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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION - OFFICE OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING
Monroe Academy for Business/Law
January 19, 2010**

1 [START 154_544.MP3]

2 MR. SANTIAGO TAVERAS: All right, good
3 evening. My name is Santiago Taveras. Good
4 evening again. My name is Santiago Taveras. I
5 am the Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and
6 Learning. Thank you for joining us tonight.
7 Since we are starting five minutes late, I'm
8 going to extend the sign-in time until 6:20 as
9 opposed to 6:15. Again, good evening. I am
10 Santiago Taveras, and I am the Deputy
11 Chancellor. I want everyone on the - - to
12 introduce themselves.

13 MS. ELENA PAPALIBERIOS: Elena Papaliberios,
14 Superintendent, Bronx High Schools.

15 MS. EBONY CARTER: Ebony Carter, parent of
16 Hassid Carter and also, I am the vice president
17 of the parent association.

18 MS. DENISE SULLIVAN: Good evening,
19 everyone. My name is Denise Sullivan, and I'm
20 from the CCHS, Citywide Education Council on
21 High Schools, representing all the high schools
22 in the Bronx. And another thing I would like to
23 say is Monroe High School for Law, I really wish
24 that this school would not be closed because I
25 have taken law myself in college and I realize

1 the complexity of the subject matter itself.
2 It takes time to learn it because it's very
3 difficult to understand the logic of law. Thank
4 you.

5 MR. TAVERAS: We're also going to be joined
6 by Robert Roche and Kelly Brownwell in a minute.
7 So first, I'm going to read a prepared statement
8 before we have Kelly and Robert do a
9 presentation for the Monroe Academy for Business
10 and Law.

11 Good evening. Thank you for coming tonight
12 to the joint public hearing for the proposed
13 phase out and eventual closure of Monroe Academy
14 of Business and Law. I am Santiago Taveras,
15 Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and Learning. I
16 am joined tonight by Kelly Brownwell and Robert
17 Roche from the school leadership team, as well
18 as Ebony Carter, a parent from the school
19 leadership team, and I believe we're going to be
20 joined by Brittany Vice, a student from the
21 Monroe Academy of Business and Law.

22 In addition, we also have Kaheem [phonetic]
23 Paul from the District 12 CEC meeting. I
24 believe he's running a little late so he may
25 join us in a little bit. We have Denise

1 Sullivan from the Citywide Council for High
2 School, as well as the high school
3 superintendent, Elena Papaliberios. This
4 hearing is being recorded. Following the
5 hearing a transcription of the proceedings will
6 be sent to all members of the council
7 participating in the hearing and will also be
8 made available on the Department's website.

9 The purpose of this hearing is for you to
10 provide comments about the proposal. Before I
11 describe the proposal I want to make sure you
12 are all aware of the opportunity to provide your
13 input. All those who wish to speak must sign up
14 on the speaker sign up area located outside the
15 auditorium. The sign up list will close at 6:20
16 instead of 6:15. Speakers will be given the
17 floor in the order that they signed up. All
18 comments are limited to two minutes. In
19 addition, we welcome any comments and feedback
20 you may have at any time before the Panel for
21 Educational Policy votes on the proposal at its
22 next meeting, January 26th, 2010. The e-mail
23 address and phone number where comments may be
24 made can be found at the Department of
25 Education's website under the section for the

1 Panel for Educational Policy.

2 This proposal is something that the
3 Department takes very seriously and considered
4 in a comprehensive manner. Over the past six
5 years the Department of Education has phased out
6 over 90 schools and opened 335 new schools that
7 have demonstrated remarkable success in helping
8 students excel. For example, our new high
9 schools have achieved an average four year
10 graduation rate of 75 percent, well above the
11 citywide 60 percent rate. This proposal will
12 continue that important work.

13 The Department is not blaming any individual
14 or group for the situation, but we have
15 determined it is important to give students the
16 best possible opportunity for long term success.
17 We know that there are a lot of people working
18 incredibly hard every day to support students at
19 the school, but we simply cannot continue doing
20 the same things and expect that we will get
21 different results.

22 In 2007-2008, the four year graduation rate
23 at Monroe Academy of Business and Law was only
24 48.4 percent. In 2008-2009, that figure
25 increased slightly to 52.1 percent, but still

1 remained below the citywide average of 60
2 percent and well below the 75 percent average
3 for new high schools. Some have argued that the
4 six year graduation horizon might be a more
5 appropriate standard by which to evaluate the
6 schools record given that the students'
7 population. However, the six year graduation
8 rate takes up only slightly to 55.2 percent,
9 still below the citywide four year average.

10 Moreover, in regions diplomas alone counted
11 toward graduation as it will be the case in two
12 years, Monroe Academy of Business and Law would
13 have a four year graduation rate of 23 percent.
14 By any of these measures, Monroe Academy for
15 Business and Law is not serving its students
16 well. Further evidence for their unlikelihood
17 of a turnaround is found in the analysis of
18 credit accumulation rates at the schools.

19 Students at Monroe Academy for Business and
20 Law fall behind early in the school and has a
21 poor record of helping those students get back
22 on track toward graduation. In 2008-2009, only
23 46 percent of first year students earned 10 or
24 more credits which ranks in the 17th percentile
25 citywide. Credit accumulation is a key

1 predictor of future academic success and those
2 students only deteriorate the longer the student
3 remains in the school with only 33.5 percent of
4 the second year students earning 10 or more
5 credits. In fact, the school is home to so many
6 holdovers that enrollment is threatening to
7 swell beyond the intended total capacity of the
8 school.

9 Additionally, the school's culture appears
10 unable to adapt to better students. Attendance
11 is low with an average attendance of only 78
12 percent last year. Safety is a concern with
13 only 66 percent of the students indicating that
14 they felt safe at the school in the 2009
15 learning environment survey. Parent engagement
16 is also weak with only 14 percent of parents
17 completing the 2009 learning environment survey
18 compared to 45 percent citywide.

19 Monroe Academy for Business and Law earned a
20 D in the 2008-2009 progress report, including a
21 D grade in the student progress and environment
22 sections of the report. This represents a
23 decline from the C grade Monroe Academy of
24 Business and Law earned during each of the first
25 two preceding years. Monroe Academy of Business

1 and Law was designated underdeveloped on its
2 2009 quality review further suggesting that the
3 school is ill positioned to transform the
4 culture of the low performance and low
5 expectations that have taken route at the
6 school.

7 Meanwhile, the other two schools sharing a
8 facility with Monroe Academy Business and Law
9 earned an A and a B on their 2008-2009 progress
10 report. One of the schools, Will Cultures High
11 School, serves 92 percent English language
12 learner and earned an A grade.

13 Let me be clear about the consequences of
14 the proposal. Students currently enrolled at
15 Monroe Academy in business and law will be
16 allowed to graduate from Monroe Academy of
17 Business and Law. We will continue to support
18 the school during the three year phase out. I
19 look forward to hearing your comments and
20 questions.

21 In order to ensure that all people who have
22 signed up to speak are given the opportunity, we
23 will limit the comments to two minutes. After
24 one minute and 30 seconds you will see a sign on
25 this side showing 30 seconds and then you will

1 be shown the two minute mark that the time is
2 up. We ask that everybody please adhere to the
3 time so that everybody gets the opportunity to
4 speak in the order that they signed up. With
5 that said I would ask the school leadership
6 team, Robert and Kelly, to come on up and do
7 their presentation. Want to use that mike?
8 Thank you.

9 MR. ROBERT ROCHE: Good afternoon, ladies
10 and gentlemen. Good evening, rather. And thank
11 y'all for coming out. It's a great turnout.
12 Thank you very much. A lot of people worked on
13 this presentation to make sure that it was done
14 properly. I'd like to say thanks to our
15 administration for doing an excellent job on
16 getting this together. We are actually here to
17 prove today that Monroe is more than what the
18 DOE is saying that it is and that we work very
19 hard here to get to where we are and that we do
20 plan on continuing the work.

21 I've been a teacher here for 13 years. This
22 is my 13th year at Monroe and I'm a math teacher.

23 [Applause]

24 MR. ROCHE: Thank you very much. I'm a math
25 teacher and in all the years I've been here

1 we've always been focused on relevance, rigor
2 and excellence. That has been our motto since
3 I've been here and that continues to be our
4 motto and our goals for our students. We'd just
5 like to point out certain things that we believe
6 that the DOE overlooks when they decided that
7 they wanted to close our school.

8 As you can see from the PowerPoint, for the
9 past three years we have been in good standing
10 with the State Education Department, and there
11 are a lot of factors as to why we've been in
12 good standing. And a lot of those factors we
13 believe have been overlooked and have not been
14 given the proper viewpoint that they should.
15 Next slide, please.

16 Our graduation status, as you can tell
17 there's only one year there that we have not
18 reached at least a 50 percent graduation rate.
19 In the 2007, if you pay attention to 2000, 2008
20 for a minute, it says 56 percent. Can you go
21 back a little bit, please? It says 56 percent
22 here. What the DOE has, the DOE information
23 says 48 percent because they did not take
24 certain information into account. They did not
25 take into account our summer school graduation

1 rate. So as you can see for the past two
2 years, we've have a 56 percent and 52 percent
3 graduation rate which is absolutely comparable
4 to schools, to other schools within the city and
5 absolutely with in the state. So we are on par
6 in terms of our graduation rate as far as that's
7 concerned. And we are convinced that the
8 information that the DOE has is not updated
9 information and we're hoping that they can take
10 a second look at that.

11 A major part of the reason why we are where
12 we are because of the position that we've been
13 put in and I think that the DOE has not taken
14 that into consideration as well. MABAL is a
15 small school, MABAL meaning the Monroe Academy
16 for Business and Law. We're a small school;
17 however, we have the demographics of a large
18 comprehensive high school. We're treated as if
19 we're a large high school.

