President. Am I told
11 that Councilmember Al Vann is in the audience?
12 Councilmember, would you like to say a few
13 words? You have a microphone at either side,
14 but here, let - - . Move those mikes in a
15 little - - .

16 COUNCILMEMBER AL VANN: Good evening. Good
17 evening, ladies and gentlemen. Good evening,
18 Panel. I'm Councilman Al Vann, as you may know,
19 and I've been following this proposed or
20 recommended closure of the schools fairly
21 closely. Not all of the recommendations, but
22 the two that happen to be in my district, the
23 middle school and, of course, Paul Robeson.
24 I've been at the schools, I've met their
25 administration and teachers and parents and I've

1 gone over the proposals that have been made
2 and I find that they are incorrect. They're
3 incorrect, they're inaccurate.

4 It does not, The Department of Education
5 have not made their case. The standards that
6 they had set in this case in terms of the
7 criteria by which they may consider phasing out
8 is not met in the case of Paul Robeson, so there
9 must be some other reason because the standards
10 that they said have been met, and there should
11 not be any recommendation for closing Paul
12 Robeson.

13 I've been with Paul Robeson for a long time.
14 In the assembly, as a matter of fact, we made
15 sure that money was made available, capital
16 money, to renovate, to rebuild this beautiful,
17 beautiful school. We worked closing with the
18 principal here, Mr. Weston, to make sure he had
19 the necessary resources at the time to building
20 a first class school and, indeed, Paul Robeson
21 was and should be again a first class high
22 school competing with any school in the City of
23 New York. As you know, students were coming
24 from all over New York City into this particular
25 school though primarily Brooklyn based.

1 So I'm aware of some of the things - - .
2 I am aware of some of the procedures that DOE
3 employed that transferred a large number of
4 students into Paul Robeson that require an awful
5 lot of services and detracted from their ability
6 to maintain the high standard that they had
7 established and maintained for the long period
8 of time. So yes, there is some slippage, but
9 that slippage is due to the policies and
10 procedures of DOE. The administration here was
11 doing a very good job.

12 So those are the reasons, among many others.
13 And we know that PEP, and we intend to be in
14 direct communication with them, we believe that
15 they will stand up and think they will be
16 independent. We think they will look at our
17 particular situation. We're not part of a lump,
18 we're not part of a group, but in terms of Paul
19 Robeson, it does not justify, there is no reason
20 why they should be closing. As a matter of
21 fact, we're going to make sure that Paul Robeson
22 is restored to the high level of standards that
23 they had established early on. They have the
24 ability, they have the leadership, they have the
25 support of the community to be sure they'll get

1 there again. Thank you.

2 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. I
3 understand we have a representative, the State
4 Senator - - Maurice Roberts. Mr. Roberts, are
5 you here? I would like, I am told by people
6 more technical than I that your phone, people's
7 phones may be causing some of this difficulty.
8 Do you want to stand - - the microphone and, we
9 can hold your phone for you if you'd like.

10 MR MAURICE ROBERTS: Good evening,
11 everybody. My name is Maurice, and I'm here
12 representing your Senator, Senator Eric Adams.
13 Actually, better than myself, the Senator is
14 actually enroute, so we are going to wait for
15 the Senator. The program will go on and the
16 Senator will be here to speak on his own behalf,
17 okay. Thank you.

18 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Okay, we
19 would now like to open up the floor for public
20 comments. I want everyone to, I want to ask
21 everyone to please refer to the number of the
22 card that you were given and if you have an even
23 number, 2, 4, 6, 8, if you would line up over
24 here. And if you have an odd number, 1,3,5, if
25 you would line up over here. If people would

1 keep coming up, that way we'll move quickly,
2 everybody will be heard and I understand more
3 people are coming and we want to make sure we
4 hear everybody. I am going to remind everyone,
5 we're going ask you to limit your remarks to two
6 minutes. We have a timekeeper who will give you
7 a sign when there's 30 seconds left. If just
8 about, you know, eight people at a time line up,
9 I don't want you to have to stand there - -
10 speaks. After the 30 seconds is up, he will
11 then, when your time, your two minutes is up, he
12 will show them to you. So we ask people in
13 respect of everyone else to be cognizant of
14 that. So let's start with the first speaker
15 over here, number one, and if everyone would
16 introduce themselves. Are we all set? Number
17 one. Felicia Henry?

18 MS. FELICIA HENRY: Yes.

19 MS. GRIMM: Okay. Would you begin, please?
20 Thank you.

21 MS. HENRY: My name is Felicia Henry and I'm
22 currently a 12th grader here at Robeson. I'm a
23 third generation family member that will have
24 graduated from Robeson and my brother, Andre,
25 will be the fourth. I'm in the top three

1 percent of my class and I'm also the school
2 wide student body president. These are my
3 feelings about the proposed closing of our
4 school.

5 There comes a time in a man's life when to
6 get where he needs to go, if there are no doors
7 or windows, he walks through a wall. Today,
8 Robeson is walking through its wall. The doors
9 and windows have been shut in our faces telling
10 us there is no hope for Robeson to succeed as a
11 large school. However, once you choose hope,
12 anything is possible. The only way to overcome
13 the problems of low graduation and attendance
14 rates is to hang in.

15 How can the DOE give up and just say face
16 itself without trying to fix the problem? The
17 DOE, we may say, phases us out and starting a
18 smaller school is the solution, but if small
19 schools are closing as well, isn't the solution
20 also a problem? Myself personally, and all the
21 other achievers in this school are proof against
22 the word failure. We've seen behind it. We
23 know that that label put on the school is not
24 true. There are no failures in this school.
25 Failure is an event, never a person.

1 Everyone and everything has gone through
2 their moment of failure when it seems like all
3 around them someone or something was telling
4 them to give up. They didn't give up though.
5 They chose to listen to that little sliver of
6 hope that said try one more time. Doing that
7 has made all the difference. That 40 percent of
8 students who succeeded found something to hold
9 on to, something to motivate them, something to
10 inspire them to finish school. So although it
11 may not be as high as the DOE would have liked,
12 that means something is going right.

13 It means that our staff, our faculty, our
14 teachers are not here merely to make a living,
15 but to enrich Robeson students' lives. It means
16 that the students have put aside excuses and
17 have said that I am capable of graduating high
18 school. Robeson has taught them how to be
19 successful human beings. If the DOE has heart
20 to criticize Robeson, they should also have
21 heart to help us.

22 So now is not the time to point fingers, but
23 for the DOE to work, for all of us to work to
24 make schools and schools all over - - our
25 children. There are success stories at Robeson

1 and you are looking at them right now.

2 MS. GRIMM: Okay, number two, Diane Smith,
3 okay.

4 MS. DIANE SMITH: Hi, thank you. My name is
5 Diane Smith. Thank you for the opportunity to
6 be here tonight and speak. I really wasn't
7 planning on it. I've been teaching in the New
8 York City Department of Education for 10 years
9 now and I was in a school for eight years in
10 Washing Heights and I resigned the position and
11 now I'm working day to day, by my choice, as a
12 per diem sub. I worked in a school just down
13 the block who will be having a meeting like this
14 next week so I hope all of he people that are
15 here tonight will be there as well.

16 I decided to speak because when I came in
17 through the lobby, my feelings are very deep
18 about what's happening throughout the city and
19 they have been for quite some time. And I see
20 things just getting worse and worse, but tonight
21 it's very encouraging to be here among all the
22 people that are here and I want to share with
23 you why I decided to speak.

24 When I came in the lobby I was looking
25 around and I noticed on the wall there's a

1 poster and it's from the Freedom March from
2 1963 and it said there when one person stands up
3 he is often not noticed, but when thousands
4 stand up together, they cannot be overlooked.
5 And that's my hope for tonight is that this is,
6 it has begun and it's just going to grow and
7 grow and thousands of us will be speaking out
8 because we have heard one side for a long time
9 now, the Department of Education side, and now
10 that people are finally speaking up and having a
11 voice. So thank you all for the opportunity and
12 thank you for being here.

13 MR. JACK FRITZ: Hi, my name is Jack Fritz,
14 I am a member of the Princeton class of 1956, as
15 are two other gray haired members of the class
16 of '56. Over there is Slade Mills and Bill
17 Roster. We have been coming out here to Robeson
18 for seven years where our mission to Princeton
19 reach out '56 is to make life better for people
20 all over the world, whatever opportunities we
21 see. We came here by a convoluted way that you
22 don't want to hear about, but we started working
23 seven years ago on college awareness.

24 I'm told that before we came here there were
25 fewer than a hundred people who went to college

1 from this school. There now are somewhere
2 around 200 year in and year out. We developed,
3 we believe it is important for the people in
4 this community particularly, to go to college.
5 What that does economically and what it does for
6 opening up their worlds is what we think we have
7 been about and we think working with Ira Weston
8 and Jackie Hudson, we have developed a program
9 that is probably unique and is very successful
10 in this school.

11 We have Ira Weston and we talk to the kids
12 starting in the ninth grade. We work through in
13 the, we have a program, ninth grade, 10th grade,
14 11th and 12th, 11th and 12th. We talk one on one
15 with each individual in the class, talk to them
16 about what colleges they want to, should be
17 going to, should be thinking of, work through
18 the applications with them. And we even made
19 actually, a DVD about why people should go to
20 college and we show that. And what's happened,
21 we think, is extraordinary successful.

22 And the reason, one of the important reasons
23 is that the school wants it there. We were
24 wanted there. We were welcomed here. We were
25 given every opportunity to do what we were doing

1 and it seems to us that that is working and I
2 don't think that the closing of this school has
3 any value in relation to this. College is an
4 important thing. These kids are getting that
5 and it's because of the way that the faculty and
6 the administration--

7 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] I need to ask you
8 to start wrapping up. Thank you very much and
9 thank you for all your efforts - - . Okay,
10 number five, no four, Mr. Mills.

11 MR. SLADE MILLS: My name is Slade Mills.
12 I also graduated from Princeton University in
13 1956. I am 74 years old. I am White. I walk
14 in the halls of this clean, brightly lit school
15 by myself with no concern. I have friends on
16 every floor of this school. They're all a lot
17 younger than I am. They are doing the same
18 things that I did when I was trying to graduate
19 from college.

20 The Virtual Enterprise Program is a program
21 for students still in the public schools of New
22 York. It is not exclusive to Paul Robeson.
23 Paul Robeson has excelled in that program. Far
24 from failing, Paul Robeson students have
25 succeeded in every year since I've been

1 attending the competitions in Brooklyn for
2 that program. They compete. The other thing,
3 with my two minutes, the class begins in
4 September. The students come into that class,
5 they do not know what they're in for. It's a
6 tough, rigorous, challenging program. They do
7 it well and they make huge progress.

8 There is no question that failure in
9 anything that we see in this school, in that
10 class, and it would be a dreadful mistake to
11 miss those things which are done well in this
12 school. Is that 30 seconds? Oh, I still have
13 30 seconds.

14 It is not just the Virtual Enterprise
15 Program, but I think the quality of the
16 performance of the students is so directly
17 reflected of the interest, intelligence,
18 imagination and commitment of the administration
19 and the faculty both. Thank you, my time is up?
20 It couldn't possibly be better than it is.

21 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much, Mr. Mills.
22 Okay. Now, we have number five.

23 MALE VOICE 1: Good evening, everybody that
24 attended the event. I hope you guys show up on
25 the 26th for the PEP rally. A lot of people have

1 come up here and basically said the
2 information that I wanted to say, but I'm just
3 going to, you know, blurge [phonetic] it out
4 again.

5 It's about opportunities. You take away
6 opportunities when you close this school. You
7 talk about Bushwick, the school in Bushwick, you
8 can't compare it. There's no--

9 MS. GRIMM: Do you have your phone with you?
10 That young lady will hold it.

11 MALE VOICE 1: There is more need here than
12 that school. Teachers, to my understanding,
13 have left this school from the time my son came
14 in here from ninth grade because it's so much
15 different issues, whether it's students coming
16 in from other countries not really understanding
17 the system, the way it is here, or you have
18 students that have issues at home that regular
19 teachers cannot attend to. You need
20 professional help. Where is that help being
21 instituted in the school, but you're saying the
22 school needs to be closed because they're not
23 performing. They're not performing because they
24 don't have enough help. If you don't have
25 enough help how do you expect to succeed?

1 The teachers here, the principal, the
2 parents, even the students have tried to
3 overcome insurmountable obstacles and they're
4 doing the best they came. Now, given the time
5 that they're giving, which is not much now from
6 what you're saying, how can you expect them to
7 achieve or show anything? They have shown
8 improvement. It may not be what you want to
9 see, but the community knows about it, the
10 people know about it.

11 All I'm asking, basically, is think about
12 what you're doing. It's not the first time you,
13 well, the DOE, I'm not saying you, has done
14 this. It's not the first time Tweed had done
15 this because I've been reading and it's just so
16 much information that I just read about, that
17 it's amazing that, you know, the answer is to
18 close the school, create a smaller school which
19 you're going to talk about, but yet, the smaller
20 school is getting more attention than the bigger
21 school that really needs the help.

22 MS. GRIMM: Thanks, again.

23 MR. SUN OAK: Okay - - . Sun Oak, Maxwell
24 High School. I'm a teacher at a school that's
25 also being phased out, okay. This is the major

1 problem with their argument. They're saying
2 that if you graduate less than 50 percent, and I
3 don't care how they spend it, they're saying
4 that you're a loser. Now, let me tell you why
5 that's bogus.

6 Do you know how many college students
7 graduate in six years, not even four, 53
8 percent. So are we saying that universities
9 should be shut down because they can't graduate
10 their school in four years? Let me ask you
11 this. How many people actually have four year
12 degrees? How many guys do you think? It's only
13 one out of four people. I'm not just talking
14 about Brooklyn, I'm talking about Long Island.
15 You know what that means? That the majority of
16 people live meaningful, productive lives as
17 police officers, as steam fitters,
18 cosmetologists, business owners and basically,
19 what Bloomberg is saying, one man, if you don't
20 fit into this little tiny definition, graduate
21 in four years, you are a loser and we don't
22 think we're losers.

23 Okay, now, here's the problem. The problem
24 is no matter how well meaning some of these
25 representatives are, the ultimate people who are

1 going to make the decision are 12 people at
2 the PEP meeting at Brooklyn Tech on January 26th.
3 Unfortunately, seven of those members are
4 appointed by the Mayor. And if you look at the
5 history of these people, they're his friends,
6 his real estate friends, people that have gotten
7 contracts from the city, okay.

