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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION - OFFICE OF  
PORTFOLIO PLANNING**

**Academy of Environmental Science  
January 5, 2009**

1 [START 154420\_A MP3]

2 MS. KATHLEEN GRIMM: Thank you for coming  
3 tonight to this joint public hearing regarding  
4 the proposed phase-out and eventual closure of  
5 the Academy of Environmental Sciences or AES.

6 My name is Kathleen Grimm. I'm Deputy  
7 Chancellor of the Department of Infrastructure  
8 and Portfolio Planning. I am joined here  
9 tonight by several people who I'm going to ask  
10 to introduce themselves to you. They are here  
11 as part of this joint hearing. And that doesn't  
12 mean that they are representing any groups who  
13 have necessarily endorsed or opposed the  
14 proposal. They are here to listen to all of you  
15 tonight. So if I could ask each of them, I'm  
16 going to ask our distinguished superintendent on  
17 my left to begin the introductions.

18 MS. ELAINE GORMAN: Elaine Gorman, Manhattan  
19 High School Superintendent. Thank you for  
20 attending.

21 MS. KIM LANDSMAN: Kim Landsman. I'm a  
22 member of the Citywide Council on High Schools  
23 elected from Manhattan. And I just want to say  
24 one quick thing, which--although Kathleen  
25 alluded to it that the--my presence here and the

1 representation of the Citywide Council on High  
2 Schools does not imply that we were even  
3 consulted on this decision or that we have any  
4 position on it or are in favor of it. We are  
5 here because we were asked to be here, and we  
6 are here to listen to you and report back, and  
7 that's about it. Thank you.

8 MR. HECTOR NAZARIO: Good evening. I'm  
9 Hector Nazario. I'm the president of the  
10 Community Education Council. And for the  
11 record, I feel the same way. We were noticed on  
12 the 11th hour, and we are just here to hear your  
13 issues and what your concerns are about, and we  
14 just wanted to let you know that we are not in  
15 collaboration with anything that is going on, on  
16 this stage, at any course.

17 MR. FRANK HANDIBODE: I'm Frank Handibode.  
18 I'm an SLT and teacher at AES. [Applause]

19 MS. LAUREN COUNTER: My name is Lauren  
20 Counter [phonetic]. I'm a teacher upstairs at  
21 Renaissance School of the Arts and a member of  
22 the SLT at that school. [Applause]

23 MS. MICHELLE MEADOWS: Hello. My name is  
24 Michelle Meadows [phonetic], and I am an elected  
25 SLT parent member of Manhattan East. [Applause]

1 MS. GRIMM: I want to thank all of our  
2 fellow panelists tonight and thank them very  
3 much for being here. As hopefully you all know,  
4 the purpose of this hearing is for you, the  
5 public, to provide comments about the proposal.  
6 All those of you who wish to speak must sign up  
7 at the speaker sign-up station, which is right  
8 outside those doors. That sign-up list is going  
9 to close in 15 minutes, so if you are not signed  
10 up, please go out and do so now.

11 I'd also like you to know that we will  
12 transcribe this entire hearing. Copies of that  
13 transcription will be provided to members of all  
14 of the groups that are sitting here, and of  
15 course it will also be on the DOE Web so the  
16 public can have access to it.

17 This proposal that we're here to discuss  
18 tonight is something that the Department takes  
19 very seriously and has considered in a very  
20 comprehensive manner. Over the past six years,  
21 the Department of Education has phased out over  
22 90 schools and opened 335 new schools that have  
23 demonstrated remarkable success in helping  
24 children to excel. For example, our new high  
25 schools have achieved an average four-year

1 graduation rate of 75%, well above the citywide  
2 60% rate, even though those schools serve some  
3 of the city's highest-need students. This  
4 proposal will continue that important work.

5 Now the Department is not blaming any  
6 individual or group for the situation at this  
7 school, but our priority is making sure that all  
8 students receive the best possible opportunity  
9 for long-term success. We know that there are a  
10 lot of people who work incredibly hard every day  
11 to support the students at this school,  
12 including our own principal, Irma Garceau.

13 But despite those efforts, the results are  
14 not what our students need and deserve. Our  
15 proposals were made with great care, including  
16 careful evaluation of student achievement data,  
17 as well as a thorough examination of school  
18 culture and practices to determine whether a  
19 low-performing school appeared equipped to turn  
20 around quickly to better support student needs.  
21 The school progress reports do inform our  
22 decision-making significantly, making any school  
23 that received a D or an F eligible for  
24 consequences. We looked at community  
25 satisfaction at each school as indicated on

1 learning environment survey results from  
2 parents, students and teachers. We also looked  
3 at demand for seats at each school to assess  
4 whether or not city families felt it was a good  
5 option for their children. By all of these  
6 measures, the evidence supporting our proposal  
7 to close AES is compelling.

8 First and foremost, the four-year graduation  
9 rate at AES is unacceptably low - only 51.1%  
10 last year. Students begin falling behind early,  
11 and the school has had little success getting  
12 them back on track. Last year, only 62.2% of  
13 first-year students accumulated 10 or more  
14 credits. While this represents a modest  
15 improvement, it is still quite low and  
16 insufficient to reverse the school's long-  
17 standing pattern of failure.

18 AES earned a D on its 2008/'09 progress  
19 report, declining from the already low C grades  
20 that the school earned in the previous two  
21 years. AES has also been found underdeveloped  
22 with proficient features on its quality review  
23 for two consecutive years. Quality reviews  
24 involve multiday site visits conducted by  
25 experienced educators who observe classes and

1 obtain feedback from staff members, parents and  
2 students. Although a new principle took over in  
3 2008, the quality review provided considerable  
4 evidence that AES remained unlikely to  
5 turnaround to better serve students. The  
6 reviewer characterized the school as disorderly  
7 and demoralized. He found a poor working  
8 relationship between teachers and  
9 administrators. Teachers were not prepared to  
10 interpret data to help students make progress,  
11 and the school did not monitor staff development  
12 adequately or ensure that instruction was  
13 sufficiently tailored to support individual  
14 student needs.

15 The 2008/'09 Learning Environment Survey  
16 demonstrated widespread dissatisfaction with the  
17 school among all constituents, specifically as  
18 it related to student safety. Only 25% of  
19 teachers felt that order and discipline were  
20 maintained, while only 61% of students felt safe  
21 at school.

22 Given these conditions, it is unsurprising  
23 that demand for the school is relatively low and  
24 has been declining. This school is low-  
25 performing, in the 14th percentile of all high

1 schools citywide. Demand for the school is  
2 relatively low and community satisfaction is  
3 also low. When considered as a whole, the  
4 factors demonstrate that this school is not  
5 serving our students well.

6 Let me be clear about the consequences of  
7 this proposal. All students currently enrolled  
8 in the school will have the opportunity to  
9 graduate from AES. We will continue to support  
10 the school during the three-year phase-out  
11 process. We propose to phase-in a new high  
12 school in the building, Renaissance Charter High  
13 School for Innovation. A sister Renaissance  
14 Charter High School already exists in Queens and  
15 has an impressive track record of supporting  
16 English-language learners and special education  
17 students.

18 Renaissance would give priority to students  
19 residing in District 4. If approved,  
20 Renaissance Charter would open in September 2010  
21 with a 9th Grade, and will eventually serve  
22 Grades 9 to 12.

23 So I want to thank you. I look forward, as  
24 we all do, to hearing your comments. In order  
25 to ensure that all people who have signed up to

1 speak have the opportunity to do so, we are  
2 going to limit each comment to two minutes.  
3 Someone up here will signal each speaker and  
4 give you a signal when you have 30 seconds to  
5 go. So when you see that sign, we ask you to  
6 try to wrap up efficiently. The microphone I  
7 believe will automatically turn off after the  
8 two minutes.

9 I will say if you have any written material  
10 that you want us to consider feel free to leave  
11 it with the folks who are here and we will make  
12 sure that all members or all committees  
13 represented here have copies of it. We would  
14 like to give an opportunity to any elected  
15 official to offer comment at this time before we  
16 have the public comment. I don't know if we  
17 have any public officials with us right now.

18 MS. GORMAN: We'd also like to recognize the  
19 Community School District 4 Superintendent, Luz  
20 Cortazzo who's with us tonight as well.

