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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION - OFFICE OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING**
Academy of Collaborative Education
January 13, 2010

1 [START 154_537.mp3]

2 MALE VOICE: There's - - right there in the
3 back. Yeah, make sure you turn it on.

4 [crosstalk]

5 MR. SANTIAGO TAVERAS: Check. Thank you.

6 Good evening, everyone. We would like to start,
7 uh, with the CEC members, SLT members, - - join
8 us - - and Mr. Lopez. Mr. Maldonado, please
9 step - - .

10 MR. MALDONADO: [foreign audio]

11 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. So everyone please
12 find a seat.

13 FEMALE VOICE: In the back. It's okay,
14 though. You have to get--

15 [crosstalk]

16 MR. TAVERAS: If you'd like to speak
17 tonight, and you have not signed up, there's a
18 sign-up area in the--right outside the
19 auditorium. And that area will be open for an
20 additional 15 minutes. So instead of 6:13, it
21 will close at 6:18.

22 My name is Santiago Taveras, and I'm the
23 deputy chancellor for teaching and learning.

24 MS. SHARAMON PEARSON: My name is Sharamon
25 Pearson [phonetic], and I'm a member of CEC

1 District 5 - - to the Education council.

2 MS. GALE REEVES: Good evening. I'm Gale
3 Reeves, community superintendent.

4 MS PATRICIA CHARLES: Good evening. I'm
5 Patricia Charles, a member of the school
6 leadership team and a teacher.

7 MS. SHANA MANFRISH: Good evening. My name
8 is Shana Manfrish [phonetic]. I'm a school
9 leadership team member and also on the PTA.

10 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. I'm going to read
11 a prepared statement. And after that, I believe
12 that Ms. Charles and then Ms. Pearson also have
13 a statement. And after that, we will begin our
14 hearing.

15 Good evening. Thank you for coming tonight
16 to join the public hearing for the prepared
17 phase out of the eventual closure of academy of
18 collaborative education. I am Santiago Taveras,
19 deputy chancellor for teaching and learning.

20 We have asked the District 5 CEC and the
21 school leadership team to participate in this
22 joint hearing. I am joined by Pat Charles for
23 the school leadership team at ACE, also by
24 Sharamon Pearson from District 5 CEC. We're
25 also joined by the community school district

1 superintendent Gale Reeves. We also have
2 present Ms. Rice [phonetic], the vice-president
3 of District 5 CEC. And in addition, we also
4 have the PTA president from the school, and that
5 is Nadine Brown [phonetic] - - .

6 The hearing is being recorded. Following
7 the hearing, a transcription of the proceedings
8 will be sent to all members of the councils
9 participating in the hearing and will also
10 remain available on the department's website.
11 The purpose of this hearing is for you to
12 provide comments about the proposal.

13 Before I describe the performance, though, I
14 want to make sure that you are aware of the
15 opportunity provided for your input. All those
16 who wish to speak must sign-up in the speaker's
17 sign-up area located outside of the auditorium.
18 The sign-up list will close at 6:18. Speakers
19 will be given the floor in the order that they
20 signed up. All comments are limited to two
21 minutes.

22 In addition, we welcome any comments and
23 feedback you may at this time--at time before
24 the panel for educational policy votes on the
25 proposal on January 26th, 2010. The e-mail

1 address and phone number where comments may be
2 made may be found on the DOE's website under the
3 section for the panel for educational policy.

4 The proposal is something that the
5 department takes very seriously and has
6 considered in a comprehensive manner. Over the
7 past six years, the Department of Education has
8 phased out over 90 schools and opened 335 new
9 ones that demonstrate remarkable success in
10 helping students excel. The Department is not
11 blaming any individual or group for the school's
12 lack of achievement. But we have determined
13 that it is important to give students the best
14 possible opportunity for long-term success.

15 We know that there are a lot of people
16 working incredibly hard every day to support
17 students at the school, but we simply cannot
18 continue doing the same things and expect that
19 we will get different results.

20 The Academy of Collaborative Education has
21 consistently demonstrated poor performance since
22 it opened in 2006. In 2008-2009, when the
23 overwhelming number of elementary and middle
24 schools in the city received scores of A or B on
25 the progress report and - - on the state test,

1 ACE experienced declining math proficiency and
2 was one of only three middle schools citywide to
3 receive a D grade on its 2008-2009 progress
4 report. ACE also received an F in the students'
5 progress section of the progress report.