8 This is what we need to do, okay. There's
9 going to be a rally at Mayor Bloomberg's house
10 on January 21st. All the students are down for
11 it from all the schools, okay. We need to show
12 up and tell the city how dare does Mr. Bloomberg
13 think he is the civil rights reformer of
14 education when we have the neighborhoods coming
15 out there and saying we are pissed. So we need
16 to show up on the 21st and represent. And you
17 know what, if the PEP members decide to rubber
18 stamp the Mayor, after the Mayor, we're going to
19 go to the PEP's house.

20 MS. GRIMM: Lena?

21 MS. LENA MEDLEY: Good evening. My name is
22 Lena Medley, and I'm Director of Brooklyn High
23 Schools from the Office of CSA. The DOE has
24 announced the closing of 20 schools and some of
25 them with new principals. Some of them just

1 beginning to turn around, and a full eight of
2 them that were opened not very long ago by the
3 head of the DOE himself, Chancellor Kline.

4 CSA embraces accountability and believes
5 that schools should be closed if they have
6 failed over a period of three or more years
7 despite receiving full support from the DOE. We
8 won't tolerate the provocation of failure, but
9 in the cases of several of these proposed
10 closures, we must ask if some of the schools are
11 being held accountable while the apparatus that
12 supports them is not. In those cases we must
13 inquire if the schools were really failing and
14 by what measures they were failing. We must ask
15 if the Chancellor truly put each of these
16 schools thorough process to ascertain whether
17 they had been provided adequate support and
18 guidance by their rating officers and if the
19 Office of Student Enrollment had leveled the
20 playing field.

21 CSA is asking the DOE to lay down the
22 process by which they determined that each of
23 these schools be closed. We need to know. We
24 need to know how the supervisors were and where
25 they were in the process of helping these

1 schools to succeed over the last few years.

2 The DOE should also include an analysis of
3 the role of the appropriate school support
4 organizations. Since each school pays an SSO to
5 advise them on student achievement, coach
6 principals on school improvement and perform
7 many other support functions, what sort of
8 service did each of these 20 schools get for
9 their money?

10 Finally, the DOE should assess how fairly
11 the Office of Student Enrollment minimized
12 challenges in schools that face so many other
13 challenges. It is important to know if these
14 institutions are sent an unusually large
15 proportion of CLL students and children with
16 special needs. When every question is asked and
17 answered we are likely to discover that some of
18 these schools can't - - .

19 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] Can I ask you to
20 wrap up, please?

21 MS. MEDLEY: We are also likely to discover
22 that many of them can remain open and thrive
23 with adequate support from the superintendents
24 and network leaders and fair enrollment
25 practices. We say let's put and keep all

1 children first.

2 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Mr. Small?

3 MR. KENDRICK SMALL: Good evening. My name
4 is Kendrick Small and I am representing the very
5 first graduating class of Paul Robeson in 1989.
6 I'm also an employee of the DOE so this
7 conversation is very extremely difficult for me.
8 I work for the DOE. I'm an educator and right
9 now I'm all ready to say I'm totally against
10 school closure. I've been in various schools
11 throughout the city, schools that are
12 struggling, schools that were doing extremely
13 well, and I've been in Paul Robeson over the
14 past 20 years as a mentor, as assistant
15 basketball coach on an ongoing basis
16 volunteering my time.

17 And I've also seen some of the teachers who
18 have been here when I was here who are still her
19 and give the care and love and support to the
20 students as - - difficult circumstances and
21 issues that they are dealing with. So I'm here
22 on record to tell you that I'm totally against
23 this closure and I deem it unfair and we need to
24 make sure that it doesn't happen.

25 I want to read a letter on behalf of alumni

1 of 1989 - - .

2 MS. GRIMM: Mr. Small, if you have a phone,
3 the gentleman will hold it for you. I think
4 that's what's - -

5 MR. SMALL: We recently just celebrated our
6 28th anniversary and had a reunion here June 5th,
7 6th, 7th and 8th and - - actually gave the school
8 a proclamation on record stating the
9 accomplishments and achievements that not only
10 the alumni achieved, but what the school has
11 done over the past 20 years.

12 The alumni of Paul Robeson High School is
13 writing this letter in regards to the proposed
14 closing of this institution. Paul Robeson High
15 School has been a pillar in the community for
16 the past 20 years and recently has just
17 celebrated our 20 year anniversary on the
18 celebration of June 5th, 6th and 7th, 2009.

19 Paul Robeson was an African-American
20 renaissance man who stood for racial justice,
21 equality and many social issues. He was someone
22 who valued education which was displayed at his
23 - - Rutgers University, where he excelled both
24 academically and athletically. We believe he
25 would want all children to excel and succeed

1 academically.

2 The first graduation class of 1989, along
3 with the alumni of Paul Robeson, strongly
4 opposes this proposed closure. We are
5 protesting this closure and strongly suggest
6 Mayor Bloomberg and the Chancellor, Joel Kline,
7 reconsider his decision.

8 Paul Robeson is not a school without
9 challenges and issues that face many of our
10 urban schools.

11 MS. GRIMM: Could I ask you to - -

12 MR. SMALL: However, we believe this school
13 has the necessary system, programs and
14 educational activities in place which are
15 addressing these needs and issues. With a
16 population of students that Paul Robeson takes
17 from prisons, immigrants, more immigrants, over
18 age and unaccredited, the faculty and staff does
19 a tremendous of getting them ready for college
20 and the workforce.

21 Paul Robeson is actually a safety net for
22 students who have been turned down from other
23 schools that otherwise do not accept students
24 based on these academic and social needs. And
25 we are aware of that so let's not fool

1 ourselves.

2 MS. GRIMM: Could I ask you to - -

3 MR. SMALL: With - - support from the DOE
4 and the support from support teams, we can make
5 the necessary changes to improve the areas of
6 graduation rates and attendance. The recent
7 progress score in 2008 reflects these statements
8 which led to the DOE to give the school a
9 greater proficient with well developed features
10 in previous school quality reviews which you
11 administered.

12 This school has enabled many of its current
13 alumni - -

14 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] Mr. Small, I have
15 to ask you to - -

16 MR. SMALL: - - due to the nurturing of
17 solid education - -

18 MS. GRIMM: - -

19 MR. SMALL: Excuse me.

20 MALE VOICE 2: Go ahead, talk.

21 MS. GRIMM: There are a lot of people here
22 who want to talk.

23 MR. SMALL: Paul Robeson has submitted
24 programs and activities which have been
25 sustained over the past several years such as

1 city partnership, which provides scholarships
2 and mentorship to college - - and employment
3 upon graduation of college, Bailey's Café which
4 provides internships, Princeton alumni class of
5 '56, parental education workshops. Many of
6 these programs are invaluable assets to the
7 school and the community which has been vital to
8 the students, faculty, parents and staff which
9 have provided jobs, mentorship and lifelong
10 relationships.

11 MS. GRIMM: Mr. Small, there are a lot of
12 people here wanting to talk - - .

13 [Crosstalk]

14 MR. SMALL: Many of the poorer students at
15 Robeson--

16 MS. GRIMM: I have to ask you to - -

17 MR. SMALL: --have been extremely successful
18 in various industries such as the NBA, City
19 Group, Department of Education, Federal Bureau
20 of Investigations, Verizon, just to name a few.
21 Many o the former students and current teachers
22 and administrators, corporate executives and
23 managers and lawyers - - and law enforcement - -

24 MS. GRIMM: Mr. Small, we will be happy, we
25 will be very happy to take that letter and share

1 it with the people who are making evaluations.
2 Thank you very, very much for coming here
3 tonight. Number nine, Mr. Charles? I just want
4 to remind everybody that if you do have a phone
5 in your pocket it might make the microphone act
6 funny. Mr. Charles?

7 MR. CHARLES: My name is Mr. Charles, Social
8 Service teacher at Paul Robeson High School.
9 Unfortunately, this is my second experience to
10 be at a closing high school. In 2007 I
11 experienced the closing of - - High School
12 unfairly. I have - -

13 FEMALE VOICE 1: We can't hear.

14 MR. CHARLES: I have never understood the
15 criteria - - decided which school to close. Are
16 you aware that 65 to 70 percent of our school
17 population is reading of level one and two?
18 Seven percent of the remaining students are at
19 level three.

20 Now, I want to ask you this question. How
21 much time do you give us to prepare the students
22 to make the criteria to pass their written
23 examination and - - ? Now, in understanding how
24 you make your decision, it reminds me of the - -
25 mark where you make decisions of people not

1 allowing them to speak to themselves. For
2 instance, have you had parents, teachers and
3 community members in the decision making in
4 closing the schools?

5 I remember Bob - - saying that we have no
6 friends in high society. But it seems as
7 thought we have forgotten - - are talking about.
8 If there were time the use of a vote in order to
9 make a decision so people would understand us.
10 We hear a lot of text and we have no
11 representation. Let us do something about it.
12 I mean that. Thank you.

13 Wait, wait, let me have the last say. I'm
14 asking again, please keep our school open.
15 Please, thank you.

16 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Ms. Lane,
17 number 10?

18 MS. MARTHA LANE: Good evening. I'm Martha
19 Lane form United Federation of Teachers. I'm
20 going to defer my time to the Vice President of
21 the UFT, Sterling Roberson.

22 MR. STERLING ROBERSON: I'm going to say a
23 lot in two minutes. But what do you do when you
24 are guilty, what do you do when you are guilty
25 of persistently failed administration, what do

1 you do? You blame everyone else. When you
2 are guilty, when a DOE is guilty of being a
3 persistently failed management system, what do
4 you do, blame you. When you have criteria, when
5 no one, based on the outpouring, not just here,
6 but citywide, and a criteria when you have
7 schools that, 19 of them, that did worse based
8 on their own criteria, and they say we need to
9 shut you down, persistently failed management.
10 Call it as we see it.

11 When a school collects a bonus two years,
12 back to back, and they blame you, persistently
13 failed management. When you talk about, when
14 all the people that got up here, when you talk
15 about your grades are low, this is low, when you
16 transfer students and close other schools that
17 impact on your community and you don't provide
18 the resources and the services and said that you
19 didn't meet the mark, persistently failed
20 management.

21 Ladies and gentlemen, they call it as we see
22 it. When you have CTE programs, as the
23 gentlemen from Princeton talked about, Virtual
24 Enterprise, when you talk about information
25 technology, finance, all the things that the

1 President of the United States talks about,
2 and moving people forward and building, not just
3 New York, but America, and they say you didn't
4 meet the mark, persistently failed management.

5 Ladies and gentlemen, you have a resolution
6 in front of you. Stephanie read the resolution
7 - -

8 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] Sir, I ask you to
9 start wrapping up, please.

10 MR. ROBERSON: She read the resolution, you
11 all have a copy. We need a second. We need to
12 move the resolution and urge the Department of
13 Education to retract their proposal because it's
14 not on you. It's the persistently failed
15 management. Thank you.

16 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 11,
17 Ms. Mitchell?

18 MS. MITCHELL. Good evening, everyone. My
19 story, I guess, is basic for the people in this
20 part of the community. I was raised on Brooklyn
21 Avenue, two blocks away. I attended - - 61 on
22 Empire Boulevard. And then I graduated from
23 Prospect Heights High School. I also graduated
24 from Hunter College and I am an educator in the
25 system, in the educational system of New York

1 City.

2 It is, for me, a very, very important
3 opportunity to be able to not only be educated
4 in this community, not only to be raised in this
5 community, but to be also able to give back. I
6 think it is a very, very important thing. And I
7 also hope that the students here will be given
8 the same opportunity because there is a feeling
9 that you get when you realize that you can give
10 back. We have that statement to who much is
11 given, much is expected. If you've given our
12 students what they deserve, then we give back.
13 I ask that you give them the opportunity to give
14 back.

15 I listened to your statements and they're
16 based on half truths. Our students do not
17 deserve half truth. Our community does not
18 deserve half truth. But the fact remains we
19 both made mistakes. Nobody is perfect, but
20 whenever we make mistakes and come together, we
21 acknowledge the fact that we've made mistakes.
22 We work together and we fix them. Our students
23 deserve it. Our community deserves it. And I'm
24 here to ask you to step up to the plate, because
25 you know how, and do the right thing. Thank you

1 very much.

2 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Mr.
3 Morrison.

4 MR. MARK MORRISON: My name is Mark
5 Morrison. I'm a retired New York City teacher
6 and a long time resident of the Robeson
7 community. I've lived for the past 34 years
8 within a 10 minute walk of the school.

9 AUDIENCE: Can't hear you.

10 MR. MORRISON: I was a math teacher at
11 Robeson for three years. I've also done - -
12 contracts and procurements for more than a
13 decade at one of the school districts. Robeson
14 is really the ideal size for a high school.
15 With just over a thousand students on the
16 register, it's large enough to offer a variety
17 of courses, yet small enough for one to know all
18 of the students that maintain good school
19 control.

20 The previous principal was so highly thought
21 of by this Chancellor that she was made a
22 community, then regional and then finally, a
23 deputy superintendent. Surely, if Robeson had
24 not served its students well under her
25 leadership this would not have happened. Where

1 has Robeson gone astray since Dr. Lau's
2 departure?

3 I've examined the school organization and
4 programs and heard from previous and current
5 teachers, as well as DOE and new - - personnel.
6 The blame for Robeson's current problems, I
7 believe, lies directly at the current
8 principal's doorstep, how funds are allocated,
9 his intransigence in the face of easily
10 identified problems, the selection of programs -
11 - in the school's organization.

12 Robeson has nine assistance principals, one
13 AP for each 110 students. One supervisor is
14 even working on an F status basis. Is to avoid
15 a C-30 process? When I worked here we had only
16 five APs. Such top heavy administration robs
17 the students of the real instructional support
18 they need and deserve.

19 If the DOE has permitted this - - of the
20 most basic educational funding, what else have
21 they allowed to escape their scrutiny. I
22 understand the DOE, UFT and building staff
23 repeatedly advised the principal that pass and
24 bells were needed to efficiently move students
25 between classes and set proper school tone. He

1 delayed their implementation for at least two
2 years.

3 Student standing has also been an issue.
4 Robeson's teachers are not the problem, the
5 principal. When GM was failing last year Obama
6 did not shutter the company and establish mom
7 and pop auto shops. Instead, he installed new
8 leadership, instituted restrictions and rules
9 and held the CEOs - - to the fire. Now, GM
10 sales are up and it is particular - - this year.
11 The same approach is needed at Robeson.

