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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION - OFFICE OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING
Middle School for Academic and
Social Excellence
January 13, 2010**

1 [START 154_508]

2 MR. JOHN WHITE: I want to thank you for
3 coming to this hearing regarding the, uh, phase-
4 out proposal for the Middle School for Academic
5 and Social Excellence, uh, 334, uh, here in
6 Brooklyn.

7 Uh, we have asked this evening, the District
8 17 CEC Representative by, uh, Ms. Agard
9 [phonetic] on my left, to participate. I'm also
10 joined by Ms. White from the school's Leadership
11 Team, uh, to my far right. And by
12 Superintendent Rhonda Hurtle [phonetic] Taylor,
13 uh, from District 17 immediately to my right.

14 This hearing is being recorded. Uh,
15 following the hearing, a transcript of this
16 evening's events will be, uh, distributed to
17 each of the councils, the School Leadership
18 Team, and the Community Education Council that's
19 represented on the panel. The hearing's
20 transcripts will also be posted on the
21 Department of Education's website. And they
22 will be submitted into the record, as with all
23 public comment received about this proposal, to
24 the Panel on Educational Policy, which is voting
25 on this proposal on the 26th of January, 2010,

1 at their monthly meeting. This meeting is
2 taking place at Brooklyn Tech.

3 The purpose of the hearing this evening is
4 to inform that vote. And the purpose is to
5 receive public comment, uh, about the proposal.
6 Before I describe the proposal, I want to make
7 sure that the proceedings for this evening's
8 hearing are clear.

9 All who wish to sign up, should do so, to
10 speak, should do so on the list that is outside
11 of this auditorium. We ask that speakers sign
12 up by 6:20, uh, p.m., and the sign-up list will
13 then close. Speakers will have two minutes to
14 speak. As I've said, everything, uh, said this
15 evening is recorded and will go into the public
16 record.

17 With one minute and thirty seconds into, uh,
18 the speaking session, you will see a sign
19 saying, uh, that you have 30 seconds remaining.
20 And when the time is complete, you will see a
21 sign saying time is up. We ask you to keep to
22 the two minutes. Uh, we have multiple speakers
23 this evening, and we want to make sure that all
24 speakers are able to heard. If we do that, we
25 will be able to ensure that all speakers can be

1 heard.

2 The, there is also an opportunity to submit
3 written comment electronically if you like. Uh,
4 the email address and the phone number where you
5 can either send or submit over the phone comment
6 are available, uh, on the Department of
7 Education's website under the Panel for
8 Education Policy, uh, section.

9 I'm going to describe a little bit about
10 this evening's proposal, the rationale behind
11 it. Then we will have presentations from first
12 the School Leadership Team, second from the
13 Community Education Council, and then we'll
14 begin the public, uh, comment portion of this
15 evening's hearing.

16 This is a proposal, the hope of which is to
17 transform a school building and a school
18 institution from one where not enough students
19 are reading and writing and doing mathematics
20 with proficiency to one where, uh, many more are
21 doing so. At the Middle School for Academic and
22 Social Excellence, there are not enough kids,
23 uh, currently, uh, achieving that standard.

24 Uh, last year, in a year where only 17
25 schools, uh, in the city, Kindergarten through

1 8th schools, received a grade of C. Uh, the
2 students in this school, on the whole, uh, did
3 not increase their proficiency. The school is
4 behind significantly, uh, other district schools
5 in District 17 at the middle school grade
6 levels. And, indeed, doesn't show the same
7 level of proficiency on average as the other
8 middle school, uh, that exists in this building,
9 other district middle school I should say, uh,
10 354.

11 Thirty-nine percent of the students in the
12 school currently are proficient in math,
13 compared with 65% at 354, and 75% in the
14 district. The school earned a C on its progress
15 report for the second consecutive year, and
16 received a quality review, uh, assessment of an
17 Underdeveloped with Proficient Features. That
18 assessment is an in-person review by educators
19 to assess, uh, the organization itself of the
20 school.

21 The 2008-2009 school survey indicated
22 dissatisfaction from students as well, roughly
23 60% of whom are saying they feel safe in the
24 building. Uh, thus 40% not expressing that they
25 feel safe, uh, in the school building.

1 I, I want to emphasize that it is not the
2 feeling on the part of this proposal that this
3 circumstance is any one individual or even a
4 group of individual's fault. Uh, why we come to
5 situations like this is incredibly complex. But
6 it is the intent to say very candidly that we
7 know we can do better. We know because schools
8 city-wide have students that bring significant
9 challenges to their schools every day, but are
10 performing at significantly higher levels. And
11 we see evidence in that in this very
12 neighborhood.

13 And so when we see evidence of that, the
14 question is: Can we do better? And we think
15 that a proposal to have students, who otherwise
16 would have entered 6th grade in this school,
17 instead attend other schools, including 354;
18 that those students very quickly, uh, will be
19 served, uh, with a guarantee that they will
20 advance.

21 I want to be clear about some of the
22 consequences of this proposal, what they would
23 be, so that no one is, is confused about
24 specific consequences of this decision.

25 One, any student who is enrolled, uh, in the

1 Middle School 354 in question is able to stay
2 in this middle school, and is able to graduate
3 from this middle school. This is not a proposal
4 to close the doors of this school, and move the
5 students who are currently enrolled elsewhere.
6 Instead, it's a proposal for this school not to
7 take a 6th grade.

8 Two, this is not a proposal to stop the use
9 of this school building. We still want to serve
10 students in this school building. We still want
11 to serve middle school students in this school
12 building. We still want to serve District 17
13 middle school students, uh, in this building.

14 Three, uh, if there were to be a new
15 Department of Education school here, uh--and
16 that is not currently part of the plan--but that
17 school would be obligated to hire at least 50%
18 of the qualified staff who apply for positions.

19 Three, uh, in replacing the school by a)
20 having kids attend 354, or b) having kids
21 attend, uh, alternate middle schools in District
22 17 as their 6th grade choice, part of the
23 proposal is to ensure that both 354 and the
24 other schools, uh, take all grades of Special Ed
25 or all classifications of Special Education

1 students and continue to serve English Language
2 Learners just as is the case here at 334.

3 I want to thank you, uh, for taking the time
4 to come this evening. I know that many of you
5 are, uh, parents with students. I know that
6 many of you are teachers who, uh, and educators
7 otherwise who have work awaiting you. So thank
8 you very much.

9 Uh, I'd like to pass the microphone now to
10 Ms. White, uh, Representative from the School
11 Leadership Team, for the presentation of the
12 School Leadership Team this evening.

13 MS. JESSICA WHITE: Thank you. Thank you.
14 Can everybody hear me? Okay.

15 Good evening. I am Jessica White, 7th grade
16 Science Teacher at Middle School 334, SLT member
17 and UFT Delegate. And I will be reading the
18 resolution to oppose the closure of Middle
19 School 334.

20 [applause]

21 Thank you.

22 Whereas Middle School 334 has served the
23 Crown Heights Community for five years preparing
24 students for further education, for citizenship
25 in a democratic society, and for productive

1 participation in the work force, and

2 Whereas the New York City Department of
3 Education has nonetheless announced plans to
4 close Middle School 334 beginning September
5 2010, and

6 Whereas the school progress reports fail to
7 provide a full and complete measure of the
8 academic, social, and emotional needs of middle
9 school students, and thus far, a fair and
10 accurate measure of academic, social, and
11 emotional performance and progress for Middle
12 School 334, and

13 Whereas in spite of all the time, money, and
14 general public resources, the New York City DOE
15 devoted to the school progress reports
16 inconsistencies of their own designed rubric,
17 and the constant arbitrary and capricious
18 failure to meet the needs of these students with
19 the highest needs, there has been a reverse
20 correlation between the needs of those students
21 with a high percentage of special needs and the
22 decline of those students ranging from AYP to
23 the performance grade of our school, and

24 Whereas the New York City DOE has, through
25 the admissions process since Middle School 334's

1 opening in September of 2005, has continuously
2 grown and concentrated in each successive school
3 year inordinately large amounts of students with
4 greater academic needs, Special Education
5 students, over-age students, students living in
6 poverty, and students living in temporary
7 housing, without providing the resources and
8 support needed to educate those students, and

9 Whereas Middle School 334 received a report
10 grade of a C as of November 2009, New York City
11 DOE ATS Data has a Special Education population
12 of 29.8% in comparison to our New York City DOE
13 designated peer group, 21.2%, and District 17
14 middle school's 12% without providing it with
15 the resources and support needed to educate
16 those students

17 Whereas the size of the Special Education
18 population has resulted in a lopsided academic
19 program that has a total of four general
20 education classes, and a total of seven Special
21 Ed, Education classes in Middle School 334,
22 without providing it the resources needed to
23 educate our students

24 Whereas in announcing the plans to close
25 Middle School 334, the DOE has ignored its own

1 standards for closure as our school was a B in
2 2006-2007, a C 2007-2008, and 2008-2009 was a B.
3 Then when the DOE, New York City DOE altered the
4 rubric, we became a C by 8/10 of a percent.

5 Whereas the New York City DOE has ignored
6 our own, their own policy that a school is to
7 have three consecutive grades of a C and on the
8 school report card, and instead are closing
9 Middle School 334 based on arbitrary and unknown
10 standards, and ambiguous combination of factors
11 per the New York City DOE Impact Statement, and

12 Whereas the New, the, I'm sorry, and whereas
13 the Middle School 334 has graduated two classes
14 of 8th graders in 2008 and 2009 with a 98%
15 graduation rate, and where 100% of students
16 taking the New York State Regents Exam for High
17 School credits passed

18 Whereas all of this shows the mismanagement
19 perpetrated upon Middle School 334 and other
20 schools by the New York City DOE, and

21 Whereas the entire school community of
22 Middle School 334--that is the students, their
23 families, and the staff--have been outspoken in
24 their opposition to closure,

25 Be it therefore resolved that this school

1 community opposes the closure of the Middle
2 School 334, and calls upon the New York City
3 Department of Education and Chancellor Klein to
4 retract their plans for closure, and provide the
5 proposed schools with the resources necessary
6 for academic success. Thank you.

7 [applause]

8 MR. WHITE: Thank you. And now a
9 presentation and comments from CEC 17.

10 MS. CLAUDETTE AGARD: Good evening. My name
11 is Claudette Agard, and I am the CEC Liaison
12 from District 17 CEC to MS 334.

13 On behalf of the CEC, we want to
14 emphatically state that we are strongly opposed
15 to MS 334 being phased out--

16 [applause]

17 --and will be submitting an official
18 statement stating opposition henceforth.

19 [applause]

20 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much. As, uh,
21 there will be, I know, other members of the
22 School Leadership Team, uh, making public
23 comment, uh, this evening, Ms. White is going to
24 join them in our, uh, audience.

25 We still have one sign-up list that is

1 being, uh, that is being finalized. I'm going
2 to call, uh, those on the sign-up list in front
3 of me. Uh, I'm going to call a number and a
4 name as well, uh, so that you have that list.
5 And as soon as I receive the other list, we'll
6 then add, uh, those who have signed up on that
7 list to that list.

8 Speaker Number 1 is Ms. A. McFadden, and the
9 speaker after that will be, uh, Speaker Number
10 3, Mr. D. Robinson. If you could please come
11 up, uh, Ms. A. McFadden, for your two-minute
12 session.