6 Following careful evaluation of school,
7 culture, and teaching practices, including the
8 fact that the school was deemed under developed
9 in the 9th--2009 quality review, the DOE found
10 little indication that the school is capable of
11 turning around quickly to turn students better.
12 ACE has received an F grade on the school's
13 environment section in the 2009 progress report.

14 The learning environment survey reported
15 widespread dissatisfaction among parents,
16 students, and teachers and administrators alike.
17 In fact, when asked questioned regarding safety
18 and culture, - - gave the school 0 out of 15
19 points. Safety and culture are serious concerns
20 and have led to a significant decline in the
21 demand for the school.

22 For example, while the school was projected
23 to admit 300 students this year in October 31,
24 2009, our orderly register indicates that only
25 195 students are enrolled. Despite the three

1 years of programs designed to support a school
2 that serves a high-need population or academic
3 performance, a troubled school culture and a low
4 student demand persists.

5 For those reasons, we propose that ACE is
6 phased out beginning in the fall of 2010. While
7 we believe that District 5 students will be far
8 better served by other local middle schools, it
9 is critical that we do not further disrupt the
10 learning environment of the school's current
11 students. To that end, all students currently
12 enrolled in the school will have the opportunity
13 to graduate from ACE.

14 We will continue to support the school
15 during the phase out process. I look forward to
16 hearing your comments and questions. In order
17 to ensure that all people who have signed up to
18 speak are given the opportunity, we will limit
19 the comments to two minutes. After one minute
20 and 30 seconds, there will be a warning signal
21 letting you know that you have 30 seconds left.
22 And who is doing that here? And then after 30
23 seconds, you will see the other side of the card
24 which says that the time is up.

25 So with that, uh, I ask Ms. Pearson to make

1 her statement at this point.

2 MS. PEARSON: Good evening. I'd like to
3 state first and foremost that, accordingly the
4 Education Council District 5 - - opposes the
5 closing of ACE. We're here, and we're asking
6 that you consider the fact that Principal Shore
7 [phonetic], given the short time that she has
8 been in the school, has introduced programs,
9 presented us with the proposal where she added
10 programs that we thought would help the school
11 that was different from the previous
12 administration.

13 We think in the short time that she's been
14 here that she has enhanced her afterschool
15 program--programs outside of the city, private
16 programs that help the school. She's changed
17 the environment of the school. The principal
18 has worked with the PTA members to figure out
19 ways to incorporate parent involvement,
20 children's involvement, making kids happy to
21 come to the school.

22 We ask that you on this committee consider
23 the comments that will be spoken tonight when
24 you make your final decision. Thank you.

25 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Ms. Pearson. Ms.

1 Charles?

2 MS. CHARLES: My purpose in being here is to
3 educate and inform you regarding matters
4 concerning the proposed closing of M.S. 344.
5 I'd like to start by informing that that, along
6 with the first principal, uh, we found that the
7 school from start up to the present.

8 The first year was a paradise, a principal
9 dream school. But as the school year closed and
10 the start of a new year, it brought about new
11 challenges, challenges caused by children being
12 inappropriately placed, children with severe
13 social, emotional, and academic deficits. It
14 appeared as if this school was an ideal place
15 for children who were socially inept.

16 But did we say no? No. We accepted these
17 children. But in doing so, it caused us even
18 bigger challenges, children throwing books out
19 the windows, fightings in the classrooms,
20 fighting in the hallways, food fights in the
21 cafeteria.

22 The teacher morale was weighed down, and it
23 appeared as if they was only trying to make it
24 through the day. But along came Ms. Shore, a
25 shining beacon of hope. She came in with a plan

1 to improve the school, a plan that required a
2 specific focus among - - , a plan built on a
3 foundation of high expectation, a plan that
4 includes support for students, for teachers, and
5 parents.

6 Because of Ms. Shore's tireless efforts, we
7 now have a teacher center where additional
8 support is in place for our teachers. She has
9 hired two guidance counselors along with a
10 social worker for most challenging children.
11 And in addition, she implemented a school
12 intervention team who meets weekly to provide
13 parents, teacher, and student support.

14 We're now connected with New York Founding
15 Hospital and Safe Horizon for mediation issues.
16 And in addition to having an - - program, we
17 also have an enrichment program, an after school
18 program, and also a college readiness program.
19 - - support for our behavior challenged student
20 is a re-acclimation program for students who are
21 constantly suspended.