20 As you can see from the numbers this year,
21 in 2009-2010 we had an incoming freshman class
22 of 136 freshmen. A regular small high school
23 should have an incoming freshman class of 108.
24 And as you can tell, each year we have way above
25 the limit that we should have so our classes are

1 really overcrowded and we're not necessarily
2 given the resources to deal with this large
3 amount of freshman class that are coming in.
4 The physical plan for our school continues to
5 decrease. We have less space.

6 Even though we continually get more students
7 every year way past our capacity, our class
8 size, not our class size, but the number classes
9 that we have to work with is decreased every
10 year so we're given less space and our teachers
11 at some point or another is forced to teach in
12 an environment that's not suitable. And that is
13 no, I don't think that's the fault of the school
14 itself. But the point here is that we are not,
15 we are not necessarily given the resources to
16 deal with the amount of incoming freshmen that
17 we get every year and every year we go over the
18 limit.

19 And not only do we go over the limit, but
20 we're kind of overcrowded with special needs
21 students as well. Into this year we had 21
22 percent of our students come in with special
23 needs and that's a lot. Can you go back to the
24 previous screen real quick? Even though we've
25 been slated for closure, since September of this

1 year we've actually added close to 30 students
2 have been sent to our school. This is since
3 September. In September we had 136 incoming
4 freshmen and since then they've added an extra
5 30 students.

6 Since December of this year, of last year
7 rather, we've had about five students put into
8 our roster. So you can see that in our view the
9 playing field is just not level and we're kind
10 of put in a position that is very difficult to
11 come out of. Go ahead, please.

12 Again, as you can see, the amount of, or the
13 percentage of our incoming freshmen that come to
14 us with special needs is very high and the
15 expectations, our expectations for them is if
16 they're not there. So we have this large amount
17 of incoming freshmen with very high needs,
18 however, expectations for them are the same as
19 the expectations for schools that don't have
20 this type of demographic. Go ahead.

21 Level one and two students. Our students
22 come in at, they can be anywhere from a level
23 one to a level four. As you can see from the
24 slide, in 2008-2009, 82 percent of our students
25 come in at level one and two. In math it's 61

1 percent of our students come in at level one
2 and two. And as you can see, this is a chronic
3 problem that we've been facing. In 2007-2008,
4 you know, the story is the same. Over 85
5 percent in reading that come in at level one and
6 level two and we're being compared with high
7 schools in which 80 percent of their students
8 come in at level three and level four and that
9 to us is not fair. The majority of the schools
10 that get As are schools that have the reverse
11 situation that we do, but we're kind of treated
12 as to say we should perform on the same level
13 even though the students we get do not come in
14 on the same level.

15 And, you know, the problem with this is that
16 everyone knows that at this point, most of the
17 students that we get, based on the level that
18 they come in, most of them are not prepared to
19 be in high school and so it's going to take a
20 little longer than four years for them to
21 graduate. And if we're not the ones that hold
22 them back for this four years, then someone will
23 have to do that. And when they go to college,
24 everyone knows the news, in colleges they go to
25 college and it takes them at least six or seven

1 years to graduate. And college is not free.
2 They have to pay for that stuff. So what we're
3 really doing is we're racking up our kids with a
4 lot of debt simply because we're pushing them
5 through the system and we're not really catering
6 to their needs as they should be catered for.

7 But even given the deficiencies that we've
8 been handed, even given that, we still have had
9 some very wonderful accomplishments that I'd
10 like to mention. Our graduation rate over a
11 four year period is equivalent to New York City
12 and New York State. That's a given. We're
13 still on par in terms of our graduation rate.
14 Again, the numbers that the DOE has is not 100
15 percent accurate information and we hope that
16 that will be looked at again.

17 Fifty-three percent of MABAL students earn
18 regions diplomas and that's higher than the city
19 average. Seven percent of our students earned
20 advanced regions diplomas and that is also
21 comparable citywide. Students with learning
22 disabilities also earn more regions diplomas
23 than compared to citywide.

24 And I would also like to speak about the
25 implementation of our AVID Program, the

1 Advancement Via Individual Determination
2 Program, which will produce its first results in
3 2012. The AVID Program is a program in its
4 second year at MABAL. The program's purpose is
5 to prepare our students for the college
6 experience, and by that we mean work habits,
7 study habits, note taking, question and skills
8 and prep for actual college classes. So the
9 AVID Program is actually giving students a
10 feeling for the college experience and it is
11 geared towards providing them for college. It
12 is the intention of AVID to enroll the majority
13 of our student population in one of the colleges
14 of their choice.

15 In the first year of our AVID Program we had
16 a 90 percent promotion rate and a 90 percent
17 passing rate on the New York State Regions
18 Exams. And this is a program that we initiated
19 about two years ago or maybe a year ago if I'm
20 not correct, a year ago, and so the results of
21 this will be published in 2012. And this is a
22 very good program. We already know that the
23 majority of our students, 90 percent and above
24 are performing exceptionally well because they
25 are a part of this AVID Program. So we do have

1 programs here geared towards the embitterment
2 of our students and making sure that they are
3 progressing.

4 So based on our AVID involvement and the
5 increasing number of students involved in the
6 program we forecast that our graduation rate
7 will continue to grow and by 2012 we anticipate
8 to have a graduation rate of at least 80
9 percent.

10 In closing, the quality review has said a
11 lot of very positive things about MABAL that I
12 think that the DOE has overlooked. Some of
13 those things is the fact that, you want to go to
14 that last slide or no? Some of those things
15 are, I'll read a couple of them for you and I
16 think that this should help to put things into
17 prospective a little bit.

18 MABAL and our principal have created a
19 learning climate with a level of trust, respect
20 and cooperation between adults and students and
21 among students themselves that is calm and
22 respectful with high expectations for good
23 behavior. Students are enabled to develop high
24 levels of personal maturity and respond very
25 positively to their teachers. Teachers who have

1 good subject knowledge cooperate well as a
2 team and are supportive of the personal
3 development of their students.

4 The inquiry team is contributing well to the
5 school's knowledge of data, particularly in the
6 focus group to which leaders and staff
7 contribute to provide effective support to the
8 special ed students. So the point is that even
9 the people that review us have said nothing but
10 wonderful things about what's going on with what
11 the principal is doing, with what the teachers
12 are doing and so if there is a problem with
13 MABAL then we have to look at some other issues
14 that we do face and we have to actually address
15 those problems because there are problems that
16 deal with our demographics that anyone that has
17 taken a close look will be able to see and know
18 that MABAL is not like an average high school.
19 We do have our issues, however, we should be
20 looked at in lieu of the position that we're put
21 in. And Kelly Brownwell will continue by
22 addressing those issues.

23 MS. KEELY BROWNWELL: Now, with all the
24 points that Mr. Roche made my question is why
25 would we get a D, because we can clearly see

1 that we've made a lot of progress. And the
2 answer to the question is we got a D for our
3 demographics or for the people that we serve.
4 We already know that the DOE is targeting
5 schools with the most vulnerable students and
6 MABAL is one of those schools.

7 Students in closing schools have lower
8 incoming scores. And if you'll look at MABAL,
9 we're the first one on the list. We have a
10 2.52, meaning that our students come in lower
11 than average with their reading and math levels.
12 And if our students are coming in lower than
13 average, how are they expected to graduate in
14 four year when we have to catch them up and make
15 up for time that they lost in middle school and
16 elementary school. So not only is it our job
17 here to make sure our students graduate, but
18 it's also to make sure they're on target when
19 they graduate so they can be successful when
20 they leave here.

21 And more are likely to need special
22 education services. And when you look at the
23 citywide schools that aren't closing they only
24 have 13.6 percent special ed and we have 21.7
25 which is a pretty high average for a small

1 school. And most schools that have As only
2 had five percent special ed, not to mention in
3 our 21.7 special ed, 54 percent of them are
4 self-contained meaning they sit in a 15 to 1
5 classroom where most small schools, their higher
6 average of special ed kids are either
7 collaborative team teaching or resource room.
8 But we have the opposite here at Monroe. We
9 have many self-contained students that come in,
10 they're very under-performing. We have students
11 coming in at second and third grade reading
12 levels. So we have to make sure we get them up
13 and out of here in a way where they can be
14 successful when they leave because I can tell
15 you no teacher in MABAL wants any student to
16 ever leave here where they're not going to be
17 successful.

18 And the question is did they truly reflect
19 the quality of the education or just the
20 challenges of our kids when they gave us our
21 grade? When you look at who got As in our peer
22 group the schools that we were up against that
23 got As were the schools with the fewer
24 struggles. Like I said, those were the schools
25 with five percent self-contained, five percent

1 special ed, 13 percent special ed where we
2 have 54 percent self-contained and 21.7 percent
3 special ed.

4 Now, follow along and I'm going to show you
5 what I mean. Special education students are
6 broken up into two broad groups. We have self-
7 contained, which are high needs, and we have low
8 need. And those low need students are resource
9 room, collaborative team teaching and related
10 services only. And when you look at the self-
11 contained students they do have a higher and
12 more intensive need. They're in a 15 to 1
13 setting meaning you have 15 students to one
14 teacher. And we have to work with those
15 students to make sure we're working with their
16 deficit and we're making sure they are getting
17 on target because the goal of every special
18 education class is to have our students get a
19 regions diploma.

20 We don't like IEP diplomas. We don't even
21 like local diplomas. We want our kids to
22 graduate so they have a level playing field when
23 they get out of here with all the general
24 education students. Also, self-contained kids
25 are great kids and this is the thing. In a

1 little circle it says but kids aren't
2 statistics. These students make slower progress
3 than students with fewer needs. And if the DOE
4 thought of our special ed population as what
5 they were, students who learn differently and
6 take more time versus just a number, maybe
7 they'd understand why it does take them a little
8 bit longer to earn that degree that they do get,
9 but sometimes it does take five years. But when
10 you're coming in so far behind it's hard to get
11 out in four years and have the ability to be
12 successful and be prepared for the quote,
13 unquote, real world.

14 Also, A schools in our peer group have a
15 lower percent of special education students than
16 the D schools. Like we said, the average A
17 school has 13 percent, the average D school has
18 17 percent in our peer group, yet, we still have
19 21.7. So we're even higher than the average D
20 school in our peer group with our self-contained
21 students or special education students.