13 [applause]

14 MS. ANDREA MCFADDEN: Good evening,
15 everyone. My name is Andrea McFadden, and I am
16 a 7th grade English Language Arts teacher here
17 at Middle School 334. And prior to that, I was
18 an English Language Arts teacher at Middle
19 School 390 that was phased out just as our
20 school is being proposed to be phased out and
21 closed.

22 Um, it really saddens me to hear that the
23 Crown Heights community once again faces a
24 school closure, especially on this very campus
25 and to a school that has not received a

1 consecutive three Cs on our school report
2 card, which is a criteria for school closure.
3 And our school has yet to reach its full
4 potential. It makes me wonder what exactly is
5 the message that we are trying to send to our
6 children.

7 I am the first of nine speakers to present
8 to you our response to why we believe that the
9 Middle School for Academic and Social Excellence
10 should not be phased out and closed. As a
11 staff, we have decided to present to you a
12 logical argument highlighting five key points
13 that we feel are the cornerstone of our
14 rationale to remain open. We hope that you will
15 listen closely to our points, and give our
16 response serious consideration. Thank you.

17 [applause]

18 MR. WHITE: Thank you. The next speaker on
19 the list is Mr. D. Robinson, Mr. D. Robinson,
20 followed by Ms. T. Scarborough.

21 MALE VOICE 1: Uh, we had planned to go in
22 order. We put our presentation together, and we
23 signed up in order. Could we go in that order?

24 MR. WHITE: We can go in that, in that
25 order. Uh, if I could please have the list of,

1 of the even... Thank you. We'll take a pause
2 for, for a minute. I'm sorry for the delay.

3 FEMALE VOICE 1: Yes, I have two. And we
4 were wondering with the even number this,
5 this...

6 MR. WHITE: Speaker Number 2. Thank you.

7 MS. DANIELLE STOLAGE: May I begin?

8 MR. WHITE: Please.

9 MS. STOLAGE: Good evening, Chancellor
10 White. My name is Danielle Stolage [phonetic].
11 I'm the 8th grade Special Ed Math teacher at MS
12 334. Prior to coming to MS 334, I taught in
13 District 75 for two years as a Teaching Fellow.

14 What I noticed that was strange when I first
15 began working here is that the school mirrors a
16 D-75 school in the respect that the Special Ed
17 population at MS 334 is close to 30%.

18 Currently, we have 11 classes total for our
19 academic program. Out of that 11, 7 are Special
20 Ed; only 4 are general education.

21 Also from the 2005 to '06 school year, the
22 Special Ed population has tripled. Noticing in
23 the Impact Statement, I read that we are...
24 Compared to our peer group in District 17
25 schools, which, both of which have considerably

1 low Special Ed populations compared to us, our
2 peer group schools have 21.2%. District 17 as a
3 whole has 12%, while we, at MS 334, have a 30%
4 population of Special Ed students.

5 Also the Impact Statement notes we are an
6 Impact School. That is not true. Students are
7 sent here, they are not selected. We are not a,
8 we are not a Choice School, excuse me.

9 Also after receiving the first school report
10 grade of C, the Special Ed population has still
11 grown which is currently at 30%. As of November
12 2009, it is still at 30%. Outside of that, we
13 have the, we have the, we have the Special Ed,
14 Special Ed issue is a very strong issue that
15 concerns us. And our next speaker will continue
16 with that point.

17 [applause]

18 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much. Speaker
19 Number 3 is Mr. D. Robinson. Speaker Number 4
20 is Ms. Rita Apah [phonetic].

21 MR. DAVID ROBINSON: Good evening. Uh, my
22 name is David Robinson. I'm a 7th grade Special
23 Education Collaborative Team Teacher, and a 7th
24 grade Social Studies teacher at MS 334. I'm a
25 Teaching Fellow, and this is my second year at

1 MS 334.

2 As you know, we have a large high-needs
3 Special Education population that is currently
4 at 29.8%. And as you heard from previous
5 speaker, Ms. Stolage, the trend at MS 334 has
6 been a growing Special Education population
7 despite requests to the New York City DOE that
8 the population had become too large, and placed
9 our school above schools in our peer group in
10 District 17.

11 What concerns our staff is that high-needs
12 population. Not just Special Education, but
13 students living in temporary housing, and
14 students living in poverty. We have all had
15 plenty of professional development over the past
16 two years, and we, the teachers, are all
17 thankful for that assistance. But we have not
18 had the resources to implement all the
19 professional and instructional strategies that
20 we have learned.

21 This means unfounded expectations for our
22 staff. Despite these limitations and obstacles,
23 we have done an outstanding job with our
24 students, and our progress has been made.

25 For example, my first year here at MS 334, I

1 observed that there was a correlation between
2 the Special Education students in my class and a
3 below average reading comprehension level. Many
4 in this 7th grade class were at a 3rd grade
5 level and below. I was able to participate in a
6 professional development, and get trained in the
7 Wilson Reading System for Struggling Readers.
8 This year, our whole school is implementing a
9 school-wide Wilson program that, that addresses
10 struggling readers. However, by the program's
11 own standards, it will take one and a half to
12 two years within the program before progress can
13 be translated to standardized tests, and before
14 you can see that progress.

15 So we think this is what real progress looks
16 like for our high-needs population. And its
17 challenges should be considered when making
18 decisions about this school. Thank you.

19 [applause]

20 MR. WHITE: Thank you. Ms. Rita Apah,
21 Speaker Number 4. Speaker Number 5 is Ms. T.
22 Scarborough.

23 MS. RITA APAH: Good evening. My name is
24 Rita Apah. I'm an 8th grade Special Education
25 Self-Contained Teacher here at 334. I am in my

1 third year here at 334, and seven years with
2 the, uh, New York City DOE.

3 I will not be redundant on this Special
4 Education population as you have heard the
5 emphasis from the previous three speakers. So I
6 want to address 334's ELA performance and my
7 concerns for the social and emotional well-being
8 of our students and our community, which tends
9 to be ignored when debates become more political
10 than children focused.

11 Despite the challenges in teaching such a
12 diverse population, I want to share with you our
13 students' progress in ELA over the past three
14 years, as it is cited by the New York City
15 Department of Education as one of the front and
16 center reasons for phase-out.

17 Since 2006 and 7, the number of students
18 meeting Standards Levels 3 and 4 in ELA has
19 steadily increased by 9.6% from 20.1% in 2006 to
20 7 to, uh, to 29.7% in 2008 to 2009. During this
21 same period, there has been a correspondent
22 decrease in the number of students not meeting
23 Standards Level 1s, from 9% to 2%.

24 One area that has remained constant is the
25 number of students partially meeting Standards

1 Level 2s. Though we have experienced a small
2 decrease from 74% to 69% in the year 2009, I
3 mean 2008 to 2009 school year, this is an area
4 that we, as a faculty, have aggressively
5 strategized, planned, and implemented our
6 instructional program to ensure that our
7 students make the progress that they can
8 achieve.

9 Though the number of students meeting
10 standards have increased in each of the last
11 years and there has been a relatively constant
12 percent of students who make at least one year's
13 growth in ELA, student progress in ELA, our
14 school has not met ELA AYP. Factoring in the
15 sizeable Special Education and Special Needs
16 population, we believe we have made great
17 strides in our students' academic progress. And
18 we ask the New York City DOE to reexamine the
19 Middle School 334 performance data prior to the
20 January 28th decision. Thank you.

21 [applause]

22 MR. WHITE: Thank you. I want to
23 acknowledge that, uh, I will be asking
24 Councilmember Van, who has joined us this
25 evening, to speak. But I want to make sure we

1 get through the set of speakers from the
2 faculty at Middle School 334 who have signed up
3 first. And then we'll ask the Councilmember to
4 speak.

5 MS. TILACIOUS SCARBOROUGH: I am Tilacious
6 [phonetic] Scarborough, 6th and 7th grade Social
7 Studies teacher at MS 334, the Middle School for
8 Academic and Social Excellence. I am in my
9 third year at MS 334, and very pleased to serve
10 in our community, students, and working with our
11 staff.

12 In coming to the MS 334, the Middle School
13 for Academic and Social Excellence, what struck
14 me my first week here is that we have a large
15 high-needs Special Education population that is
16 currently at 29.8%. And we have a high
17 concentration of Special Education students,
18 whose disabilities range from learning to
19 emotional.

20 Currently, we have 11 classes in our overall
21 academic program, and 7 are Special Education;
22 only 4 classes are general education. As you
23 have heard from previous speakers, Ms. Stolage
24 and Mr. Robinson, the trend at MS 334 has been a
25 growing Special Education population despite

1 requests to the NYC DOE that the population
2 had become too large and placed our school above
3 schools in our peer group in District 17.

4 Despite the challenges in teaching such a
5 diverse population, I want to share with you our
6 students' progress in Mathematics over the past
7 three years. Since 2006 to 2007, the number of
8 students meeting Standards Level 3 and 4 in
9 Mathematics has steadily increased. Our
10 proficiency rate has increased 17% points over
11 the three-year periods from 2006-2007, 21.7% to
12 2008-2009, 39%. During this same period, there
13 has been a correspondent increase in the number
14 of students not meeting Standards Level 1s.

15 Level 1 has decreased 16 points over the
16 same three-years period from 27% to 11%. One
17 area that it has remained constant over this
18 period is the percentage of students partially
19 meeting Standards Level 3. Each year,
20 approximately 50% of our students fall, fall
21 into this category.

22 One area to point out to you, sir, is that
23 over this three-year period, 55% of our students
24 made one year's growth or progress in
25 Mathematics. Our school has met our AYP targets

1 each year in Math.

2 We ask the NYC DOE to reexamine MS 334
3 performance data prior to the January 2000 26
4 decision making. The next speaker will share
5 ELA's student performance, and her personal
6 experience at MS 334. Thank you.

7 [applause]

8 MR. WHITE: Thank you. The next speaker,
9 Number 6, is Mr. Lawrence; with Ms. Brett being
10 the speaker to follow.

11 [applause]

12 MR. BRENT LAWRENCE: Good evening. I am
13 Brent Lawrence, 6th grade Science teacher at MS
14 334. I am a Teaching Fellow, and this is my
15 second year here.

16 As you have heard and are aware, we are a
17 large high-needs Special Education population at
18 29.8%. This number reflect, reflects our
19 documented Special Education students, but does
20 not reflect, but does not include the number of
21 unclassified students who are in need of Special
22 Education services.

23 You, you might be aware of this, but what I
24 don't think the DOE is aware of is the
25 dedication and courage of our teachers here at

1 MS 334 who all have the best interest of our
2 students, and provide our students with a
3 rigorous and challenging program as opposed to
4 falling into the temptation of passing students
5 along that come from the pressures of standards-
6 base education and accountability.

7 [applause]

8 In 2009, a group of 12 faculty and
9 administration spent a weekend retreat examining
10 the instructional program and devising strategic
11 instructional plan that went beyond the, the DOE
12 conventional school comprehension educational
13 plan.

14 On a side note, the learning environment
15 survey, we were cited for having a 75%, uh,
16 approval rating as a negative for our parents.
17 Would elected officials have such numbers. This
18 should not be a negative for our school, but
19 should be a positive.

20 [applause]

21 Currently, we are in the process of
22 implementing this plan. The highlights being
23 the following. Professional development that
24 focus on Special Education and the teaching of
25 writing and reading, writing and writing across

1 the curriculum. We strongly believe we are on
2 the right path for student achievement and
3 improving our community.