22 Even though we are faced with challenges
23 every single day, the teachers are still willing
24 with tireless effort to continue building up
25 this community, along with our principal, Ms.

1 Shore. And I feel that an academic school
2 year of 2008-2009, one year, is not enough time
3 to render an ill-will situation that pertained
4 to our previous school year. So implore unto
5 you to please reconsider.

6 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. We are going to
7 have two mics available this evening, one on my
8 left hand side, your right, and one of my right
9 hand side, your left. And we ask that, if you
10 have an even number, that you come to the right
11 hand side, and if you have an odd number to go
12 to my left hand side. We do that simply so that
13 we can get both sides going at the same time.

14 I would also like to ask that the first ten
15 speakers, Numbers 1 through 10 just come out to
16 either side. If you are even number, so 2, 4,
17 6, 8, 10 on this side, and 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 on my
18 left hand side. And we have representatives for
19 the department who will give you the microphone.
20 And please give them your number. And we have,
21 um, two folks who have--or just one--

22 FEMALE VOICE: Two.

23 MR. TAVERAS: Two folks who have time--a
24 stop watch to make sure that you get your two
25 minutes. Okay? So if we're all set, okay. So

1 Number 1.

2 MS. SHAKIRA SHOOKER: Good evening, staff,
3 parents, students, and members of the panel. My
4 name is Shakira Shooker [phonetic], and I am an
5 8th Grader here at M.S. 344. I am here this
6 evening to speak to you on behalf of the
7 students at M.S. 344.

8 I have been a student at M.S. 344 since 7th
9 Grade. My experience at M.S. 344 has been an
10 academics challenging - - . Last year, I was
11 not focused on my academics in the manner that I
12 wanted to. However, this year, I had noticed a
13 drastic change in the school environment here at
14 M.S. 344.

15 We have teachers that are committed, caring,
16 and dedicated to teaching the students at M.S.
17 344 to become valuable citizens of society.

18 FEMALE VOICE: Society.

19 [crosstalk]

20 MS. SHOOKER: While we are, as middle school
21 students, are constantly engaged in emotional,
22 social, and academic - - , we still manage to
23 come to a school where we are embarrassed by a
24 loving and caring--embraced by a loving and
25 caring staff.

1 FEMALE VOICE: Embraced.

2 MS. SHOOKER: We have teachers who spend
3 extra time in helping us socially, emotional,
4 and academic gully [phonetic]. Although I am in
5 8th Grade and a potential member of the class of
6 2010, I believe M.S. 344 is on the path of a new
7 beginning for the certain 6th and 7th Graders.
8 And to close its door would be a disadvantage to
9 these students as well as the community at
10 large.

11 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. Number 2?

12 [crosstalk]

13 MR. TAVERAS: Number 2?

14 FEMALE VOICE: - - number - - next one - - .

15 [crosstalk]

16 MR. TAVERAS: Oh, - - . Okay. It's Number
17 3.

18 MS. NADINE BROWN: Good evening, everyone.
19 My name is Nadine Brown, and I'm the president
20 of the PT Association. My son attends the
21 school, and he's an 8th Grader. And he's here
22 by choice.

23 When we received a letter stating that the
24 school was closing and that he could transfer,
25 my son immediately decided to stay. He loves

1 the school, and he adores his teachers. And
2 moreover, my son is doing well academically, and
3 my husband and I are proud of my son.

4 And because we see the improvement in him
5 and his work, and he's very eager to come to
6 school every day, and - - wonderful educators.
7 I cannot imagine the school not being here. If
8 this school was not here, where would our
9 students go? I am a product of public school,
10 and I come from a family of educators, so I know
11 how important this building is and its teachers
12 and how it's important to this community.

13 We need this school. We need our teachers,
14 and our children deserve the best education that
15 they can. And ACE is the best take this
16 opportunity to reevaluate our future leaders.
17 This school is striving every day, and we now
18 have a new science lab. We now have a new art
19 teacher. And Principal Shore, she has brought
20 so much new and innovative ideas here, and I'm
21 proud of her as well. She allows all parents to
22 be active and involved.

23 And more, why I really like Ms. Shore is
24 that she's not afraid. She's fearless, and
25 she's strong. And I love the way she talks to

1 me if my child is doing something that he
2 shouldn't be doing. And she does it in such a
3 way that I have to change. And I said once
4 earlier that I see a change in my son. So
5 please give her a chance to educate our
6 children, and don't take this school away. This
7 is all our kids have. Thank you very much.
8 Good evening.