22 But more important, A schools have a smaller
23 percent of self-contained like I mentioned
24 earlier. They only have five percent. The
25 average, Mr. Crews, you're a little ahead there,

1 okay. The average D school has 52 percent and
2 here at Monroe for self-contained, we have 54
3 percent. So once again, we're even higher than
4 average in our peer, you can just stay because
5 I'm going to get that when I - - sorry. There
6 you go.

7 Now, of the 13 A schools in our peer group--
8 [Laughter]

9 That's all right. Of the 13 A schools in
10 our peer group, nine had virtually no high need
11 kids. All nine had less than five percent and
12 five of them had zero percent. Well, you know
13 what, it's really easy to get an A when you
14 don't have students coming in with
15 underdeveloped skills. It's really easy to get
16 an A when most of your special education
17 students are sitting in the general education
18 population. It's a lot harder to earn an A or a
19 B when you have many of your special education
20 students coming at a lower level and sitting in
21 a self-contained classroom.

22 And there are only two Ds that had, the only
23 two Ds in our peer group both have the highest
24 number of special education self-contained
25 students. Isn't that amazing how the schools

1 that have the hardest demographics to work
2 with get the lowest grades? The other school
3 that's in there is the Academy of Arts and
4 Sciences Secondary High School, and they had a
5 little over 40 percent. We had over 50 percent.
6 Like I said, 54 percent self-contained alone in
7 our special ed population. Now, the progress
8 report seemed to be stacked against schools in
9 our peer group with a lot of high need or self-
10 contained students and what about MABAL?

11 MABAL educates a high percentage of special
12 education students, like I said, 21.7. Last
13 year we had about 15 percent. So even, you
14 know, the DOE is looking at our school and
15 saying that we're not doing a great job, but
16 what we're doing, but they keep giving us more
17 high need kids and then higher demographic - -
18 and those kids still graduate from school with
19 regions or local diplomas. We very rarely give
20 any IEP diplomas because we push all of our
21 students to be successful when they leave here
22 and we know what the difference is between and
23 IEP diploma and a local diploma and a region
24 diploma. And we make sure our kids are out of
25 here and able to be in the real world being

1 successful.

2 And MABAL educates more self-contained kids
3 than any other school in the district. Like I
4 said before, in our peer group, 54 percent, we
5 have 54 percent self-contained and I just can't
6 stop stressing that number because when you look
7 at the A schools, they only have five percent,
8 five percent versus 54. How can we earn an A if
9 we're not getting the resources we need to help
10 these students that are coming in at such a low
11 level?

12 And last - - we saw this one before, but I
13 just want to remind you like look at the two D
14 schools. Look at the two D schools. We have
15 the highest in our peer group. And so the only
16 thing I can think of, the only reason why we
17 could possibly have gotten a D is for our
18 demographics. The only reason the DOE is giving
19 MABAL a D is because we have those students that
20 come in at such a low level, but we work so hard
21 to get them out of here and get them to be
22 successful and I just really want you guys to
23 think hard about that because just because we
24 have a harder demographics doesn't mean we
25 deserve to be shut down.

1 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Kelly. At this
2 time the principals from the other schools in
3 the campus wanted to read a statement.
4 Principals from the campus wanted to read a
5 statement. The school leadership team of the
6 campus wants to read a statement.

7 FEMALE VOICE 1: Good evening. What I'm
8 about to read - - from the school leadership
9 team - - . - - . We, the school leadership
10 team - - particularly on this task we should be
11 receiving support - - . In addition to the
12 regular school day - - we have to deal with
13 budget restrictions - - which is not just taking
14 - - . James Monroe Academy is - - the largest
15 special education population - - yet, we are not
16 - - . We are considered one of the safest
17 buildings - - to a combination of the entire
18 school community - - . We, the high school - -
19 are concerned that students will be - - to phase
20 out due to the fact that the DOE - - dedication
21 and the population that we work with. For
22 example, several years ago - - was phased out.
23 - - .

24 Although - - the school was rated
25 outstanding - - . It was not - - that this

1 school was being - - . Monroe - - . - - .
2 As we - - being removed, funding that were
3 allocate to help that school were withdrawn.
4 Consequently, the school began to falter - - .
5 - - the school that was services, they were - -
6 to be removed - - , The city is not considering
7 any of the contributing factors and challenges
8 that we face - - every day.

9 The high school of - - is entirely - - . We
10 are subject to the same standards as all regular
11 high schools who have students who were - - .
12 However, our school, the high school - - only
13 has five percent - - population - - . Based on
14 the historical practice of the city - - .

15 At this community meeting we are asking once
16 again to help the students by taking in
17 consideration the factors that placed MABAL in
18 this predicament. The James Monroe campus was
19 never properly organized as a small campus as
20 were the other large schools in the city. James
21 Monroe campus was divided into three small
22 schools and then another school, along with a
23 suspension center, was added. Phasing out all
24 the schools one by one is not the solution.
25 However, it is never too late to provide us with

1 support, the support we need to restructure
2 and reorganize our campus rather than phase out
3 our schools. Sincerely, the School Leadership
4 Team at the High School of Will Cultures.

5 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. Before--

6 MALE VOICE 1: - - visual arts.

7 MR. TAVERAS: Excuse me?

8 MALE VOICE 1: - - visual arts and then
9 you've got - - . Were you doing SLTs as
10 speakers or - - ?

11 MR. TAVERAS: We were doing a presentation
12 from the team, from the school leadership team.
13 Then we had a presentation from the school
14 campus. And now we would like to be able to get
15 everybody who signed up to speak.

16 MALE VOICE 1: - - do it through speaker
17 list.

18 MR. TAVERAS: Yes. Has she already signed
19 up?

20 MALE VOICE 1: Yes - -

21 MR. TAVERAS: Yes, if they are ready, yes,
22 that's fine. Thank you. How many speakers do
23 we have so far?

24 FEMALE VOICE 2: Thirty-two.

25 MR. TAVERAS: Thirty-two speakers? Before

1 we start calling the numbers for the thirty-
2 two speakers, I would like to ask, we have
3 representatives from several elected officials.
4 We have Senator Rubin Diaz's representative,
5 Helen Jacome [phonetic]. We have the Bronx
6 Borough president's representative for the Panel
7 for Educational Policy, Anna Santos. And we
8 have a representative from the Assemblymen, Mr.
9 Crispo [phonetic], Linda Brown. So I will ask
10 those folks to speak in that order. So, Ms.
11 Jacome, please.

12 MS. HELEN JACOME: Hi, everyone. My name is
13 Helen Jacome from the Office of State Senator,
14 Rubin Diaz. The Senator was not able to attend
15 tonight because he had to be in Albany tonight
16 so please forgive him. His concern is the lack
17 of respect that the Chancellor's Office has to
18 the community, to the students and to the
19 school. He continues saying that he is
20 listening to the students, he's listening to the
21 needs of the community and I don't think so.
22 The Senator for so many years has been asking
23 for the resignation of Chancellor Kline, for the
24 resignation of Dennis Walcott, and still to this
25 day they stand.

1 This is the community. He is to listen to
2 the community. Our voices should be heard. It
3 is not right that this is happening to a school
4 that obviously has so many needs, a school that
5 with everything that they've had still was able
6 to form a family, a community, a unity. That's
7 what a school is. It's not about numbers. It's
8 not about all those things that they keep
9 throwing out at us. I'm really sick and tired
10 of it and I'm glad that you guys are out here to
11 be able to show support for your school.

12 And we still need you on January 26th to be
13 out there and listen to the mundane, stupid
14 meeting, but I need you there to at least show
15 up. They need to see that we are watching them
16 as much as they are watching us. It is time.
17 Thank you.

18 I started working with the Senator in 2003.
19 He gave me an opportunity, an Adlai E. Stevenson
20 High School graduate with no college education,
21 but a desire and a passion for education. He
22 saw that in me and kept me as the educational
23 liaison because my desire was to continue
24 keeping Pre-K in our Department of Education.
25 That's one of the things that he wanted to take

1 out at first. And so that's how I started
2 off.

3 And it starts off with a small voice and it
4 continues growing and growing. And that's what
5 you guys have to understand, that they're taking
6 your education away from you. They're doing it,
7 little by little, chopping it up little by
8 little. So we need for you to continue coming
9 out there. Thank you. Thank you.

10 One of the things that I wanted to mention
11 too, we have a bright young man named Jose
12 Santana, who is an ex student. While he's
13 working in our office he's doing really well,
14 learning every single day. So you guys did good
15 in educating that young man over there so I want
16 to thank you for that. Thank you.

17 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. Anna Santos, thank
18 you.

19 MS. ANNA SANTOS: Well, good evening,
20 everyone. I thank you all for coming out
21 tonight. And I wrote something because I
22 normally don't stay within two minutes. So I
23 want to introduce myself. I am the Bronx
24 representative to the Panel for Educational
25 Policy, appointed by the Bronx Borough

1 President, Rubin Diaz, Jr.

2 Now, at December's Panel for Education
3 Policy meeting the panel did receive a letter
4 from the Borough President which raised concerns
5 over the school closure process. Now, under the
6 current closure proposals there are
7 inconsistencies with the Department's own
8 measurement standards that we believe requires
9 substantive debate and review prior to the vote
10 that will be taken by us on January 26th.

11 Now, there is one thing I would like to
12 raise tonight and it was also in the Borough
13 President's letter, about the Monroe Academy for
14 Business. Now, the educational impact statement
15 for the school stated the following: After
16 consultation with the internal stakeholders the
17 DOE determined that Monroe Academy for Business
18 had not made significant progress for its
19 students and proposed the school's failure phase
20 out, eventual closure.

21 The educational impact statements mentions a
22 conversation with internal stakeholders, but
23 nowhere in those statements are those
24 stakeholders identified nor is the context of
25 their conversation described. So there isn't

1 any student, teacher, there isn't anyone
2 mentioned very clearly in that statement that
3 says that they actually spoke to you. Excuse
4 me.