12 Closing the school down is an overly radical
13 step. The DOE has been remiss in its
14 supervision--

15 [Crosstalk]

16 MS. GRIMM: Could I ask you to begin
17 wrapping up - -

18 MR. MORRISON: --in each of the past two
19 years. It has awarded the staff and principal
20 bonuses for meeting performance goals. Now, it
21 turns around and wants to close the school for
22 poor performance. Just what credibility does
23 DOE have? One can only wonder the fact that the
24 current principal's wife works at - - has
25 influenced the DOE's reluctance to terminate.

1 Now is the time to change, not to close
2 the school down, but to install a new competent
3 principal, closely oversee his budget and
4 provide robust oversight. These steps would
5 turn Robeson around and make it the school it
6 once was.

7 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Ms. - -

8 MS. TAMARA TOLLS: Good evening. My name is
9 Tamara Tolls. I am currently a teacher at Paul
10 Robeson High School. I've been a member of this
11 community for the past four years, and I teach
12 students with varying abilities and
13 disabilities.

14 The state - - at Paul Robeson High School,
15 mainly the administration, teachers, support
16 staff, students and parents strongly contest the
17 legitimacy of this day. According to President
18 Obama's newly appoint Secretary of Education,
19 Arnie Duncan, it has been recognized that there
20 are students that may need more than four years
21 to graduate. The U.S. Department of Education
22 therefore, began to look at the five year
23 graduation rate. Not just the four year, but
24 the five year graduation rate.

25 And speaking of the '05-'06 graduates, last

1 year's graduates, they are considered the - -
2 cohorts. Paul Robeson received 281 freshman
3 through the high school administration process
4 in that cohort. We've received an additional
5 145 students over the counter. The 145 students
6 included students that were new to the country,
7 over age and over credit, under credited
8 students, and students who struggled
9 academically in middle school. Out of 348
10 students we received that year in the freshman
11 class, 310 of them performed below reading
12 levels on state tests. Out of the 347 students
13 that were tested in math, 287 of them performed
14 below state standards in math. We received 287
15 students who performed below state standards,
16 yet, you expect us to graduate them in four
17 years.

18 MS. GRIMM: I'm just going to ask you to
19 start wrapping up, please.

20 MS. TOLLS: Okay. 124 out of the 204
21 students in the building for '08-'09 for that
22 graduation cohorts, 61 percent of them
23 graduated. 124 out of the 204 seniors in the
24 building last year graduated. That is not
25 failure. What we need to do is to improve our

1 attendance and our outreach to our students,
2 not close the school down. Based on our data, I
3 second the motion of the resolution to oppose
4 the closure of Paul Robeson High School. Thank
5 you very much.

6 MS. GRIMM: Number 15, 14, Ms. Howard?

7 MS. WILLENA HOWARD: Yes, ma'am.

8 MS. GRIMM: Thank you.

9 MS. HOWARD: My name is Willena Howard, I'm
10 an educator here at Paul Robeson High School.
11 I'm also a teacher of students with diverse
12 special needs.

13 MALE VOICE 2: Can't hear you.

14 MS. HOWARD: In addition, I am the
15 mathematics teacher. I've been teaching in and
16 in the system for over 12 years. I come from a
17 school that also went through this whole process
18 of phasing out. According to our data, as Ms.
19 Tolls and people who have spoke about it, the
20 DOE mentioned that we came into that cohort
21 year, we had over 1,500 students. They also
22 noted how our enrollment has decreased.

23 Paul Robeson does not get to choose which
24 students come into it. The DOE actually assigns
25 the students to this school. So because they

1 assign the students to this school, we don't
2 have those choices per se to say we can choose
3 the cream of the crop, but all the students who
4 come into Paul Robeson, we love them, we nourish
5 them, we cherish them and we try to help them to
6 excel and do their best.

7 Now, what you're looking at here is that
8 enrollment that she mentioned over that - - .
9 You're looking at the cohort that Ms. Tolls
10 mentioned which was called - - 2005-2006. She
11 mentioned that our enrollment did decrease.
12 It's clearly been reflected on the graphs. It
13 is decreasing based on the amount of students
14 that the DOE is actually putting into our
15 school, sending here. And when you're closing
16 other schools this is affecting our school.

17 Now, please note our poverty rate. She
18 mentioned it earlier. We're talking about our
19 poverty rate in reference to the students that
20 we actually deal with. We are dealing with,
21 over 60 percent of our students come from East
22 New York. We know Brooklyn. We know the
23 demographics. We know how the communities
24 change depending on the county lines and where
25 it splits.

1 With that being said, we have a poverty
2 rate. And from the year that's she's mentioned,
3 including 2008-2009 which isn't being reflected
4 here, but it's over 80 percent of our students
5 come from low income families and yet, we still
6 provide them with the appropriate services that
7 we can give them and the time that the need.

8 MS. GRIMM: I need to ask you to begin
9 wrapping up.

10 MS. HOWARD: - - with that being said,
11 please switch to the next one. Now, as Ms.
12 Tolls also mentioned, our students do come in
13 here over age. It's ridiculous. AT this year
14 in itself we're looking at over 192 students who
15 came in here over age. What that means is that
16 they came in here over 15, in the ninth grade,
17 over 16 in the 11th grade, and so forth and so
18 on, and the graphs can show that. Can you flip
19 to the next one - - ?

20 Now, we also deal with students who are in
21 serious situations. This is temporary housing.
22 That means they can move at any moment, be taken
23 in, as Ms. Tolls mentioned. We had so many who
24 came in over the counter, literally.

25 MS. GRIMM: Ms. Howard, I need you to wrap

1 up, please.

2 MS. HOWARD: Yes - -

3 MS. GRIMM: I'll be happy to accept your
4 graphs.

5 MS. HOWARD: Literally, these years are
6 being reflected - - .

7 MS. GRIMM: Okay.

8 MS. HOWARD: As this is another graph of
9 those. So now we are actually putting a face to
10 what the DOE is saying and we're clearly
11 disputing their data. And for the young man who
12 spoke up in front of me, I clearly don't agree
13 with anything that he said. So I need that to
14 also be made clear.

15 Now, basically, this is our attendance rate
16 for those years. We mentioned that we are at 69
17 percent - -

18 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] Ms. Howard, I
19 have to ask you to wrap up.

20 MS. HOWARD: Ma'am, can I give you the data?

21 MS. GRIMM: I'll be happy to take the data.

22 MS. HOWARD: Okay, I can facilitate you with
23 it? Okay, so what I'll do - - I'm going to
24 stop. I'm going to facilitate you with it so
25 that you can see the numbers that we have so

1 that we can take it from there, okay?

2 MS. GRIMM: I know. I just want you to wrap
3 up quickly.

4 MS. HOWARD: That will be fine. With that
5 being said, the attendance rates, all of these
6 things that Ms. Tolls has mentioned affect what
7 goes on here. The dynamics of the community
8 affects what goes on here. You cannot say we
9 are a failing school because we are not a
10 failing school. The kids are not failures. The
11 mindset that you've given to them is ridiculous
12 to say that they are failures. And I don't care
13 how you close a school and how you say you're
14 going to faze them out, kids do not want to go
15 anywhere where somebody is being classified as
16 failure. I don't think that makes sense with -
17 - want to stay here. So I'm requesting that you
18 really consider your decision. And since this
19 only supposed to be a proposal, you actually
20 look at it and see what we have and made sure
21 that it doesn't happen. Thank you.

22 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Okay,
23 number 15, please. Simone Monroe? Is he here?

24 MS. SIMONE MONROE: Yes, ma'am.

25 MS. GRIMM: Thank you.

1 MS. MONROE: Hello, my name is Simone
2 Monroe and I am a proud graduate of Paul Robeson
3 class of '09. During my senior year I was hit
4 with an unfortunate situation of homelessness.
5 The support that I had in the school was
6 tremendous and it made the burden on me a lot
7 lighter making sure that all my finances were
8 taken care of so that I also enjoyed my senior
9 year to the fullest extent.

10 They made sure that I had somewhere to sleep
11 and food to eat each and every night, ensuring
12 that I made it to every class on time and
13 telling me each day to keep my head up and smile
14 even when my situation tried to get the best of
15 me.

16 The thought of making everyone here at Paul
17 Robeson proud by managing to stay focused and
18 graduating and also enrolling in college puts a
19 smile on my face because I know it all wasn't in
20 vain. I stand here with mixed emotion about
21 sharing the challenges I faced in my life. But
22 I think it is important for panel to know the
23 kind of situations children face and the
24 invaluable support my Paul Robeson family
25 provided me with. They are as follows:

1 The Paul Robeson community made sure that
2 I had shelter and food to eat. They conducted
3 fund raisers for my senior expenses. They made
4 sure my cell phone was on at all times to make
5 sure they had contact with me. They made sure
6 that my prom was a magical night to remember.
7 They made it possible for me to be able to go on
8 my senior trip. They gave me a shoulder to lean
9 on when I needed one the most. They kept
10 abreast of my grades. I also was awarded a
11 scholarship grant.

12 As I stand here to support this needy cause,
13 I hope you realize that there are children in
14 our community that may find themselves in the
15 same situation as I was.

16 MS. GRIMM: I have to ask you to start
17 wrapping it up, please.

18 MS. MONROE: It's not worse. With no one to
19 reach out to for help but the school community,
20 where will they find help?

21 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 16.

22 MS. CICELY HUMES JAMES: Good evening,
23 everyone. My name is Cicely Humes James and I'm
24 an English teacher here at Paul Robeson High
25 School. I'm also the activity coordinator for

1 the program. I am the mother of three, but I
2 also feel like I have children here at the
3 school. The kids that come to me every day for
4 something to eat, for someone to talk to, for
5 someone to hug, for someone to laugh with, for
6 someone to yell at to tell them to do the right
7 thing, and I could feel the emotions building up
8 because Paul Robeson is a good place with good
9 kids.

10 And as a mother I know that you never, ever
11 turn your back on your kids. You never tell
12 them that they're a failure. You pick them up,
13 you dust them off and you guide that - - on the
14 right road.

15 I'd like to talk about some of the programs
16 that work here at Paul Robeson High School. We
17 have on our panel Ms. Stephanie Segal. She is a
18 mother to so many students - - . Not only
19 current students, but students that graduated in
20 the first class, the second class, they
21 constantly reach out to her. How can you say
22 what she's done for those kids are a failure?
23 You can't do that. The DOE cannot do that to
24 our students.

25 Ms. Stephanie Segal runs Bailey's Café,

1 which is an inter-general non-profit
2 organization that utilizes creative arts and
3 community service activities to build
4 relationships between the youth and the - - .
5 So many times the world wants to tell us that
6 young people don't know how to treat older
7 people. This is someone that's teaching them
8 how to do that through creative arts. We honor,
9 heal and celebrate and transform lives.

10 MS. GRIMM: I need to ask you to start
11 wrapping up, please.

12 MS. HUMES JAMES: Members express themselves
13 and the stories of their elders through singing,
14 dancing and spoken word.

15 Another program that I quickly want to
16 mention is City Group. We've had a 20 year
17 relationship with City Group. We have students
18 currently who are in City Group. If we lose
19 this school, if we are closed, those students
20 who are prepped and worked to get a City Group
21 scholarship will be turned away. They may not
22 be able to afford college if the DOE allows us
23 to close.

24 We cannot let Mayor Bloomberg close our
25 school. He's a rich man that does not care

1 about poor people. He doesn't give a damn
2 about us. We cannot allow him and Joel Kline
3 and his panel to say to us that what we do every
4 day is a failure. We cannot allow what our kids
5 do to be called a failure. We can't allow that.
6 Please - -

7 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] I need to ask you
8 to wrap up.

9 MS. HUMES JAMES: --make sure you e-mail,
10 write, show up on the 26th, show up on his
11 doorstep and stay there because that's what I
12 plan to do if he closes Paul Robeson High
13 School.

14 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Thank you.
15 Number 17, Mr. Boyd?

16 MR. CONRAD BOYD: My name is Mr. Conrad
17 Boyd, I'm an English teacher at Paul Robeson.
18 I've been here for the past seven years and I've
19 grown as a teacher and grown within this
20 community as well. When I look at the fact that
21 we broke into academy, and at the same time
22 you're asking us to break into academies and
23 then at the same time advise our kids to grow
24 and learn and support each other, network with
25 each other, just like the business community

1 does. We ask them to learn what everybody
2 else learns in four years, but then we have to
3 advise them. So we broke up into advisors.

4 We have small little communities within
5 these four communities and we create a family
6 within this school. Every time you look at
7 these students and you begin to see how much
8 these teachers get involved in these students'
9 lives and support them from an advisory council
10 piece, as well as a small community piece,
11 that's why we restructured this school for you.

12 We restructured this school to make sure
13 that we were given proper attention. We made
14 sure we restructured this school to benefit our
15 students. As much as we have disadvantages is
16 as much as we try to make sure that we support
17 them right behind them. Even though we as
18 educators, we do need advisories and we do need
19 support, we go to our mentors. Guess what, our
20 students don't have many mentors. They have
21 Paul Robeson High School and that's where they
22 come back to and a lot of times we forget that.
23 We forgot that we need mentors.

24 And we also forget the fact that a lot of
25 students don't have that technical networking

1 that we as business people and we as educators
2 have. That's why they look for us, to see how
3 much we can show them as role models and to
4 support this school as Paul Robeson High School,
5 not as a fractured community.

6 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 18.

7 MS. NORMA VALENTINE: Good evening,
8 everyone. My name is Norma Valentine, I'm a
9 special educator here and a transition
10 coordinator. And I'm going to read to you a
11 couple of improvements that we are working on,
12 that we are planning to implement here at Paul
13 Robeson High School. One of them is the long
14 term absent counseling.

15 LTA students continue to be an issue for us
16 here at Robeson. First, we need to hire
17 additional attendance teachers. We believe that
18 we can continue to address the problems by fully
19 utilizing the role of the attendance teacher and
20 the family paraprofessionals. We will continue
21 home visit to the homes of students that have
22 missed a certain number of days. Students will
23 continue receiving counseling on their return to
24 school, discuss the reason for their absences
25 and - - realistic plans to stay in school.

1 Each student with three or more absences
2 for three weeks will meet with the guidance
3 counselor to create an action plan. Each plan
4 will include - - of said students, names and
5 phone numbers of people to assist the students
6 to adhere to their plans, goals, long and short
7 terms, and extra academic services, create a
8 program for LTA that will help them in the
9 transition back to school.