9 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Ms. Brown. Speaker
10 Number 4?

11 MR. FRANK PERRY: Good evening, ladies and
12 gentlemen. My name is Frank Perry. I'm the
13 chairman of Community Board 10 of Central
14 Harlem, which represents the stiff district.
15 Community board vehemently opposes the closing
16 of ACE. This young school, and I mean young,
17 because it only opened recently, needs an
18 opportunity to demonstrate its capacity to
19 improve.

20 We Community Board 10 do not believe that
21 the school has received the necessary support to
22 improve the grades given it by the Department of
23 Education. The principal, Ms. Shore, further,
24 we feel, has not been given the support to
25 effectuate a meaningful change. She has put

1 into place new, different, and innovative
2 programs. However, it seems from the outside
3 eye that Ms. Shore was set up to fail.

4 FEMALE VOICE: Exactly.

5 MR. PERRY: We want Ms. Shore to be given,
6 and the administration, and the teachers, and
7 the students, an opportunity to use the programs
8 that have been put in place to demonstrate to
9 the Department of Education that the students of
10 this school and the students of this community
11 have the capacity to achieve their best.

12 We feel that teachers today are sort of,
13 like, emergency room physicians. They can never
14 tell what's coming through their doors. They
15 have to deal with a myriad of problems presented
16 by their students every day in addition to
17 effectuating their lessons plans, but many of
18 them are not given the support. Many of them
19 have to act as social workers in addition to
20 teachers.

21 FEMALE VOICE: That's right.

22 MR. PERRY: So in that regard, Community
23 Board 10 feels that this school needs an
24 opportunity to demonstrate its capacity. We
25 appeal to you to reconsideration your decision.

1 Do not close the doors of this school, because
2 its students deserve the best. And Ms. Shore,
3 the administration, and the teachers can provide
4 that if they're given the support. Thank you.

5 FEMALE VOICE: Absolutely.

6 [crosstalk]

7 MR. TAVERAS: Speaker Number 5.

8 FEMALE VOICE: Good evening. My name is - -
9 . I'm in the 6th Grade. - - school closing -
10 - some students will not find school quick.

11 Also, what I like about this school is they have
12 polices to say if you're safe. And other
13 schools--and other schools will not have the
14 same as this school. Also, they changed, at
15 least. Other schools may not have changed.

16 Also, the teachers and the - - are nice, and
17 they will help you when you have troubles with -
18 - . When the school closes down, you will even
19 lose your friends and teachers. Therefore,
20 please do not close the school. - - and see how
21 students and teachers will - - inside their
22 heart - - .

23 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. Speaker Number 6.

24 MR. RICH PARKER: Good evening. Uh, Rich
25 Parker [phonetic] from the United Federation of

1 Teachers. I want to thank the parents,
2 teachers, and students from the community that
3 came out here tonight to put up a fight to save
4 this school. And we need you out there on
5 January 26th at Brooklyn Tech to put up the same
6 fight. If you live by the test scores, you're
7 going to die by the test scores.

8 This is not about test scores. If we want
9 to talk about test scores, we can prepare the
10 city's test scores and what they say to the
11 national exams, which shows a tremendous
12 difference between what the city says and what
13 the federal government says. So if we do that,
14 let's hold Chancellor Cline accountable. And
15 let's close that down.

16 FEMALE VOICE: That's right.

17 MR. PARKER: Now, has anyone from the
18 Department of Education really been here and
19 looked at the culture of the school--

20 FEMALE VOICE: [interposing] Yes.

21 MR. PARKER: --and seen the positive stuff
22 that the principal, the teachers are doing, what
23 the kids are telling us, what the community is
24 telling us that's going on in this school? It's
25 not about test scores. Let's talk about

1 reality. It's about putting another charter
2 school in here in this community, taking the
3 public out of public education, and making
4 schools for profit for profiteers. That's what
5 this whole thing is about.

6 Where is the responsibility of the
7 chancellor? Where is the responsibility of the
8 department to support the children to support
9 this school? Shame on them. It's January 26th
10 at Brooklyn Tech.

11 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. Speaker Number 7?
12 Speaker Number 7? Speaker Number 8?

13 MS. ILESHA SACO: I was here, actually. I
14 was given the Number 100. But I'm a community
15 member. My name is Ilesha Saco [phonetic].
16 When I arrived this evening, this auditorium was
17 empty. And I came early on purpose and not by
18 accident, because I wanted to make sure that my
19 voice was heard.