5 Furthermore, it seems that it was these
6 conversations that really led to the decision to
7 propose the closure for your school. Now, what
8 we want the Department of Education to do is to
9 identify who exactly were those internal
10 stakeholders referred to in the educational
11 impact statement. We want to know what they
12 discussed, how they came to the recommendation
13 for closure. This is crucial information for
14 all of us to have.

15 Now, as the Borough President's
16 representative on the panel, this information
17 must be presented by the Department of Education
18 on the issues of school closures, must be
19 completed before we vote. To reiterate it,
20 reiterate what I was speaking about, I really do
21 ask the Department of Education sincerely that
22 we need to identify these internal stakeholders.
23 We really need to know exactly who they were
24 referring to in this impact statement because we
25 feel that it is very much a great need for this

1 community so that we can understand and know
2 that we were spoken to. And if not, I believe
3 that should be corrected. So I thank you.

4 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. Ms. Linda Brown?
5 Thank you.

6 MS. LINDA BROWN: Good evening. My name is
7 Linda Brown, and I'm from the Office of State
8 Assemblymen, Marcus Crispo. He could not be
9 here with you this evening because he is in
10 Albany, and he asked me to speak to you. I'm
11 going to speak to you very compassionately
12 because I am a 1965 graduate of this school, and
13 I have come full circle. I am now a senior and
14 I can come back and talk to you. I hold four
15 degrees, but it started here.

16 Assemblyman Crispo, he wants you to know he
17 strongly opposes the closing of the Monroe
18 Academy for Business and Law. The Assemblyman
19 opposed mayoral control, and he voted against
20 it. He was one of the few who voted against it.
21 The Assemblyman wants you to know your voices
22 will be heard. He wants to ensure you that the
23 whole community challenges this. He also
24 supports all of the students and the parents who
25 are fighting for the closure of this school.

1 I, for one, believe this school should
2 stay open for all the good that it's doing. I
3 went here. The walls are talking to me right
4 now and I am so compassionate. So the
5 Assemblyman wants you to know that he is going
6 to do everything that he can do to ensure that
7 this school stays open. And if I have to stand
8 at the door, that's what I intend to do because
9 this school has to be open.

10 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Ms. Brown. Thank
11 you. We will now begin the public hearing. So
12 we have numbers one through five line up on my
13 right-hand side, your left-hand side, and Caress
14 at the microphone will begin timing. So if you
15 have numbers one, two, three, four, five, please
16 come up to the microphone on my right-hand side,
17 please. And I see that it's a lot of students
18 so I ask that you please give them your
19 undivided attention because it takes a lot of
20 courage to get up and speak in front of a lot of
21 people. So please listen so that there time is
22 not taken up. And please state your name before
23 you speak.

24 MS. VIANCA VAMERAS: My name is Bianca
25 Vameras [phonetic]. I just started - -

1 MR. TAVERAS: [Interposing] I'm sorry,
2 hold on. Guys, I will help her out with that.
3 So just get, take a deep breath, take a deep
4 breath and just speak a little closer to the
5 microphone and you will be fine.

6 MS. VAMERAS: All right.

7 MR. TAVERAS: Okay.

8 MS. VAMERAS: My name is Bianca Vameras. I
9 just started this school this month, on the 5th
10 of this month. My old school was junk. I did
11 not like it over there in that school. In my
12 old school they never broke the work down for me
13 so I couldn't understand it, but here, but here
14 they do. Now I can do all my work and homework
15 without a problem. In my old school they did
16 not help me with anything that I needed help
17 with. I like this school more than my old
18 school. My teachers help me with all my work
19 and how to put my finger under the word I do not
20 know.

21 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Bianca.

22 MS. SHEILA MCCOY: Hi, everyone. My name is
23 Sheila McCoy, and I'm a senior at Monroe
24 Business and Law. My school, MABAL, should stay
25 open because it is a One school in the area.

1 Also, when I came in my freshman year I was
2 lost, but then when I met some of my teachers I
3 found my way. The DOE says that our school
4 cannot improve. That means that they think the
5 students cannot improve. I have improved. My
6 reading and my writing have improved. And thank
7 you for MABAL, I became a better person.

8 Over the years before they start cutting our
9 budget, we had after school programs to help the
10 students become successful, but now we only have
11 one after school program. And the students are
12 suffering as a result. Although I have had the
13 opportunity to reach my goal, if the school
14 closes the future students will not have the
15 opportunity to do so. Thank you.

16 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Corey.

17 MS. TATIANA JOHNSON: Hi, my name is Tatiana
18 Johnson.

19 MR. TAVERAS: Hold on one second, just wait
20 until they--

21 MS. JOHNSON: Hi, my name is Tatiana
22 Johnson. The reason why I think my school,
23 MABAL, should stay open is because instead of my
24 teachers giving up on me when I wasn't attending
25 to school so much, they are helping me earn

1 credits and graduate. My teachers believed in
2 me even when I wasn't doing my work. Instead of
3 my teachers putting me down or telling me that I
4 wouldn't make it, they told me that I could make
5 it, that I still have a chance to walk down the
6 aisle with my cap and gown.

7 Why when you have so many people who care
8 about you, like the teachers at MABAL, would you
9 close us down?

10 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Ms. Johnson.

11 MS. VICTORIA RIVERY: Good evening. My name
12 is Victoria Rivery [phonetic], and I am a
13 graduate of Monroe Academy for Business and Law
14 as of 2009, June. When a person is sick we
15 treat them, bring them back to health, alleviate
16 their illness, but we do not tell them cut your
17 losses and die, give up, quit while you're
18 ahead. No. We tell them to stay strong, take
19 medicine, drink fluids, get rest and start over
20 the next day.

21 Our school, for a lack of a better word, is
22 sick. We have our problems and we have our
23 issues, but isn't it revered when a hardship is
24 overcome? Now, this is not to imply that MABAL
25 will be able to overcome this issue swiftly. In

1 fact, I believe it will be one of the hardest
2 things that everyone in the MABAL community will
3 face. But as we have done before, we will
4 succeed.

5 Now, if the Board of Education does not wish
6 to support us in our time of need, then they
7 should not support any of the schools. The
8 Board of Education acts as a government, or sort
9 of government. The schools are the states, the
10 students, teachers and administrators are its
11 inhabitants. This school is not a separate
12 government. We do not stand alone when we
13 represent ourselves. We are a division of this
14 pseudo government and we should be allowed to
15 remain.

16 When I was a student at MABAL the school was
17 healthy and full of life. Now, as an alumni, I
18 see that it is not well. For the past year and
19 several months I have been tutoring with the
20 AVID Program here with the freshmen, and I just
21 hope that as I do it that whatever help I can
22 offer can actually help them in their future and
23 help them succeed. It may not seem like much,
24 but if I can help I will do it to the best of my
25 abilities.

1 Now, Deputy Chancellor, I seem to recall
2 you saying something along the lines of, that
3 our school is not servicing our students well.
4 I beg to disagree. Last year in June there were
5 six students in particular that no one thought
6 would graduate in a million years, yet, they
7 walked down the aisle with me on the same day.
8 Thank you.

9 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. Hold on. Hold on
10 one second. Hold on one second. Numbers six
11 through 10 please start lining up on my right-
12 hand side, numbers six through 10. Go right
13 ahead.

14 MICHELLE: Okay, I'm Michelle, and I'm a
15 sophomore here at MABAL. I would like to start
16 by saying closing our school is robbing
17 students, taking the real high school experience
18 from us. This year's freshmen will not be able
19 to know what it's like to have ninth graders
20 after them, which is an experience that I
21 enjoyed as a sophomore.

22 Sophomores and freshmen will not feel as if
23 Monroe High School for Business and Law is what
24 we originally chose. On top of that, sophomores
25 don't even get a chance to pick a new school to

1 go into. Instead, we have to go to what you
2 guys choose for us which is not fair because I
3 have an average of 90 and they'll probably put
4 me in my zone school which is Gompers
5 [phonetic], and I feel that I'm too good for
6 that school, honestly.

7 On top of that seniors will not have
8 freshmen to see every day and reminisce on the
9 times that they were in the same shoes. The
10 same dynamic will be true for all students. A
11 true high school experience is sacrificed if our
12 school is phased out and we will miss out on all
13 these dynamics that make for a fitting high
14 school experience. Thank you.

15 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Michelle.

16 MS. ANGELA AISLERS: Hello, my name is
17 Angela Aislars [phonetic]. I'm in the 11th grade
18 and I do not wish for my school to close down or
19 phase out. I remember when I came to MABAL, I
20 hated to work and I especially hated math. God,
21 did I hate it. I thought I would have to drop
22 out and would have to get my GED, but my
23 teachers convinced me to stay in school, to try
24 hard and that I was smart enough to get my high
25 school diploma. Now, three years later I am an

1 honor student, the 11th grade representative
2 and a MABAL of SLT, and also, in the top three
3 in my class.

4 Also, I received a 98 on my global history
5 regions exam. I have my teachers to thank for
6 this because they gave me the encouragement I
7 needed. Give MABAL another chance. Do not close
8 our school.

9 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Angela.

10 DR. DANIEL GILDESCANE: Okay, my name is Dr.
11 Daniel Gildescane [phonetic]. I hold a Ph.D. in
12 developmental psyche from Teachers College,
13 Columbia. I've been teaching special ed people
14 for over five or six years and my point today is
15 that as you've heard, the people that we see
16 here in the special ed area take longer than
17 four years to do their graduation on average.
18 The can graduate. As you've heard, they can do
19 the work. It takes them longer to do that.

20 And one of the things that make it difficult
21 is they come with their own difficulties. They
22 also come with training lacks. I mean, these
23 kids sometimes don't know what you do with
24 division. If you have three radios that cost so
25 much, how much does one cost? They don't know

1 this and they have to have this train because
2 they don't bring it with them.