4 In closing, I want to share my thoughts with
5 you, Deputy Chancellor. Our students are often
6 referred to as products. And the reality is
7 they are our children, and we are teaching them
8 life skills, social skills, and academics to
9 prepare them for the future to contribute as
10 citizens to this society so they can make
11 informed decisions and exercise their civil
12 rights and liberties to prevent injustices from
13 being perpetuated against them. Thank you.

14 [applause]

15 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much. Ms. Brett.
16 And the speaker to follow is Speaker Number 8,
17 Ms. Williams, Kathy Ann Williams.

18 MS. JESSICA BRETT: Good evening. I'm
19 Jessica Brett, 8th grade Special Education Self-
20 Contained English Language Arts teacher at MS
21 334. I came here as a Teaching Fellow in our
22 second year, 2006-07, as a 7th grade
23 Collaborative Team Teacher.

24 Our first CTT had only 26 students. Now our
25 CTT classes carry more than 30, which makes

1 meeting individual student needs difficult.
2 Since I have been here, I have witnessed and
3 experienced a rapid growth of our Special
4 Education population and its impact on our
5 instructional program.

6 I want to impress upon you to review what we
7 have accomplished here at MS 334 in spite of the
8 challenges and obstacles that we have faced as a
9 faculty, delivering an effective instructional
10 program where our students continue to perform
11 and progress. We have had two graduating
12 classes, each with a graduation rate of 98%.
13 Several of those graduates moved from self-
14 contained classrooms to less restrictive
15 environments, CTT, or mainstreamed to general
16 education, or have even been decertified because
17 of significant progress.

18 Our students have made gains in ELA and
19 Math, a year's growth as well as decreasing the
20 number of Level 1s and moving more students from
21 Level 2 and Level 3. Several of my own Special
22 Education students have demonstrated outstanding
23 growth, moving from low Level 1s and 2s to
24 points away from Level 2 or Level 3. Yet New
25 York City's DOE's quality review does not

1 mention the accomplishments of our Special
2 Education population. These accomplishments are
3 not seen because Special Education and general
4 education are evaluated using the exact same
5 measures even though we know it takes much more
6 effort and hard work for Special Education
7 students to reach the same standards.

8 Our school's instructional program provides
9 our students with the tools they need to succeed
10 in middle school, high school, and the working
11 world. As with all schools slated for closed,
12 closure, our school deserves the opportunity to
13 continue and be made better. Our school is only
14 five years young. And while we may not have the
15 size or years of other schools proposed for
16 phase-out, our heart is just as big, our
17 students and school community just as deserving
18 the opportunity to continue our mission,
19 educating the children of District 17. Thank
20 you.

21 [applause]

22 MR. WHITE: Speaker Number 8, Kathy Ann
23 Williams.

24 MS. KATHY ANN WILLIAMS: Good evening,
25 Deputy Chancellor White. I am Kathy Ann

1 Williams. I currently teach 6th, 7th, and 8th
2 grade Social Studies and Technology. I have
3 been at Middle School for Social and Academic
4 Excellence for the last three years.

5 Given that I teach all the classes, I've had
6 the opportunity to work and see our students
7 grow and become strong in different areas that
8 they've been weak in. Again, we have, we have a
9 very large high-needs Special Ed population that
10 is currently at 29.8%. This population, again,
11 we've seen it grown from the time I've been here
12 till 2000 to 2010. All right.

13 One of the criterias cited for school
14 closure is that the school should have three
15 grade Cs, three consecutive grade Cs on the
16 report card. MS 334 received a B in 2006-2007.
17 In 2007-2008, we received a C. In August 2009,
18 we received a B. However, when it came to
19 September 2009, we were notified that the New
20 York City DOE had revised the rubric and metric
21 for the school reports card, and we were
22 downgraded to a C.

23 Upon analysis of the metrics, we discovered
24 that our school actually missed being a B by
25 0.8%. All right. We should have been two Bs.

1 Now, the question is: Why is it that the DOE
2 is not adhering to its own policies and criteria
3 for phase-out?

4 We strongly feel that our Special Ed,
5 Education and special needs population for the
6 2008-2009 school year needs to be taken into
7 account when examining our school performance
8 and progress for 2008-2009. We are being graded
9 and compared to other schools not faced with
10 similar populations as ours and similar
11 circumstances.

12 We believe that our students have progressed
13 and succeeded in spite of the imbalance and
14 inequity of our population in relation to our
15 peer group and District 17 schools. We ask the
16 NYC DOE to review the school report card
17 metrics, and reconsider their decision to phase
18 out MS 334.

19 [applause]

20 MR. WHITE: Thank you. Mr. Shevralotti
21 [phonetic] is the last, uh, speaker, I'm
22 assuming, of the faculty's set of speakers.
23 Then I'm going to call Councilmember Van.

24 MR. JOHN MICHAEL SHEVRALOTTI: Thank you.
25 Good evening. I'm John Michael Shevralotti. I

1 am the 8th grade English teacher and the UFT
2 Chapter Leader here at the Middle School for
3 Academic and Social Excellence. I am also one
4 of the founding team members of our school.

5 [applause]

6 Okay. As you heard this evening, Deputy
7 Chancellor, a number of concerns that we have in
8 regards to our proposed closure for us. What
9 I'd like to bring to your attention is the plan
10 that we currently have in place. A plan that
11 our superintendent has come by our building, our
12 network leader has seen.

13 We are in the process of implementing a very
14 aggressive academic intervention services
15 program for our children who are not only Level
16 1, but who we call bubble children, who are on
17 the cusp of Level 2 and Level 3 as well as Level
18 1 and Level 2. We also have implemented a very
19 aggressive program for English Language Arts and
20 writing in those classes and across the
21 curriculum.

22 Third, an extremely intensive professional
23 development program. As our faculty can tell
24 you, we have PD, and our PD is applied into the
25 classroom. We are responsible for applying what

1 we are doing. What we are asking for is that
2 since this plan is in place--and this plan was
3 put in place, as Mr. Lawrence referred, from our
4 May retreat, not knowing that we were going to
5 be a C, or end up on the list for proposed for
6 phase-out. We want the opportunity to see our
7 plan through.

8 We want to be able to prove to you, because
9 we were aware that we knew that we had some
10 issues. And so we set up our plan. And so now
11 we want the opportunity to see our plan through.
12 Our plan: intensive PD, intensive PD, focus on
13 English Language Arts, aggressive and academic-
14 intensive services, intensive extended morning
15 program, as well as our staff ourselves all
16 working with our children beyond the normal
17 school day.

18 We feel that we what have in place will
19 tenor into success for our student body. And
20 those results will be seen on the exams this
21 year in grades 6, 7, and 8, in Math and ELA. So
22 we ask you: Please reconsider the phase-out.

23 [applause]

24 MR. WHITE: Thank you. I'd like to thank
25 the faculty of MS 334 for, uh, for submitting a,

1 uh, a set of, of successive arguments and
2 making your testimony so coherent.

3 Councilmember Van, now the floor is yours.

4 [applause]

5 COUNCILMAN ALAN VAN: Good evening, ladies
6 and gentlemen. Good evening, panel. Our Deputy
7 Chancellor--name?

8 MR. WHITE: John White.

9 COUNCILMAN VAN: White?

10 MR. WHITE: Yes, sir.

11 COUNCILMAN VAN: Oh, John. Thank you. Uh,
12 to the panel. Uh, first of all, could I, could
13 I ask a question? I know that the, uh, state
14 legislation, uh, established a procedure, uh,
15 when they extended mayoral control. But I'm not
16 very clear on what the function is of this
17 panel. What happens with the testimony that you
18 receive?

19 MR. WHITE: The, uh, testimony--and thank
20 you for the question, COUNCILMAN. The, this is
21 a hearing where two, uh, bodies are, uh,
22 mandated to be represented--I should say, the
23 Department of Education, but then also the
24 School Leadership Team, which, uh, earlier in
25 the evening provided testimony, uh, as well as

1 the Community Education Council of District
2 17, which provided a statement and then tomorrow
3 will provide their official testimony.

4 The purpose is for that testimony as well as
5 public testimony to be entered into public
6 record. The public record will then be
7 considered by the Panel for Educational Policy,
8 which, as you know, on the 26th of January, is
9 voting on the proposal as put forth by the
10 Department of Education. So the, the purpose is
11 ultimately to shape the, uh, the decisions that
12 the Panel for Educational Policy will make by
13 submitting evidence into the record.

14 COUNCILMAN VAN: Does the panel take any
15 position or any recommendation? Or do you just
16 facilitate?

17 MR. WHITE: As the Department of Education,
18 we have advanced a proposal. The, uh, I don't
19 want to speak for the two, uh, councils
20 represented, but they have both voiced their
21 opinion into the record this evening. It's also
22 worth noting that the, everything said is being
23 recorded. And transcripts will be sent to both
24 councils as well as posted on the Department of
25 Education's website.

1 COUNCILMAN VAN: Okay. So the fact that
2 the proposal to phase out is coming from DOE and
3 the other two members on the panel may have a
4 position opposing it--may, I don't know what
5 their testimony was. So both positions go to
6 the panel, the PEP, and so there's no one
7 recommendation. It's just facilitating the
8 testimony going to them.

9 MR. WHITE: That's right.

10 COUNCILMAN VAN: And they'll read the
11 transcripts and so on and so forth.

12 MR. WHITE: That's right.

13 COUNCILMAN VAN: So it's more facilitation
14 as opposed to you've heard some good testimony,
15 it makes sense, and so you recommend--you don't
16 really have that role. Is that...?

17 MR. WHITE: That's correct.

18 COUNCILMAN VAN: Right, okay. Uh, thank
19 you.

20 MR. WHITE: Thank you.

21 COUNCILMAN VAN: Thank you. Uh, three
22 years... I'm Councilman Alan Van. Three years
23 ago, I remember presenting a proclamation. Uh,
24 I believe it's Mrs. Glover, the Principal of
25 this school, because on the newly, uh,

1 instituted progress report or report card, uh,
2 they scored a B, which was thought to be very
3 good. Actually, I presented a citation to all
4 the schools in the district if they had As or
5 Bs. And, of course, 334 was among that group.

6 Uh, I am aware of the strong leadership, uh,
7 presented in the school by your Principal, Mrs.
8 Glover. I've become aware, not only of the
9 esprit de corps that is obvious, but the real
10 concern and dedication that most teachers have
11 in, in this particular school. It's a very
12 unique situation. You can't find that in every
13 public school.

14 Uh, I say that to say this. That, uh, there
15 should be no testimony going forward, because
16 there really--this school should not be on any
17 list to be phased out.

18 [applause]

19 I'm, I'm really, I'm not really speaking to
20 play to the audience, which would be easy to do.
21 I'm doing it based on the DOE's own criteria.
22 They don't belong on it. They didn't receive an
23 F. They didn't receive a D. They didn't
24 receive three Cs.

25 [applause]

1 What is this? Uh, as I look at the
2 progress they made this present, current year
3 is, is, uh, rather substantial. In all of the
4 three categories on the report card, they made
5 progress. It's unbelievable. Unless there's
6 some other ulterior motives that we're not aware
7 of, there's no way that 334 should be having a
8 hearing tonight or they should be on any list
9 considering being phased out.