20 Ms. Shore--I've been in this community 27
21 years. I'm also a radio talk show host and a
22 community activist, and I do a lot of work with
23 young people in the community and a lot of which
24 come from ACE. And I know the young people, and
25 I know the parents. And I'm also the mother of

1 a 32-year-old child who spent time in this
2 school. I want to say that I came to Ms. Shore
3 to present workshops to her young people. I
4 don't know if you remember, but I came a number
5 of times, Street Corner Resources, Ilesha Saco.

6 The first time that I came, I sat outside
7 the office for almost two hours, and I was able
8 to observe what happens during the course of the
9 day here. And I watched, uh, an overwhelmed Ms.
10 Shore do her best to make sure that the day went
11 well for young people. And I watched teachers
12 trying to do what they could do with the
13 behaviors that were going on in the school at
14 the same time.

15 I think at that time, we didn't have an
16 assistant principal, if I remember correctly.
17 And I think the second time I returned, there
18 was still no assistant principal. And there was
19 very little support outside of teachers coming
20 outside of their classroom and interrupting what
21 they were doing to deal with issues that were
22 happening in the hallway. And I hope that I'm
23 not misspeaking, but I'm speaking to what I
24 observed.

25 So I've been in this school on more than one

1 occasion to offer workshops to Ms. Shore, uh,
2 from our organization. But she was not able to
3 entertain that fully, because she was always
4 consumed with all of the stuff and the behaviors
5 and the social issues that were going on. And I
6 think that we really should be ashamed of
7 ourselves, for one, leaving a woman like Ms.
8 Shore, the principal, to do this work and expect
9 great things to happen in a situation where
10 great things cannot happen when you don't have
11 the proper support.

12 So I know that my time is almost up, but in
13 an age where we can talk to people all across
14 the country, see people across the world, make
15 changes, put babies together in test tubes, and
16 we can't manage a school right here in central
17 harbor, something is wrong when the only outcome
18 that we have is to close the school. The only
19 solution is to close the school. Something is
20 wrong, and we ought to be ashamed.

21 And this should not be the only time that we
22 see the officials show up to do something about
23 this when all year long this has been going on.
24 And really, we should have really come together
25 tighter than this before now when we're talking

1 about a closing.

2 So, Ms. Shore, you have my support. What I
3 offered you, uh, - - okay. I knew that this - -
4 . I mean, I spent more time outside your door
5 than I did looking at you. So that's why I
6 remember. But I do remember the people who
7 tried very hard to make things happen in this
8 school. There's a teacher who's on the radio
9 with me, as well, at your school, because we've
10 done some things with his class together.

11 So, I mean, I'm not just here speaking off
12 the cuff. I've been in this school. You
13 probably didn't even know when I did, uh, things
14 with teachers, as well, and brought things to
15 the school. But I'm saying that we have to do
16 more.

17 And I went to a meet with Joel Cline. And
18 one of the things that he said was to get
19 involved in the school in your neighborhood, and
20 I did that. My child's 32, and I did that. And
21 to hear that it's going to close without
22 allowing us to give full effort from our
23 community, something is wrong, and we have to do
24 better than this.

25 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Ms. Saco. Speaker

1 Number 9? I'm sorry; before you start, if you
2 have Numbers 11, through 20, please line up,
3 even numbers on this side, odd numbers on my
4 left hand side. Thank you. I apologize.

5 MS. SHAREEKA MUGWIN: Hello. My name is
6 Shareeka Mugwin [phonetic]. I am in the 6th
7 Grade, and I found out not too long ago that you
8 all were going to close down our school. When
9 us 6th Graders graduate as 8th Graders, I don't
10 think it is fair to close down--no, I do think
11 it's fair to close down this school, especially
12 when you didn't give us a chance to show you
13 what we can do.

14 We have after school programs. We have
15 dances. And we have college readiness programs.
16 I am one of the CFES students. I mentor younger
17 students, and we do have school spirit, and we
18 are proud to be ACE Jaguars.

19 FEMALE VOICE: All right.

20 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. Speaker Number 10,
21 Ms. Rice.

22 MS. TANISHA RICE: Good evening. My name is
23 Tanisha Rice. I'm a community education council
24 vice-president for District 5. But foremost,
25 I'm a parent. Um, and I just have a couple of

1 statements and questions. And I think the
2 biggest picture that we're missing is why are so
3 many District 5 schools being phased out, uh,
4 initiative to close the schools?