21 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much.

22 Okay. We will then move to public comments.  
23 Okay, can you talk to one of those people? Talk  
24 to one of those people. Can you [off mic]?  
25 Debra [phonetic], not Russ [phonetic], yeah.

1 Debra? Debra?

2 MS. MARION BELL: Good evening. My name is  
3 Marion Bell. I am an elected district leader in  
4 East Harlem. I am here to speak to you today  
5 because I've been hearing a great deal about  
6 your concerns. We have other elected officials  
7 that are going to be here with you this evening  
8 and they will be speaking for themselves. But  
9 I'm starting out talking to you as a community  
10 leader, community advocate, teacher, former  
11 public school parent, and I have to say that we  
12 know that it is possible, it is possible to  
13 collaborate with all of the parents, with all of  
14 the community members that live in East Harlem.  
15 We know that negotiating is also possible. We  
16 have two very capable elected officials that are  
17 sitting that were elected by you, the parents,  
18 to represent you, and I'm sure that they're  
19 going to be willing to sit down and negotiate  
20 with the powers that be. This is good that you  
21 are here tonight, but it is a problem if there  
22 is so much dissention amongst you that you are  
23 not ready to wholeheartedly accept this movement  
24 and this proposal. It might be an indication  
25 that the public relations have not been done

1 well enough so that you have enough  
2 information to feel secure with any changes  
3 being proposed to you.

4       And so if nothing more, I would hope that by  
5 the time you leave here that you have felt  
6 empowered to ask all of the questions that you  
7 have and that you feel vindicated in asking  
8 those questions because you deserve those  
9 answers before you leave and you certainly--if  
10 you don't get them today, you deserve a  
11 quantifiable timeframe in which you will get  
12 those answers. It is true, as it was opened  
13 today, that failure of any school is not  
14 acceptable, but neither is ignoring the  
15 community and their concerns. So it's  
16 appreciative that--I'm appreciative that they  
17 are here today, but it saddens me because my  
18 relationship with academic environmental  
19 sciences is one of a long-term history. I'm  
20 also a member of the Community Advisory Board of  
21 Metropolitan Hospital. Many years ago, we set  
22 up a collaborative effort that would allow the  
23 students from this school to be mentored by the  
24 healthcare providers in the hospital facility.  
25 It is extremely important that we be able to

1 maintain those types of relationships and  
2 build an opportunity for our students to be  
3 involved in sciences, to be involved in what it  
4 means to be Go-Green. And I see our Borough  
5 President coming in who is the head of our Go-  
6 Green East Harlem, absolutely, and I know--

7 MS. GRIMM: [Interposing] Could I ask you to  
8 wrap up your comments?

9 MS. BELL: Absolutely.

10 MS. GRIMM: Thank you.

11 MS. BELL: And I know that it is within  
12 their authority also to question what is about  
13 to happen with you all today. And I wish you  
14 luck. I wish you the opportunity to get those  
15 answers, and I'm going to be here with you to  
16 hear that. And I'm also a member of the  
17 Community Board. Thank you.

18 MS. GRIMM: Thank you very much for your  
19 comments. [Applause]

20 Borough President Scott Stringer is here  
21 tonight.

22 MR. SCOTT STRINGER: Thank you very much,  
23 and it's very good to be here, and it's very  
24 hard to follow Marion Bell, right?

25 But I'm glad that we're here tonight to

1 discuss the Department of Education's proposal  
2 to phase out the Academy of Environmental  
3 Science. And I'm glad, under the new governance  
4 law, that we actually have hearings and that we  
5 actually have discussion. That was the point of  
6 the improved law that was passed at the last  
7 legislative session.

8 My concern, and I guess this is the bad  
9 news, is tonight there are multiple hearings  
10 going around the city and we are planning  
11 multiple hearings in a short amount of time,  
12 which means that, in a rush to do hearings to  
13 close schools, we're not paying enough attention  
14 to what the law was really about, which is  
15 meaningful input. And I do believe we need to  
16 come up with a schedule so that PEP reps like  
17 Patrick Sullivan [phonetic], who represents  
18 Manhattan, also have opportunities to come here  
19 tonight so we don't have to have a divide-and-  
20 conquer mentality.

21 I want to talk a little bit about school  
22 closings, and I'm going to submit formal  
23 testimony to you today about the Academy of  
24 Environmental Science. But I want to talk to  
25 you and for you to understand what those of us

1 who went to public school, some recently and  
2 some a long time ago, what it means to close our  
3 schools. If you were contemplating closing  
4 PS152 and Junior High School 52 or Kennedy High  
5 School where I went, I would feel, automatically  
6 as a graduate, a tremendous loss of identity.  
7 The reason is because those schools, growing up  
8 in Washington Heights, a little north of here,  
9 was really about community. It was about  
10 parents and teachers and kids building not just  
11 an education but also building a community. In  
12 fact, some of the earliest experiences you have  
13 in those school buildings really transform your  
14 life. And many people who've gone through the  
15 public school system in New York take their kids  
16 and their grandkids to the same neighborhoods  
17 that they went to school in. My mother did that  
18 with me. My father did that with me. And that  
19 has been the great tradition of New York.

20 Now having said that, as Borough President,  
21 I recognize that the 1960s can't look like 2010.  
22 And skylines do change, and this community knows  
23 about changing skylines. But the one thing that  
24 we have got to ensure in this process is that if  
25 you're going to close a school you've got to

1 tell us what the criteria is, what it means  
2 for the community, what it means for the kids in  
3 the building. When you say phase out, does that  
4 mean you give up on those kids? I'm not saying  
5 you are, but that's what people think. What's  
6 going to happen to those teachers who helped  
7 build up the infrastructure of that school. Is  
8 it a bait-and-switch for the charters? People  
9 are going to ask you those questions.

10 [Applause]

11 MS. GRIMM: Borough President, I just ask  
12 you to be mindful, there is a two-minute limit.

13 MR. STRINGER: Excuse me?

14 MS. GRIMM: We have asked people to have a  
15 two-minute limit.

16 MR. STRINGER: I was just getting rolling.

17 MS. GRIMM: I know. [Laughter]

18 MR. STRINGER: And again, I'm not talking  
19 about--to pit charters against public schools  
20 tonight. What I'm saying is these are the  
21 questions that people are going to ask.

22 I also want to just, in closing, just say to  
23 you that I want to stress criteria and I want to  
24 stress transparency. I do recognize that there  
25 are--sometimes, you have to close a school. But

1 I also think that we need to hear from you and  
2 hear from DOE what does it take to save a  
3 school. And now I know the chancellor says--  
4 [applause].

5 And in saying what it means to save a  
6 school, we as a community, elected officials,  
7 teachers, parents, we all have responsibility to  
8 that. So I would hope that before we close  
9 schools we teach people what you think the  
10 criteria ought to be, we help teach you what  
11 sweat equity and what community schools mean and  
12 that we find ourselves in a place that, when we  
13 have to close a school, everybody in the room  
14 says we have to close the school.

15 Now we know that--[applause]. We know we're  
16 not always going to agree to that, and we do  
17 know that with our war rooms--and I want to  
18 thank DOE for working in all of the districts  
19 now in overcrowding issues. You get great  
20 credit from me for that. But I also know that  
21 when you close a school how difficult it is to  
22 find new school space. And I want to put that  
23 out there as well.

24 So thank you for being here. Thank you for  
25 being in el barrio. Thank you for

1 participating. But please, Deputy Chancellor  
2 and everybody, listen to what they say because  
3 they come from this neighborhood and they  
4 understand what it is to build a community.  
5 Thank you very much. [Applause]

6 MS. GRIMM: Thank you. Thank you.

7 SS: Thank you.

8 MS. GRIMM: I Council Member Gabriel Rito  
9 [phonetic] here? No? Okay. Not speaking.  
10 Okay. Thank you for being here then.

11 All right, we are now going to open up the  
12 public comment period. Again, I ask everyone to  
13 try to limit your remarks to two minutes in  
14 recognition and courtesy to your fellow public  
15 speakers who are here.

16 I'm going to ask my colleagues who are up  
17 here, my fellow panel members, if they will call  
18 the names of the people who have signed up.