10 Parents, guardians will also be involved in
11 this class of action to keep LTA students in
12 school and on the path to graduation. There
13 must be also changes made to the protocol to get
14 students who have been identified as LTA and who
15 is no longer attending Robeson - - of our school
16 roster.

17 Another improvement will be the parental
18 workshop. Parents and guardians need to play a
19 more active role in their children's education
20 at Paul Robeson High School. Parents and
21 guardians will be encouraged to attend an
22 ongoing series of workshops to help them
23 understand the high school process. These
24 workshops will serve as a way to educate them on
25 the requirements for graduation - - needed to

1 graduate, curriculum, extra curriculum
2 activities, PTA meetings, tutoring services.
3 Upon completing of the - - series of workshops,
4 parents will attend a graduation ceremony and
5 receive a certificate.

6 Also, we are planning the family counseling
7 because we recognize that - -

8 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] I need to ask you
9 to start wrapping up.

10 MS. VALENTINE: Yes, and social issues
11 preventing students from coming to school. We
12 plan to implement a stronger - - program to
13 families to families that include counseling and
14 community based organization. And on behalf of
15 all of our students and the special education -
16 - I'm very passionate about. Please, I will ask
17 you to reconsider your decision and please do
18 not close our school.

19 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 19.

20 MR. HOWARD SHORE: Hello, my name is Howard
21 Shore. I'm the Brooklyn Borough representative
22 of the UFT. And, Ms. Grimm, you opened up the
23 meeting by saying we're not blaming anybody for
24 this failure. Well, we're blaming the DOE for
25 this failure.

1 MALE VOICE 3: All right, now.

2 MR. SHORE: And on my, I have a button, and
3 you're going to see a lot of these buttons
4 around town. It says DOE persistently failed
5 management, because the management system that
6 you have set up has resulted in the closing of
7 the following schools in Brooklyn: Wingate,
8 Erasmus, Prospect Heights, South Shore High
9 School, Crenate High School, Tilton High School,
10 Lafayette High School. And my question to you
11 is where do you think these schools went? They
12 went to some of these other schools that stayed
13 open, but you didn't solve the problem that
14 these children needed help and these schools
15 needed, but you didn't give it to them.

16 I was here for the first meeting. People
17 got up, they asked Mr. - - over here questions
18 about what did the DOE to help this school. And
19 you know what he said? We let them pick a
20 school support organization. Well, whooptie do,
21 because you let every school pick one. And when
22 they picked one that didn't work, what are you
23 going to do? You're going to close them down
24 because that's your - - . You're going to close
25 them down.

1 And Mr. - - , you said at the last
2 meeting, you were here one time last year. Now,
3 you are the superintendent of this school and
4 you are the rating officer of this principal and
5 the other supervisors and the teachers in the
6 school. And you were here one time. Where's
7 your responsibility?

8 This process is not objective, it's not
9 fair. They make up the rules however they want
10 to make them up. They had three quality reviews
11 in the last two years. One was - - proficient
12 or well-developed, those are the two highest
13 grades out of three, in the last three years.
14 There are many schools that got under-developed,
15 but they didn't close them.

16 And also, on the school wide bonuses, the
17 DOE put 20 million dollars a year for school
18 wide bonuses. This school qualified two years
19 in a row to get these bonuses because they met
20 the criteria that you set up.

21 MS. GRIMM: I need to ask you to start
22 wrapping up.

23 MR. SHORE: Thank you very much.

24 MS. GRIMM: Thank you. Number 20, Mr.
25 Reese.

1 MR. MICHAEL REESE: Good evening,
2 everyone. My name is Michael Reese. I'm a
3 community educator activist and I have recently
4 joined Ms. Stephanie Segal at Bailey's café.
5 And what we do, we take interns from Paul
6 Robeson and bring them to another site and they
7 serve as group leaders, they serve as educators
8 and the show their academic best. When you see
9 them in an environment doing something and we
10 make functional use of their time because our
11 students need academic and economic support
12 systems in place in order for their, the quality
13 of their education to be risen as well. And I
14 have some comments I put on papers because I
15 don't want to miss anything I came here to say.

16 Closing the public Paul Robeson High School
17 is not the solution. It's putting the blame on
18 the students. Not only the student is it
19 putting the blame on, it's putting the blame on
20 many of the hard working teachers, principals,
21 administrators in the school and using student
22 performance is not fair when quality education
23 services and programs are not being offered.
24 Where are the artistic educational activities
25 that exemplify Paul Robeson's life, who was an

1 activist, artist, educator, philosopher? The
2 children were involved in programs that made
3 them want to stay to school.

4 I'm a graduate of Jamaica High School and
5 they're talking about closing that school
6 because the school is predominately Black and
7 Hispanic whereas an institutionalized racist
8 policy, there is a stench of racial pathology in
9 the Department of Education concerning the
10 rights and the well-being of the children that
11 live in our community.

12 Now, I'm going to sum up, I'm going to sum
13 up. What is the future of this school and the
14 ideas that our billionaire Bloomberg have, no
15 billionaires that's left behind. What happened
16 in no child left behind? The future of this
17 school may very well be to put a chartered
18 school I place which is separate and unequal.
19 If you're going to have a chartered school
20 system - -

21 [Crosstalk]

22 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] Mr. Reese, I need
23 to ask you to start wrapping up.

24 MR. REESE: --it should be separate and
25 equal. They are building chartered schools at

1 the expense of our public school dollars.
2 there is a stench of racism and a stench of
3 racial - - going on in our community. They are
4 putting us out in the community. They need to
5 put educational programs to this community that
6 work like Bailey's Café and the Jackie Robinson
7 Center for Physical Culture.

8 MS. GRIMM: Mr. Reese, I need to ask you to
9 start wrapping up. Number 21, Mr. Turner.

10 MR. CHARLES TURNER: Hello, my name is
11 Charles Turner and I'm a teacher at Maxwell High
12 School for 27 years. I'm also UFT District Rep
13 for Brooklyn High Schools since before Mr. Kline
14 became the Chancellor, okay. I rise in
15 opposition for the Chancellor's proposal to
16 close Paul Robeson High School.

17 Both Maxwell High School and Paul Robeson
18 High School are the latest victims of the DOE
19 ham fisted school closings that began seven
20 years ago and can only be characterized as
21 flagrant mismanagements. Sound familiar? From
22 the beginning of this process there was simply
23 no forethought regarding where the incoming
24 ninth grade students would go when schools like
25 Erasmus, Prospect Heights and Wingate High

1 School were closed. As a result of this
2 mismanagement, a domino effect of overcrowding
3 has initiated the Brooklyn High Schools'
4 District.

5 Okay, and soon after these initial closings,
6 all of the large high schools in Brooklyn became
7 overcrowded and even the best schools began to
8 have problems with safety and security, okay, as
9 well as educational problems that they never had
10 before.

11 Next, the DOE's fun fare policy of exempting
12 the new small schools from taking special
13 education students and ELL students further
14 exasperate this problem. And so schools like
15 Paul Robeson experienced a large influx of high
16 need students. Now, because of this extreme
17 overcrowding, most schools were forced to go
18 with extended day and multi-session. Anybody
19 that's had this before knows that extended day
20 and multi-session, okay, thin out your physical
21 resources and personnel effectiveness, okay. So
22 you had many schools like Paul Robeson High
23 School that were overcrowded and received a
24 critical level of high need students, but they
25 had very limited capacity to serve these high

1 need students and there was no support from -
2 - .

3 MS. GRIMM: Mr. Turner, I have to ask you to
4 - -

5 MR. TURNER: I've got another - - okay?
6 Once a school reaches a critical level of high
7 need students without additional support,
8 measures like an absolute four graduation rate
9 and AYP become virtual impossibilities. The
10 population of this school is mobile and
11 vulnerable. They need to be supported by the
12 Chancellor, not crushed.

13 The community of this school rejects the
14 move to close Paul Robeson, and we urge you to
15 look carefully at the positive impact that Paul
16 Robeson High School has had and continues to
17 have in this community.

18 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much - - . 22,
19 Mr. Roseboro.

20 MR. SKIP ROSEBORO: Hell, everyone. My name
21 is Skip Roseboro, and I'm a volunteer leader
22 with New York Acorn and member of the
23 organizations. And I'd just like to add just a
24 little bit of clarity here. When Mayor
25 Bloomberg came into office, teachers were

1 underpaid and eight years later they're still
2 underpaid. Eight years ago underpaid teachers
3 were supplementing the school system by buying
4 books, paper, pens, chalk, out of their own
5 pockets. It continues until today.

6 When Mayor Bloomberg first came into office,
7 many New York schools were failing and eight
8 years later, according to his closing of more
9 than 20 schools, he is saying that after eight
10 years and full mayoral control the system must
11 still be - - . Now, the Mayor and Department of
12 Education claim that they are doing a great job,
13 yet, they are closing more schools than ever.
14 If they are closing so many schools after eight
15 years, then they have failed and according to
16 their own fail policy they should be closing
17 themselves down.

18 Those who would shut down our supposedly
19 failing schools would never shut down their own
20 failing children. They would provide them with
21 the resources and caring that they need to be
22 successful. Why should our children be treated
23 differently?

24 And I'd just like to quickly say we're
25 having, on Martin Luther King Day we're having a

1 rally on January the 16th. It's very
2 important. See me and some of the others with
3 these. And there is another thing on the 26th, a
4 panel for educational policy meeting. And these
5 are two very important meetings. I hope
6 everybody will come and get a flyer and show up
7 there because this is going to help our
8 children. Thank you.

9 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 23,
10 Mr. Vasquez.

11 MR. ALFONSO VASQUEZ: Vasquez. I'm Alfonso
12 Vasquez, class of 2008. And let me tell you how
13 it is to be a Latino graduating from this
14 school. I'm exactly a product of Paul Robeson
15 High School, a successful one. And let me tell
16 you all that everybody is going to be coming up
17 here and talking about the opportunity that Paul
18 Robeson has to give. Well, let me tell you all
19 what these opportunities have done for me.

20 See, City Group, to begin with, has been the
21 one thing that I can honestly say that has been
22 very frequent because it has given me the mentor
23 that I have always wanted towards my life
24 because being from poverty, growing up five
25 blocks down, I didn't have no one to look up to

1 being first generation. And that person has
2 helped me not only get through the last two
3 years of my high school career, but has also
4 helped me get into a college, get scholarships
5 and now going to school basically for free.

6 Now, another thing also about the City Group
7 scholarship, it has given me an internship of
8 which I am deeply grateful about. Even though
9 it wasn't through the career path I wanted, has
10 taught me the corporate skills I need to get
11 anywhere in life.

12 Second, the debate team. The debate team
13 was something that I have gone through four
14 years of my whole life in this school. Before,
15 when I first got here my English was barely
16 understandable. Now, I'm standing up here able
17 to articulate my words and very well spoken
18 because of the man, Adam Stevens, who was my
19 coach. And I can honestly stand up here and say
20 the debate has given me two free scholarships
21 over the summer to Atlanta, I mean to Atlanta,
22 Georgia, to study at Emory University, as well
23 as the University of Texas in Austin. And as
24 well, you can go upstairs to the lobby and see
25 how many - - we have up there.

1 The last thing I'd like to mention is
2 Virtual Enterprise. Virtual Enterprise was my
3 senior year, I was CEO of graphic designs and it
4 has given me tremendous opportunities because I
5 am a graphic design major. And because of that
6 I have met so many people. I was given the
7 ability to go to Austria and Europe to conduct
8 business. And on top of that like Virtual
9 Enterprise has given me the lifetime of
10 experience that I need from high school.

11 And all these teachers here, these students,
12 these are what we call community. This
13 community has helped me become the person I am
14 and it has never been not one day - -

15 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] I have to ask you
16 to start wrapping up.

17 MS. VASQUEZ: All right, I got you. Has
18 never been not one day in which I have never
19 been able to come up to any teacher or counselor
20 here and not be able to talk about my issues.
21 Ms. Eve, Ms. - - , Ms. Alexander, Ms. McGuire,
22 all our teachers, please give them a hand
23 everybody, because these are the people that
24 actually make Paul Robeson High School
25 successful - - . Thank you.

1 MS. GRIMM: Number 24.

2 MS. LATITIA INGRAM BROWN: Good evening. My
3 name is Latitia Ingram Brown. I am the science
4 lab specialist here at Robeson and I've been a
5 member of the faculty at Paul Robeson High
6 School from the inception of Paul Robeson High
7 School, so I've been there for 24 years. And I
8 look around the audience and stand behind me,
9 many of my surrogate children are in the
10 building from class of '89 to the class of 2009.

11 But I attribute that to the family
12 atmosphere and to the support and the
13 environment and the community that we have
14 created here at Paul Robeson High School. We
15 are a family. For better or for worse, we are a
16 family and we back each other. We understand
17 that it takes a village to raise a child and so
18 whatever challenges come, we stand together as a
19 family and a village that we nurture our
20 children and we strive for excellence in the
21 legacy of Paul Robeson.

22 And looking at the quality review report
23 based on the DOE record, it makes a statement,
24 it has bullets that says school plans for
25 improving student outcomes are often successful

1 because of the strong link with goal setting
2 and evaluation conversation between senior
3 leaders, teachers and students that clarify each
4 student's goal. The principal's clear shared
5 vision for the development of the school has
6 enabled implementation of a range of affected
7 systems to support students' academic and
8 personal growth. The school collects a wealth
9 of data whose frequent and regular analysis
10 allow senior leadership to adapt, turn key and
11 design new tools to promote student learning.
12 The outcomes of the frequent meetings at the
13 variety of levels provide the principal with a
14 good range of data at regular intervals to
15 support effective planning and goal setting for
16 the school - - improvement.

17 And there are two more bullets, but this is
18 exactly quoted - -

19 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] I need to ask you
20 to start wrapping up, please.

21 MS. INGRAM BROWN: --from the quality, the
22 2008-2009 quality review report. So the
23 question in my head is what is the reality that
24 the DOE is not understanding? You've created a
25 false reality and so you're living by it. But

1 the reality of Robeson is that it is a good
2 school.

3 And with that, Sterling Roberson put the
4 resolution, he motioned the resolution on the
5 floor and many of you seconded it. So I would
6 like to see by standing on your feet how many of
7 you would like to adopt a Robeson opposition to
8 the closing of our schools, by standing? So we
9 clearly want to let the DOE know that the
10 community of Robeson at large is opposed to the
11 closing of Paul Robeson and we accept and
12 acknowledge and ask you to accept our resolution
13 to keep Paul Robeson open. Thank you.