5 Um, and the other - - is that once the
6 school gets a good principal or good
7 administrative staff, why aren't those resources
8 being initially supported in, and why are they
9 given a short-lived time to turn around on that?
10 Um, I've been with Board of Education as far as
11 advocating as a parent for the last 15 years.
12 I've been on probably just about every board.

13 Um, but my major concern is to be supportive
14 to the school. We reach out to the community,
15 reach out to the parents, reach out to the
16 students. We don't do enough support--

17 FEMALE VOICE: [interposing] That's right.

18 MS. RICE: --um, as a community.

19 FEMALE VOICE: That's right.

20 MS. RICE: And it's not just this District 5
21 school. It's all District 5 schools.

22 FEMALE VOICE: That's right.

23 MS. RICE: So we need to reach out and span
24 different schools to figure out what's going on,
25 because the problem is not outside of here. We

1 keep looking outside for outside people to
2 come resolve things. We need to start resolving
3 inside.

4 What we are demanding that Board of Ed do,
5 assist us and do that support. Don't break down
6 the schools to bring another school in and not
7 give the initiative support in the first place.
8 Thank you.

9 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Ms. Rice. Speaker
10 Number 11? Speaker Number 12?

11 DR. GRACIO GORMAN: Good evening, ladies and
12 gentlemen. I am--I am Dr. Gracio Gorman
13 [phonetic]. And I represent the council of the
14 school supervisors and administrators. My
15 assistant chair - - CSA chair for - - everybody
16 knows - - Mr. George Young.

17 Uh, as you all know, Chancellor Cline
18 together with the Department of Education
19 announced the closing of M.S. 344. I would like
20 you to know that CSA does not tolerate the
21 propagation of failure. We embrace
22 accountability. However, we also note that it
23 takes three years or more to turn a school
24 around. And, um, I'm not saying this because I
25 read it on the papers or because I heard. I'm

1 telling you this all of this, please.

2 I took a failed school - - , and it take me
3 more than two years. And in the case of this
4 school, Ms. Shore is getting only one year. Is
5 that fair?

6 FEMALE VOICE: No.

7 DR. GORMAN: We don't think so.

8 FEMALE VOICE: No.

9 DR. GORMAN: Okay. Now, another question we
10 ask. Was the school given the proper resources?
11 Was the office of the chancellor careful of
12 making sure that she did not receive a great
13 amount of students with special needs? We
14 already have people testifying here that there
15 was a big number of children--of students in
16 here with special needs.

17 Now, we always have to ask the question.
18 You know, why is this happening to our leaders
19 in Harlem? You all know that our supervisors in
20 Harlem have to deal with a great deal of
21 challenges. And then, they make more challenges
22 given that students that have tremendous needs?
23 They're not - - the proper amount of materials
24 needed, resources, - - that they have to deal
25 with.

1 We at CSA are aware that all of this is
2 happening in schools and have - - session with
3 the chancellor about it - - to support our
4 supervisors. After questions are answered and
5 details - - , we are certain that the Department
6 of Education will find out that, given the time
7 and resources needed, M.S. 344 here with Ms.
8 Shore to remain open and be allowed to thrive.
9 Thank you.

10 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. Speaker Number 13?
11 Speaker Number 14?

12 MS. GUSTOPA: Good evening. My name is - -
13 Gustopa [phonetic]. I am a third-year teacher
14 here at the Academy of Collaborative Education.
15 I sit on the school leadership team, and I'm
16 also the chapter leader of the UFT here at ACE.

17 This school was founded in 2006. In 2009,
18 we received the word that our school would be
19 closing. So the first principal who founded the
20 school left the school after two years. The
21 second principal who is now on her second year
22 is now being told that her school is going to
23 close within two years.

24 If we keep just saying, "Get rid of it.
25 Close it," rather than looking at what's the

1 problems, let's fix the problems, then we're
2 going to experience the same problems with the
3 next school that's put in, with the next school
4 that's put in, and the next school after that.

5 FEMALE VOICE: That's right.

6 MS. GUSTOPA: We need to figure out what is
7 the problem. How can we support this school?
8 How can we support these teachers, these
9 students--

10 FEMALE VOICE: [interposing] Right.

11 MS. GUSTOPA: --so we can keep this school
12 open, every other school in this district and
13 communities just like this district.

14 I am a product of this community. I chose
15 to teach in this community, because I believe in
16 public education. I believe in this community,
17 and I believe that these students can perform
18 just as well as any other student, given the
19 proper resources. I am a member of this union.
20 I'm a member of this school. I'm a member of
21 this community.