19 MS. GORMAN: We'll call two names at a time.  
20 One and two, if you'd go to opposite  
21 microphones, that way there will be an  
22 expediting of the speaking, and when--then  
23 they'll call three and four.

24 MR. LANDSMAN: The first person is  
25 Jacqueline Rivera [phonetic]. And let me just

1 say ahead of time that if I mispronounce  
2 somebody's name I apologize, but I'll do the  
3 best I can.

4 I can't even read that. And Jena Torrez  
5 [phonetic].

6 MS. JACQUELINE RIVERA: Hi. I'm Jacqueline  
7 Rivera and I've been at AES for a while. I have  
8 been at AES for a while. And while I've been  
9 here at AES, I have developed a passion for  
10 nature and the environment. And it was here at  
11 AES that I discovered my passion to be a  
12 veterinarian and how much I loved writing. At  
13 AES, there is a program called the Envirothon,  
14 which is part of the environmental competition  
15 between environmental schools. And I am one of  
16 the only four--I have been one of the only four  
17 freshman that have actually been able to make it  
18 to state. And all four of those freshman have  
19 come from here at AES. [Applause]

20 Just to add a little importance as to how  
21 big that is, it is nearly impossible for ninth  
22 graders to actually make it to state. So that  
23 just goes to show you here hardworking we are  
24 here in AES.

25 Another thing I would like to bring up is

1 our school is the best environmental school in  
2 this city. One reason is because we are the  
3 only environmental school that actually has a  
4 rooftop garden, right up there. And it has been  
5 there for a long time, and I have actually  
6 worked there. And if the school closes, I would  
7 hate to see that rooftop garden to just die  
8 because, if you bring in another school, you  
9 know, like Renaissance was it, like, what are  
10 they going to do with a rooftop garden? And  
11 many of the students have worked really hard on  
12 the rooftop garden and I would just hate to see  
13 it just die away like that because that's life,  
14 and you can't just set up like a memorial or  
15 some remembrance of it. And that, I have to  
16 say, is the jewel of the Academy of  
17 Environmental Science. [Applause]

18 MS. JENA TORREZ: Hi, I'm Jena Torrez. I'm  
19 a current ninth grade AES student. [Applause]  
20 And I feel that this school is wonderful. It  
21 has great programs such as Math Club, College  
22 for Every Student, which prepares students for  
23 college at an early age, after-school programs,  
24 free tutoring and a rooftop garden that is  
25 beautiful. And as years go on, we are

1 improving. Teachers are very motivated help  
2 us achieve in what we want to do or what we want  
3 to become. We have great programs that teachers  
4 students in the way they need to be taught, at  
5 their speed and at their learning pace.

6 I travel all the way from Brooklyn to come  
7 here at AES because each day is a brand new  
8 experience. That's why I get up so early to  
9 come here. I'm devoted to keeping the school up  
10 and running. In conclusion, we need the DOE to  
11 help us instead of changing us. The phase-out  
12 is a mistake. We love this school. [Applause]

13 MR. LANDSMAN: Thank you. Number 3 is  
14 Jebari Sante [phonetic] and Number 4 is Crystal  
15 Hemenes [phonetic].

16 MR. JEBARI SANTE: Well good evening,  
17 everyone. My name is Jebari. This is my first  
18 year at AES. The past few months I've noticed  
19 that there is a great group of people who help  
20 the school. One club is CFES, College for Every  
21 Student. It's a club that helps students get  
22 into the colleges they want. Another club that  
23 I'm in is called Envirothon, a city and  
24 statewide competition that our school excelled  
25 in. And there are much more programs and clubs

1 that currently help build the school.

2 [Applause]

3 MS. CRYSTAL HEMENES: Hi, my name is Crystal  
4 Hemenes, and I'm a student here at AES as a  
5 junior. When I first came here to AES, I felt  
6 welcome and, well, when I needed help in my work  
7 my teachers would always ask me if I needed  
8 help, so I would come after school and get help.  
9 And my marks are good, and I'm really happy to  
10 be in this school.

11 And I would recommend a lot of students to  
12 come here because you guys are basically basing  
13 the school on the past work and not what we're  
14 doing now. [Applause] We're improving and you  
15 guys are like taking it away from us. So I  
16 don't see how phasing the school out is a good  
17 thing. That's not really giving us a chance to  
18 prove ourselves. But if you keep the school  
19 open, you'll let us prove that we're doing  
20 better than how past is, and you're not letting  
21 us show how we're doing it now, Just letting us  
22 prove that we're doing good. That's all I  
23 wanted to say. [Applause]

24 MR. LANDSMAN: Number 5 is Nicholas, I think  
25 it's Tishuk, and Number 6 Lauren Kellner

1 [phonetic].

2 MR. NICHOLAS TISHUK: I would actually  
3 prefer to face the audience for this. Good  
4 evening, everyone. My name is Nicholas Tishuk.  
5 I am one of the cofounders and principal of the  
6 Renaissance Charter High School for Innovation.  
7 I know a lot of the folks here tonight are here  
8 to address AES and plan to phase it out, but I  
9 wanted to come here to introduce myself to  
10 everyone, to make my face known, to talk a  
11 little bit about the innovation program and also  
12 make myself available afterwards to answer any  
13 questions. Unfortunately, the timeline that the  
14 DOE process has hasn't given us the opportunity  
15 to speak to folks, so I wanted to make that  
16 available afterwards.

17 I'm an English teacher and I am an  
18 administrator at our school in Queens called the  
19 Renaissance Charter School. It was started in  
20 1993 as a way for kids to have a humanistic  
21 education. It's a K through 12 program. And  
22 over the last 17 years, it's really developed  
23 something that's really special.

24 In Jackson Heights, where we are, it's a  
25 very diverse community. It's a community that

1 has a lot of changes happening now and a lot  
2 of immigrants from various parts of the world,  
3 and it has a lot of struggles and a lot of  
4 challenges. I see a lot of that here in East  
5 Harlem as well.

6 We're a small school. We're K through 12,  
7 and we serve all students regardless of their  
8 ability, their status as English language  
9 learners, the fact that they have IEPs or their  
10 special education students, and we don't really  
11 look at those labels. We look at the kids  
12 themselves.

13 We've got a humanistic model, which looks at  
14 the whole child and allows us to work to give  
15 every single kid a chance to succeed. We've  
16 been very successful and very fortunate to have  
17 kids be graduates. We have a 95% graduation  
18 rate and about a 95% college acceptance rate for  
19 those kids, so we're very proud of them.

20 Innovation is a replication of that model,  
21 and we hope to bring that model here to East  
22 Harlem if this proposal is put through. I see a  
23 lot of passion from the kids here, and I could  
24 only hope that the students we have will have  
25 that passion as well. And I think it's very

1 important.

2 Again, I'll be here afterwards, and I can  
3 answer any questions. Thank you very much.

4 [Applause]

5 MS. GRIMM: Council Member Viverito.

6 MS. MELISSA MARK VIVERITO: Hi, I'm Council  
7 Member Melissa Mark Viverito representing  
8 Council District 8. We're in my district as it  
9 stands, which covers School Districts 3, 4 and 5  
10 in Manhattan. A lot has been said and I want to  
11 really attach myself to and really reiterate the  
12 comments that our Borough President made with  
13 regards to transparency.

14 But I want to just make a couple of other  
15 comments. I stand strong in saying that the DOE  
16 must take significant steps to improve its  
17 engagement with local communities and  
18 stakeholders before determinations are made  
19 regarding the opening the closing of our  
20 schools. Parents throughout my district have  
21 contacted me to distress their dismay over the  
22 closure of their children's schools and how they  
23 feel completely shut out of the decision-making  
24 process. Furthermore, we have heard some  
25 concerns from local parents and community groups

1 that whatever procedures the DOE does  
2 currently have under state law are sometimes not  
3 properly followed. The AES, the Academy of  
4 Environmental Science, one of the schools in my  
5 district, which is being closed--and I really  
6 want to commend the young people for your  
7 courage in standing up, despite the fact that  
8 the DOE is telling you and your parents that the  
9 school has failed, I think that your standing up  
10 is a testament of what has succeeded in this  
11 school. And so I really want to stand strong  
12 with the resolution that the school has put  
13 forth that we don't think that it should close.