14 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 25.

15 MR. SAM ANDERSON: Good evening. My name is
16 Sam Anderson. I am a resident of the community.
17 Robeson High is my back yard because I live on
18 Rivera Place. I am a professor of mathematics
19 for over 40 years, of Black history for over 40
20 years and of education for over 40 years. And
21 let me just say Paul Robeson High School should
22 stay open. Paul Robeson High School needs to
23 stay open. The department of miseducation does
24 something that never happens in a school system.

25 When a student gets three Cs, that student

1 does not fail. But according to the
2 department of miseducation, three Cs means
3 failure. It doesn't make any sense. And the
4 reason why it doesn't make any sense is because
5 you have mayoral control. You have a non-
6 educator mayor controlling the school through a
7 non-educated chancellor who had to get a special
8 waiver from the New York State Department of
9 Education to be the chancellor of New York City
10 schools. That would never happen in a
11 predominately White school system. Never,
12 never.

13 Let me just end up by saying this. Mayoral
14 control and education-less chancellor means
15 gross mismanagement grounded in corporatism, not
16 educational management. And this means that the
17 department of miseducation needs to be closed.
18 Not Robeson, not Maxwell, not any of the
19 schools. It needs to be closed. And what we
20 need to do, what we, the people, we, the
21 students, we, the educators need to do is to put
22 together a People's Board of Education.

23 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Thank you.
24 Number 26, Mr. Paris.

25 MR. COURTNEY PARIS: Madam Deputy

1 Chancellor, Superintendent, members of the
2 head table and the members of the PEP who I hope
3 will listen, but who are not here, my name is
4 Courtney Paris. I'm social studies teacher here
5 at Robeson and an activity coordinator of one of
6 our academies and an advisor to many of our
7 students who seek our guidance and help.

8 The Department of Education pronounce
9 Robeson as a failed school. Three Cs does not
10 spell failure. It's an achievement worthy of
11 commendation. Forty percent of test rate at
12 graduation where 70 percent of the students had
13 a reading level of one or two is not by any
14 means failure. It's an achievement worth of
15 commendation.

16 We're told that the school is unsafe. So
17 was New York City a while ago. It was not
18 closed. Competent people fixed it. And if we
19 have a problem with safety, we have the
20 competency here to fix it. Allow me to
21 introduce a side of Robeson that you have not
22 considered or chosen to consider.

23 Paul Robeson High School won the stock
24 market gain every year for three years in
25 succession against the best schools in New York

1 and New Jersey. That is not failure. That is
2 an achievement worth of commendation. Paul
3 Robeson High School for several years in a row
4 won the federal challenge competition competing
5 against top schools in this state and in the
6 State of New Jersey.

7 MS. GRIMM: Mr. Paris, I have to ask you to
8 start wrapping up, please.

9 MR. PARIS: That is not failure. That is
10 achievement worth of commendation. We're using
11 business tactics of closing businesses when they
12 fail in an education system that's not a
13 business. We're using a system that failed in
14 Chicago in New York.

15 MS. GRIMM: Mr. Paris, we have other people
16 here who - - to speak.

17 MR. PARIS: When there's a problem you fix
18 it. That's what we do. And I stand in support
19 of the resolution to keep Robeson open. Thank
20 you.

21 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 27,
22 27.

23 FEMALE VOICE 2: You all will have to
24 forgive me with my voice, however, I'm going to
25 try my best and speak that everyone can hear me.

1 Hello to everyone. My name is - - . I'm a
2 parent advocate for the New York City public
3 schools. Parents, I try to be as realistic as
4 can be. No matter what you present to the
5 department of miseducation at this time, the
6 strength of Paul Robeson, now and in the future,
7 the agenda was to close it from day one when the
8 Mayor became Mayor of New York City.

9 If we look at it, when Mayor Bloomberg
10 became the Mayor and also became the Mayor of
11 all New York City public schools where he became
12 the person in charge of it, his agenda was to
13 close to down our high schools where the
14 minority students are there. It was organized.
15 And because it was organized, it had to be
16 organized for failure. It had to be organized
17 for failure. And failing schools build
18 successful persons. Not because - - we must
19 organized.

20 Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Kline,
21 together with his cabinet, are well organized.
22 Maybe they are right or wrong, in which case
23 they are wrong, but they are organized. And
24 because they are organized they are going to get
25 things their way. We have to be organized. We

1 know the truth about Paul Robeson. We know
2 the truth about our children. Our children - -
3 they came from kings and queens. This is not -
4 - . They came from kings and queens, not from
5 slavery. Slavery came about after the fact.

6 Our children are brilliant and given the
7 right opportunity they will succeed - - . - -
8 you cannot keep on changing. Every year or
9 every - - years - -

10 [Crosstalk]

11 MS. GRIMM: I need to ask you to begin
12 wrapping up - - .

13 FEMALE VOICE 2: - - the department of
14 miseducation.

15 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 28.

16 MS. MARONOWSKY: Good evening. My name is -
17 - Maronowsky. I'm - - teacher for the
18 chairperson. I've taught social studies at the
19 school for 22 years, and I'm also the attendance
20 coordinator. I was in opposition to the closure
21 of the school. Our students are sincere caring,
22 fun loving young men and women who are growing
23 academically, socially and emotionally under the
24 guidance of all members of the Robeson community
25 down from the administrator to the kitchen staff

1 to the school workers, school aides, parents,
2 social workers, counselors, teachers, and if I
3 forgot somebody I'm sorry.

4 Statistically speaking we have 1,010
5 students on registry. Our attendance last year
6 was 69 point something percent. The first three
7 months of this year our attendance has risen to
8 an average of 85 and a half percent. So we have
9 made strides in that area through the - - of all
10 members of the community. Additionally, our
11 graduation rate was shown as 40 percent. The
12 state came out with different figures and our
13 graduation rate is 55 percent.

14 Our cohort numbers, the ones that they are
15 counting for the people who started out in 2005
16 and should have graduated in 2009, those figures
17 also are different from the city and the state.
18 I do not have the numbers offhand. I think that
19 we have a lot of programs here that help our
20 students. We have the life program where we
21 have family, parents and a teacher helping the
22 young children of our students so that they can
23 continue their education. We have, as been
24 mentioned, City Group. We have the Princeton
25 '56. We have Brooklyn College. We have

1 programs for our parents on the weekends so
2 that they can learn skills such as computer
3 skills. So if we close our school we will
4 depriving not only our students, but our
5 community of the vibrant services that we
6 present here.

7 That's about all I've got to say. So please
8 keep us open. Thank you.

9 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 29.

10 MR. RICKY RODRIGUEZ: My name is Ricky
11 Rodriguez, and I'm a student of Paul Robeson
12 High School. I'm a junior and I just wanted to
13 start by saying, addressing a comment that was
14 made by one of the ladies on the panel. They
15 said that 1,500 four years ago was the amount of
16 students that were attending Paul Robeson High
17 School. Well, the numbers did drop to about a
18 thousand, but a thousand is the capacity that
19 this building can hold. So at that time we were
20 over-capacitate and now, we're at the number
21 we're supposed to be at.

22 So for the four years of the grades that
23 supposedly had dropped, those numbers might have
24 went down, but the five and six year graduation
25 rate has gone up. It might have been difficult

1 for the teachers to teach a school that was
2 over-capacitated by over 500 students, but they
3 got the job done in a little more time that was
4 needed, but the job got done sooner or later.

5 All right. Another thing that was said was
6 that these small schools support needy children.
7 Well, a need is, it has to be defined because a
8 need for one person may not be a need for
9 another. In this school the need for these
10 children is an education. They need somewhere
11 to go throughout their day to help them learn,
12 to help them get out into the world because most
13 of these kids in this school deal with
14 challenges and different needs. Single homes,
15 living with grandparents, living in shelters,
16 regardless of what the needs are, these needs
17 are more severe than certain other
18 circumstances.

19 This school offers several different
20 opportunities that I, myself, have been taken
21 advantage of since I got here in my freshman
22 year. They say that the school isn't up to par
23 on their grades. Well, me, myself, and several
24 of my classmates are finished with the math
25 curriculum because we have, we have been

1 advanced with these teachers.

2 There are several different organizations
3 that are set up in the school that I'm not going
4 to repeat because they've been said. I feel
5 that they should be taken into consideration
6 because, yes, a new school can get new programs,
7 but you can't get a program and build a bond for
8 20 years over again.

9 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 31.

10 MALE VOICE 3: Number 30?

11 MS. GRIMM: I thought it was 31 - - . Is
12 there a rep from the CDC, 17, Ms. Griffith? Ms.
13 Griffith? Charmane Griffith?

14 MS. CHARMANE GRIFFITH: Yes?

15 MS. GRIMM: Right here. Want to come up to
16 one of the microphones? Thank you.

17 MS. GRIFFITH: Good evening, everyone. I am
18 here on behalf of the community and the CDC, 17th
19 District, first vice president and all the
20 community at large in District 17. Instead of
21 closing our schools you have to give them enough
22 time and adequate resources to turn themselves
23 around and final decisions are made. So instead
24 of closing our schools I think you should give
25 this school a chance before you close it. Thank

1 you.

2 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. We have
3 with us tonight, and have for a while, State
4 Senator Eric Adams, who would like to say a few
5 words - - .

6 SENATOR ERIC ADAMS: Thank you. You know I
7 am extremely, my heart is heavy and from my days
8 of being with 100 Blacks from law enforcement,
9 all I knew was how to be honest to my community,
10 that's all I know. And I cannot lie to you.
11 This is why I voted against Mayoral control in
12 the State Senate. This is why. This is why.

13 And to hear students, to hear parents and to
14 hear committed educators all talk about how they
15 want to nurture this community and save our
16 children and in spite of that, the Mayor is
17 saying he wants to close this school. This is
18 troubling to me because we are going through
19 just a basic ceremony right now. The panel is
20 stacked, board consoled. They are going to vote
21 to close the school and let me tell you what's
22 the reason going on across this city and across
23 this state.

24 It's all about the two biggest sources of
25 our 130 billion dollar budget goes to health

1 care and education. This is all about the
2 dollars. It's a move to privatize education and
3 turn our system into a money generated machine.
4 Our schools are not a group of chain store 7-11
5 that you just look at the bottom line. That's
6 wrong. It's wrong. We must not merely teach
7 our children to take a test. We must prepare a
8 well-rounded individual who could successfully
9 participate in society.

10 And let me conclude with this because it
11 doesn't take long to say what we have to do.
12 This battle is not going to be won at this
13 microphone or that microphone. Until we realize
14 we've got to take this to the streets, until we
15 realize that, you have won nothing, nothing in
16 this country by sitting in a sterilized
17 environment of an auditorium or make-shift gym.
18 You didn't win the right to vote. You didn't
19 win the right to sit at a lunch counter. You
20 didn't win the right to rob a bus. You will not
21 win this fight merely by speaking to a 7 to 5
22 panel with seven of the members chosen by the
23 Mayor. If we don't take this to the street this
24 school is going to close. This school is going
25 to close. - -

1 Our level of anger must reach their level
2 or arrogance. That's what it has to be because
3 cross town in other communities, if you attempt
4 to close their school, they will close down this
5 city. That's what they will do, because their
6 city is about the education of their children.
7 The will not come in the gym and merely talk
8 about it's wrong. They will not merely come to
9 a microphone. If you mess with the education of
10 children in other communities they will close
11 this city down.

12 And not until we're ready, not until we're
13 ready to send a message in the embryo state of
14 his third term that he took from the people, not
15 until we send him a message, don't mess with our
16 kids, they're going to destroy the education for
17 our kids.

18 MS. GRIMM: Thank you, Senator. Thank you,
19 Senator. We will resume now at number 31.

20 MALE VOICE 3: 32.

21 MS. GRIMM: 32.

22 MALE VOICE 3: Sorry, 31.

23 MALE VOICE 4: 31.

24 MS. GRIMM: That would be Mr. Temple.

25 MR. TEMPLE: Good evening.

1 MS. GRIMM: Good evening.

2 MR. TEMPLE: Senator Adams is a hard act to
3 follow. But I'm here representing a group of
4 men, and I mean men, who have been organized for
5 37 years. The organization is the Brooklyn Old-
6 timer's Foundation, Incorporated. And we are a
7 bunch of guys who performed, guys who went to
8 school in Brooklyn, high school in Brooklyn,
9 lived in Brooklyn some of the times, moved out,
10 but we always, we came together to give back to
11 our students.

12 Presently, we are a scholarship granting
13 organization. We give scholarships to five high
14 schools in central Brooklyn, a thousand dollars
15 a year for the winner of our scholarship and we
16 carry them through for four years. We mentor
17 them. We give them support. We even give them
18 a little something extra when they are in need.

19 Paul Robeson happens to be the school that I
20 come to interview students, and in the last 12
21 years of interviewing the students from this
22 school, we interview, say three students for our
23 scholarship, we have the hardest time to make a
24 decision because of the quality of the student
25 who we have to pick to give our scholarship to.

1 These students are excellent examples of young
2 people who are grasping for higher education.
3 The staff of this school have done an
4 outstanding job under extreme circumstances to
5 nurture these young people who live under some
6 of the most heinous conditions possible,
7 shelters, broken homes, what have you, but they
8 succeed.

9 Just in early December, we give a dinner
10 dance every December to raise funds to support
11 our scholarship.

12 MS. GRIMM: I need to ask you to begin
13 wrapping up.

14 MR. TEMPLE: Okay, wind it up. This year we
15 had the honor of honoring one of the student
16 graduates of Paul Robeson High School who is
17 presently a vice president in the CitiBank
18 organization through which she was in this
19 program during her stay in Robeson, graduated
20 with honors, went to Stony Brook University, in
21 Stony Brook, maintained a 3.8 average through
22 her four years and she's doing wonderful. She's
23 a product of Paul Robeson High School.

24 How dare you, Chancellor, how dare you
25 consider closing this great educational

1 institution. It's a slap in the face to this
2 great man who this school is named after. Paul
3 Robeson, a great champion of the people. How
4 dare you want to take this away from this
5 community, this bright light of education in
6 this community. I dare you to close it. We
7 will support this resolution.