3 In addition to which, there's attendance
4 issues. Behavioral issue is a particular issue
5 because we have no place to take a student out
6 of our room to put them in a place where they
7 won't disturb the other kids. So we're backing
8 up because we can't deal with that. We need
9 space and time for that.

10 There are also family issues and demographic
11 issues, you heard about that. And you've heard
12 about the additional supports, different clubs,
13 and so on, which we need to have. So I want you
14 to keep this school open because we can do it.
15 Support us. I'd also like to argue that we need
16 to rerun the modular because the data that we
17 worked with initially has been worked through to
18 be clear of errors. Support us. Give us longer
19 graduation time. Give us better internal
20 discipline, outreach to families and we're not
21 trying to lower standards, we're trying to bring
22 people to the standards. So thank you.

23 MR. TAVERAS: Thanks, Dr. Daniel.

24 MS. TAMIKA EDWARDS: My name is Tamikka
25 [phonetic] Edwards, and I'm a sophomore at

1 MABAL. MABAL has offered me many
2 opportunities. The one that has benefited me
3 the most has been the AVID Program. The AVID
4 classes help me look towards the future in a
5 different prospective. I've been an AVID
6 student since freshman year and I started high
7 school knowing that I'll graduate and go to
8 college, but I didn't know why.

9 I knew it was the right thing to do and
10 college is a great way to start off a successful
11 path. AVID has taught me so much more. I'm
12 only in the 10th grade and I know the benefits of
13 many career opportunities out there. I go home
14 and tell my mother about so many career choices
15 and how I want to try them all. And not that I
16 want to go to college because I have to, but
17 because I want to.

18 I've already had so much exposure to
19 possible futures at this young age, I can only
20 imagine what is to come next semester or in my
21 junior year. I've created a bond with my AVID
22 teacher and she's become more than just a
23 teacher to me. She's taught me so much and I
24 don't think I would have had the motivation I
25 need to excel without her. If the school closes

1 down I would lose the relationship I have with
2 my teacher and other students would miss out on
3 a great opportunity. I speak for every student
4 in my AVID class and every student who has taken
5 an AVID course when we say that we need our
6 school.

7 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Tamikka.

8 MS. MARINA CUNACHEV: Good evening. My name
9 is Marina Cunachev [phonetic], I'm a math
10 teacher. And when I interviewed for jobs as a
11 new teacher, I looked at a lot of schools,
12 including new schools that were being opened and
13 the reason I chose MABAL is because I found that
14 we have a really, really rich faculty. A lot of
15 the schools I was looking at including new
16 schools were limited to really young White
17 females at teachers. Even looking at a place
18 like Truman, most of the math faculty were young
19 White females. And I think that really limits
20 the students' view of education and what
21 education looks like.

22 And here, we have teachers of all ages, of
23 all levels of experience, linguistic
24 backgrounds, academic backgrounds, and I think
25 that's really to the benefit to the students to

1 see such a rich environment academically. And
2 also for me as a young teacher to be able to
3 have so many mentors and I think that's really,
4 really important, something that I think a lot
5 of the new schools are lacking.

6 I'm also an AVID teacher. We had a couple
7 students talk about that already. And I think
8 that that's something that a lot of our data is
9 not representing right now. We are in our
10 second year and we have tutors coming in that
11 are returning alumni and they're doing this, not
12 because they have to, they have college classes,
13 they're busy, they've got new friends, a whole
14 new social network and they're choosing to come
15 back. And I think that that's really going to
16 impact and help us with our credit accumulation
17 which is something that I know we have been
18 having a hard time with, but this is a new
19 program for us that we are trying. We've
20 invested in it.

21 We had teachers going for free, not paid,
22 for a week out of their summer. We took and
23 went to Florida for training, unpaid, to do
24 this, to invest in our students. And we are
25 only going to see the results of that in a

1 couple of years, to see how that tutoring is
2 impacting them. And you've already heard how
3 many students have already felt how useful that
4 has been for them. Thank you.

5 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. Mr. Casey, hold on
6 one second. Numbers 11 through 15, please line
7 up behind Mr. Casey. Thank you.

8 MR. LEO CASEY: My name is Leo Casey and I
9 am the Vice President for Academic High Schools
10 for the United Federation of Teachers. This is
11 not the first meeting for a closing school that
12 I've attended this year, but it is the same old
13 story at each meeting. The Department of
14 Education refuses to stand up like an adult.
15 The leadership of the Department of Education,
16 which are all men, refuse to stand up like men
17 and take responsibility for their part in the
18 failure of these schools.

19 Twelve years ago the Department of Education
20 closed down James Monroe High School and they
21 replaced it with four small schools. And every
22 feeder school into those four small schools was
23 on the surrealist. Who's responsible for that?
24 Now, the Department of Education is closing down
25 the third of those four schools. Who's

1 responsible for that? In the 12 years since
2 James Monroe was closed, those schools have had
3 18 different principals. Who's responsible for
4 that?

5 It wasn't the teachers. It wasn't the
6 students. It wasn't the parents of South Bronx
7 who did that. It was the Department of
8 Education. Stand up like men and take
9 responsibility for what you have done.

10 This is not an educational decision. This
11 is a political decision. The Chancellor wants
12 to create space to put new schools, to put
13 charter schools, and so what he did was shoot,
14 ready, aim with schools. He didn't look at the
15 schools. That's why seven of the impact
16 statements have been amended. He decided which
17 schools he was going to close and then he went
18 about creating a justification for them.

19 If there is any educational integrity left
20 at Tweed it will not appear on Bronx newspaper's
21 letters to the editors. It will appear when
22 these decisions, these wrong decisions, are
23 reversed.

24 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Mr. Casey. Speaker
25 number 11.

1 MS. SUSAN CLAUDIO: Hi, my name is Susan
2 Claudio, and I'm a member of this SLT school
3 leadership team and I'm a senior. I am speaking
4 on behalf of the Monroe Academy for Visual Arts
5 and the Zion School leadership team located on
6 the third floor of the Monroe campus.

7 The idea of closing the Monroe Academy for
8 Business and Law concerns us greatly. This
9 closure, which will be the second of the Monroe
10 campus, will have a major impact on our school
11 community. The Monroe campus is an integral
12 element of our community and the school within
13 the campus makes every effort to serve the
14 students from the population.

15 The reality is that the community has
16 struggled for many years to effectively service
17 its students. In 1994 Monroe High School
18 originally closed and was reinstructed in order
19 to strengthen the academic life of the school
20 for all the individuals who attended. Today we
21 are facing the reality that two of the four
22 original schools on Monroe campus have already
23 closed and now we are considering closing the
24 third. The fact is that neither the area nor
25 the needs of individuals has changed. However,

1 the school's commitment to serve the students
2 who choose to attend our school has remained
3 steadfast.

4 The motion to close Business and Law only
5 emphasizes the reality that the student
6 community and Monroe continue to struggle. If
7 this proposal for closure, in fact, goes
8 through, Monroe Academy for Visual Arts will be
9 the only remaining non-application school in
10 this area. Three of the high schools are
11 screening schools and the fourth will be
12 accepting students from the eight grade class.
13 Therefore, we would be the only school in this
14 area that is mandate to accept all of the
15 students sent to our school.

16 Unfortunately, Movad [phonetic] would not be
17 able to accept all of these students who are in
18 need of a school because of capacity
19 restrictions. This means that many of the
20 individuals from this area would have to attend
21 schools outside of their community. The
22 students, parents and faculty of Visual Arts
23 consider the closing of Business and Law to be a
24 major loss to the commitment that we are trying
25 so hard to strengthen.

1 Because our schools interact with one
2 another on a daily basis we understand and - -
3 we feel the benefits of having a school like
4 Business and Law in our campus.

5 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Susan. I just want
6 to remind everyone to please, try your hardest
7 not to even whisper because of the acoustics.
8 It makes it very hard to listen. So I would
9 really appreciate that. Thank you.

10 MS. NILSA ROSARIO: Good evening, everyone.
11 My name is Nilsa [phonetic] Rosario, and I am a
12 graduate of James Monroe High School of class of
13 '78. It was in this building that I was
14 motivated to continue with my education and it
15 was through my education that I was able to
16 become a Spanish teacher and now a bilingual
17 school psychologist for this building. I didn't
18 choose the building. The building chose me, and
19 it is with pride that I work here.

20 And I state tonight that closing the schools
21 is not the solution. It wasn't the solution in
22 1997 when they closed my high school and it's
23 not the solution now. So I ask you tonight to
24 please, see the students, consider the students,
25 not the politics. We serve the students. We

1 don't serve the politicians. And let's
2 please, address the real issue tonight. The
3 issues are out students and the proper
4 interventions that we can put into place, Tier
5 One, Tier Two, Tier Three, Tier etc., so that we
6 could touch and help our children so that they
7 can continue with a quality education and
8 graduate and be a productive member of this
9 community. Thank you and good night.

10 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Ms. Rosario.

11 MS. ESCARLA SESPIDEZ: Hello, my name is
12 Escarla [phonetic] Sespidez [phonetic] and I'm a
13 senior.

14 MR. TAVERAS: I'm sorry, I didn't hear your
15 name.

16 MS. SESPIDEZ: My name is Escarla Sespidez.
17 Our school is a terrible thing to waste. We are
18 working hard up at our own pace. Closing us
19 down is a decision made in haste. We are almost
20 there so please have faith.

21 Going for a job interview my future manager
22 might ask what high school did I attend in my
23 past. I'll look away with my face real sad
24 asking myself man, why didn't we last. I wish
25 to come back and show my gratitude to my hard

1 working teachers. Thanks to them, I made it
2 through. Closing our school would be a flaw.
3 Please keep Business and Law open. We are
4 MABAL. I am MABAL.

5 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. I ask numbers 16
6 through 20, 16 through 20, please start lining
7 up to my right, your left. Thank you.

8 MR. TOM PORTEN: Okay, my name is Tom Porten
9 [phonetic], and I brought my own fan club from
10 the '70s, '80s and '90s. All right, thank you.
11 All right, I've been in this building 40 years
12 and I want to approach this, please, I only have
13 two minutes.