14 I want to just say something. On December  
15 8, 2009, which is the day that the National  
16 Assessment of Educational Progress Math Exam  
17 statistics came out, Brian Lamb interviewed  
18 Diane Ravitch, who is an NYU education expert  
19 and former Assistant US Secretary of Education  
20 who also served seven years on NAEP board. He  
21 had her on his show. And although the  
22 Department of Education issued a press release  
23 touting the scores, indicating the great success  
24 our fourth and eighth grade students have  
25 achieved, I just want to quote what she said

1 because it's very relevant to today, "What  
2 troubles me is that he," referring to Chancellor  
3 Klein, "is closing schools based on one-year  
4 changes in test scores. They rate scores an F  
5 or a D if the number falls flat. The scores  
6 here are flat for two straight years," meaning  
7 the NAEP scores, "and you would have to say, if  
8 you use their accountability methods, that the  
9 city would get an F if they were judging  
10 themselves and we would have to change  
11 management or change the system." [Applause]

12 MS. GRIMM: Council member?

13 MS. MARK VIVERITO: So I understand I have  
14 to stop, and I'm going to provide further  
15 testimony, but you're talking about closing a  
16 school based on one-year statistics. That is  
17 inaccurate. I think that is not the way to go,  
18 and we need to really revisit the decision-  
19 making process with regards to opening and  
20 closing schools. Thank you very much.

21 [Applause]

22 MS. COUNTER: My name is Lauren Counter.  
23 I'm a teacher upstairs at Renaissance School of  
24 the Arts, not to be confused with Renaissance  
25 Charter High School, which will be the school

1 that's being brought in. [Applause]

2 I'm here tonight to share my concerns about  
3 this proposal. First and foremost, it is the  
4 Department of Education's responsibility to  
5 provide every support, resource and type of help  
6 to make a school successful before it is shut  
7 down. [Applause] And based on my experience  
8 upstairs and what I've seen around this  
9 building, I'm not convinced that the Department  
10 of Education has done that yet.

11 And in terms of a charter school coming into  
12 this building, I'm aware of several of the  
13 examples of academic excellence that charter  
14 schools have brought around this city, but  
15 several of those schools engage in a selective  
16 admissions process. [Applause] They're not  
17 providing the proportional amount of services to  
18 special education and ESL students.

19 What happens when this happens on a broad  
20 scale, which is what's tending to happen in New  
21 York City, is that you get a two-tiered  
22 education system, where the charter schools are  
23 the good schools and the public schools are for  
24 everybody else. [Applause] That's not fair to  
25 our children and I don't want to see that happen

1 in this building.

2 I believe in public education and I want to  
3 see it work. Every single day, I bring 110% to  
4 my job. I know the teachers and the students at  
5 AES are doing the same, and I want to see the  
6 Department of Education do its job before it  
7 decides to close AES down. Thank you.

8 [Applause]

9 MR. LANDSMAN: Number 7 is Keisha Romel  
10 [phonetic] and Number 8 is Gloria Torrez  
11 [phonetic].

12 MS. KEISHA ROMEL: Hi, my name is Keisha  
13 Romel, and AES has helped me motivate--AES has  
14 helped me find my motivation and my passion.  
15 There is one question I want to ask you guys.  
16 What is our purpose here? Are we wasting our  
17 time because it seems as if the proposal is just  
18 a done deal? You're talking as if--[applause].  
19 You're talking as if the ninth grade charter  
20 school is coming in, so it's a done deal that  
21 AES is over, after all the grades are phased  
22 out.

23 I am also in the Envirothon, and I was the  
24 freshman--I was also one of the four freshmen to  
25 go to state. I have also one thing - change.

1 Change doesn't happen in one day. You can't  
2 expect AES to change in a little bit of time.  
3 You need to give us a chance. Thank you.

4 [Applause]

5 MS. GLORIA TORREZ: Hi. My name is Gloria  
6 Torrez, and I'm the Vice President for the PTA  
7 here at AES. And basically, I have a few  
8 questions, which I'm not going to get the answer  
9 to tonight, so my first question was that we  
10 actually had a drastic increase in education  
11 population here at AES, which was a 20% from a  
12 6% based on the schools that was closed in the  
13 Bronx, Queens and other boroughs last year. My  
14 question is that if the charter school has a  
15 selection process and they can actually screen  
16 their students how our children in District 4  
17 are going to get--you know, how is it that  
18 they're going to get the services that they  
19 need. They're basically left stranded in the  
20 streets for them to become whatever is it that  
21 there is to do on the streets, sell drugs and  
22 stuff like that. We need help for our children  
23 in this society, in this community. I hope that  
24 the Department of Education will make a wise  
25 decision and they can really hear us out and

1 make the best decision that is going to help  
2 us as a community. Thank you.

3 MR. LANDSMAN: I just want to say that  
4 Hector is one of the people that has to go to  
5 two meetings tonight, so he's going to leave  
6 now. And Number 9 is Robert Ganz [phonetic] and  
7 Number 10 is Silvia Sevia [phonetic].

8 [Applause]

9 MR. ROBERT GANZ: Hi, everybody. My name is  
10 Robert Ganz, and I treat environmental science  
11 or science, and I am the coach of the Envirothon  
12 team at this school. When I was first thinking  
13 of coming to this school, one of the reasons  
14 that I applied is because it had a name Academy  
15 of Environmental Science. And it stood for  
16 something. It stood for a niche that I thought  
17 was important to the world. Since we--since  
18 I've been here, we have joined four  
19 international efforts, including the Stroud  
20 Research Institute and the New York City Parks  
21 Department Macro Invertebrate Study that we have  
22 been working on since 2003. We've been a part  
23 of International Beach Cleanup Day, studying the  
24 input of floatables on the beaches of--all over  
25 the world that has more than 450,000 volunteers.

1 We've been doing it since 2004.

2 As the students here talked about, we have t  
3 he rooftop garden that is second to none in  
4 terms of we have drip irrigation systems. We  
5 got a grant for that. We got it built. Another  
6 thing, we have started a program. It's adopted  
7 marine mammals where we've participated with the  
8 Riverhead Marine Research Foundation who's in  
9 charge of the Tristate Area. I was just going  
10 to say very quickly we've adopted over 20 marine  
11 mammals.

12 And in Envirothon, Envirothon is a national  
13 competition. In the city, we won the borough of  
14 Manhattan, top environment school there. We won  
15 the wildlife competition for New York City. We  
16 came in second overall to New York City.

17 [Applause] We have a small population, not  
18 4,000 people, not 3,000 people, so it's a  
19 significant part of our population that got  
20 involved with the work that we did in  
21 environmental and in science.

22 And you know what, I believe in trying to  
23 build on things, build on our strengths. Don't  
24 tear it apart. I'm a positive person. Let's be  
25 positive. [Applause]

1 MS. SILVIA SEVIA: [With a Translator]  
2 Hello, my name is Silvia Sevia. My apologies, I  
3 won't be speaking in English. But I am  
4 speaking--however, I will be speaking on behalf  
5 of my daughter who is saddened and she can't  
6 speak because she is sad about the closing of  
7 the school.

8 Okay. Well you know, I just would like you  
9 to explain to me precisely what--how you came to  
10 this decision, why you've already taken upon  
11 yourselves a decision about closing the school  
12 when you didn't consult me, the community or the  
13 children in the school about this closing.

14 [Applause]

15 I'm very saddened because it's my daughter's  
16 second year studying here. And she--when she  
17 enrolled in this school, prior to being at MS25  
18 at 120th Street, and I've seen her growth and  
19 advancement since she came through in September  
20 of 2008.

21 She's very happy. She says that she--the  
22 feedback she's given me is that the teachers  
23 explain everything to her. They give her  
24 feedback. They give her instruction and this is  
25 why she's happy. She's happy in her growth and

1 she's progressing.

2 All I'm asking is that you give these  
3 students another opportunity so that you can let  
4 them prove to you their advancement and how they  
5 can grow. All I want is for them to get an  
6 opportunity. Just give them an opportunity.

7 [Applause]

8 Thank you.

9 MR. LANDSMAN: Number 11 is--I think it's  
10 Evalisa Rivera [phonetic] and 12 is Yomara  
11 Ortega [phonetic]. Is, I think it's, Evalisa  
12 Rivera here still? You're up.