8 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 32.
9 Ms. - -

10 MS. SHARON WEATHERBOURNE: Good evening,
11 everyone. My name is Sharon Weatherbourne
12 [phonetic] and I'm the - -

13 MS. GRIMM: The lady is speaking. Please,
14 the lady is speaking. Please sit down.

15 MS. WEATHERBOURNE: Good evening, everyone.
16 My name is Sharon Weatherbourne, and I'm the
17 education chair for Community Ward Eight. I
18 have to say Community Ward Eight represents the
19 communities of Crown Heights, Prospect Heights
20 and - - . And I have to tell you when I first
21 heard of this closures I was very dismayed
22 because it rolls down on us. What am I talking
23 about?

24 First, they close Erasmus Hall and made
25 small schools. Then they closed Green Gate High

1 School. Then they closed Prospect Heights.
2 The - - Institute has definitely studied that
3 the closure of small schools imposes harm and
4 damage to the larger schools because you cannot
5 enroll a student over the counter at a smaller
6 school. Thus, we have students that are less
7 well prepared attending our larger schools. Or
8 stated another way, small schools have the
9 luxury of enrolling students who are well
10 prepared for the work of high school.

11 So when we talk about community, an integral
12 part are our schools. Our schools are not real
13 estate assets. And the reason why I say this, I
14 don't think it's coincidental that they are not
15 only trying to close Paul Robeson, but they're
16 trying to close one of the middle schools
17 located in the building at Park Place and Troy
18 Avenue. Coincidental, I don't think so. Noting
19 that the money that is going to support schools
20 in the future come for the race to the top from
21 the federal government and from private grants,
22 I would say that we're prime targets. And as
23 our Senator has said, this battle will not be
24 won in the auditorium. It'll be one to know
25 that you don't mess with Brooklyn because if

1 Paul Robeson falls, surely, the next school
2 that falls will be Boys and Girls High School.

3 And what will we have? No comprehensive
4 educational institutions located in central
5 Brooklyn.

6 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 33.

7 GAIL: Hi, I'm Gail - - , President of
8 Transforming Education in America. And I was in
9 this school, the professional - - program last
10 year. And I want to say that I really, I taught
11 at Stuyvesant for 20 years and what I learned
12 there was what excellence looks like. I taught
13 kids who were homeless, blind, deaf, who had
14 ADD. I saw kids who were highly motivated and I
15 saw what they could do with their lives and how
16 they could succeed.

17 And I was very impressed here. I mean I
18 really applaud the fact that the Department of
19 Education has raised standards and says we
20 won't, you know, we will not tolerate low
21 performance schools. I think that's wonderful.
22 But I think on the other hand you have to
23 provide the resources. And I know when I came
24 into the school, the school had been in a
25 downward spiral because they were getting

1 students who were less and less able entering
2 in the past several years here.

3 And this past year, by June of 2009 when my
4 program finished, almost all of the grades had
5 been up across the board. There was a 25
6 percent decrease in violence, 70 percent
7 increase in communication. Regional scores were
8 up between 33 percent in English to 58 percent
9 in science. This is not a failing school. I
10 saw the teachers put in enormous effort and
11 really, when they were giving different tools,
12 innovative tools, really take hold of them and
13 apply them.

14 The heart of the school is the teachers and
15 I really applaud the teachers here. You've
16 heard from them. You've heard what kind of part
17 they have. You've heard the kind of influence
18 they've had on students. And I think it's
19 essential to work, I mean you keep closing down
20 school after school, unless you transform
21 teachers to giving them better tools to deal
22 with that non-academic aspects of learning. And
23 that's what we were working with.

24 This year, school didn't have enough money
25 to bring the program back. It would have helped

1 a lot. And I think you can do enormous things
2 by teaching teachers how to work, and support
3 teachers, coach teachers. I work with healthy
4 habits, life lessons that teachers pass on to
5 their students and it had an enormous impact on
6 the school. That's what we need to do, not
7 close schools. We need to transform them with
8 teachers who have heart like the teachers here.
9 And so I applaud all of you teachers and I think
10 it's wonderful, everything you've done.

11 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 34.

12 MS. JANELLA HINES: Hi, my name is Janella
13 [phonetic] Hines, and I am a member of the
14 community, but I am going to defer my time to
15 Ms. Anna Torres who is a member of the Robeson
16 community.

17 MS. ANNA TORRES: Thank you. Good evening.
18 I'm the - - counselor here for Robeson and I
19 came to Paul Robeson 17 years ago after serving
20 six years as a probation officer for the New
21 York City Department of Probation. And as a
22 probation officer I observed how over 85 percent
23 of Latino, Caribbean, African and American youth
24 fill the criminal justice system, not only the
25 city, but in this country. And I decided that I

1 wanted to do something about that and that is
2 why I joined the school system, to reach out to
3 the children early on.

4 What I do here at Robeson is provide
5 evidence based prevention workshops to young
6 people to help them develop life coping skills,
7 to develop skills that help them deal with the
8 day to day life issues. In addition to that I
9 provide them group and individual counseling.
10 And part of what I've noticed is that a lot of
11 the problems that our children face today that
12 make it difficult for them sometimes to make it
13 through high school in four years, which means
14 it may take them five or six, are a lot of the
15 problems that the young people that I dealt with
16 as a probation officer faced.

17 We deal with mental health issues here,
18 issues of suicide, neglect, violence prevention,
19 alcohol and drug prevention, teen pregnancy
20 prevention, HIV-AIDS prevention - - resolution.
21 And I ask myself what's going to happen with
22 those kids that need more than four years?
23 Where will they go if they don't fit into the
24 screening or the lottery system to go into
25 whatever new schools are made available, whether

1 here or elsewhere? Will they be our next
2 statistics? Will they be our next inmates to
3 benefit the pockets of those investing in the
4 correctional industry on the stock market?

5 I ask you again, panel, to please reconsider
6 your decision and reconsider closing our schools
7 which help our students not wind up in the
8 criminal justice system.

9 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 35,
10 Mr. Boyd. Ms. Boyd, Julia Boyd, I'm sorry.

11 MS. JULIA BOYD: Good evening, good evening,
12 how is everybody? My name is Julia Boyd. I've
13 been an advocate for 40 years for education.
14 I'm sick and tired of what's going on. I was
15 cooking tonight and heard they were closing this
16 school.

17 MS. GRIMM: Speak right into the microphone.

18 MS. BOYD: And heard that they were closing
19 Robeson. I was just with him, the man, the
20 testing man about a month ago closing Maxwell.
21 When is it going to stop? I'm sick and tired
22 every time I turn around I've got to go to
23 another closing of the schools in my
24 neighborhood.

25 I don't understand how you can say you're

1 closing this school. If children are not
2 doing what they're supposed to do, then you keep
3 them back or you put in the resources in there
4 to make them do the right thing in order to
5 pass. It's ridiculous.

6 When I went to school and if I didn't pass,
7 and I never did, they would make me stay in
8 there until I did pass. If you don't put the
9 resources in the school how is the child going
10 to go to the next grade? And these poor kids, I
11 feel sorry for them because you are hurting
12 them. You're telling them you're not needed
13 here. You put them out this school, you send
14 them to another school. When is it going to
15 end? This school has been here. The children
16 are doing good. Leave them alone. If they
17 don't - - . Stop running our children around.

18 And I think when people are at the
19 microphone saying what people want to hear, you
20 should not tell them to sit down. That's - - .

21 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 36
22 - - . Number 36 is it, Nagee [phonetic]
23 Saunders.

24 MS. LATASHA BOLTON: Good evening, everyone.
25 My name is Latasha Bolton. I was in the

1 graduating class of 2007. I'm joined here by
2 my fellow graduates of 2007. We are also joined
3 by the salutatorian of our graduating class, Ms.
4 Brittany Cook. But we are all juniors in
5 college and we just wanted to come here and
6 state that closing Paul Robeson like, I don't
7 even know what to say.

8 I came and I found out that Paul Robeson was
9 going to be, well, it was a proposal to close
10 Paul Robeson and I literally, I wanted to cry
11 because Paul Robeson High School has been the
12 most influential educational institution of my
13 life and I'm in college. And high school has
14 been the most influential educational
15 institution. It is so, I did everything at Paul
16 Robeson High School. Like Paul Robeson High
17 School opened so many doors for me. I see so
18 many of my old teachers. I see so many, my
19 guidance counselor. I can't even tell you the
20 bond that I made with my guidance counselor.

21 In Ms. Segal's room, school let out at 3, I
22 didn't go home until 7, 8:00 at night because
23 I'm in Ms. Segal's room, we're planning the
24 revolution of the world, I'm doing homework
25 where they didn't even have aides. Everything

1 happens in Ms. Segal's room. I mean to, I
2 was part of the Wise Program. I know Ms.
3 Stevens was sitting on the board. She left, but
4 she was an influential teacher in the wise
5 Program for myself.

6 A few of my classmates were a part of
7 Virtual Enterprise. I was in the academy of
8 finance. We had the academy of information and
9 technology. We had partnership with Brooklyn
10 College. We are all recipients of the city Paul
11 Robeson scholarship, which paid my way through
12 college. Because of that scholarship I'm in
13 college now. And there are so many
14 opportunities. The entire class of 2007, I
15 apologize that there's so few of us who's here
16 to represent our class, but because of the
17 opportunities that Paul Robeson gave us when
18 were seniors in 2007, that helps us stay in
19 college to this day. It helped us go to
20 college.

21 Many things, I know Ms. Hudson was there
22 helping us write our graduating essay or our
23 entrance essay for college. I know Nagee wanted
24 to talk. I know you're number 36 - - . Come
25 here - - .

1 MR. NAGEE SAUNDERS: It's going to be
2 quick and easy.

3 MR. GRIMM: Thank you. Is this number 37?

4 MS. BOLTON: No, he's number 36 - - .

5 MR. SAUNDERS: Just quick, fast. I've been
6 through so much in high school and I can
7 probably say that anywhere I go I represent
8 Robeson. It took me a little while to bet
9 everything straight, but I came back to Robeson
10 looking for guidance and it was easily given. I
11 was never turned away. So as Senator Adams said
12 earlier, we're going to have to take this to the
13 street. It's not going to be easy. So united
14 we stand, divided we shall fall. So let's keep
15 the focus and let's let this proposal go away.

16 Please, everyone, this is not one night - -
17 you have to go every day. As we go back, as we
18 turn away every night, we cannot turn our blind
19 eye - - this. We have to keep our vision
20 straight. So let's get together and let's do
21 what we have to do as a community and keep the
22 light shining. Thank you.

23 MS. GRIMM: What number do we have here?

24 MALE VOICE 3: 37.

25 MS. GRIMM: Thank you.

1 MALE VOICE 4: Good evening, everyone.
2 My name is - - and I'm a Robeson graduate.

3 MS. GRIMM: Speak right into the mike.

4 MALE VOICE 4: I'm a Robeson graduate from
5 the class of 1994. I am a Haitian immigrant who
6 came straight to Robeson and didn't speak
7 English when I got here. Before I continue, I
8 want to point out that I'm here tonight, part of
9 the blame is that there are a lot of kids that
10 came to the country, that just got here, came
11 straight to Robeson. I want to point out that
12 that's not the problem. If you have a kid like
13 me who wanted to learn and you have a school
14 like Robeson who had a good system in place to
15 help you learn and get where you want to be and
16 be successful. So I want to point that out.

17 I was part of the Sound of Robeson
18 Partnership, a program that I changed my life
19 in, learned a lot from it. Now, it's the City
20 Group Program. Now, I read you the last third
21 of my speech because I won't have time to go
22 through the whole thing.

23 In addition to the partnership program, Paul
24 Robeson presented me with many other
25 opportunities that helped me to grow into a

1 responsible young man and a productive member
2 of society. I was president of the Haitian club
3 and recurrent winner of the parenting club which
4 awarded students with \$500 scholarships for
5 every semester where the student earned 85 or
6 better in every subject. I was a member of the
7 soccer team which allowed me to win the athlete
8 with the highest average award upon graduation.

9 I was a member of the National Honor
10 Society. I took 18 courses, attended - -
11 interview, business etiquette class at - - and
12 many other opportunities that Robeson offered.
13 The school's counselor was also instrumental in
14 helping me to get admission to college. I'm a
15 graduate of New York University, the Stern
16 School of Business, with a Bachelor of Science
17 and an MBA - - . The NYU Business School is the
18 top 10 in the country. And, by the way, I'm the
19 first to go to college in my family.

20 After almost 19 years, after I set foot into
21 Robeson, by all accounts I'm a success story.
22 With a strong foundation from Robeson, I've been
23 able to beat the odds against me by not being
24 one of the - - statistics, a Black man who end
25 up dead or in jail in their 20s. I'm married to

1 a beautiful woman. I have three sons. I'm
2 able to provide them with a nice home in Long
3 Island, a big back yard to play in. I'm
4 currently Assistant Vice President in - -
5 technology at - - where I manage a team of high
6 propensity trading systems support specialists.

7 MS. GRIMM: Thank you. I need to ask you to
8 start wrapping up.

9 MALE VOICE 4: I can wrap it up. I've
10 worked for some of the most renowned companies.
11 And in closing, I hope that my story will help
12 shed some lights on this matter and also help
13 strengthen the case not to close the school. I
14 can assure you that there are many stories like
15 mine out there, Paul Robeson graduates. I know,
16 they are still friends of mine today. So I
17 speak on their behalf.

18 And the last thing I want to state, last
19 month I went to Haiti where I'm from and I could
20 see again the - - poverty. And there's no way
21 I'd be here, standing, talking to you about my
22 success if it wasn't for Paul Robeson. So
23 please, don't close the school. Create other
24 success stories like mine. Thank you.

25 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. We're

1 going to skip 38 because I think - -

2 MALE VOICE 4: I would not have been counted
3 as a graduate of the school because I didn't in
4 the eighth grade. So that policy should be
5 reconsidered.

6 MS. GRIMM: Thank you. Number 39, Deborah
7 Hunt.

8 MS. GLORIA BRAMAN: Hello. Hi, my name is
9 Gloria Braman [phonetic]. I've been a teacher
10 in New York City public schools for 30 years and
11 I am a proud graduate of Erasmus Hall High
12 School. And I won't tell you when I graduated.

13 First of all, I have a question. I heard
14 the panel say we'll work with you to plan a new
15 replacement school. I think I, forgive me, I
16 heard something like that at the beginning.
17 Well, I have question. Why not work with the
18 community, the students, the parents, the
19 administrators, the teachers now, to fix what is
20 not working well in this school and support what
21 is working well. And I have heard about a
22 tremendous number of things going on in this
23 building that sounds incredibly wonderful and
24 successful.