10 [applause]

11 They do not meet the criteria. Uh, that's
12 why I asked the question early on in terms of
13 what is your role. Because I was going to
14 suggest that you recommend to the Chancellor
15 that he withdraw, uh, 334 from such a process
16 because they don't believe, they don't belong on
17 it, if you have that authority.

18 [applause]

19 Uh, if you don't have that authority, I'm,
20 again, it's unclear exactly, you know, whether
21 the PEP is going to read all of the testimony
22 from 22 hearings, uh, is, you know, that's a
23 lot. So I'm hoping, and we will be holding the
24 PEP to, uh, the standard of, of independence.
25 Are they going to make an independent judgment

1 on 22 schools at one time? Are they going to
2 look at, uh, the testimony and history and the
3 documentation around each school individually?
4 That's a tremendous--on one evening, on the
5 26th, they're going to take a vote on whether or
6 not 22 schools should be phased out?

7 I don't know about the other 20 schools.
8 The two I do know about, 334 and Paul Robison,
9 do not belong, should not be phased out. They
10 are making tremendous progress. They have good
11 leadership. They have support from the
12 community. And let that go forward.

13 We will communicate, uh, my, my colleagues
14 on the City Council, I made them aware of the
15 situation. We will continue to communicate with
16 PEP and the Chancellor to make sure that justice
17 prevails in this case. And if justice prevail,
18 they will not be phased out. They'll be
19 supported and given the resources to do the job
20 they're doing and to do a better job. Thank
21 you.

22 [applause]

23 MR. WHITE: Thank you, Councilmember. The
24 next speaker is Speaker Number 10, uh, Barbara
25 Simmons. Uh, following that is Speaker Number

1 11, Kathleen Murphy.

2 MS. BARBARA SIMMONS: Um, good evening. I'm
3 not, I'm not a good speaker, but I'm going to do
4 the best I can. Um, good evening, Miss Hurtle,
5 Chancellor, panel, parents, students.

6 Um, I'm going to tell a little bit of my
7 secret. I'm a parent that was failed by the
8 Board of Education. I was younger, because of
9 my disability. Um, my name is Miss Barbara
10 Simmons. I'm Board-Certified Parent Consultant,
11 advocate, district leader and Parent Consultant
12 for District 17.

13 My son graduated from Middle School 390 in
14 1997. Um, when Middle School 390 became a sir
15 [phonetic] school, I came to Dr. Castro and I
16 asked her, Can I be the parent consultant to
17 take this school through the redesign? I told
18 her I'd do it free of charge, because they
19 couldn't afford to really pay me. But they paid
20 me quite well. Um, I wasn't able to speak at
21 the hearing for the state, because my son
22 graduated. But my job was to consult my parents
23 through this redesign.

24 Um, when Middle School, um, closed, I was
25 sick. I'm a 9-year cancer survivor. I was

1 sick. Um, I promised Miss Harrison, Miss
2 Georgia Harrison was the Principal here, that I
3 will continue my service in District 17. Um, I
4 want to say that Middle School 390, we were a
5 family. We did exciting things together. Um,
6 Miss Taylor, who was Miss Hurtle, we used to
7 call her Miss High-heels, um, she was... I want
8 to say, um, I want to say thank you for getting
9 me to where I am today, um, because without an
10 administration here, I wouldn't have been able
11 to do the things that I do. I'm also the first
12 black Afro-American to sit on the - - Executive
13 Board. My son graduated from - - .

14 Um, tonight I gave away 400 flyers to try to
15 fill this room. I went to Paul Robison hearing.
16 I went to, um, Maxwell last night. Um, I talked
17 to my parents. I went to the clinics. Um, I
18 just want to say thank you and, um, don't close
19 Middle School 390 please. And all the people
20 that--thank - - Van for coming here tonight. I
21 invited, um, um, Eric Adams. I invited, um, um,
22 Lou. I invited Cynthia Quinn. I invited Andrew
23 Jackson. I invited Corinne Camera. Um, I
24 invited, um, Michael Mogal [phonetic]. I
25 invited, um, a lot of elected officials to come

1 join me. I invited the kids who graduated
2 from here. You have a teacher at 161, I invited
3 her. I invited students. I invited custodians,
4 um, retired teachers that I keep in touch with.

5 And I just want to say, um, Middle School
6 390, you still have 390, so I'm part of 390.
7 And I'm going to do the best I can for this
8 community. And I'm going to ask you not to
9 close my school.

10 I'm a parent and I'm also with, um, Brooklyn
11 Parents for Peace. I'm with EECJ. I'm with,
12 um, - - United Federated Teacher Parent Outreach
13 Committee. Um, I'm with Coalition for Public
14 Education. And the people who I invited here
15 tonight--

16 MR. WHITE: Ms. Simmons, thank you very
17 much.

18 MS. SIMMONS: --would you please stand up
19 and support me? The people who I invited.

20 [applause]

21 MS. SIMMONS: Thank you.

22 MR. WHITE: Ms. Simmons, thank you very much
23 for your comments. Uh, the next speaker is
24 Kathleen Murphy. The speaker to follow is
25 Speaker Number 12, Sharon Wetterburn [phonetic].

1 MS. KATHLEEN MURPHY: Good evening. My
2 name is Kathleen Murphy, and I represent the
3 Council of School Supervisors and
4 Administrators.

5 The DOE has announced the closing of 20
6 schools, some of them with new principals, some
7 of them just beginning to turn around, and a
8 full eight of them that were opened not very
9 long ago by the head of the DOE himself,
10 Chancellor Klein.

11 CSA embraces accountability and believes a
12 school should be closed if they have failed over
13 a period of three or more years despite
14 receiving the full support that they need from
15 the DOE. We, at CSA, will not tolerate the
16 propagation of failure.

17 But in the case of several of these proposed
18 closures, we must ask if some of the schools are
19 being held accountable while the apparatus that
20 supports them is not. In those cases, we must
21 inquire if the schools were really failing, and
22 by what measures they were failing. We must ask
23 if the Chancellor truly put each of these
24 schools through a thorough process to ascertain
25 whether they have been provided adequate support

1 and guidance by their SSOs and if the Office
2 of Student Enrollment had leveled the playing
3 field.

4 CSA is asking the DOE to lay bare the
5 process by which they determined that each of
6 these schools be closed. DOE should include an
7 analysis of the role of the appropriate school
8 support organization. Since each school pays an
9 SSO to advise them on student achievement, coach
10 principals on school improvement, and perform
11 many other support functions, what sort of
12 service did each of these 20 schools get for
13 their money?

14 Finally, DOE should address how fairly, how
15 fairly the Office of Student Enrollment
16 minimized challenges in schools that face so
17 many other challenges. It is important to know
18 if these institutions were sent an unusually
19 large proportion of ELL students and students
20 with special needs.

21 When every question is asked and answered,
22 we are likely to discover that some of these
23 schools can't be saved. We are also likely to
24 discover that many of them can remain open and
25 thrive with adequate support, networks, and fair

1 enrollment practices. Thank you.

2 MR. WHITE: Thank you, Ms. Murphy. The next
3 speaker is Number 12, Sharon Wetterburn. And
4 the speaker after that is Number 13, Rick King.

5 MS. SHARON WETTERBURN: Good evening. My
6 name is Sharon Wetterburn, and I am the
7 Education Chair for Community Board Number 8.
8 Community Board Number 8 is comprised of the
9 communities of Crown Heights, Prospect Heights,
10 and Weeksville [phonetic]. I am here as a
11 representative of our support and our, uh,
12 support of Middle School for Social and Academic
13 Excellence and our dismay at the proposal.

14 As a person who, um, is a community
15 resident, I'm particularly concerned about the
16 shifting goal line. Given that the school was
17 on track to be rated B, and then suddenly
18 they're rated C, yet they have now only received
19 two Cs yet the school is slated for closure
20 seems to speak to some other agenda rather than
21 educating our children appropriately.

22 [applause]

23 At one point, the school was on a list of
24 schools that were persistently dangerous. Yet
25 earlier in the week, I heard a parent talk about

1 her child feeling safe in this school.
2 Further evidence of this is as I was sitting in
3 the audience, you see students waving to their
4 principals and to their teachers. They don't
5 have to do it. It's after school. But that
6 says that, um, Middle School for Academic and
7 Social Excellence is doing one thing really
8 well. They're socializing their children so
9 that they can be successful not only in the
10 community, but in their academics.

11 [applause]

12 Given the unique population of this school--
13 and I'm talking about the children--I wonder,
14 Are we really receiving adequate resources for
15 them to be successful, meaning the children and
16 their teachers? I would say not, a cookie-
17 cutter formula is not what we need. What we
18 need is the opportunity for the teachers and the
19 administrators to successfully implement their
20 plan for the children's success on a go-forward
21 basis.

22 [applause]

23 To be clear, we do not support the closure
24 of Middle School 334.

25 [applause]

1 MR. WHITE: Thank you, Ms. Weatherburn,
2 Wetterburn. The next speaker is Speaker Number
3 13, Rick King. The speaker that will follow is
4 Number 14, Fred King.

5 MR. RICK KING: Good evening. My name is
6 Rick King, and I represent United Federation of
7 Teachers. I am currently the UFD District Rep
8 for District 17.

9 [applause]

10 Thank you. Last night at the CEC meeting on
11 the closing of Maxwell High School, a reference
12 was made to the fact that one of the reasons why
13 the school was closing can be attributed to the
14 fact that middle schools are sending students to
15 high schools not academically prepared to meet
16 the challenges. I took offense to that
17 statement because, after spending 18 plus years
18 at the middle school level, I quickly saw the
19 fallacy and the blueprint for the blame game.

20 If you buy into that argument, then we have
21 failed MS 334. I do not support the closing of
22 this school.

23 [applause]

24 Let me clarify that. If this school is to
25 close because of what is being proposed, no

1 school is off the radar. Any school then can
2 become a target. So let us make sure that we
3 stand united to fight this cause.

4 I am now left with one burning question as
5 it pertains to the closing of this school. What
6 message are we sending the students in the
7 community? If we truly believe that children
8 are the future, we shouldn't write them off. We
9 need to educate the students, and not write them
10 off.

11 The proposal is that 334 will eventually
12 absorb some of these kids. The problem that I
13 have here is that what would happen when we have
14 a negative impact on 354, and we see a decline
15 of the graduation rate, and we also see a
16 decline in that school not meeting AYP? Are we
17 then going to close that school for them? Where
18 are the kids going to go once we close all these
19 schools for them?

20 Are we to believe that children are capable
21 of learning? The answer is yes. In many of the
22 developed countries, and this is a developed
23 country, when a student cannot get into a
24 school, they commit suicide. In this case, this
25 is not a physical suicide; this is a

1 psychological suicide. It is physical for the
2 students, and it's also psychological for the
3 students and the communities.

4 Remove these resources from the students and
5 the kids, what are we saying? You do not
6 reserve the right to exist. Let us make sure
7 that we do not condemn our students to
8 psychological and a physical death. By closing
9 this school, that is exactly what you are doing.
10 You're condemning these students to a death.

11 And earlier on this afternoon, you were
12 presented with stats. The stats were such that
13 they're misleading. Stats are meaningless
14 unless you can anchor them to a claim. The
15 claim is that if we do not educate these
16 children, the cycle will continue to repeat
17 itself. I thank you.