13 MS. EVALISA RIVERA: Hello? All right. In  
14 regards to my school, Academy of Environmental  
15 Science, and this school has made--no, I do not  
16 to face my back at people who's facing their  
17 backs on us. [Applause]

18 But like I was saying, this school has  
19 improved a lot through everything, through  
20 success, through everything. The teachers push  
21 you in this school so you could be successful.  
22 And for you to close this school down I don't  
23 think is right because we've been working hard,  
24 and we're still working hard till now. So like  
25 I do--[background noise]. They're not right,

1 they're not. They're not.

2 Like I said, I want this school to stay open  
3 because people need opportunities. Well, I want  
4 this school to stay open because people need  
5 opportunities, but that's the end of my speech.  
6 Goodbye. Thank you. [Applause]

7 MR. LEO CASEY: Good evening. My name is  
8 Leo Casey, and I am the Vice President for  
9 Academic High Schools of the United Federation  
10 of Teachers. And I sat here and I listened to  
11 the statement made by the Department of  
12 Education on why they were going to close the  
13 school, and there was one glaring absence, any  
14 acceptance of responsibility by the Department  
15 of Education itself. [Applause]

16 You have a system of accountability in which  
17 everyone but the head of that system is held  
18 accountable. This chancellor and this  
19 administration has led these schools for seven  
20 years, and it is damn well responsibility if any  
21 school fails. [Applause]

22 You have increased the neediest students  
23 in this school immensely. You have taken  
24 special education students and brought them from  
25 6% to over 20% of the students in this school.

1 [Applause]

2 You have placed special education students  
3 with the highest degree of challenge, nearly  
4 half of them in this school, and then compare  
5 the school in its peer group to schools that  
6 have none of those special education students.

7 [Applause]

8 This is not an educational decision. This  
9 is a political decision. It is a political  
10 decision that you made when you decided you  
11 couldn't close down elementary and middle  
12 schools because your broken school progress  
13 reports gave them all As and Bs. This is a  
14 political decision. I call upon the school  
15 leadership team, the community educational  
16 council, the citywide council to stand for  
17 education and say this is wrong. [Applause]

18 MR. LANDSMAN: The person I called actually  
19 was Yomara Ortega. Is she here? [Laughter]  
20 Ms. Ortega? Okay. And Number 13 is Juanita  
21 Bass, and we'll skip ahead to Number 16, Harvey  
22 Lickman [phonetic].

23 MS. JUANITA BASS: Good evening, I'm Juanita  
24 Bass, high school director representing the  
25 Council of School Supervisors and

1 Administrators. The Department of Education  
2 has announced the closing of 20 schools, some of  
3 them with new principals, some of them just  
4 beginning to turn around and a full eight of  
5 them that were opened not very long ago by the  
6 head of the DOE himself, Chancellor Klein.

7 In several cases, principals, assistant  
8 principals, teachers of the staff, parents and  
9 especially students are stunned, hurt and  
10 confused. Many members of the school community  
11 are perplexed about who is responsible for these  
12 perceived failures, whether they are failures at  
13 all, and, if so, how they could've been  
14 prevented.

15 CSA embraces accountability and believes  
16 that schools should be close if they have failed  
17 over a period of three years or more despite  
18 receiving full support from the DOE. We abhor  
19 propagation of failure. But in the case of  
20 several of these proposed closures, we must ask  
21 if some of the schools are being held  
22 accountable while the apparatus that supports  
23 and sustains them is not.

24 Many sectors of the education community,  
25 including CSA, are asking the Chancellor and his

1 staff to lay bare the process by which they  
2 determined that each of these schools be closed.  
3 We want nothing less than an individual  
4 accounting. In the case of each school, we want  
5 to know what the superintendent, the principals  
6 direct supervisor, did besides visiting the  
7 school to announce its closing and individual  
8 accounting for each school should also include  
9 an analysis of the role of the appropriate  
10 school support organization, since each school  
11 pays the SSO to advise them on student  
12 achievement, coach principals on school  
13 improvement and perform many of the support  
14 functions. What sort of service is AES get for  
15 its money? [Applause]

16 And the accounting would not be complete  
17 without an assessment of how fairly the Office  
18 of Student Enrollment minimized the challenges  
19 that schools faced and so many other challenges.

20 In closing, at the moment, we are prepared  
21 to accept on faith that none of these schools  
22 were targeted because of hidden agendas or due  
23 to ulterior motives. But for the sake of our  
24 children, we do demand to know if some of them  
25 would succeed if the superintendents, the SSOs,

1 the Office of Student Enrollment and the DOE,  
2 as a whole, were doing their jobs.

3 MR. LANDSMAN: Is Harvey Lickman here?  
4 Harvey Lickman?

5 MR. HARVEY LICKMAN: This is a political  
6 decision. This sounds like a school with a lot  
7 to offer, but it's not just about the  
8 competition of which schools get closed and  
9 which stay open. It's part of the corporate  
10 takeover of the public schools that is going on,  
11 not only in this city either. The--led by  
12 corporate politicians like billionaire Mayor  
13 Bloomberg who is backed by even bigger money  
14 like Bill Gates and Eli Broad. They are out to  
15 make the working class pay for the profits of  
16 big business. They are not only shutting down  
17 schools, they have shut down hospitals. They  
18 are shutting down train and bus routes. They  
19 are even talking about taking away the student  
20 transportation passes. It's a big attack.

21 They give trillions to the banks and for  
22 wars, but they shortchange the public schools  
23 unless they're charters. And then they take the  
24 results of the rationing to bring in private  
25 management and privately backed nonprofits. The

1 lawsuit filed today on overcrowding of  
2 classrooms proves it. But there was a 13-year  
3 struggle for those funds that--and now they want  
4 to go back to the courts.

5 The democrats and the republicans in New  
6 York City and New York State pretend to be for  
7 education and people's needs but they cut the  
8 taxes of the rich and the corporations. Why do  
9 we have to hear that the elected officials need  
10 to be put under pressure? Obama is giving \$4.3  
11 billion now but to push states to have more  
12 charter schools, okay? The working class will  
13 only be able to unite and fight this if it makes  
14 the kind of political unity that is necessary.  
15 That means a new political party and socialist  
16 policies, okay?

17 Some of you got this leaflet from the World  
18 Socialist website. Please take a look at it.

19 MR. LANDSMAN: Okay, Number 17 is--it says  
20 Mr. and Mrs. Edmond Vega [phonetic], and then  
21 Number 18 is just a name, Shay [phonetic].

22 [Background Noise]

23 MR. EDMOND VEGA: Good evening, parents. As  
24 you read, you know, the baseless resolution for  
25 closing this school, and as you read also the

1 status and data for this school with these  
2 kids doing good and making their progress for  
3 this school and grades, if we decide to close  
4 this school, first, where are we going to bring  
5 these teachers, all of these teachers? Are we  
6 or are you going to put them inside a rubber  
7 room and continue giving their salary without  
8 doing nothing? And I believe all of this is a  
9 mere political action by the Department of  
10 Education. And also, as the DOE giving a stern  
11 and--a stern decision to close this school are  
12 we not hearing this--the voice of these kids  
13 that they have a very, very bright future  
14 waiting for them?

15 As a final, these kids have a lot to do in  
16 this school. And I am supporting behind--you  
17 know, and I am the parent of one of these  
18 students, and I am supporting behind these  
19 students to stay in this school and I want this  
20 school to be still open.

21 MR. LANDSMAN: Thank you.

22 [Background Noise]

23 MS. SHINARA TAHALA: Yo, they not even  
24 hearing you. Most of them on their  
25 Blackberries. Most of them going home to their

1 full-furnished houses. Most of their kids are  
2 in charter private schools because they're  
3 paying for them, but they're not hearing you.  
4 You all are taking notes, right? You're taking  
5 notes. Please take notes.