25 And I have not heard anybody speak against

1 keeping the, I'm sorry, I have heard nobody
2 speak against not closing the school, or did I
3 miss that? Did anyone come up here and say good
4 idea, close it down? No. So why close it down?
5 Why close it down? Bogus stats are being used.
6 Data which they switch up and down to meet their
7 needs. Is it really in the best interest of the
8 students? I don't think so.

9 I think the massive school closings is
10 really only in the best interest of the
11 Department of Education and the Mayor. I
12 haven't heard of any school closings in the
13 richer neighborhoods in our city either. By the
14 way, so why close it down? Well, you know,
15 those As and Bs and Cs and Ds, every elementary
16 school last year, 97 percent of the elementary
17 schools got As and Bs last year. So they can't
18 use that stat. But they'll fix it next year.

19 They need more building help. Why are they
20 closing the schools? Well, the Senator, Senator
21 Adams spoke eloquently about why and I cannot
22 compare with him, but it's just basically, it's
23 close the schools, put in small schools, put in
24 charter schools, privatize them. Overcrowd the
25 schools that are still open. If they fail,

1 close them down, put in more charter schools.
2 It's happening New York City. It's happening
3 all over the country.

4 MS. GRIMM: I need to ask you to stop right
5 there.

6 MS. BRAMAN: Okay. Okay, we have to go to
7 the PEP, yes. But we also have to go to the
8 Mayor's house. Don't wait until, don't wait
9 until the PEP on the 26th. Go to the Mayor's
10 house on January 21st and let the Mayor know
11 you're messing with our communities and we're
12 going to come to your community and we're going
13 to let you know. Stop. Thank you.

14 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 40,
15 Gloria Braman. Number 40? Okay.

16 MS. DEBORAH BONDS: Hello, my name is
17 Deborah Bonds, and I'm a concerned community
18 member, former DOE teacher and former parent
19 coordinator of MS 584, one of Paul Robeson's
20 peer schools. And as such, I can testify to the
21 needs of our children in our community and I
22 adamantly oppose the closing of Paul Robeson
23 High School, as well as the closing of our
24 schools citywide.

25 I have a few questions. Where are the

1 additional resources that address the dire
2 need of this student population, parent
3 population and beloved community that has been
4 historically and current day deprived and
5 starved of critical resources to help them
6 sustain and flourish? How do you explain
7 exceeding and disregarding the mandate to cap
8 special needs at 15 percent instead of the 23
9 percent that the school has been faced with?

10 While addressing all the various needs of
11 their children and loving and embracing them and
12 their families regardless of circumstance as
13 they should, the DOE concluded that Paul Robeson
14 should be closed without considering any of the
15 factors or obstacles that the students and
16 school had to overcome. However, we, the
17 community, ask the DOE what have you done
18 specifically, Mr. Cumberbach [phonetic], to
19 support the wonderful programs and progress of
20 the school in making specifically, how many
21 times have you been to the schools to plan with,
22 communicate with, talk to students, parents and
23 the community and discuss ways in which you can
24 help them to support their schooling?

25 MS. GRIMM: I need to ask you to stop right

1 there.

2 MS. BONDS: I'm sorry, I just have, I would
3 like to wrap it up, if I may.

4 MS. GRIMM: Yes.

5 MS. BONDS: Okay, thank you. I'm sorry, I
6 didn't hear you right. How do you feel that you
7 are providing a quality educational experience
8 to the beautiful children and parents by coming
9 to their school and proposing its closing
10 stating that it is failing with no tangible
11 justification for it's closing other than the
12 three Cs, which is very vague and a very flimsy
13 explanation. No written policy or procedure for
14 the school's phase out.

15 DOE officials barely being able to
16 articulate the reasoning for their mislabel of
17 attending a failing school, and where is the
18 professionalism that you as DOE leadership are
19 supposed to be exemplifying, not only for the
20 principal, but for the community. Your personal
21 attack on Paul Robeson to me is deplorable and
22 exposes the level of disrespect and disregard
23 for the entire community. I think Paul Robeson
24 and its students and staff need to be commended
25 for addressing the needs of their community,

1 their parents and their students regardless
2 of the lack of resources that the DOE has
3 provided and I give DOE and F--

4 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] I need to ask you
5 to wrap it up.

6 MS. BONDS: --in their report card for not -
7 - . And they really need to look at that report
8 card and then--

9 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] I need to ask you
10 to wrap it up.

11 MS. BONDS: I'm sorry?

12 MS. GRIMM: I need to ask you to wrap it up.

13 MS. BONDS: Oh, I'm, okay. I think Paul
14 Robeson should also be commended for motivating
15 their children in the face of the opposition to
16 keep going and keep striving and to graduate.
17 Thank you.

18 MS. GRIMM: Thank you.

19 [END 154_488a.MP3]

20 [START 154_488b.MP3]

21 MALE VOICE 5: And my daughter goes to this
22 school, but before I say anything, first I want
23 to give my praise to my Lord and Savior, Jesus
24 Christ, who's the Head of my life, okay? Now,
25 Paul Robeson High School has a lot of kids from

1 - - . I'm a community educational council
2 member from District 23. I have worked very
3 hard in our community. As a matter of fact,
4 this school is Alexander Hamilton; Dr. Alcott is
5 the principal at Teacher's Prep. As a school
6 board member form 1999 to 2003, we put the high
7 school - - . We put the gifted school there.
8 FDR High School is from ninth to 12th and
9 Teacher's Prep from six to 12. She used to work
10 her also. We put them there in - - .

11 A lot of kids in Orchard and - - come to
12 this area, come to this school, understand? I
13 work very hard with the coordinators in school.
14 The teachers are very excellent, the principal
15 excellent. Everybody in this school work as a
16 team, including the children. Back in the day -
17 - . It used to have money for the kids, money
18 for the teachers, money for the principal. If
19 they're not doing good in reading, get a special
20 reading teacher to pull that reading up or give
21 them a book that they could read, okay?

22 If they need math help, give them math - -
23 special teacher to pull it up. If there's
24 special needs children, y'all always talking
25 about nobody do the special needs, special

1 education, pull them up, bring them up, okay?
2 Make them something in life, all right?

3 The closing of this school is a rejection
4 thing. They went from Alexander Hamilton, now
5 Paul Robeson. That's a great Black man and he
6 did great, wonderful things. I'll be finished
7 in a minute. And great, wonderful things, okay.
8 Listen, we've got to do, the Mayor Bloomberg is
9 our Mayor, but Bloomberg is not an educator,
10 he's a business man, okay. Joel Kline, he's a
11 lawyer, he's not an educator, he's got to go,
12 you understand? Because everything is our
13 neighborhood, close down, close up, shut down
14 and get out.

15 Y'all are running us out our own
16 neighborhood, closing our kids. Give them a
17 chance. Let them learn. Help them. You
18 understand what I'm saying, help our children.
19 They want help. They can do - - . These
20 teachers - - the principal - - . I work with
21 the community. I was honored by 15 politicians,
22 Senator Sampson. I'm the one that work with the
23 - - , Assemblyman - - .

24 Okay, we had a representative in here from
25 Yvette Clark's office and all, all right. All

1 the Senators know me well, all right. I used
2 to work with Major Owens as 100 man for - - all
3 right. We pray for everything, education for
4 our children.

5 MS. GRIMM: I need you to stop - - .

6 MALE VOICE 5: Okay, I'm going to wrap it
7 up. But we need to help one another. One thing
8 I want to say in that my mother said, so listen
9 to this very good. My mother said people ain't
10 nothing but people. And my father said there's
11 only one race and that's the human race because
12 God made us all. Now let's help each other as
13 New Yorkers. Stick together for our children,
14 for - - . Thank you very much. God bless you
15 all.

16 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 42,
17 Mr. Corbin.

18 MR. CORBIN: So I had a long day at work,
19 little tired, but this morning I woke up, I
20 looked in the mirror and I said I'm a success.
21 And the reason why I said that because of one
22 reason. In that one reason of many reasons is
23 because in 1989 I graduated here at Paul Robeson
24 High School, 20 years ago. I'm still here, I
25 never left. And a lot of my classmates are here

1 in the back and they're here to support and
2 we're here to support the school.

3 The one thing I realize is that the DOE
4 likes to play the card game. I don't know if
5 you understand that. They like to reshuffle the
6 deck which means they are reshuffling kids who
7 need help, but then you reshuffle them and again
8 and again and guess what, the results are still
9 not the same. Well, the dealer is actually
10 Bloomberg. He has all the rules, but you don't
11 know them. So he's actually hiding them from
12 you. So you don't know the rules and can't play
13 the game, but Paul Robeson was dealt a deck that
14 it could not handle because DOE couldn't handle
15 it. So they failed. They failed, but Paul
16 Robeson didn't.

17 So now you've got new cards in the deck of
18 other students who are from, not from here, but
19 they're from out of state somewhere, right, and
20 you shuffle them in the deck as well. What
21 happens now, you have a consistent card game of
22 reshuffling and reshuffling, but guess what,
23 Bloomberg thinks he's winning, but he's really
24 not. So we need to go back, our communities, we
25 need to go and fight, we need to fight for our

1 school.

2 So what do you do with failing kids or the
3 ones who aren't trying? What I do? I'm an
4 educator. So I'm teaching kids how not to fail.
5 I'm actually staying hours afterward doing one
6 on one, going to the house, dropping by, calling
7 parents saying can I help your child. DOE is
8 not doing that. They're not stopping by a
9 house. They're not calling a parent and saying
10 does your child need help? They're not doing
11 that. They're not doing after school. They're
12 not actually taking them on trips, which I pay
13 for out of my own pocket and take them to see a
14 movie or go to David - - and help play - -

15 [Crosstalk]

16 MS. GRIMM: Mr. Corbin, I need to ask you to
17 stop.

18 MR. CORBIN: I build a relationship with
19 these kids. So you want to be able to, DOE
20 needs to stop playing that card game and get to
21 business at hand. Bloomberg and Kline need to
22 like step out of the way and let us do our job
23 and help our children.

24 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 43,
25 Lisa Woods.

1 MS. PORTIA ARMSTRONG: Good evening, my
2 name is Portia Armstrong - - . And here I risk
3 using some of my precious time to again point
4 out the mismanagement of the DOE. Here they
5 spend precious time and resources using
6 contradictory benchmarks to figure out ways to
7 close a school rather than using their time and
8 their resources to figure out ways to fix a
9 problem. Yet, even still, how crazy can it be
10 that you close up a school and yet, you have no
11 plan in place for how to correct the negative
12 impact that closing these schools will have on
13 our children and the community, mismanagement.

14 But I would like to say even in that,
15 pointing out time and resources, I heard that
16 they are even planning, even now, a middle of
17 the school year budget cut to take away even
18 more resources from our children. While I'm
19 here to let you know that I have a group of
20 people who are proactive and progressive and as
21 our Senator said, we have to have a grass roots
22 action. And I encourage all of you who are - -
23 these people to please come out and hear about a
24 group of people who have sat around to think up
25 solutions to problems and joint us on January

1 16th at the Absentia Baptist Church in the
2 Village of Harlem.

3 And again, join us at the PEP meeting where
4 the decision makers who are going to decide what
5 schools close, be there because that's when they
6 need to see our anger and hear our voices. The
7 decision - - .

8 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Lisa
9 Worse, number 43? Lisa Worse, she's not here?
10 Number 44, Sheila Small.

11 MS. SHEILA SMALL: Hello, everyone. My name
12 is Sheila Small. I'm the mother of - - Small,
13 the one that - - spoke about who was sent here
14 to Brooklyn Old-timer's Association. My
15 daughter graduated from, unfortunately, she
16 cannot be here tonight because she's sick, so
17 she asked me to speak on her behalf.

18 My daughter graduated from Robeson in 2002,
19 and a huge part of her success derives from the
20 fact that - -

21 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] Could you speak
22 right into the microphone?

23 MS. SMALL: Pardon?

24 MS. GRIMM: Speak right into the mike so
25 everyone can hear you.

1 MS. SMALL: Okay. A huge part of her
2 success derives from the fact that she went to
3 this school. She's an associate at City Group
4 working with hedge funds and a set manager. She
5 started working at the company when she was 16
6 because of an internship program from this
7 school, sponsored by Robeson. She was also
8 placed with a mentor from City Group who helped
9 her develop a bright future.

10 If the school is closed you're denying
11 gifted students, like my daughter, the
12 opportunity to broaden their horizon. You will
13 also be taking away from the community, taking
14 away from the scholarship dollars from the
15 community.

16 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 45,
17 Eddie Mantry. Number 45. No? Number 46,
18 Jennifer Williams.

19 MS. JENNIFER WILLIAMS: Good afternoon,
20 ladies and gentleman. My name is Jennifer
21 Williams. I graduated in 2006. It took me six
22 years to graduate high school. And I can hold
23 my head up high and say that because I made it.
24 I didn't - - . I now attend the College of - -
25 I'm in my third year.

1 Life, what does that mean? Life is what
2 we all make it. If you close down this school
3 you are telling young mothers like Rebecca,
4 stand up, go ahead, stand up, you're telling a
5 young mother that they cannot make it, that they
6 cannot, life taught me that I would be able to
7 make it. I hear a lot of - - . Everybody is
8 saying - - . Have you ever heard of overcome,
9 that we can do this? Yes, we can, Obama, that
10 we can do this if we would all stick together
11 and make this happen. This is about love. This
12 is not about money or any other type of finances
13 or, it doesn't take a genius to know love. We
14 stick together, this is our family.

15 If we close down this school you will be
16 putting a death to our family. Have you ever
17 had a death in your life? That means that
18 you're killing us, that you're squashing us.
19 You told us that we, it's no, you're dividing
20 us. When I have a problem or anything that goes
21 on in my life I have these women, Ms. Gray was
22 like a mother to me. She comes and she tells me
23 everything that I need to hear, that is true,
24 love. We need to stick together. We need to
25 make this happen.

1 Regardless, I will fight to the end, the
2 end for this school if it's the last thing I do
3 because my son who is nine years old, Isaiah
4 Williams, who - - while I was in school? And I
5 - - William A Maxwell School when he was first
6 born. Fourteen years old with a child, thinking
7 that I couldn't do anything with my life. But
8 guess what, I'm here now to say that I can.

9 This young mother, she's here because she
10 knows that this is not the end. This is only
11 the beginning. This is the stepping stone.