18 [applause]

19 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much, Mr. King.
20 Uh, next speaker is Fred King. Then speaker
21 after that will be Lillian Jones.

22 MR. FRED KING: My name is Fred King, and
23 I'm a Consultant currently working with 334.

24 We're here this evening because the DOE has
25 a critical decision to make regarding the fate

1 of 334--shut it down or support it to be
2 successful. Make no mistake about it, the
3 litmus tests for this decision must be what's in
4 the best interest of the children of Crown
5 Heights?

6 [applause]

7 On one hand, we all agree that the school
8 stats are not where they need to be. But on the
9 other hand, the stats also indicate that the
10 school is making slow but steady progress.
11 Should we shut it down, or should we support it
12 to be successful?

13 I can see that the rate of growth is not
14 sufficient because we're talking about children.
15 But we do have choices beside closing the school
16 that does work for kids. We could, for example,
17 work with the school to build upon the steady
18 progress that has been made over the last three
19 years, and fast-forward that growth.

20 In the five years that MS 334 has been in
21 existence, we spent approximately \$10 million to
22 developing this school. Should we shut it down,
23 or should we support it to be successful?

24 We have the prescription for fast-forwarding
25 the school's progress. It is clearly laid out

1 in the school's quality review. I'm in this
2 school at least once a week. And the
3 administration and staff know what to do, and
4 they're working on a daily basis to use the data
5 to support the needs of classes, groups of
6 students, and individual students so that they
7 can be successful. Should we shut it down, or
8 should we support it to be successful?

9 Politically, I understand. It makes sense
10 to close the school, and we'll have another
11 quote failing school off the DOE's ledger. But
12 that's a solution that's short-term and short-
13 sighted. In the long-term, the closure of MS
14 334 will create a vacuum for the kids in Crown
15 Heights.

16 The research tells us that the middle
17 schools present the greatest challenge to
18 educators. We need to have the confidence, that
19 in the case of 334, we're on the right track.
20 That we can create a successful middle school
21 with this school, with this administration, and
22 with this staff.

23 So in closing, I ask you again: Should we
24 shut it down, or should we build on what we
25 already have and support to be successful?

1 [applause]

2 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much, Mr. King.
3 The next speaker is Speaker Number 15, Lillian,
4 I may be misreading your last name. But I--

5 MS. LILLIAN JEHNUS: Jehnus [phonetic].

6 MR. WHITE: Jenox.

7 MS. JEHNUS: Jehnus.

8 MR. WHITE: Jehnus. Thank you very much.

9 MS. JEHNUS: Thank you.

10 MR. WHITE: The following speaker will be
11 Speaker Number 16, Daniel Fret [phonetic].

12 MS. JEHNUS: Good evening. My name is
13 Lillian Jehnus. I am the grandmother and
14 guardian of Isaiah Jones of class 611. I'm also
15 the PA President of K334, and I've included
16 other names that make up our team of PA and SLT
17 team. They are Kathleen Guy Hodges, Joan Luke,
18 Moretta, sorry. Moretta Rogers and Nicole
19 Campbell.

20 I speak for my grandson who is new to the
21 school and the community, as myself, and the
22 parents in the community when I say we do not
23 want our child's school closed.

24 As a new parent to the school and community,
25 and having a child in the New York City Public

1 School System, I'm appalled at the decision
2 you've reached to phase out school as a solution
3 to the problem.

4 I received, I've reviewed the New York City
5 progress report for the past three years to get
6 an understanding from where this started to know
7 where it's going. And from those reports, the
8 school started out with an overall grade of a B,
9 ending out with a C for two consecutive years.

10 I understand, as a parent, that can be
11 alarming. However, what you are about to do is
12 inconceivable to say the least. Recently
13 announced that among the New York City public
14 schools, 22 schools are slated to phase out.
15 However, these schools are all within low-income
16 and minority neighborhoods that you are doing
17 this to. This is absurd and an injustice to our
18 children and communities.

19 [applause]

20 As I previously mentioned, my grandson and I
21 are new to the school and the community as many
22 other parents with their child entering into
23 K334 for the first time. And now you want to
24 close the door in our children's faces without
25 giving them a chance, or our school a chance to

1 overturn the C to an A.

2 I also understand that a school must receive
3 three consecutive Cs or worse to be placed on a
4 list to be phased out. Clearly this is not the
5 case here. I am optimistic that we can make a
6 change with hard work and dedicated teachers and
7 administrative staff all working collectively
8 with our parents to bring change to our campus.

9 If the NYS Education Department has given us
10 two years to get off of the Schools In Need of
11 Improvement list, then, as our Chancellor, you
12 have, you can give our children and our school
13 the same time and opportunity to prove the
14 necessary progress. Thank you for your time.

15 MR. WHITE: Thank you, Ms. Jehnus. Number
16 16, Daniel Fret. Number 17, Lisa North, is the
17 next speaker.

18 MR. DANIEL FREFF: Good evening, panel. Uh,
19 my name is Daniel Fret. I'm the parent of
20 Samuel Fret who was a student here at MS 334.
21 Um, since his enrollment here, I've seen my son,
22 uh, develop particularly with the information of
23 the school's model: Dream, inspire and believe,
24 with the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade respectively.

25 Um, I'm appalled at the fact that I have to

1 explain to my son why they're trying to close
2 his school. I don't even know what to say to
3 him, uh, as far as the political process goes in
4 trying to explain to him some of the things that
5 the teachers, that I give great commendability,
6 I commend wonderfully, by the way--

7 [applause]

8 --because they do a wonderful job in just
9 everyday teaching. Um, I know that a teacher's
10 salary and pay is, it's not the best, but--so I
11 know that these people are doing it because they
12 want to do it. And I feel the dedication from
13 my son.

14 Um, it's discouraging to have to, to have to
15 discuss this with him. But, uh, at home, we
16 teach dedication and hard work, and if you
17 believe in yourself and you - - yourself, you
18 can achieve and become successful in this
19 country.

20 Uh, with this being the case, I don't know
21 what to tell him now. Um, it's going to be hard
22 to explain not only to him, but also my other
23 children who are younger--he, being the oldest--
24 what possibilities will come, uh. Hopefully,
25 they won't have to come to a school hearing or

1 be faced with a situation where their school--
2 whatever the situation is.

3 But this school is not even on a criteria
4 list to have to be closed out or have to be
5 phased out. So I don't even understand why
6 we're here having this meeting. And thank you,
7 uh, Councilman Van, for making that clear.

8 Um, I wonder how my child is supposed to be
9 able to dream, according to his 6th grade model,
10 without the hope and support from the education
11 system that's supposed to be supporting him.
12 How is he supposed to be inspired, um, if he
13 might be the last 7th grade that this school may
14 possibly have, um, without the purpose of,
15 without the dedication from the administration?
16 And what is he supposed to believe in if the
17 system that constructs his education, doesn't
18 show belief in him or the education system that
19 they give him? Thank you.

20 [applause]

21 MS. LISA NORTH: Hi. My name is Lisa North,
22 and I'm a teacher in the New York City Public
23 Schools for over 20 years, and a parent for
24 many, many, many years within the DOE. So I
25 have a pretty good understanding of the, um,

1 education in New York City.

2 Um, if the Department of Education really
3 cared about our students, they would give us the
4 resources that we need to educate the students
5 that we have.

6 [applause]

7 Closing schools is not the answer for our
8 struggling students. It only shuffles students
9 around, and gives the remaining schools extra
10 Special Ed and ELL students, which causes them
11 then not to have good data, which is what the
12 DOE then uses to close the schools. So we're
13 just have seen a shuffling around of students
14 instead of really helping the students.

15 And then I've attended a couple of other
16 school closings hearings, and I'm hearing the
17 exact same thing every place I go. That the,
18 that the schools are being, um, as other schools
19 close, they are being given extra ELL and
20 Special Ed students, and then their data, um,
21 so-called data does not look good, and then
22 their schools are closed.

23 So what was happening was we're not helping
24 our students. What we have to do is give our
25 schools the resources and the money that we need

1 to improve, um, to give the, to help our
2 students.

3 So then why is the DOE doing this? And you
4 have to really ask that question. Um, for one
5 thing, it makes the DOE look good in some
6 places. Okay. Because they have some schools
7 that then look good. And they have other
8 schools that don't, and then they close those
9 schools.

10 But I think the main thing we have to think
11 about is the privatization of education.
12 There's a lot of money to be made in education.
13 And the Department of Education right now, is
14 giving lots of private contracts out.

15 [applause]

16 So what can we do to fight this? We have to
17 come together city-wide. City-wide, we have to
18 come together. All these different closing the
19 schools, a lot of the schools have charter
20 schools pushing into them. And we have to come
21 together.

22 So I'm just going to tell you some city-wide
23 events. There's the, uh, January 21st event.
24 We have to all come together, a lot of the
25 closing schools will be there. We need to come

1 together.

2 There's also, um, Coalition for Education
3 Justice, this Saturday, is having an event.
4 It's a city-wide parent activist group that's
5 organizing. So, um, hopefully, if you--you
6 should get this flyer.

7 And the other event is this Saturday. It's
8 Emergency City-Wide Parent Conference on School
9 Closings is this Saturday, 9:30 to 1:00. School
10 of the Future, it's on East 22nd Street.
11 Everybody needs to come out.

12 [applause]

13 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much, Ms. North.
14 The next speaker is Number 18, Nicole Campbell.
15 The speaker after that will be, uh, Gloria
16 Branman [phonetic].

17 MS. NICOLE CAMPBELL: Hi. Good evening.
18 Uh, my name is Nicole Campbell. I'm a parent of
19 Shamar [phonetic] Campbell, um, who's in class
20 711, which is one of the general ed classes.
21 I'm also on the school's, um, School Leadership
22 Team.

23 Um, I just wanted to let you know briefly
24 that I am opposed to and do not want the Middle
25 School for Academic and Social Excellence, MS

1 334, to be phased out. My son is in a safe
2 and nurturing environment at MS 334, and has
3 grown socially and educationally since attending
4 this school. Besides he has caring staff
5 members and teachers who show a genuine interest
6 in our children, and are helping them to grow
7 into well-adjusted and socially-concerned young
8 adults.

9 The initiatives and personal support given
10 encourages the students to be better and to do
11 better. The school has made improvements to
12 provide more tutoring time, and has received
13 additional help this year so our children can
14 benefit from greater instruction.

15 Please allow MSASE to continue to help the
16 children in our community to realize their
17 dream, to continue to inspire them, and to help
18 them believe that all they wish to be is
19 possible with a great education.

20 One, they can receive right here in our
21 community. MSASE is a good school getting
22 better. Allow them the opportunity to make the
23 necessary changes to improve. Langston Hugh
24 says we have tomorrow bright before us like a
25 flame. How can our children in this community

1 have a bright future before them if we keep
2 phasing out our schools? Stop extinguishing
3 their educational flame. Keep it burning bright
4 by keeping the Middle School for Academic and
5 Social Excellence, MS 334, open to prove that
6 our children deserve the best in their
7 educational experience. Thank you.

8 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much. Speaker
9 Number 20, Gloria Branman. The next speaker is
10 Speaker Number 21, Patricia Harrin [phonetic]
11 Lawrence.