6 Why do all think Obama got four years? You  
7 all think he was going to make a change in one.  
8 [Applause]

9 I don't think you all are hearing me. I  
10 didn't even want to touch this mic because I'm  
11 going to make some of you all mad but I don't  
12 even care. I'm not going to take off my hat.  
13 I'm not going to pull up my pants because I know  
14 I'm educated, and ain't none of you all touching  
15 me because I can have all of you all seats. I  
16 can do what I want to do and I can get anywhere  
17 I want to get. But because let's see, didn't  
18 you all just put a whole bunch of specially  
19 educated kids in here, but you all only give us  
20 a year to try to improve that. But you all just  
21 said that you all was--we was enhancing, right?  
22 We was making it better. We was getting better.  
23 So why not let us continue to make it better?  
24 Why not let us continue to improve as opposed to  
25 just shutting it down right here? [Applause]

1 You all are not giving us a chance. I know I-  
2 -I know you looking at me crazy and all that but  
3 I don't even care. That 30-second flag doesn't  
4 matter to me. It takes me two minutes to say my  
5 name, Shinara Tahala [phonetic].

6 You all are not hearing what they're saying  
7 in those two minutes. You all are on you all  
8 Blackberries. You all writing what you want to  
9 write. You're probably not even writing it.  
10 You are probably doodling your name. You all  
11 don't really care, though. You all don't know  
12 how it is to wake up in the morning in the hood,  
13 have to come to school. Some of these teachers  
14 care more than you all care. Some of these  
15 teachers come here because they want to be here.  
16 Some of these teachers got Masters Degrees.  
17 They don't got to be here. [Applause] They're  
18 here because they want to be here. They're here  
19 because they care. They're here because they're  
20 trying to show us that we can be better, that we  
21 can be anything that we want to be. We can have  
22 any of you all seats. [Applause] We could put  
23 on a blazer and put on the shoes. We could do  
24 all of that.

25 But because most of you all live in these

1 houses and you all going home to these  
2 Bentleys and Chrysler 300s and Chargers and all  
3 of that, [Laughter], it don't matter to you all.  
4 It don't matter to you all. That's why you only  
5 give them two seconds because you all are really  
6 not trying to hear us.

7 MR. LANDSMAN: Now, we gave you two minutes,  
8 and your time is up.

9 MS. TAHALA: Two minutes, but you all are  
10 really not trying to hear us.

11 [Background noise]

12 [Applause]

13 MR. LANDSMAN: Next up is Natalie Nunez  
14 [phonetic] and Tarnesha Rivera [phonetic]. Who?  
15 I don't think so. I'm--there's a 19 that is a  
16 squiggle, and I--if it's somebody's name, then  
17 I'm happy to recognize them.

18 [crosstalk]

19 MR. LANDSMAN: No, Delilah is a ways away.  
20 Don't worry. I'm up to Number 21 and Number 20  
21 on our list. Nineteen is a squiggle.

22 [crosstalk]

23 MR. LANDSMAN: Okay, then you're up.

24 MS. DELILAH NUEVES: Okay. Hello, everyone.  
25 My name is Delilah, and I'm a current ninth

1 grader attending AES. I'm sorry. I'm  
2 nervous.

3 Before I started here, I was accepted to  
4 three Catholic high schools. I could've simply  
5 chosen to go to one of them, but instead I chose  
6 to come here. I wanted a new beginning and it  
7 was easier to travel for me.

8 To me, AES is pretty cool. I like the way  
9 that, when I'm in class, teachers don't only  
10 focus on those who want to learn, they focus on  
11 everyone.

12 They help others when needed. They take  
13 their time out to stay after school and provide  
14 tutoring for everyone and for every subject.  
15 And there are a lot of programs that help us,  
16 like, be where we are today, to be who--the  
17 people we are today. One time, when I was  
18 having a problem with a classmate, I knew I had  
19 someone to talk to. I could talk to my teacher.  
20 I could go to the office. I could go to my  
21 mentor. I could go to anyone. I could go to my  
22 guidance counselor, anyone.

23 In AES, we have a program called CFES, and  
24 we are assigned with mentors. And when we need  
25 someone to talk to, they will always be there

1 for you.

2 MR. LANDSMAN: Great. Excuse me, just for  
3 purposes of my list, are you Delilah Nueves  
4 [phonetic]? Okay, you were Number 23, but  
5 we'll--that's fine. Anyway...

6 MS. TARNESHA RIVERA: Hi, my daughter was  
7 the first to speak, and she is a sophomore in  
8 this school. I have been a analyst for over 15  
9 years, and I'm looking at these numbers and, as  
10 an analyst, it makes no sense to me how these  
11 statistics are brought up about the graduation  
12 rates and everything. And yet, you have a 20%  
13 population of special needs children in this  
14 school and that was because of so many schools  
15 that were closed already. So now where are  
16 these children going?

17 You know, it's just amazing to me because  
18 you have a school that has shown, I mean, so  
19 many improvements in just the last year that  
20 I've been here, that my daughter has been here.  
21 I've been impressed by this school. It's a very  
22 small school. I like this school. My daughter  
23 loves this school. She's excelling in this  
24 school. The principal is doing an excellent  
25 job. And it really hurts the kids here, it

1 really hurts the people here, just by seeing  
2 that you're not going to allow the work to  
3 continue. You're not going to allow this school  
4 to get a chance to improve, not a chance. It  
5 got a D - one D, one year, and then you're going  
6 to say you don't have a chance to improve  
7 because, well, we just don't see it, and yet you  
8 have a 20% special needs population that's  
9 getting no help from you at all.

10 This is just amazing. This was already  
11 decided. And if this decision is going to be  
12 made, it's already made. I see it. I see it.  
13 You know, it's just something that, you know, if  
14 you have a plan to do something, you had the  
15 plan last year. Now all of a sudden we're  
16 having these public hearings. And yeah, it's a  
17 public hearing just to see what we're going to  
18 say but what is it going to do? [Applause]

19 MR. LANDSMAN: Okay, Number 21, Natalie  
20 Nunez, and Number 22, Gilbert Rivera [phonetic].

21 MS. NATALIE NUNEZ: As a senior at AES, I  
22 believe our school has really shown improvement  
23 in the last two years. We have improved our  
24 test scores and our enthusiasm in the whole  
25 student body, not just by encouraging students

1 to bring up their grades and going to class,  
2 but we, the Class of 2010, have made the  
3 communication throughout the school increase at  
4 a higher level. This past year, we have  
5 participated in the Cancer Walk, have had  
6 successful spirit days that everyone  
7 participated in, and we have made our College  
8 for Every Student Program an actual functioning  
9 system for all students. We have all created an  
10 amazing relationship with the whole AES staff,  
11 and we wouldn't want our home, well our second  
12 home, because this is our second home, to just  
13 disappear in a couple of years. [Applause]

14 Since my freshman year, I personally haven't  
15 seen AES improve as much ever since Ms. Garceau  
16 became principal. She has really shown  
17 connection with all students by the help of many  
18 teachers and assistant principals. Many  
19 students definitely improved their grades and  
20 have given more effort to actually show more  
21 interest in school.

22 The Academy of Environmental Science is  
23 a school and should maintain as a school for  
24 many more years. Being the morning announcer of  
25 AES, all I have to say on behalf of this

1 situation is that the Academy of Environmental  
2 Science is my home and, in this home, I have  
3 learned a lot and achieved a lot, enough to  
4 actually say and be proud to say that, I,  
5 Natalie Nunez, with the help of the college  
6 writing class and college prep, will graduate  
7 with the class of 2010 from AES. [Applause]

8 MR. GILBERT RIVERA: Hi. My name is Gilbert  
9 Rivera. I'm an alumni here representing the  
10 alumni here from Academy of Environmental  
11 Science. I graduated here in the Class of 2009,  
12 Salutatorian, and I am an example of what AES  
13 can do and can bring from--as a graduate. I was  
14 here--grown up in this neighborhood for 18  
15 years, came here, went to middle school here  
16 from sixth to eighth, and then went from high  
17 school from ninth to twelfth. I have seen this  
18 school through three administrations and the  
19 current one is doing a great job in terms of the  
20 climate of the school.