14 I wrote the original proposal in 1993 that
15 became Monroe Academy for Business and Law. So
16 I was there when it started, before it started,
17 and I want you to understand that I have watched
18 with heartfelt agony what's happened to Monroe
19 since the closing of Monroe. And I have to
20 blame the way the DOE, first it was the Board of
21 Education, then the Department of Education, but
22 his concept of cut and run which is what the DOE
23 does when something doesn't work to its
24 satisfaction. I'd like to know how concerned
25 you are about the hundreds of thousands of

1 dollars that have been spent on this building
2 as a money pit on all the construction that's
3 been done in the same jobs over and over and
4 over again and why that wasn't channeled into
5 education. No child left behind has become no
6 payoff left behind.

7 Another problem, we had to go to the Daily
8 News to get a library in this building. We have
9 kids who haven't had a library in four years,
10 four years. And it says on the front page of
11 Education Week, kids do better with a library in
12 high school and on standardized tests. These
13 kids haven't had a library in four years.

14 It's so sad that it takes meetings like this
15 to bring together all elements of the community,
16 the DOE, the administration, the staff, the
17 kids, the parents, other people from the
18 community, because they've made a concerted
19 effort in this building to do away with
20 community council meetings so that it takes a
21 crisis to bring you folks here and to bring all
22 these people here and it's shameful and it's
23 scandalous and James Monroe High School deserved
24 better. Thank you.

25 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Tom.

1 FEMALE VOICE 2: He's going to do his
2 presentation in Spanish and we're going to
3 translate.

4 MALE VOICE 2: You can read it and then I'll
5 translate it.

6 MR. MANUAL BURRITO (Through Interpreter):
7 Good evening, ladies and gentlemen and students.
8 My name is Manual Burrito, President of the PTA
9 for the Pan American International High School.
10 We're gathered here tonight because of the said
11 news that the Department of Education has taken
12 the decision to close one of our schools which s
13 Monroe Academy for Business/Law located at this
14 campus. I also represent the school leadership
15 team.

16 We are an education community and we're
17 really concerned that this decision is being
18 taken because we understand that the objective
19 of schools is to support and give an integral
20 education to our children where physical, mental
21 and intellectual aspects are favored so that
22 they can become useful persons to society. We
23 know the reason why the school is being closed
24 and at the same time we know the importance and
25 meaning to keep a school open in our community.

1 We need open schools, not closed because the
2 future of this society will depend on how well
3 prepared our children are. Schools are the path
4 to progress and welfare of the nation. Thank
5 you.

6 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you.

7 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Hello, good evening. My
8 name is - - Rodriguez, and I'm a teacher at the
9 High School for World Cultures. I'm here to
10 speak as a teacher whose ideal is shattered,
11 completely shattered and I have a nice
12 experience. I am the daughter of two parents
13 who went to public school. My father went all
14 the way to Harvard. That school is now
15 Manhattan Center for Science and Math, but it
16 was once Benjamin Franklin.

17 I'm here because I sense that we're losing
18 the promise of public school and I know deep in
19 my heart having taught in chartered schools and
20 having taught in other small schools that this
21 is not the solution. And I know that when you
22 try hard to hit a moving target which seems to
23 be what's happening with the stats that were
24 shown us, you know, it's kind of impossible to
25 hit a moving target and it's unfair.

1 I would akin it to well, I guess the only
2 phrase that can be made is white - - crime is
3 what it is. There for the grace of God go I and
4 my school should you move the target and we
5 miss. You know coming for MABAL, coming for
6 Brown's Tech, coming for federal, they came for
7 all of these schools and we could be next.

8 I would like to make the point that an
9 institution, which is what a school is, is
10 supposed to be lasting. It's supposed to be
11 something you invest in. We say a marriage is
12 an institution and should last forever.
13 Apparently, these small schools were not really
14 invested in. They're disposable. There doesn't
15 seem to be anybody looking at the problem, just
16 the symptoms. And I don't think the kids are
17 disposable, the teachers, the effort and the
18 collateral damage that would impact the entire
19 community is something that is real and people
20 need to be concerned about that none of these
21 children should be forced out to go to a school
22 that they didn't choose. Where is the choice in
23 that?

24 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Ms. Rodriguez.

25 MS. JUANITA BASS: Good evening. My name is

1 Juanita Bass, and I'm here representing the
2 Council of School Supervisors and Administrators
3 with the two minute version of CSA statement.
4 The DOE has announced the closing of 20 schools,
5 some of them with new principals, some of them
6 just beginning to turn around and a full eight
7 of them that were opened not very long ago by
8 the head of the DOE himself, Chancellor Joel
9 Kline.

10 In the case of several of these proposed
11 closures we must ask if some of the schools are
12 being held accountable while the apparatus that
13 supports them is not. In those cases we must
14 inquire if the schools were really failing and
15 by what measures they were failing. We must ask
16 if he Chancellor truly put each of these schools
17 through a thorough process to ascertain whether
18 they had been provided adequate supports and
19 guidance by their superintendents and SSOs, and
20 if the Office of Student Enrollment had leveled
21 the playing field.

22 CSA has asked from the DOE to lay bare the
23 process by which they determined that each of
24 these schools be closed. In the case of each
25 school we want to know what the superintendent

1 did besides visiting the schools to announce
2 their closings. We need to know how thorough
3 the superintendent was in the process of helping
4 these schools to succeed over the last few
5 years.

6 The DOE should also include an analysis of
7 the role of the appropriate school support
8 organizations. Since each school pays an SSO to
9 advise them on student achievement, coach
10 principals on school improvement and perform any
11 other functions, what services and support did
12 Monroe Academy for Business and Law receive for
13 its money?

14 Finally, the DOE should assess how fairly
15 the Office of Student Enrollment minimized
16 challenges in schools that face so many other
17 challenges. It is important to know if these
18 schools, like MABAL, were sent an unusually
19 large proportion of ELL students and students
20 with special needs line 21.7 percent without
21 providing financial means for these students to
22 receive adequate services to ensure their
23 achievement.

24 When every question is asked and answered,
25 we are likely to discover that many of these

1 schools, in particular Monroe Academy for
2 Business and Law, can remain open and thrive
3 with adequate superintendents and support
4 networks and fair enrollment practices.

5 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Ms. Bass.

6 MS. SHARON BROOKS: Good evening. My name
7 is Sharon Brooks, the former guidance counselor
8 at Monroe Academy for Business and Law. I've
9 been the guidance here since 2002 and when the
10 ninth graders come to us they're young, they're
11 eager, they're a little insecure, but they're
12 ready to be molded and educated and we as a
13 staff work together to mold them and to educate
14 them and to work with them to become mature
15 adults.

16 These students come in with a multitude of
17 different issues and problems, but together as a
18 family, we call ourselves family, we work to
19 help these students through the various
20 problems, homelessness, drug problems and other
21 vital issues, we work as a team to support them.
22 Stability is the key word. We try to help our
23 students as best as we can and in the meantime,
24 also help to make sure that they receive the
25 education that they deserve. Students want

1 stability, they need it, they thrive with it
2 and most of all, they succeed when they receive
3 it.

4 We have many, many success stories of
5 students who we thought would not make it, but
6 they managed to make it through our team effort
7 and developing them in many different ways. It
8 would be a shame to see our school close because
9 we have many good and positive things going on
10 and we have a lot of past students that come
11 back and support us in many different ways
12 through our drives, clothing drives, blood
13 drives, food drives, so on and so forth, and it
14 would be a shame to lose this family for our
15 students and the stability that they need.
16 Please help us to keep our school open. Thank
17 you.

18 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Ms. Brooks. May I
19 also ask that speakers 21 through 25 please come
20 to the right-hand side and line up to speak?
21 Thank you.

22 MR. ABEZ TOLAREDO: Good evening. Good
23 evening, my name is Abez [phonetic] Tolaredo
24 [phonetic]. I'm the present parent coordinator
25 at Brown's Tech, the school that you slated to

1 close a few years ago, and what I'm here to
2 discuss is the emptiness and the soul that
3 you've taken away from the students at my
4 present school now which is going to happen to
5 the next school that you close and it is a
6 depressing, they feel that the Department of
7 Education gave up on them and I feel the same
8 way too, and I'm asking you not to give up on
9 this school.

10 You know if the government can give billions
11 of dollars to the banks to refurbish themselves,
12 why can't you put a little more money back into
13 Business and Law and let it start again? Okay,
14 it's only fair, okay. And I've seen too many
15 good things in this building where you have four
16 different, five different schools working
17 together as human beings for common goal. And
18 here, the Department of Education decided that
19 it doesn't mean anything. You're not looking at
20 the whole picture. You're only looking at
21 statistics and the statistics are incorrect.
22 There are other things besides statistics.
23 They're human beings here.

24 And about the part of 66 percent of the
25 students with violence, I'm with the stop the

1 violence awareness to the parents here in the
2 Bronx. There isn't a hundred percent of the
3 streets out here in the Bronx that are non-
4 violent or safe. For 66 percent of the students
5 feel that they, you know, feel violence in this
6 school, that's not that bad considering what we
7 have out there in the Bronx, okay, where
8 students are getting shot during the day with
9 stray bullets and I fight that every day.

10 I go to wherever a parent association
11 meeting needs me to discuss with them how do you
12 prevent your child from becoming a gang banger.
13 We do it here all the time. Every day we speak
14 to our students here on a daily basis. We
15 cooperate with all the parent coordinators and
16 all the principals. So please, in your heart,
17 change your mind about closing this school. I
18 would appreciate it. Thank you.

19 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, sir.

20 MR. CARLOS CHARLIE RAMOS: Thank you. My
21 name is Carlos Charlie Ramos, I'm a neighborhood
22 resident. Until recently I served as the Bronx
23 Rep of the City Control of Bill Thompson. I
24 felt compelled to come here today. I attended
25 77 and then I went to Stevenson High School. My

1 cousin attending James Monroe High School and
2 now she's a public school teacher here in the
3 Bronx. And I just wanted really to take the
4 opportunity to tell a story.