12 MS. GRIMM: - - I need to ask you to wrap
13 it up.

14 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. I was finished. But
15 this is not finished. This right here, this is
16 not finished. This is only the beginning. And
17 if you close down this school, you're telling
18 them, you're telling everyone, not only the
19 young mothers, you're telling them that they
20 can't be no one, that it's no, it's nothing for
21 them. You're breaking up a family here.
22 Brothers and sisters, we all, look how many
23 years, this is history.

24 Paul Robeson, who was that man? He was
25 someone who dedicated his life to everything

1 that was going on. He's the one who
2 persevered, who overcame the challenges that he
3 had in his life. So I'm telling you today,
4 please, think. When you're going home, if you
5 had a son or a daughter that went to this school
6 would you close down the school? I don't think
7 so. You would tell them that we're going to,
8 okay, you would tell them that we're going to
9 overcome this and we're going to get through
10 this no matter what. And no matter what, we are
11 going to stand here. We're going to stand above
12 all this and we're going to keep this school
13 going.

14 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 47.

15 MR. RODNEY DEEDS: Thank you. My name is
16 Rodney Deeds. I want to welcome everybody here
17 at this Paul Robeson gathering, hearing. And
18 I'm one of the community members, of a long time
19 community members entrepreneur, one of the
20 people behind the positive conscious hip hop
21 movement. I'm known as the Radio Raheim
22 [phonetic].

23 And what I've been doing for the past 10
24 years in my community, the past 10 years in my
25 community I've been working with children from

1 the department of miseducation. And I've
2 been very successful without any budget from the
3 department of miseducation to have many of my
4 students attend college and, as well, be very,
5 very successful.

6 And like someone said earlier, a two minute
7 hearing on our issues is just the beginning. We
8 need more than two minutes for you to hear the
9 miseducation and the racism that goes on. And I
10 think your psychographics and your demographics
11 is going to lead you to tell you one thing, that
12 the people of this community recognize the
13 systematic setup that you at the department of
14 miseducation has systematically set up against
15 the people of our community.

16 This is not happening in any other
17 community. And the people are picked up here.
18 They're tired of this. The people are going to
19 organize, organize and continue to organize and
20 let this panel know go back to Joel Kline, go
21 back to Mr. Bloomberg, I know his name, and it's
22 not against the panel, nothing against the
23 panel, it's against the policy of racism at the
24 department of miseducation.

25 The people here are not sleeping.

1 Unfortunately, you have the difficulty of
2 hearing us tell you again and again and again
3 wake up.

4 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 48,
5 Dedra Johnson. Dedra Johnson?

6 MS. REBECCA FREEMAN: Hi, my name is Rebecca
7 Freeman, and I started Paul Robeson exactly one
8 year ago. I started, when I started Paul
9 Robeson I had a three month old child. So I
10 started Paul Robeson with the expectations that
11 I was not going to get nowhere, that by the end
12 of the week that they were going to say no, you
13 can't stay here, you have to leave, you're not
14 going to make it, this, that and the other.

15 But Paul Robeson taught me that it doesn't
16 matter what trials you go through in your life,
17 that there will always be somebody there just to
18 say you can make it. When I got to Paul
19 Robeson, I moved here from - - by myself. My
20 mother didn't come with me. I came out here by
21 myself and I came, I came here and people took
22 me in like I was their own child. Paul Robeson
23 took me in like I was their child. There's not
24 one day I come into this school where somebody
25 doesn't say good morning and how was your day,

1 how was your night, how are you feeling?

2 They want to know how you are. They don't just
3 want to know oh, she's not a Nike average
4 student so I'm not going to speak to her.

5 It doesn't matter what your average is. It
6 doesn't matter where you came from. It doesn't
7 matter what color you are. All that matters is
8 what's inside of you. And that's what Paul
9 Robeson teaches everybody. They teach you that
10 it doesn't matter where you come from. It
11 matters where you're going. Without Paul
12 Robeson I'm not going anywhere. Without Paul
13 Robeson I would not have gone anywhere.

14 I came here with practically no credits and
15 I'm about to graduate in 2010 with a 14 month
16 old child. So if they're telling me that Paul
17 Robeson has done nothing for nobody and will not
18 do nothing for nobody, that they are failing,
19 you're basically telling me that I'm a failure.
20 And I'm standing here right now to tell you that
21 I will not fail. I have not failed and I will
22 never fail.

23 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Thank you.
24 Is Dedra Johnson here?

25 MS. FREEMAN: She - - the number.

1 MS. GRIMM: Oh, she gave that number,
2 okay. Then we'll go to 49, Michael.

3 MR. MIKE GRAHAM DANNY: Good evening,
4 everyone. My name is Mike Graham Danny. I'm a
5 retired music executive. I'm not here because
6 I'm a member of this community, but I am here as
7 a product of the New York City school system.
8 When my friend who just spoke, two speakers ago,
9 Radio Raheim, he's known, told me about this I
10 jumped at the opportunity. I live in the Bronx
11 and I came all the way down because I felt that
12 these kids need a chance.

13 I also have a daughter that just graduated
14 from Clark Atlanta University last summer and
15 she got a chance because I'm from Trinidad
16 originally and I came here when I was 12 years
17 old. And the school system, I went to PS 252
18 here in Brooklyn, 117 in junior high school, 117
19 at Dewitt Clinton High School, and I was in the
20 U.S. military, but I had a chance. These kids
21 need a chance.

22 Mayor Bloomberg is trying to run this city
23 and the Department of Education like one of his
24 zillion dollar businesses. And the people of the
25 community's got to step up and let him know just

1 because he's got all 16 billion dollars, that
2 he can do anything that he wants. But I'm here
3 to say when these kids don't get a chance, they
4 wind up paying more money because they wind up
5 upstate in jail somewhere.

6 You know when they come to these after
7 school programs, they have nothing, these kids
8 have nothing to do. When they come to libraries
9 and everything like that, they have nothing to
10 do. These kids need a chance. Thank you very
11 much.

12 MS. GRIMM: Thank you. Number 50, Paul - -
13 Zapara. Zapara? 51, Ms. Belton? Okay.
14 Charles - -

15 MALE VOICE 5: He went up.

16 MS. GRIMM: Oh, he went already. So it's
17 your turn.

18 MS. LISA NORTH: Hello, my name is Lisa
19 North, and I've been a teacher for over 20
20 years. I taught in Bedstine [phonetic] and Fort
21 Green. And I just want to say, I'm going to
22 make it really short because it's very late. If
23 the New York City Department of Education and
24 Kline and Bloomberg really cared about the
25 students of New York City, they would give us

1 the funds and the resources we need to
2 educate our children. So obviously, they don't.

3 They have a different agenda and I agree
4 with Senator Adams, that it's all about money
5 and it's all about privatizing, it's all about
6 real estate. It's all about, a lot of these
7 chartered schools that they have are run by
8 billionaire's children and billionaires and
9 hedge fund people and it's really about money.
10 so it's not about the kids, unfortunately, in
11 New York City.

12 So what we have to do, everybody that spoke
13 here has to get out, and not get out of the
14 auditorium and get out into the streets. And
15 there are all these events coming up that have
16 been planned. There's the one on the 21st to go
17 to Bloomberg's residence. There's the one on
18 January 16th at Absentia Baptist Church and then
19 there's the PEP meeting. But we know the PEP
20 meeting is a setup, that it's controlled by
21 Bloomberg, so we have to be out in the streets
22 at these other events letting the powers that be
23 and the city know that people are turning out
24 and they're not going to take it anymore.

25 MS. GRIMM: Thank you. Number 53, Ms. Black

1 MS. ARNETIA BLACK: My name is Arnetia
2 [phonetic] Black. My son graduated from Robeson
3 in the '90s. He's now a math coach in the
4 middle school. A very committed math coach, I
5 might say. I served as PTA president of this
6 school, I think during his senior year so I've
7 had an attachment. At the same time that I
8 served as PTA president I was doing a master's
9 program, I think at - - University, and my
10 project was parent involvement. So I had
11 started a parent involvement program in a
12 neighboring middle school and I was always
13 struck by the difference, the environment that
14 was going on in that school where I was working
15 with parents trying to get them involved and the
16 experience that I had here at Robeson.

17 So needless to say, I've made the change
18 some contacts, no close. I'm not here for
19 meetings and all of that, but they are
20 definitely family. And I think my son feels the
21 same way. Currently, I write a parent's
22 notebook column for - - and I learned somewhere
23 during my parenting that we have an opportunity,
24 a duty to nurture our children because they come
25 innate - - and we need to create - - create an

1 environment that allow them to do that. And
2 I think Robeson was one of those places and I
3 think the education, Department of Education,
4 needs to look and see what they're not doing and
5 not management in order to have that happen.

6 I only have questions left. One little
7 thing that I'm curious to know, what was
8 Robeson's record prior to 2000, the first year
9 they got the C? The other think I'm curious to
10 know is what resources or strategies are given
11 to students when they first earn a C since this
12 is the sign of, you know, closing, if they get
13 two more. And what role - -

14 MS. GRIMM: - -

15 MS. BLACK: Okay, thank you. President
16 Obama took responsibility for the systemic
17 breakdown in that Christmas day Detroit flight
18 event and I'm curious to know what role, what
19 responsibility does Department of Education when
20 schools are, as you call it, failing? Where
21 does the responsibility lie? Our children
22 deserve those answers and parents have to stand
23 up. This is an opportunity. This is an
24 opportunity. Parents, grandparents, neighbors,
25 community, stand up. Thank you.

1 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number
2 54, Ryan Core. Ryan Core? Number 55, Ramón
3 Lopez.

4 MR. RAMON LOPEZ: My name is Ramon Lopez.
5 I'm an assistant principal and the director of
6 the academy of finance at Paul Robeson High
7 School. I've been in this school for 11 years.
8 I started as a teacher and now I'm an
9 administrator. And I feel that the decision to
10 phase out the school is unfair and, you know,
11 arbitrary. It is true that our register has
12 gone down in the past few years, but, you know,
13 it went up when the other schools around us were
14 closing. So I think that's more of a policy,
15 you know, because of the policies of the DOE
16 then something that we had to do.

17 Two years ago, three years ago, we decided
18 to start - - in the community and we saw the
19 need to change with that. However, I feel
20 personally that DOE did not support that
21 initiative. I guess we were competing with
22 other small schools and that was not, you know,
23 something they wanted to see.

24 I think that the DOE knew that we were in
25 trouble and they never provided the support.

1 They never helped us - - students. I do have
2 to defend Mr. Cumberbach. He was not our
3 superintendent last year and he was in the
4 building more than one time because I met with
5 him a couple of times. But our superintendent
6 was not even here one day last year, not one
7 day. And I know because I was here every single
8 day last year.

9 So where is the accountability for her? How
10 is she being held responsible for the failure of
11 not just our school, but many schools under her
12 jurisdiction? The DOE itself is failing because
13 if we fail, we are part of the DOE. So who is
14 being held accountable above us for the failure,
15 for the so-called failure of our school? Thank
16 you.

17 MR. GRIMM: Thank you - - . 56, Shadine
18 [phonetic] Wright.

19 MS. SHADINE WRIGHT: Good evening. My name
20 is Shadine Wright. I am a freshman at Paul
21 Robeson High School. Some of the time I've been
22 here I've welcomed into a family. People have
23 said this school is bad, but they are wrong. It
24 is bad that teachers care about me. It is bad
25 that they push me when I don't have it in me to

1 push myself.

2 I was saddened to hear that the school will
3 be closing. I have been moving forward with
4 many of my hopes and dreams that the school is
5 supporting me in to make it come true. What I
6 learned in high school is a treasure in my head.
7 When you shut down Paul Robeson, you shut down
8 my home, a place that has allowed me to grow as
9 a student and a future - - member of society.
10 And I'm begging you, think about twice to shut
11 down my school.

12 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number 57
13 - -

14 MALE VOICE 6: Good evening everybody.

15 AUDIENCE: Go to the mike.

16 MALE VOICE 6: Hello.

17 MS. GRIMM: Yes, good.

18 MALE VOICE 6: Good evening everybody.

19 FEMALE VOICE 4: Good evening.

20 MALE VOICE 6: I graduated from Paul Robeson
21 there in 2008 and when I was told that I got
22 accepted to Paul Robeson during 2004, before I
23 even started this school I was told that this
24 school was very bad and more than 50 percent of
25 the kids here never graduated or don't even know

1 what happened to them. But I'd like to say
2 that it's not all true about what they said
3 about this school.

4 The school is not that bad. The people here
5 are, they are very caring and they are very firm
6 with their work. The guidance counselor, they
7 do their best to make sure that the kids stay in
8 school and, oh, yes, the security, they are
9 pretty cool too. And I learned a lot because
10 even the kids are pretty good here. Like even
11 though that we might act really bad during our
12 freshman year, but as time grow, they learn a
13 lot and we actually feed off each other and it
14 became more like, more like less of a stranger,
15 but more like a family as we get closer and
16 closer.

17 And as we get closer to our sophomore - - we
18 took our education more seriously and we found
19 out that it is very important to graduate on
20 time. By the time we reach our senior year like
21 that's when we really like see things really
22 clear and even those kids that didn't have
23 enough credits, they find ways to get the
24 credits and graduate on time during all four
25 years. Thank you.

1 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Number
2 58, Dominic Zola. Dominic Zola?

3 MR. JULIAN PETICAN: Then gentleman yielded
4 to me. My name is Julian Petican [phonetic].
5 I'm a senior from - - Senior Center down the
6 street. We have been with Paul Robeson for
7 many, many years thanks to the - - . And just
8 the idea of closing down the school, that our
9 people are, they're learning. They're
10 experiencing life or what it's going to be like.
11 And it's just heartbreaking just to even think
12 about doing this.

13 In this school they get so much, even
14 through Ms. Segal program that we, the senior
15 are with and they do so much for us. They come
16 down, they - - for us. They clean apartments.
17 I mean that's really wonderful, you know, to
18 have the young people coming to clean the
19 apartments, you know. And it's just the
20 learning that they get here and the - - that
21 they have and just, I just couldn't imagine this
22 school being closed and we, the senior center
23 down the street, that we can't converse anymore.

24 And we're asking those that are in charge to
25 please keep this school open.

1 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much. Mark
2 Torres. Mark Torres? Then that concludes the
3 public portion of this evening. Again, I want
4 to thank each and everyone of you for coming
5 tonight and for sharing with us your opinions
6 and your views on this. And I wish you all a
7 good evening. Thank you.

8 [END 154_488a.MP3]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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

Signature Yvonne T. Boggs_____

Date January 10, 2010_____

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