21 She has increased student morale and brought  
22 a life to AES that I have never seen before. As  
23 a former member of the SLT team here at AES and  
24 as a former member of the student government and  
25 class council here at AES, I've seen a lot of

1 changes come about, whether it's Natalie doing  
2 the morning announcements, which we never had  
3 because we could never get our speakers fixed  
4 until now because of our new principal, we have  
5 coaches around the room. As the former captain  
6 of the Envirothon team who have been here--who's  
7 been captain for the last three years, to be  
8 proud to say that I brought the other four  
9 freshmen with me along from the city to the  
10 state competition winning third place in our  
11 first ever being at state, not only that, being  
12 in state, but also winning best in Manhattan,  
13 best environmental school for Manhattan, and  
14 being a great representative of what can come.  
15 Because of AES, because I came from here, I got  
16 a full scholarship to my university, to the  
17 University of Vermont. [Applause]

18 And because of that, I'm the person who I am  
19 now. I got all of the leadership abilities from  
20 the teachers here who gave me their attention,  
21 that individualization that let me become who I  
22 am, where now I am in the University of Vermont  
23 as a member of class council for my--for the  
24 Class of 2013, as a member of the student  
25 advisory board for the Dean of Students at UVM,

1 as a member of Alianza Latina, which is going  
2 to bring about the Latina alliance out there in  
3 UVM and bring the students from here to UVM and  
4 show them what's there, out there for them,  
5 because, even though we're from AES and we're  
6 not from a prominent neighborhood and you might  
7 think that we're not, we don't have anything  
8 that we can bring forward to the table, but we  
9 have a lot, and I'm proof of that. And I'm here  
10 to stand by the other students, the freshmen,  
11 sophomores, juniors and seniors, that we can do  
12 a lot, and we have big things out there for us.  
13 And you haven't given us that chance, and I  
14 would like you to acknowledge that. [Applause]

15 MR. LANDSMAN: Number 25, Santiago Ventura  
16 [phonetic], and Number 24, Carole Copeland  
17 [phonetic]. Sorry, it looks like a U.

18 Is Santiago Ventura here, Number 25? All  
19 right.

20 MS. COPELAND: Good evening. My name is  
21 Carole Copeland [phonetic], and I'm the proud  
22 parent of three children. Two of my children  
23 graduated from the Academy of Environmental  
24 Science. One is 24, she's a corrections  
25 officers today, protecting our city. The other

1 just graduated from AES last year. She's in  
2 another school where she's performing well and  
3 she's even tutoring children.

4 I took my daughter out of a private school  
5 because I could no longer afford it. AES opened  
6 their doors and they had the same environment.  
7 They taught her and she's still performing well  
8 at her other school.

9 I'm still the mother of--a parent of a child  
10 here. He goes to the Renaissance School of the  
11 Arts where he's also performing well.

12 I am just so disturbed that the Board of  
13 Education or DOE now would bring another school  
14 into this school without even offering the  
15 School of Renaissance to expand their school and  
16 also closing the Academy of Environmental  
17 Science because of a D grade or an F grade. The  
18 focus of DOE is to educate our children not for  
19 them to get--for the school to get Ds or Fs.  
20 Our children must learn, and that's the focus of  
21 DOE that our children learn and be educated, and  
22 I don't see that today. They're becoming--it's  
23 becoming so political.

24 So those same children that you're taking  
25 out of this school, placing into another school,

1 those are the same kids. So if they're  
2 failing in this school, they're going to be  
3 failing in the next school. So are you going to  
4 close that school also? What's going to happen?  
5 And I see the three-minute--I had no success  
6 with any charter schools.

7 My child that goes to Renaissance got left  
8 back in the first grade because he was not doing  
9 well in a charter school. I have a grandson who  
10 also did not do well in the charter school. So  
11 I had to wind up taking my child out of the  
12 charter school, putting him in a public school,  
13 and then taking him, putting--I see--putting him  
14 into a private academy for a couple of years and  
15 then putting him back into education.

16 We need to do something with this education  
17 department. This is not a political arena, and  
18 we should be able to educate our kids and not  
19 worry about the grades because when we educate  
20 them we know that they're learning something.  
21 It's not a grade system here. They need to be  
22 educated. [Applause]

23 MR. LANDSMAN: Number 27, David John  
24 [phonetic], and Number 26, Michelle Meadows, 26.

25 MR. DAVID JOHN: Hello. My name is David

1 John, and I am a sophomore who attends the  
2 Academy of Environmental Science. I am here to  
3 tell you that closing our school is wrong and  
4 unjust. For a year, when I attended this  
5 school, I have noticed that the school is safe,  
6 I can learn anything I want, and my dream is--so  
7 I want to reach for it. My dream is to become  
8 Governor or New York and future President of the  
9 United States. [Applause]

10 And I feel that if you're going to close  
11 this school--what are you laughing for? If  
12 you're going to close this school--

13 MR. LANDSMAN: [Interposing] I'm smiling at  
14 you. I'm not laughing.

15 MR. DAVID JOHN: If you're going to close  
16 this school, you should close me down too  
17 because you're just--you're leaving us behind  
18 and moving on, and that's not right.

19 How would you feel if I left you behind in  
20 your generation? You're going to leave behind  
21 future generations and my generation. And I  
22 will work hard in college and in my career to  
23 make sure that this does not happen anymore and  
24 it won't happen today. That's it. [Applause]

25 MS. MEADOWS: Hello. I'm a representative

1 from Manhattan East, which is on the fifth  
2 floor of this building. It's an arts and  
3 academic school, and it's sixth through eighth,  
4 and I have a sixth grader there. I'm a parent  
5 and a member of the SLT. And I'm very concerned  
6 about the learning environment in this school.

7 I am concerned that Manhattan East wasn't  
8 brought to the table when you were discussing  
9 bringing in a new school, who that school is.  
10 We weren't even school if it was a charter  
11 school or a public school. In your report, you  
12 say that the building is at 70% space  
13 utilization capacity in 2008/'09. I'm--we're  
14 very curious to know what 100% capacity would  
15 be.

16 Considering that you are looking so severely  
17 at AES, there are certain issues in the building  
18 that I think have a lot to do with the learning  
19 environment. It's not ADA compliant. If you've  
20 got 20% special ed students, I think that's very  
21 concerning that you don't have an ADA compliant  
22 building. We have a student at the moment who's  
23 been out for five weeks because she can't get up  
24 to the fifth floor with a broken leg.

25 We don't have air conditioning in this

1 building. Our upgrade--our electrical needs  
2 to be upgraded. There are many issues when you  
3 start looking at education. And I am a  
4 researcher in higher ed. I work for the  
5 University of California, the California  
6 Community College System, the University of  
7 Georgia. I work for many different  
8 institutions. And one year--looking at a  
9 school's progress for one year doesn't tell you  
10 anything. There is no progress that one new  
11 administrator can make in one year that anyone  
12 can put any weight in. So just for the--  
13 [applause].

14 This is the first time I've seen these  
15 statistics. And as an educational researcher, I  
16 am floored that you would close a school down  
17 with that many changes in such a short amount of  
18 time.

19 So I would--in closing, I would like to say  
20 that any decisions that are made for Complex 99,  
21 Manhattan East would very much like to be at the  
22 table to discuss those, and I appreciate your  
23 time.

24 MR. LANDSMAN: Number--excuse me. Number  
25 29, it looks like an I or J, and Number 28,

1 Ilana Robin [phonetic].

2 MS. ILANA ROBIN: I work for Scan East  
3 Labeken [phonetic]. I--the program that I work  
4 for services the AES students. And I just have  
5 to say that the students here in this school are  
6 the most creative, talented and have the most  
7 potential to be anything that they want to be.

8 You're sending the message, and the wrong  
9 message, punishing the students for their  
10 failing grades when we should reprimand and  
11 count and--and claim accountability to the  
12 adults and the educators and the community  
13 advocates who need to work together to service  
14 our children. Our children are not dumb. They  
15 may need--they may have special needs, but  
16 they're not dumb. And the message that you're  
17 sending is the wrong message, "You are dumb, so  
18 we're closing down your school. We're closing  
19 down your second home where you have grown up in  
20 the neighborhood." That's the message that  
21 we're sending to our children right now, "You're  
22 dumb." And they're not dumb. [Applause]

23 MR. LANDSMAN: Numbers 30 and 31?

24 [crosstalk]

25 MR. LANDSMAN: I have you as 31 but feel

1 free... I'm sorry. Why don't you go first,  
2 since you were there first?

3 MALE VOICE 1: All right. Well I'll speak  
4 quickly. I think most of you guys saw what I  
5 had to say in the form of the resolution, which  
6 I worked on tirelessly over the past couple of  
7 weeks to put together--[applause]--to give you  
8 guys the information firsthand so that you guys  
9 can see where we're coming from.