22 I have a number of points to make, but I
23 just feel like the biggest point is not ACE.
24 Then what school? What school are you going to
25 put next? What resources are you going to put

1 in the next school? And why not put those
2 resources in this school to support this school?

3 Sorry, the school needs time to grow.
4 Nothing is done overnight. We need time. We
5 need support. We need to look, figure out where
6 the problems are, fix it, and let's keep ACE
7 open. Thank you.

8 FEMALE VOICE: That's right.

9 FEMALE VOICE: Woo. Woo

10 MR. TAVERAS: Speaker Number 15.

11 FEMALE VOICE: - -

12 MR. AUGUSTUS GUSSET: Uh, good evening.

13 FEMALE VOICE: - - all the way.

14 MR. GUSSET: My name is Augustus Gusset
15 [phonetic], Jr., and I'm the discipline
16 coordinator for Middle School 344. Uh, my
17 position doesn't make me biased, but it does
18 offer you some real facts about the situation.

19 Uh, we are not who we were, clearly, but
20 we're also not who we could be. And with those
21 same resources that - - talking about, if they
22 were offered t us, we could continue to grow.
23 But to do it like they're doing it right now
24 hurts these children, and that should be the
25 main focus of everybody. It's hurting the

1 children.

2 Bureaucrats and all of us have jobs. All of
3 us can go and have another license to go to
4 another school. Are you thinking about these
5 children? Are you thinking about the district
6 where, just like she said--so if it's not ACE,
7 you can throw another name on it. It's still
8 the same children--

9 FEMALE VOICE: Yes.

10 MR. GUSETT: --from the same community that
11 you're not supporting. You can't abort the
12 plan, because the DOE saw a problem two years
13 ago. When Ms. Alami [phonetic] was here, she
14 was the principal; they didn't things were up to
15 par, so they removed her. She didn't leave.
16 She was removed. So the DOE saw a problem.

17 And they brought in Rashonda Shore, someone
18 who was fresh with a new insight with a new
19 plan. But she inherited the staff. She
20 inherited the same kids. She inherited the same
21 parents. So you have to give her a chance to
22 kind of feel it out, because - - feel out and
23 assess the situation before they attack it.

24 So now that she's done that, she's made
25 personal changes, and she bought programs, and

1 we're all working together. And we got 75% of
2 this problem gone. At this point last year,
3 over 120 to 130 incidents were reported for our
4 school, some of them Level 4's and Level 5's in
5 our school. We now have close to maybe 53. And
6 some of those problem students are gone.

7 So if they're going to look at data, include
8 that, because that's the reason why you called
9 us persistently dangerous and want to close us
10 in the first place. That's not happening.
11 We're not persistently anything. And we're
12 persistent about--what we're persistent about is
13 their success. And with more support, you will
14 see more of that.

15 There's not a dangerous feel to this school
16 anymore. You can walk our halls. You can come
17 in our lunchroom. You can come in any time you
18 want. The proof is just coming in. Don't talk
19 about it from on high and look at it on paper.
20 Come see us. Come see these kids. And see how
21 beautiful they're reacting to the change that's
22 been initiated by this principal.

23 So I swear all you have to do is come and
24 see it. It's not about - - . Come see us and
25 see if what we're saying is true. So if the DOE

1 saw a problem and what was inherited by her,
2 also, you must be--one more thing has to be
3 considered. There's a little fuzzy math going
4 on.

5 Like he stated earlier, we're supposed to
6 have 301 kids, and we only have 195 and possibly
7 a little bit less than that. So the weighted
8 scale that they weigh our incidence on when you
9 have a low population raises that school
10 violence incidences very high, very quickly. So
11 it's not a fair deal. It's fuzzy math.

12 So when you're looking at us being
13 persistently dangerous, like I said, see us now,
14 and give us the time to continue with the
15 progress that we started. God bless Ms. Shore.

16 FEMALE VOICE: Yeah, that's right. That's
17 right.

18 [crosstalk]

19 MR. TAVERAS: Speaker Number 16.

20 MS. MARIAN GLOVER: Yes, good evening. My
21 name is Marian Glover [phonetic], and I'm a
22 school social worker. I've been here for three
23 years. And I have to say that I oppose the
24 closing of Middle School 344.