12 MS. GLORIA BRENMAN: Hi. Good evening. My
13 name is Gloria Branman. Um, I've been a teacher
14 in the public schools for, this is my 31st year.
15 I'm a proud graduate of Erasmus Hall High
16 School. My daughter went to public school in
17 New York City, public school. And she's now in,
18 at McGill doing really well. So I know, I am
19 Brooklyn, I am education, I am for public
20 education, and it works.

21 Um, and so far I've only heard very positive
22 things about this school, a school that seems to
23 educate the hardest to educate students. I'm
24 also a Special Educator, and that's the only
25 thing I've done my whole career here. And I

1 know the challenge that that takes.

2 I haven't heard anyone speak against closing
3 this school. Did I miss that? I don't think
4 so. So why is this school being closed? Why is
5 the DOE trying to close 22 schools all at once,
6 using faulty statistics, um, made-up stats,
7 changing the data? Um, it's very strange. Mr.
8 Van questioned why are these, all these closures
9 unless there is an ulterior motive?

10 Well, I think there really is an ulterior
11 motive. Um, I think there's another reason.
12 Um, the kids in this school are, can do better.
13 And I think the faculty is up to the challenge
14 from what I've heard. So if they got the
15 resources, they could do better. So closing
16 this school is really not the first choice as
17 far as I can, I can see.

18 But maybe there is another reason. And I,
19 and I think I'm going to say what that reason
20 is. I think, as my, um, somebody who spoke
21 before me said, it's privatization. Let's close
22 this school down. And, by the way, I did hear
23 you also say that, um, the replacement school
24 might not be a public school. Or am I
25 misquoting? But I thought I heard something

1 like that.

2 Um, so close the schools down. Throw the
3 kids someplace else so those schools can do
4 poorly. And open a charter school. As a matter
5 of fact, this is, this is not only happening in
6 New York City. This is happening nationally.
7 So New York City isn't the only place this is
8 coming from.

9 And I think it's time we all have to get up
10 out of the auditoriums, because this is not
11 really going to make--it's not the only thing
12 that's going to make the difference. We have to
13 go to the PEP meeting. Although, be aware, a
14 lot of those people really are working for the
15 Mayor. So you've got to go to the PEP meeting.
16 And also you need to come out on January 21st to
17 Mayor Bloomberg's block, and let him know how we
18 feel about it. Because it's really time to let
19 them know that we're serious, and we're not
20 going to let them close down all our schools.
21 Thank you.

22 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much. The next
23 speaker is Patricia Harrin Lawrence, Number 21.
24 Speaker after that is Speaker Number 22, Isaac
25 Jordan.

1 MS. PATRICIA HARRIN LAWRENCE: Good
2 evening, everyone. My name is Patricia Harrin
3 Lawrence, and I'm a parent of, um, MS 334. I
4 have two students here also with me who would
5 like to, um, also give their concern about the
6 closing of the school.

7 My question is to you, um, Mr., um, White,
8 what can you do--what can you, can you look at
9 these students tonight and also the community
10 and let them know what can you do tonight to
11 help prevent from closing the school? What can
12 they do to stop the closing of MS 334?

13 MR. WHITE: If you wouldn't mind, I'd like
14 to wait until after--I will answer the question.
15 I, I'd like to wait until after I hear them
16 speak, until we have a couple of more speakers.
17 Maybe we can get through the public comment, and
18 then I'll answer your question.

19 MS. LAWRENCE: Right. It's really
20 important, because we have, um, the first time
21 we heard this, the children were crying because
22 they did not want their school to be closed.
23 Um, my other thing is there are a lot of
24 programs that the school offer for the students.
25 And one of them is the MSASE Jewels. It

1 encourages the students to actually be a
2 better, um, citizen of the community, and also,
3 um, they educate the students very well.

4 I, there's a lot of several programs that
5 I've known about, even the afterschool tutoring.
6 There's many tutoring program that they have
7 here as well.

8 Um, I want to also thank Mr., um, Al Van for
9 coming and asking you the question about where
10 does this go from here. Because it's not just
11 us coming up talking about not closing the
12 school, but actually continuing to work toward
13 getting the school, um, staying here at MS 334.
14 I'm going to have the students come up and just
15 say a few words based on, um...

16 [applause]

17 MS. TANISHA LINDSEY: Good evening. Um, my
18 name is Tanisha Lindsey [phonetic], and...

19 FEMALE VOICE 2: My name is - - , and, um,
20 we are two students from MS 334. And we are in
21 the 8th grade. And this is our second year in
22 the school. We will be graduating this year.
23 Our school is a very exceeding and we students
24 try to be the best. We are determined to let
25 our teachers make our education easier to

1 achieve.

2 MS. LINDSEY: Not only do our teachers help
3 us learn, they help us make the right choices in
4 the future. We do not believe that our school
5 should be phased out because and us 8th graders
6 will, will miss out on coming back to see
7 teachers. In the course, in the course
8 proceeding our departure, we hope that the
9 following students will get an even better
10 education than us 8th graders now. We are
11 asking you councilors to keep our school open.
12 Thank you.

13 [applause]

14 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much to each of
15 you. The next speaker is Number 22, Isaac
16 Jordan. And following that is Maretta Rogers.

17 MR. ISAAC JORDAN: Good evening. My name
18 is, um, Isaac Jordan. I'm an Assistant Teacher
19 in the public school system, and I have, uh,
20 been a assistant teacher for five years, and
21 predominantly in the Special Ed setting.

22 I have had the pleasure of working in
23 various, uh, school districts. And I have
24 noticed that in these school districts in the
25 African-American community, we're very much

1 underserved.

2 Uh, I worked in District 15, uh, for a
3 number amount of years. Uh, I live right around
4 the corner from here, and I was appalled that
5 the schools in my neighborhood are closing. And
6 most African, a lot of African-American
7 neighborhoods are closing. And the ones that
8 are in, uh, other districts that have some
9 problems are given the opportunity to make some
10 changes. And I think that's what this school
11 here is, is trying to do. And that's what
12 we're, we're asking for in the community.

13 Um, not only is this school closing, but
14 Paul Robison is closing. So what are our
15 children supposed to do? What is it saying to
16 our children? The sliding goal line, uh, for
17 the school here. This school didn't receive an
18 F. Um, I know the Principal personally. She
19 was my camp counselor when I was, when I was
20 young. She was the one that encouraged me to,
21 you know, excel in education.

22 And so, you know, it goes a little bit
23 deeper as to, you know, we know there's a lot of
24 bureaucracy. We know there is a, a, a bigger
25 plan. And, uh, the privatization process is

1 being done at the expense of African-American
2 children in low-income neighborhoods. What
3 we're seeing is we're seeing our school closing,
4 and we're seeing charter schools pushing in.
5 And it was, uh, done a lot in, in Harlem, and
6 it's being done here. The message that's being
7 sent is we're not giving a fair chance.

8 When the precinct doesn't perform, they
9 don't close the precinct down. So the school is
10 asking--

11 [applause]

12 --you know, the school is asking for the,
13 for the, for the city [background noise]. When,
14 when, when African American, when young African-
15 American boy is killed by that precinct, they
16 don't shut precinct down. They still operate.
17 So we're asking for the same fairness.

18 This is, this is a life. This is a life
19 form of our community. This is our family here.
20 These are our children. It is just not numbers.
21 It is just not a part of a plan to shift, uh,
22 our school, uh, our school structure to
23 privatization. This is our neighborhood, this
24 is our community. And our community is asking
25 for a fair chance.

1 [applause]

2 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much, Mr. Jordan.
3 The next, uh, speaker is Maretta Rogers. And
4 the speaker after that is Cybil [phonetic]
5 Walker.

6 MS. MARETTA ROGERS: Okay. Good evening,
7 Chancellor. My name is Maretta Rogers. I am a
8 parent. I sit on the SLT. Um, I have a student
9 here who just sat up here. She's a A student.
10 She's a excellent student. She loves this
11 school.

12 [applause]

13 She loves this school. She doesn't come
14 home until almost 6:30. That's how much she
15 loves this school. Okay? Her name is Alexis
16 Lawrence. And I, personally, I, I mean, I have
17 to give that principal, this staff a round of
18 applause because they have given my daughter
19 character.

20 [applause]

21 It's about character. My daughter has a
22 beautiful character. She has big dreams. She
23 wants to go to Japan. Come on. The girl has
24 big dreams. And she's got it from this school.
25 She loves this staff. She does not want to come

1 home. I am against this school closing.

2 My daughter's in the 8th grade. She will be
3 graduating, and she will be doing better things.
4 She will come back to this school, and put in
5 this school what she has learned from this
6 school.

7 I love this school. I love this staff. I
8 even got on the, the PTA committee. I used to
9 work for the Department of Education for 11
10 years in Special Ed. I've been all around
11 Special Ed. And I don't know anybody that has a
12 heart like Mrs. Glover. Okay? I love you, Miss
13 Glover.

14 [applause]

15 Keep this school open. Keep it open.
16 [background noise] going to close this school.
17 My daughter needs to come back and give her
18 experience back to these students in this
19 particular school. Keep the school open. Ms.
20 Glover got it going on up in here.

21 [applause]

22 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much, Ms. Rogers.
23 The next speaker is Cybil Walker.

24 MS. CYBIL WALKER: Hi. Good evening. Um, I
25 didn't really come here prepared to speak, but I

1 felt the need to say that my son graduated
2 last year. Um, he came here in the 7th grade.
3 His scores went up so high that when he
4 graduated, he was able to get into a medical
5 science program.

6 [applause]

7 Um, and he's pretty shy. He's sitting back
8 here. Kysimaray [phonetic], he's trying to hide
9 his face. But, um, and I have to say that I
10 have to give the credit to the school, to the
11 teachers. They did afterschool programs. They
12 came in on Saturdays. They called. These
13 teachers care. These teachers care about the
14 children just as much as the parents do. They
15 call you. They let you know what's going on.

16 And to close this school, I don't think this
17 neighborhood can take another hit like that.
18 It's, it's just not fair to the children. Why
19 should our children go out of the community to
20 get a good education when it's right here?
21 There's no reason for this school to be closed.

22 He made it into a medical science program.
23 That's just the tip of the iceberg for a lot of
24 these kids. And they have to know that they can
25 do it here in their neighborhood. They

1 shouldn't have to go to somebody else's
2 neighborhood to get good education that they
3 deserve and that they are capable of getting,
4 when you have caring teachers right here in this
5 school that's willing to help them.

6 And that's what I came to say. Thank you.

7 [applause]

8 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much. Uh, I want
9 to make a couple of comments because there have
10 been a couple of questions directed at me. And
11 also because, uh, in all candor we're going to
12 finish a little bit earlier this evening than we
13 have in some of the hearings that have been done
14 in the last couple of weeks. So I thought it
15 might be worth, at the risk of holding some
16 parents, and students, and teachers, a little
17 bit--maybe five or ten minutes longer. It might
18 be worth making a couple of comments.

19 Uh, and, Councilmember Van, I know you're
20 very busy as well, and I very much appreciate
21 you staying for the duration of the hearing.

22 Uh, I feel like the evidence from this
23 evening's hearing, and per what the
24 Councilmember said, uh, his question earlier, it
25 is the purpose of this to present evidence to

1 the panel that will help them individually
2 make a decision. There's a Brooklyn
3 representative on the panel. He will be making
4 a decision.

5 And so I feel like there's a piece of
6 incomplete evidence. And, uh, while we only
7 have maybe five or ten more minutes in the
8 hearing because I think people need to go home,
9 I thought it'd be worth giving the opportunity
10 to offer a chance for someone to respond to what
11 I think the incomplete evidence is.