10 And I'm a numbers guy, too. I think that  
11 was kind of shown by the resolution. And I  
12 noticed, in some of my research, that some of  
13 the numbers sometimes are a little bit skewed.  
14 I noticed that I saw a student that walked--in  
15 2006, that walked down the aisle, cap and gown,  
16 received a diploma and everything, and then I  
17 come to find out in some of my research that she  
18 was counted as a non-graduate. And I was like  
19 well why is she a non-graduate? And it's  
20 because she received an IEP diploma. And I was  
21 like, well, the IEP diploma is the one that we  
22 give to special ed kids, and we currently have a  
23 special ed population of 20%. So does that mean  
24 that potentially upwards of 20% of the diplomas  
25 that we're handing out don't count? And if

1 we're at 51.8% graduation rate and the average  
2 for the city hovers somewhere just under 60%,  
3 maybe about 56%, then add another two, another  
4 three to our graduating class, then we have  
5 about 50, 60 kids, then all of a sudden, that  
6 51.8% becomes 60%, 62%, 63%. So then we're over  
7 the number, we're over the average.

8 Also, since 2005, when I walked in, this  
9 school's had three principals. It's had three  
10 principals and six APs. With three principals  
11 in five years and six APs, how have we had a  
12 chance to salvage ourselves and set a precedent  
13 for any sort of change, any sort of marked  
14 improvement? I don't think we've had the  
15 chance. I mean, in my time, three principals,  
16 I've been running around and I'm trying to learn  
17 the profession and trying to get the vibe and  
18 the tone of each administration.

19 Last year, we were lucky enough to get Ms.  
20 Garceau, who has made some marked improvement.  
21 She did so last year with one AP, by herself,  
22 with a school that she inherited that was  
23 phasing out already, our middle school. Our  
24 middle in 2007 was slated to be phased out. And  
25 so in addition to 9 through 12, we had a seven

1 and eighth grade with two administrators.

2 Now looking forward, I just want to make  
3 sure that we have a chance to prove ourselves.  
4 I don't think we've really had a chance to prove  
5 ourselves. So thank you. [Applause]

6 MS. JULIE ROENES: Hi. Oh, hi. Hi, my name  
7 is Julie Roenes [phonetic]. I'm a teacher here.  
8 I'm also the CFES liaison, a program that you've  
9 heard a lot about today. College for Every  
10 Student is a program that targets schools  
11 exactly like ours and has a proven track record  
12 of turning schools around. Our program has been  
13 alive for about three years. The first year, it  
14 was not taken seriously at all. Last year, we  
15 were just figuring it out. This year, it has  
16 taken off. We have had an alumni day. We have  
17 had various fundraising activities, community  
18 service. If we are given a chance, like our  
19 principal gave CFES a chance, our new principal,  
20 we have a chance to actually turn this school  
21 around the change the culture. Instead of  
22 shutting us down, you need to give us a chance  
23 to try to actually enact change. And that's all  
24 I have to say. Thank you. [Applause]

25 MR. LANDSMAN: Number 32 is Wes Harter

1 [phonetic], and Number 33, Jasmine Bencozme  
2 [phonetic].

3 MR. WES HARTER: Good evening. My name is  
4 Wes Harter. I'm a teacher here at AES. I had  
5 the pleasure of being hired on August 28, 2008.  
6 If you notice, that's right at the end of the  
7 summer. Normally, you get hired earlier than  
8 that, but our principal was only hired a few  
9 days or a week or week two before that. She was  
10 given this task of hiring all this new staff to  
11 replace so many of our teachers who had left for  
12 a number of reasons based on our former  
13 administration mostly. Many of them had said if  
14 they knew that we were going to have a new  
15 principal like Ms. Garceau that they would've  
16 stayed. [Applause]

17 Ms. Garceau has been great. She was given a  
18 seventh through twelfth school. Unfortunately,  
19 she hadn't had a lot of experience with middle  
20 school, and last year we spent so much effort  
21 working on these middle school students. So  
22 much of our research had we spent towards them,  
23 and they're a great group of kids who have been  
24 working hard to get through our system and to  
25 make sure they aren't left behind. But now, we

1 need to focus our--we've been trying to focus  
2 our attention on the high school. And all of a  
3 sudden, this gets pulled from under us that all  
4 of this effort that we've been focusing on  
5 isn't--we haven't had a chance. We haven't had  
6 a chance. And if I gave a student a D and I  
7 didn't give them a chance to improve, my student  
8 would be angry. He'd complain. If you give a  
9 student a D--I had a student--they stay for  
10 their 37.5 minutes and they stayed for 10  
11 minutes extra. We gave them a chance to come  
12 back, move up from that D. Come on, we need  
13 another chance, more time. [Applause]

14 MR. LANDSMAN: The last listed speaker is  
15 Number 34, Karen Marino. Oh, I'm sorry, I got  
16 ahead of myself. Excuse me.

17 MS. JASMINE BENCOZME: My name is Jasmine  
18 Bencozme. I've been here since seventh grade,  
19 and I'm a tenth grader now. When I first  
20 stepped in this school, my teacher asked me to  
21 introduce myself, say my name and tell me--where  
22 do I see myself 20 years from now. And I  
23 couldn't answer. But ever since our new  
24 principal came in, I've seen change, and I've  
25 seen a staff that really cares about me. And I

1 discovered that my passion was creative  
2 writing.

3 So when I graduate from this school, I'll be  
4 majoring in creative writing, and I could thank  
5 my English teachers and my Math teachers and all  
6 of the teachers I can go to for help. And--  
7 [applause]--I developed a love for this school  
8 and a love for this staff, and I know the staff  
9 loves all of us, each and every one of us.

10 I know that if I had a problem or issue, I  
11 could go up to any one of my teachers and  
12 they'll be there to help me, trying their best.  
13 And I want to thank all of you all for that.  
14 And if you take that away from us and all the  
15 little kids growing up around us who would love  
16 to go to this school, it's like where do we  
17 stand. So today, we share all our comments to  
18 fight for our school and that's all I have to  
19 say. Thank you. [Applause]

20 MR. LANDSMAN: Karen Marino?

21 MS. KAREN MARINO: Hi, good evening. Thank  
22 you for the opportunity to be speaking to this  
23 council. I am here wearing two hats. One is a  
24 past hat and one is a present hat. Let me talk  
25 about my past hat.

1           I began teaching in Junior High School 99  
2           in 1984. I watched the building change. At  
3           that time, it was Junior High School 99. It was  
4           one building. It began to change through the  
5           Corridor Initiative, so you could see I'm quite  
6           old, and it gave me the opportunity become a  
7           future school principal in starting a small  
8           school in this building.

9           I was here when AES moved into this  
10          building. I was here when AES changed from a  
11          middle school to a high school and became a 6  
12          through 12. The reason for AES becoming a high  
13          school was to support the children in the  
14          neighborhood who didn't have a place to go--  
15          [applause]--when Julia Richman closed. And it  
16          was very important for the parents of East  
17          Harlem to feel that they had a place for their  
18          children to walk from their homes in the  
19          neighborhood to a safe school where their  
20          children could be educated.

21          I'm here for the children. There's been a  
22          lot of eloquence here tonight. I think there's  
23          a wakeup call. I believe in the Chancellor's  
24          plan in making every school a good school for  
25          every parent to want to send--their school. I

1 think it's wonderful that you've all come  
2 together. It's time that you all came together  
3 because I was the school building principal here  
4 for several years, and then I moved on.

5 My new hat is a network support in this  
6 building, so I know what happens. I've used it-  
7 -okay. Sorry, I'll take it after the meeting.  
8 Thank you. [Applause]

9 MR. LANDSMAN: The speaker list is now  
10 exhausted. Thank you all again for your  
11 participation. Thank you, and this joint public  
12 hearing is now closed. I offered it.

13 MR. HANDIBODE: That was fine. That was  
14 just easier for [off mic].

15 MS. GRIMM: Frank, I--

16 MR. HANDIBODE: [Interposing] No, that's  
17 okay. It was easier for him.

18 MR. LANDSMAN: Who wants the list?

19 [END 154420\_A 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   Cynthia Feldt  

Date   January 7, 2010