25 We have built the community here. We love

1 our children, and this year, we were blessed
2 to have two guidance counselors and one social
3 worker. And the three of us, we worked
4 diligently to work with our students, support
5 our teachers. Some of our students had behavior
6 problems, yes. So we bring them in. We talk to
7 them. We work on the problem.

8 And our students are learning you don't stay
9 in the problem. You work towards a solution.
10 So they go over this situation of what brought
11 them into the guidance office, and they learn to
12 problem solve. They learn to work out their
13 differences with other students.

14 And I'm here to tell you that it has made a
15 difference. It has made a difference in the
16 lives of our students. A lot of them are more
17 accountable for their behaviors. They've
18 learned to trust when some of them couldn't
19 trust. And I can tell you that when you come to
20 ACE, the guidance department, in addition to
21 their teachers, were highly favored by our
22 students, because we've taught them something.

23 We've taught them how to get along with each
24 other in their community. We've taught them how
25 when there's a difference with their parents

1 that they can go to their parents and talk to
2 them in a more respectable manner, but again
3 also letting them know that they are a person
4 and they can also speak their differences,
5 whether it's to teachers or whether it's to
6 parents.

7 Yes, our students, they deserve a school in
8 their community. They deserve people, staff,
9 that are in ACE that are capable and accountable
10 of working with them. And when every June
11 comes--and I know the dates are counting down; I
12 looked--and tears begin to come to my eyes,
13 because they're leaving us for three months, two
14 and a half months. And that brings us sorrow,
15 because we've done tremendous work with them.

16 And I'm appealing to you. Allow ACE to
17 continue so our students in this community will
18 not be affected. If this school is replaced by
19 a charter school, you know charter schools.
20 They go by lottery. Who will take some of our
21 students? Our students need us in - - . Harlem
22 is undergoing tremendous changes, and our
23 students, they need to also work through the
24 changes that are going on in their community.
25 Thank you.

1 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you.

2 [background noise]

3 MR. TAVERAS: Any other speaker sign-ups?
4 Any other numbers that I called earlier that
5 were missed? 11 and 13? If not, in January
6 26th at 6:00 in the evening at, uh, Brooklyn
7 Tech, we will have the panel for educational
8 policy. I'll give you an opportunity to speak.
9 You have two minutes, ma'am.

10 MS. MARIA JONES: Good evening, everybody.
11 My name is Maria Jones. Um, I love ACE. My
12 daughter graduated from here. I have my niece
13 here, right, still going here. This is a
14 beautiful school for the kids. The parents love
15 the kids coming here. I love my niece still
16 staying here.

17 My, my cousin's supposed to put her kids
18 here, too, - - 5 Grade for kindergarten, so she
19 got to come here. So if ya'll take the school
20 away from us, where are the kids going? That's
21 what I want to know - - . If you take the
22 school from the kids, where they going? I hope
23 you're not going to send them all the way out to
24 New York, because the transfer - - messing up.
25 They want to take away from that from the kids.

1 They're living in a community. It's not fair
2 that we - - right now. I can't go through that.

3 I have schools - - I can't - - my niece - -
4 . This is the closest school for my niece to
5 come. I've been with them for two years. Two
6 years and a half I've been with them. I love
7 this school a lot. Please, give me that
8 opportunity to see my niece graduate from this
9 school. God bless you all.

10 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. This is the last
11 person.

12 MS. SEGA PATRICK: Fine.

13 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you.

14 MS. PATRICK: My name is Sega Patrick, and
15 my daughter Shakira Shooker just spoke. For
16 Shakira made a stand in front of more than five
17 people and speak her mind was for me an amazing
18 feat, because ACE taught her to have that self-
19 esteem. I came out of a sick bed today, because
20 she called me and said, "Mommy, I want to speak
21 before them to tell them I want to stay at ACE."

22 So I'd like to say, "Thank you, Ms. Shore."
23 Thank you all the teachers here at ACE. They
24 guy my shy child up to stand before all of you.
25 This is a crowd - - and to make me get out of my

1 sick bed to tell you it's wrong. We need ACE.
2 That's a perfect example of why ACE should stay
3 open. Thank you.

4 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Ms. Patrick. As I
5 mentioned, that was the last speaker. Uh, the
6 panel for educational policy meets on January
7 26th at Brooklyn Technical, um, High School in--
8 uh, at 6:00 in the evening. And that's where
9 this proposal and other proposals will be voted
10 on by the panel. Thank you. Have a good
11 present evening. Good night.

12 [END 154_537.mp3]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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

Signature April C. Hodson

Date January 15, 2010