5 Late last year I was part of a broad based
6 coalition that we were pushing for the
7 nomination and eventual confirmation of Sonia
8 Sotomayor to the Supreme Court. At the peak of
9 our campaign I was managing a Face Book page, we
10 had about 15,000 members. The one thing I
11 noticed when we were participating in these
12 national conference calls is that many people of
13 color did not have the credentials to be vetted
14 at the highest level and yes, she had all the
15 credentials, she went to ivy league schools.
16 And just the mere fact that you guys are
17 providing students here in the Bronx with the
18 skills - - that they need to go into law school
19 hopefully, is a good option.

20 And to the students, I really just want to
21 convey a message to the students. I grew up in
22 this neighborhood. I dropped out of high
23 school. I came back to school. I eventually
24 came to college when I was about 28 years old
25 and I eventually graduated. I really want to

1 tell the students you guys have to help each
2 other. I remember when my mother couldn't be
3 there for me and I realized that when you help
4 each other you can empower each other. All our
5 parents are struggling. All our parents have
6 two, three jobs. I really, really want to pass
7 this message on to the students.

8 You guys really, really take the opportunity
9 to help each other because when you go into
10 college, at some of these schools, most of these
11 faces here are brown right now. When I was in
12 college it was reverse, we were the minority on
13 campus. So I just want to thank you and I
14 really urge you to keep the school open.

15 MR. TRAVERAS: Thank you, Mr. Ramos.

16 MALE VOICE 3: Good evening. Members of the
17 educational panel, there is something irrational
18 and in fear going on at the Department of
19 Education. And I believe there is a hidden
20 agenda at the heart of it. We are quick to use
21 the refrain closing failing schools because of
22 its powerful impact. But let us look more
23 closely at what is being done to Monroe Academy
24 for Business and Law and others.

25 They would have more communities believe

1 that their proposals are focused on helping
2 children, but when this is thoroughly examined
3 it becomes abundantly clear that the progress of
4 students is secondary and their hidden agenda is
5 at the center of these proposals. The criteria
6 for closing schools are so vague that many
7 administrators, teachers and parents were
8 surprised that their schools were to be given
9 death sentences.

10 We are embracing a business model for
11 schools and are unconcerned or oblivious to the
12 variables that affect children who attend
13 schools in impoverished communities as opposed
14 to selling Big Macs at McDonald's in those same
15 neighborhoods.

16 This unnamed agenda is so powerful that the
17 criteria for closing schools at this moment
18 should be shifted to close schools at any poor
19 community irrespective of the grades received.
20 They say that the student's progress is their
21 concern, but if that had been the case novel
22 approaches would have been employed to deal with
23 the deficits in many of our elementary and
24 middle schools. For example, visiting students'
25 home with their - and take along - - as well as

1 sticks to make sure that importance of
2 education is underscored.

3 High schools are supposed to be places where
4 students learn to read. However, every year we
5 receive a large number of students who need
6 remedial reading. That being the case, one
7 would expect the Department to take corrective
8 measures in the lower levels of schooling before
9 a child is sent to a high school. These
10 arrogant and misguided forces are so concerned
11 with perception rather than results that common
12 sense would dictate that if students enter a
13 school with reading deficits, they should be
14 allowed extra time to make the - - up.

15 Please do not close our schools just because
16 you can. Thank you.

17 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, sir.

18 MR. WARREN DOUGLAS: First and foremost I'd
19 like to acknowledge the people and the families
20 of Haiti in this bad trying time. My name is
21 Warren Douglas, and I'm here for my daughter,
22 Cheyenne, along with my wife. Now, I don't plan
23 to be a layman about what's going on here
24 because I'm not a part of the education like
25 y'all are, but I am an intelligent person.

1 I've seen grass, I've seen people speak
2 and I've yet to hear any negativity in reference
3 to why we're here. I've heard a bunch of
4 excuses. This is the second meeting that I came
5 to. The first one, there was another lady from
6 the Chancellor's office, I don't remember her
7 name offhand, you know, and she gave us a bunch
8 of very viable excuses. Once again, no reasons.

9 You know you can't serve a diet of
10 negativity and then expect the people who you
11 serve this meal to to prosper from what you are
12 not giving them, the things they need to achieve
13 the goals that y'all are using to close our
14 school down. So, you know, I'm not going to
15 stand up here and take a lot of time, but
16 there's a lot of people in here that might
17 understand what I'm about to say because I'm
18 going to paraphrase John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

19 Don't ask the students what they can do for
20 the Board of Education. Maybe we should ask the
21 Board of Education what the schools can do for
22 us.

23 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Mr. Douglas.
24 Please, speakers 26 through speakers 30, please
25 line up on the right-hand side.

1 MR. KEITH CHICOLETS: Good evening. My
2 name is Keith Chicolets [phonetic], I'm the
3 programmer and law coordinator for MABAL. I've
4 been here, I've been with MABAL since day one.
5 I'm the only one left from day one of the
6 school. I've seen teachers come and go. I've
7 seen every student we've had come and go. In
8 2000 I became the programmer to help set up the
9 student and teacher programs every semester and
10 let me tell you, it's not an easy task.

11 When you've got people down here not taking
12 into consideration the space requirements we
13 have or lack thereof, you've got students coming
14 in without the proper documentation, without
15 their transcripts and we can't program them
16 properly without that documentation. And that's
17 the fault of the lower schools and the incoming
18 information we are not getting.

19 A number of years ago, it was about five
20 years ago, we received on the first day of
21 school 100 new students. They were lined up
22 down the hall and around and I - - at the point
23 to start handing out the pre-made programs, we
24 couldn't even take the time to program them
25 because we didn't have the information to do it.

1 It turned out a number of students were mis-
2 programmed because of the people down here just
3 sending them upstairs wholesale.

4 We have a lack of space. It's a miracle for
5 us, for a teacher, I mean there are schools
6 where teachers have their own classroom. Some
7 of our teachers have three classrooms and I'm
8 one of them. I'm in three classrooms in the
9 day. I teach four classes while we're doing the
10 programming. I've had teachers sometimes had to
11 take four classrooms because that's the way the
12 schedules fell. We can't do our job if the
13 people down here aren't giving us the ability to
14 do it and they are throwing us more than the
15 space that we have.

16 The small schools were set up, we were
17 supposed to be capped at 467. A number of years
18 we had 650, almost 700 students. I have no
19 space. We're supposed to have smaller class
20 sizes in these smaller schools. My class sizes
21 are 30, 34 students. I have a ninth grade class
22 right now that's 34 students, mixed, bilingual
23 and general ed. You can't teach in that type of
24 environment where you've got students, I mean,
25 you say that, you know, that everybody should be

1 progressing at the same time. If that was the
2 case, why are they pushing differentiated
3 education? Why are they pushing all these
4 things on us that tell us your students don't
5 progress at the same rate, but yet, you expect
6 them to do so.

7 We can't do this job and the programming is
8 an essential part of. I can't do that job, I've
9 got to tell - - I can't do that job. We don't
10 have the space to put students. You people keep
11 sending us more than we're supposed to have.
12 Thank you.

13 MR. TRAVERAS: Thank you, sir.

14 MS. CHARLENE GLOVER: Good evening,
15 everyone. My name is Charlene Glover, I'm a
16 parent. And I'm also one of those parents that
17 y'all are saying that in 2007 that they did not
18 graduate with the numbers. My daughter is here,
19 she's a graduate of 2007. She left her job
20 early to come help us protest to keep this
21 school open.

22 For the teachers that's here in the school,
23 they are very good teachers. They are trying
24 their best. I also have a son that has special
25 needs and he also would love this school to stay

1 open. He's a junior, and without the teachers
2 here he wouldn't make it the way he is also. My
3 daughter came in in 2004 and graduated in 2007.
4 That right there should show you that she
5 finished before her time. And she couldn't have
6 done it without the teachers in this building,
7 okay.

8 Also, you know, the concern that I have that
9 y'all saying that the smallest schools are
10 getting grade As. Of course they're getting
11 grade As because they're accepting the kids like
12 they said were level three and level four. This
13 school is the school that is accepting other
14 kids that no other school wants. So why do you
15 think that they're having the problem that
16 they're having? Fifty-three percent of their
17 students are special need. So that right there
18 is a number that y'all should consider and look
19 back in your statistics with 2007 and see the
20 graduate class of that year.

21 Last year the numbers went up, this year the
22 numbers went up. The numbers that are in
23 question is 2007 that y'all gave them a D for.
24 I understand the 30 seconds. But I'm telling
25 you, if you close this school you're going to

1 lose a lot of students because y'all want to
2 turn it into a GED program. Let's be honest,
3 because if the small schools are not accepting
4 level one and level two, how are they going to
5 accept these kids now? Who are going to accept
6 the level ones and level twos? Could you answer
7 that for me, sir? No, not right now?

8 MR. TAVERAS: Schools all over the Bronx do
9 accept levels one and two.

10 MS. GLOVER: That is not true. You know why
11 I asked you that question, because the year that
12 it went in my son was one of them that was
13 rejected and Monroe was the one that accepted
14 them. Not only that, when my daughter came in
15 in 2004 she was out of junior high school for
16 two years for her own personal reasons,
17 whatever, she didn't want to go to high school.
18 But guess what, Monroe accepted her. She
19 finished in two and a half years.

20 Show me a student that you have in another
21 school that finished two and a half years
22 besides Monroe. Thank you. I hope you take
23 this in consideration because I'm looking at
24 faces and I hope to see all of y'all at the
25 Black and Puerto Rican caucus because I'm going

1 to talk to y'all again.

2 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Ms. Glover.

3 MR. RAMON CRUZ: Good evening. My name is
4 Ramon Cruz, I'm the parent coordinator and have
5 been since 2003 when the initiative began.
6 During that time, as you've heard from some of
7 the teachers, some of the students and some of
8 the parents around, we did have, at the
9 beginning when I first came in, a lot of viable
10 afternoon programs for the kids for enrichment
11 and otherwise and for credit recovery. We
12 haven't had that in the last few years because
13 the budget has cut us down a lot.