12 I'm also compelled because I'm compelled by
13 the compassion with which parents and students
14 have spoken. I, not too long ago, was, I wasn't
15 a teaching fellow, but I was in Teach for
16 America many, many years. And I understand the
17 spirit, uh, Ms. Glover, that your faculty
18 clearly brings and you clearly bring to this.
19 And so I want to acknowledge that.

20 Uh, we have talked a lot about some of the
21 struggles that this school faces. Last year, I
22 know this year it, it was said, it was even more
23 last year it was 27% special needs. People have
24 said that the community faces challenges.
25 People have said the school doesn't have enough

1 resources. People have also said that we're
2 considering putting a charter school in here,
3 and privatizing, and so on. Those have been
4 some of the predominant themes that I've heard,
5 and that the record will reflect for the panel.

6 There's no proposal to put a private school
7 or charter school in the building, uh, another
8 one. The proposal that was said is that the
9 question is: Should youngsters who are coming
10 into 6th grade be offered seats in other
11 schools? And that leads me to the question that
12 the panel is going to ask me at the meeting on
13 the 26th, and is going to be asking over the
14 next couple of weeks. And that is: Should
15 they, and the Department of Education, look at
16 parents and say, Rather than sending you to this
17 school, I'm going to offer you this school seat?
18 And the panel is going to say, Yes, the school
19 has 27% Special Education, but there are other
20 schools in the district, including the other one
21 in the building--and I'm just telling you what
22 they are going to say, what they might ask--that
23 has similarly, in fact, the exact same
24 percentage, 27%.

25 And they're going to say, But at this

1 school, 30%, meaning at 334, 30% of the
2 youngsters are reading on Level, 40% are doing
3 math on Level. And I know that it's been talked
4 about that the school is a C, and it's not a D
5 or it's not an F. But I want to level with you,
6 and say that when people see that, they see that
7 we're talking about youngsters who are 11, 12,
8 13 years old. And that already less than 1 in 3
9 of them is reading on Level.

10 And they're going to ask if the other school
11 in the building, and if other schools in the
12 district also have 27%. They're also funded by
13 the exact same formula as this one. But the
14 district average--and remember, this district
15 is, as the Community Board 8, uh, spokesperson
16 said, this is the Crown Heights, Prospect
17 Heights district. We're not talking about any
18 other part of the city. There's a 75% average
19 in math, not 40%. Every school is funded on the
20 same formula.

21 And what they're going to say to me is, If
22 the proposal, Mr. White, that you've put in
23 front of us, that you've put in front of the
24 panel, is to simply offer kids a seat in those
25 other schools, not to privatize, and this school

1 has 1 in 3 reading, and this school has much
2 higher, why shouldn't we accept that proposal?
3 Why should we stare parents in the face and say,
4 I'm giving you a C in a school where right now 1
5 in 3 children is reading on Level, when we know
6 that every school faces challenges, and we know
7 that some schools are doing better?

8 So I thought it would be worth framing that
9 question. Uh, if there is--we only have five
10 minutes left in the hearing, unfortunately. If
11 there is an individual who would like to respond
12 to that question--because I think the evidence,
13 the record should reflect an answer, if there is
14 an answer to that question--then I would
15 appreciate hearing it for the record. If
16 there's not, we can end the hearing.

17 [applause]

18 MR. ROBINSON: I teach 6th grade Science,
19 and I gave a 2nd grade reading comprehension
20 test, reading comprehension test today. I teach
21 Science. Why am I doing this? I have a kid who
22 is failing my test after test after test. So
23 what is it? I changed my lesson up. I'm doing
24 these different things. What is it? He can't
25 read. He can't comprehend the material.

1 So am I expected to grab this kid, who
2 comes into my school with a report card that
3 says he's at a 3 Level, and then move him up to
4 a 4? I can't do that, not in a year, not in
5 four months, not in six months. As Mr. Robison
6 has stated, it takes a year and a half to how
7 long?

8 FEMALE VOICE 3: Three years.

9 MR. ROBINSON: Two to three years. That's,
10 those are the challenges we're dealing with.
11 We, we have a strong, rock solid staff here. I,
12 I can't thank them enough for bringing me in,
13 and showing me love, which we give back to our
14 students who go on and do bigger and better
15 things. So yes, we have these challenges, but
16 our kids are out there doing more than what,
17 than what they came in with.

18 Um, I'm, I'm not too sure if that answers
19 all your questions, but we are moving these
20 students. It may be as fast as what these other
21 schools are doing. But I don't think the school
22 upstairs have 30%, uh, Special Ed. Um--

23 [applause]

24 --um, so I'm going to let the next speaker
25 come up. But...

1 MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Robinson.

2 [applause]

3 FEMALE VOICE 4: My name is Miss - - , and
4 I'm a New York City Public School teacher. I
5 don't think the problem that our children are
6 having deficits in reading and math is a
7 reflection of the school, or the administrators,
8 or the teachers that dedicate their lives to
9 public service to educate our children.

10 I think the fact that the City of New York
11 and the Department of Education has instituted a
12 promotional policy that is biased towards
13 certain kids in certain neighborhoods, and
14 you're shutting down schools in, in certain
15 neighborhoods that cater to certain kids with
16 certain racial backgrounds, to me, you're racial
17 profiling. Because you're not giving these
18 children an opportunity to succeed like everyone
19 else in this city.

20 So for you to sit up there and say you have
21 schools in this districts and other parts of
22 this district where you have more affluent
23 parents, or you have parents who have the time
24 and the opportunity, don't have to work two and
25 three jobs to support their families. They can

1 sit down and help their children to succeed.
2 For you to sit here and say that 40% of the kids
3 in this school are not, uh, progressing, or 30%
4 is, is scoring in mathematics, that's wrong for
5 you to say in this meeting when the city has not
6 done its best to assist this school. It seems
7 to me, from the data that you provided, you have
8 not done your best to assist this school to
9 assist the children to succeed.

10 But you're just shutting them down. You're
11 cutting them off. Like they said, this is a
12 school in this community. You're hurting this
13 community. You're bussing kids out of this
14 committee for what? So they could go to another
15 school and feel like a failure because their
16 other school now is going to say that they're
17 failing and they're bringing their scores down?
18 Then you have to shut that school down. So
19 you're going to keep classifying people in this
20 neighborhood as the problem instead of
21 addressing the problem, which is your
22 promotional policy. That's what's hurting this
23 school, and that's what's hurting our children
24 city-wide.

25 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much.

1 [applause]

2 Um, the, I see we have three more speakers.
3 I'd like to have these speakers speak. If there
4 are more responses to my question or more
5 comments to be submitted, I would ask that you
6 submit it, uh, in writing per the prescribed...
7 In fact, we can take four speakers. We'll have
8 four speakers. And then if you have more, more
9 responses to my question, I'd ask you to submit
10 it for the record. Sir. Or, sir, go ahead.

11 MR. RICK KING: Mr. White, uh, I'm, I'm glad
12 that you put forth the argument you did about
13 choice for parents. I think choice is good.
14 But how could you put forth as an argument
15 without putting forth support for the school?
16 Before you can give choice as an option, you
17 have to support. The question that I asked when
18 I spoke earlier, What is going to happen when we
19 have an impact on 354 if we see an increase of
20 students, and then we see a decrease in
21 graduation, and then the school is not meeting
22 AYP? What are you going to do then to support
23 that school? 'Cause, in, in essence, it will
24 have an impact.

25 [applause]

1 MR. WHITE: To be clear, to be--and thank
2 you for the question. There are a variety of
3 schools that are in the immediate area, and
4 students under this proposal would be offered
5 seats in many of those schools. And I think
6 that my question was: How can I say to parents,
7 uh, that this is the school to which we're
8 assigning you when many of those schools face
9 the challenge that the previous speaker
10 identified, and many of those schools seem to
11 be--and, again, I'm trying to frame the
12 question--seem to be performing at a different
13 level?

14 I want to make sure that we hear all the
15 speakers that are standing, so I'm going to pass
16 to the next speaker. Thank you very much for--

17 MR. RICK KING: [interposing] But, but, hold
18 on. My question would be: What support are you
19 going to give the schools?

20 MR. WHITE: The, each school is going to
21 receive the supports that are necessary--

22 MR. RICK KING: [interposing] I'm speaking
23 of 354 at this point.

24 MR. WHITE: Each school is going to receive
25 the supports--

1 MR. RICK KING: [interposing] 3, I'm
2 sorry, 334.

3 MR. WHITE: --necessary, uh, to ensure that
4 they get to their objectives. But I would say
5 that whatever supports are being provided, in so
6 many of the cases, are working. And that's,
7 we're here this evening because for what, for
8 all that's been tried, uh, the proposal reflects
9 that in one instance, they're not. Thank you
10 very much. Let's move to the next speaker.

11 MR. AARON PACKER: All right. Thank you.
12 Uh, my name's Aaron Packer. I teach, uh, 6th
13 grade Special Ed, 6th through 8th actually. Uh,
14 I've been a teacher for five years now. I'm
15 going to, uh, give the DOE a couple compliments
16 first. You establish a lot of programs, say the
17 Teaching Fellows. Right? You invest a lot of
18 money in us. I'm one. Finished now. Most of
19 my colleagues are Teacher Fellows, and they've
20 come through similar programs. You invest a lot
21 of money in that. You invest a lot of money in
22 a lot of other programs, too.

23 Let's talk about data. Data could be really
24 good, you know. You examine data they teach us
25 in college, and taught by some of the best, uh,

1 data people in, in the, uh, city colleges in
2 New York City. And we look at data. Data can
3 tell us a lot of information. It also tell us
4 how to fix things.

5 As a Special Education teacher, we use data
6 all the time. Uh, we examine a student, we
7 bring them in, we pretest them, see where
8 they're at. That's the data supposed to be used
9 for. See where students are at, and then
10 develop a plan to build upon that. Whether the
11 student--I'm not going to drop a student who
12 scores 10%. But I sit around with my colleagues
13 and develop a plan to continue their success, to
14 develop a school's plan.

15 So sure, the statistics may say we score 40%
16 in a particular area. But how are we going to
17 develop this school to continue to show a little
18 bit more progress maybe a little bit longer?

19 You know, for example, graduation rates.
20 Where are their students in high school and how
21 are they succeeding at that level from the past
22 two graduating classes? Data things like that,
23 I think would be the most important to examine.

24 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much.

25 [applause]

1 Next speaker.

2 FEMALE VOICE 5: Hello, hello. Um...

3 FEMALE VOICE 6: Good afternoon. I'm a
4 teacher. I've been teaching 5th grade for a
5 number of years. This year is, this year I'm
6 doing SET [phonetic].

7 But I think a lot of people who are talking
8 have never been in a classroom. They're
9 treating education like a business. It's not a
10 business, these are kids. Children, they're
11 some kids--our schools are overcrowded. I give
12 up a lot of my lunch time to tutor kids who
13 can't get it in a small group. And they get it.
14 But how much time can we give up? We give up
15 our lunch time. If you go to my school now,
16 5:00, 6:00, teachers are still there. We need
17 resources. The kids will learn.

18 I have kids who they say is not going to do
19 it. I take my lunch time, I tutor them, and
20 they go on, and they do great things. We need
21 the time, and we need the resources.

22 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much.

23 [applause]

24 And if, and if you could mention your name
25 as well.

1 MS. ANNA BLUE: My name? Yes. Anna Blue.
2 That was, um, and my son is in 6th grade. That
3 was his 6th grade teacher that spoke earlier,
4 the young man there, Mr. Lawrence, and that was
5 his 5th grade teacher that just spoke when he
6 made the transition into this school.

7 But this is the first time that I experience
8 the transition of a school closing down with one
9 of my children in it. I have four children, and
10 he's the baby of the bunch. And I had a
11 daughter that came here 19 years ago. It was
12 difficult at that time, but she left, she
13 graduate, she did well. All right.

14 But I want to take responsibility and answer
15 the question that you had mentioned about the
16 parents and all of that, and what do we know
17 about the system and how it's working. I
18 believe it also is a responsibility of the
19 children. We, they are not progressing because
20 sometime they don't understand that they need
21 these things.

22 And I'm here as a parent, taking
23 responsibility for my child. I'm not saying
24 that it's all the children, but I try, I brought
25 my son here today for him to realize I, I got my

1 education, and I'm still striving. And he
2 have to pay attention, because things like this
3 begin to happen. And now that this is
4 happening, it reminds me when my brother was
5 segregated to different schools because of
6 failure in the '70s. And these things are
7 becoming extreme once again.

8 And being that nature, we are going to have
9 bigger dropout rate, because they're going to
10 begin in junior high if you keep shutting it
11 down. What are they going to do? And what are
12 they going to give to the community if they be
13 failed here?

14 I, I want to know what kind of resource can
15 we develop as individual, as a community to
16 start putting into the caddy, and start help
17 paying for our kids to learn and start having
18 ownership of our own property. I want to know
19 where you can give us these resources and let us
20 develop for ourself. Because it's getting a
21 little bit serious now. And I'm a little bit
22 tired because I pay my debt to society, and I
23 pay my tax dollars, the fund for my child to go
24 to school. And I don't have to pay no private
25 sector to do it. So I want to know these

1 resources, and I want to have them, and I want
2 us to start owning out things.

3 And I take responsibility, because he came
4 in with the low grades. And I tell him each and
5 every day, Just do your best. And he don't
6 understand that. That's why I bring him out to
7 this meeting. He comes everywhere, 'cause I
8 want him to know, I want him to listen, I want
9 him to have a part of society and a culture and
10 pay. Because in our church, it tells us if you
11 don't work, you don't eat. And he has to work.

12 MR. WHITE: Thank you. Thank you very much.

13 MS. BLUE: And he have to have the
14 education. Thank you so much for listening.

15 [applause]

16 MR. WHITE: Thank you.

17 MR. LAWRENCE: Deputy Chancellor, we thank
18 you for the opportunity. I know that this is
19 highly unusual at the hearing for you to do an
20 open forum as you're doing right now, and taking
21 questions from the floor.

22 Nor am I going to dispute you on comparing
23 us to 354 or anyone else. Here's what I ask of
24 you. I ask of you to give us an opportunity to
25 show you our plan that is in place currently,

1 what we are doing to prove to you where we are
2 at, that this is a viable school that should be
3 allowed to continue to serve the community. And
4 extend an opportunity for you before the 26th,
5 come see us. Come see us in our classroom.

6 [applause]

7 You don't have to spend the day with us.
8 Come see and visit our classroom, and see who we
9 are, and see what we do, how we teach, what our
10 instruction is, and get a feel for us.

11 One of the things, that you at least give
12 that opportunity. And that's what I, that's all
13 that I asked of you if you would consider that.
14 We're more than happy, as a staff, to sit with
15 you, to walk you through our binders. I'm
16 sorry. We have done such extensive work. We
17 have done such extensive work as a staff in PD.
18 And I do, and we just give you that invitation.
19 Give us the opportunity to show you our plan,
20 and for you to visit with us, and to see us in
21 action. That's all we ask of you. Thank you
22 very much.

23 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much.

24 [applause]

25 Thank you very much. Uh, this,

1 Councilmember.

2 COUNCILMAN VAN: Let, uh, let me--thank you
3 very much. I appreciate, uh, what you've done
4 here. And you seem to be a serious person, you
5 seem to be sincere in your presentation. And
6 the question you asked, I thought was very
7 important.

8 But first of all, my background. I, I was
9 not always a politician. My first love was
10 teaching. I taught for a number of years in
11 Bedside [phonetic] Junior High School 35. I
12 taught at PS256. I was on the Community School
13 Board 13 for many years. I mean, education is,
14 is really my first love and my thing. And, you
15 know, I, I, you know, you can tell things about
16 schools once you have that kind of background
17 experience.

18 But the first thing I, I wanted to bring to
19 your attention is you raise a valid question,
20 but that was not the question in the criteria of
21 determining whether the school should be phased
22 out or not. So before we get to discuss your
23 area, I want you to acknowledge that according
24 to DOE, according to your Chancellor, for a
25 school to be considered for being phased out, it

1 had to meet certain criteria. And in this
2 case, it is not met.

3 So once we are--let's get to that first. I
4 think that's very, very important because there
5 are many of us, there are many people who
6 disagree with DOE's focus on testing as being
7 the only real criteria for success in education.
8 Those of us in education know better. See what
9 I'm saying?

10 Another point I would like to bring to your
11 attention is this. That even if you go beyond
12 the criteria, then you have to look at that
13 school individually. What do they have? What
14 are their strengths? What do they bring? And
15 in this particular school, they have strong
16 leadership. They have effective and dedicated
17 teachers. They have a good morale. They have
18 the support of their parents and community. So
19 if you have that situation, that's what you're
20 looking for. You look to build on that
21 situation.

22 So you don't come into--and as, as part of
23 a, of a school of a community. You don't look
24 to phase that out even if you disagree, if you
25 agree they're not where they should be. You

1 look to see, Well, what can I do to make sure
2 they do a better job? Don't eliminate them and
3 bring something new in. I just want to make
4 that point.

5 [applause]

6 MR. WHITE: And our final speaker is
7 Representative from Senator Adams' Office.

8 MS. WETTERBURN: No, no, no. I'm not
9 Senator Adams. I'm from the Community Board.
10 Would you like this--could I...?

11 MR. WHITE: Community, Community Board is
12 fine. Thank you.

13 MS. WETTERBURN: Okay. So just, I just
14 wanted to, um, speak to you directly. What do
15 you tell parents? Because Community Board 8 is
16 comprised of Prospect Heights, Crown Heights,
17 and Weeksville. What do you tell parents when,
18 when you send them to this school? What do you
19 tell them is that you look at a, from a macro
20 perspective when you shutter one school, you
21 concentrate the number of children who need
22 additional resources in another school. You
23 have a cascading effect.

24 What you see here this evening is dedicated
25 administrators and the principal, teachers

1 giving of their own time, and community
2 support for a school that children, so children
3 will be allowed to be educated in their own
4 community appropriately when they receive the
5 support and opportunity from the DOE to do a job
6 that they have a plan for in place. The plan is
7 only partially executed. It's there. Give them
8 the opportunity to execute it.

9 And when we look at our schools, we have to
10 look at our schools to say it is a community.
11 Casting a spell of failure is not the road to
12 success.

13 [applause]

14 MR. WHITE: Thank you, Ms. Wetterburn.
15 Thank you to all participants in this evening's
16 hearing. Thank you for all of your time. And,
17 representing Senator - - ? Okay. This is our
18 final speaker representing Senator Adams'
19 Office.

20 MR. MAURICE ROBERTS: Good evening. Good
21 evening, panel, and students, parents,
22 educators. I represent you. My name is Maurice
23 Roberts. I'm representing Senator Eric Adams.
24 And I want to express his sentiments and
25 thoughts and support, excuse me, of the school

1 remaining open.

2 Senator Adams, again, is absolutely in
3 support of yours. And we do attend the
4 graduations at MS 334. And we find that the
5 school is an asset to the community. The DOE
6 has a responsibility not to simply close down
7 schools, but to put effort and support behind
8 making them better as we've heard that expressed
9 over and over again this evening.

10 Schools are part of the fabric of the
11 community. And closing them down so suddenly,
12 particularly when improvements are being made,
13 is doomed, excuse me, is to the detriment of not
14 only the students and parents, but the
15 educators, community organizations, and
16 thousands in the area.

17 There should be benchmarks in place if the
18 DOE feels a school should close. These
19 benchmarks should be beyond debate, and not
20 random or arbitrary. As Councilman Van just
21 expressed, the DOE actually had a certain
22 standard that they implemented that, in essence,
23 they don't even comply with.

24 Let's all be honest. The fact that any
25 school closes is bad for our city. It almost

1 doesn't matter that there are worse schools
2 out there. The question really is: Why are
3 these schools subpar? No school should be so
4 bad that the closing is the only option. So,
5 again, that goes back to the sentiment of
6 parents, teachers, educators, and students
7 making these strong appeals for support and
8 effort.

9 And it really doesn't matter what school or
10 plan or proposal that comes in here. The only
11 real reason why it would, it would be successful
12 is because it would have support. So, in
13 essence, it really isn't a difference between
14 this school, which is not really failing at this
15 time, as the educator or the gentleman that
16 spoke before, who invited you to just come out.
17 He said come to the school. And I find that
18 that's something that the DOE did not do before
19 making these decisions.

20 [applause]

21 They never came out. That's not just
22 Brooklyn. I work out here in Brooklyn for
23 Senator Adams. But I was a PTA President at a
24 junior high school. My kids have graduated
25 since, my kids, my twins. And I met the

1 gentleman on the panel. But they did the same
2 thing there only we didn't find out until it was
3 on the news, and that includes the principal.
4 So they've got better in what it is that they
5 want to do in terms of how it looks in the
6 public. But make no mistakes about it, they,
7 the decks are stacked against you. The Mayor
8 selects seven of those people on that panel. So
9 it doesn't matter what the other five pretty
10 much conclude, comes up to.

11 So with that being said, really, this is
12 pretty good. But if you really want to make a
13 difference and send a strong impact and message,
14 and not just a strong message, but one that
15 would bring about the outcome that you really
16 want, and it appears what you all deserve, with
17 support... So, in essence, economically, that
18 might be a lot less money because this wheel is
19 already going. It only needs repairing. You
20 don't have to reinvent the wheel, and come in
21 with a whole new proposal, and a whole new team,
22 and a whole new dream.

23 This is working fine, apparently, at this
24 time. So what you've really got to do is take
25 it to the streets. And you have to do it in a

1 concert, concerted, strong effort.

2 [applause]

3 Uh, in the case of MS 334, the decision
4 needs to be reevaluated based on the school's
5 importance to the community, and continued and
6 growing successes. With that, I say on behalf
7 of Senator Eric Adams, good night. And I want
8 you all to not be disheartened, but to
9 reinvigorate yourselves and fight to have this
10 school open. Because if you close them down in
11 certain other areas, you can believe they
12 wouldn't, they would turn it up, and this city
13 would know about it, and them schools would
14 remain open. So okay? So do what those areas
15 do.

16 MR. WHITE: Thank you very much.

17 MR. ROBERTS: Thank you and good night.

18 MR. WHITE: Thank you.

19 MR. ROBERTS: Thank you for the opportunity.

20 [END 154_508]

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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 Melissa Strickland

Date January 15, 2010_____