14 Although in this building, as Mr. Porten
15 mentioned earlier, when I first came into this
16 building it was a unique, for me it was a unique
17 sort of building because they had a campus where
18 we had high school students and elementary
19 students in the same building. To me, I had
20 never seen that. And when I first came in it
21 worked very well. I saw the amount of money
22 that was spent on those little children. They
23 made bathrooms for them.

24 MR. TAVERAS: Hold on one second. Hold the
25 time. If you're leaving, please do it quietly

1 so that we can listen to the speaker. Thank
2 you. I apologize.

3 MR. CRUZ: Thank you. Many millions of
4 dollars was spent on those bathrooms, making the
5 bathrooms for the little kids. Well, you
6 changed the little kids to another building.
7 Now, we have bathrooms, but we have no children
8 to use those bathrooms. All those millions of
9 dollars, no one is speaking about that. So how
10 come some of that money isn't spent on trying to
11 get us some remediation help, some extra
12 programs for the kids so that they can spend
13 more time in school? A lot of that stuff should
14 be brought up.

15 Statistics, everybody is - - the - - .
16 We've heard them, we see them, but the positive
17 ones that go on our side nobody wants to look
18 at. We just keep throwing the negative ones.
19 But what about all those millions of dollars
20 that are wasted on all that, no one is asking
21 the questions. Who's going to use those little
22 bathrooms? But yes, we've still got kids that
23 can't stay here, that are going to be going
24 somewhere else because there's no money to keep
25 them here. That's all I have to say. Thank

1 you.

2 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Mr. Cruz.

3 MS. ABIGAIL BOOZE: Good evening. My name
4 is Abigail Booze and I'm - - . I'm a senior and
5 the vice president of Monroe Academy of Business
6 and Law. I was in my English class during the
7 second period when my teacher announced the
8 proposal of the closing of the school. All of a
9 sudden I felt this pain of disappointment. I
10 asked myself will my dreams of this school come
11 to pass. Does the school have any special or
12 good thing to write about? Then I realized that
13 yes, it does.

14 Seven of my family members graduated from
15 this school and they have all been successful.
16 They have been my role models and I am here to
17 continue what my family left. My family passed
18 through the same roots to become who they are
19 now, shows that Monroe Academy for Business and
20 Law has something unique and especially that
21 people need to take time to discover.

22 Monroe Academy for Business and Law has
23 really helped me a lot in my academics and has
24 disciplined me in so many ways. Now, I can put
25 my hands on my chest and boast about that. I

1 have a GPA that is more than 95 above and made
2 me - - the National Honor Society and I work
3 with the veterans as a case manager.

4 But now, the school which held me up when I
5 was down, opened my eyes when I was blind,
6 directed me when I was lost, continues to teach
7 me how to make my life better is going to be
8 closed. No, it needs to allow others to
9 experience the same thing I have been feeling
10 since I came to this school.

11 Now, how would you feel if you found out
12 that the school you graduated from does not
13 exist? How would you feel if people tried to
14 stop you from exploring or hindering your dreams
15 from coming true? Lastly, how would you feel if
16 people tried to stop you from showing
17 appreciation to the people who made you who you
18 are? These are the questions I ask to you to
19 answer sincerely.

20 Monroe Academy for Business and Law may not
21 be the best school, but they are good to write
22 and say about. Please, look at the positive
23 things the school has achieved. To me, the
24 students smile and - - . The youth is the
25 future of this nation so allow Monroe Academy to

1 stay open. Thank you.

2 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you. If we have any
3 other speakers, please come around and line up.
4 Thank you.

5 MALE VOICE 4: Thank you again for your time
6 again. I would like to speak from the heart
7 because I think that, and I think that all
8 teachers here should be able to relate to what
9 I'm saying, as well as the parents because I
10 think that what's happening in New York State in
11 terms of our education policy and our system of
12 educating students is really, for lack of a
13 better word, it's twisted and our ideas about
14 educating students needs to sincerely be looked
15 at.

16 At the last administration of the math
17 regions exam, are y'all listening? Very good.
18 At the last administration of the math regions
19 exam which is one of the hardest requirements
20 for students for graduation, the State Education
21 Department said that 36 percent was a passing
22 grade. If you had a 36 percent, that's a
23 passing grade. So what that said to me was that
24 it actually gave me a proper understanding of
25 what no child left behind means.

1 The Stated Education Department is
2 actually, they actually do want to have no child
3 left behind, but they want them to be not left
4 behind even when it's in their best interest to
5 be left behind. A 36 percent passing on a math
6 regions exam, anyone knows that that is just not
7 acceptable. The only people that accept that is
8 the State Education Department.

9 And worse, even worse, to make matters even
10 worse, they actually pressured teachers into
11 calling a 36 percent a passing grade as well.
12 So there is this push just to get kids out of
13 school, just get them out. Whether they're
14 ready to get out or not, get them out. And what
15 happens is our students end up, look, they need
16 six years. I've mentioned this before. And the
17 six years they're held back is when they get to
18 college and y'all know college is free.

19 What we're ending up doing is we're loading
20 our kids up with debt so we're going to have
21 adults that have to pay off this hefty education
22 because the buck has to stop somewhere and the
23 Education Department is telling us that it's not
24 going to stop at high school. We're not really
25 going to provide you with what you need, but

1 we're going to act as if you have what you
2 need. So there is a pressure placed on, and
3 what we have here at Monroe Academy for Business
4 and Law are teachers, administrators and support
5 staff that value our students, that are more to
6 us than just a number. These are students that
7 come to us, that care about themselves, that
8 care about their surroundings and that want to
9 make better for themselves.

10 However, the Board of Ed does not give them
11 the resources that they need in order to be
12 where they need to be. They close their eyes
13 and say pass them on. Pass them on to someone
14 else. And that, ladies and gentlemen, we're all
15 familiar with the financial crisis that just hit
16 us and we're all still trying to survive. That
17 was caused by people over-valuing assets, saying
18 that an asset is worth more than it actually is.
19 And at some point the buck is going to stop and
20 they're going to realize that that asset was not
21 worth what they said it was worth and then the
22 bottom just fell out and you had what we're
23 experiencing in terms a depression in our
24 economy. Yes, sir.

25 And if we continue at this pace, what we're

1 going to see is a crisis in our education
2 system because we're over-valuing students and
3 we're being encouraged to over-value students
4 and at some point that bottom is going to drop
5 out. And when that bottom drops out, if y'all
6 think the financial crisis was a crisis, wait
7 until Bloomberg and Kline get their way with
8 what they're doing with education because it's a
9 serious issue that needs to be addressed. And I
10 don't think at this point the Board of Ed is
11 ready to do that. Thank you.

12 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Robert.

13 MS. ANNA MEDINA: Hello. My name is Anna
14 Medina, I'm a parent of a son, he's a senior.
15 I'm here to ask to please reconsider and keep
16 the school open. My son had his ups and downs
17 in this school and the teachers were there for
18 him, guidance counselors, and my son is about to
19 graduate now. Please keep it open for them so
20 they can progress because if they go to another
21 school they may not make it. They're used to
22 this school. This is where they want to finish.

23 If these close, they're going to go to other
24 schools that are going to be overcrowded. It's
25 bad enough here, the classes are overcrowded

1 because my son was in an overcrowded and he's
2 in special ed and he wasn't learning properly.
3 So not only for special ed, for regular ed,
4 please keep this open because if they go to
5 another school they may not like it over there.
6 They may not get taught the same way they're
7 taught here. The work may be different. They
8 may not make it out there.

9 Where they will go they will not like the
10 school. Where are they going to be, in the
11 street? They're not going to want to go to
12 school and I know because I'm one of them. And
13 now, I'm learning in my house and I'm about to
14 get my diploma. That's the reason why my son is
15 going to make it now. Thank you.

16 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Ms. Medina.

17 MR. JOSE SANTANA: My name is Jose Santana,
18 I'm a former student from the school. I was one
19 of those students that people thought I was
20 never going to do nothing in my life. I did
21 drop out. But I had some of my teachers call me
22 at my house every single day. Because of them
23 I'm somebody right now. Right now I work for
24 Senator Diaz's office, for them.

25 For all those teachers that called my house,

1 I don't believe for you to close this school
2 because many students here, we're kids, they're
3 kids. Some of them cut class, whatever. But I
4 believe like a former student, I did it. They
5 could do it themselves too. I'm here. I'm kind
6 of nervous, but I thank every teacher that's
7 here for calling me every single day because
8 they get up.

9 You could be somebody. Because of them I
10 got my GED. Right now I'm in college. I'm
11 studying criminal justice and some day I would
12 like to come back to this school to be a teacher
13 in this school too. Thank you.

14 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Mr. Santana.

15 MS. BROWNWELL: In front of me I have the
16 resolution to oppose the closing of Monroe High
17 School. Everyone at the panel has a hard copy.

18 WHEREAS, Monroe is a true community high
19 school that provides a meaningful education to
20 its young adults in spite of lack of support
21 from the DOE; and

22 WHEREAS, has been explained in the
23 PowerPoint presented to the DOE, our teachers
24 are privileged to work with a very high
25 percentage of self-contained, high needs

1 students and our D on the progress report
2 seems to reflect the challenges these students
3 face as illustrated by the following: 1)
4 Schools with few high needs students were far
5 more likely to get A. Of the nine schools with
6 the fewest high needs students, all got an A.
7 All nine of these schools had fewer than five
8 percent of these students and five had none at
9 all. 2) In both of the D schools in our peer
10 group, a very high percentage of the special
11 education populations were struggling with high
12 needs. At Monroe a full 54 percent of our
13 special education students were high needs, the
14 highest in the peer group. So that it seems
15 that in general, as needs went up, grades went
16 down even though the DOE was supposed to level
17 the playing field between different schools with
18 its fancy and complicated formulas.

19 WHEREAS, the DOE can be permitted to close
20 Monroe based on what appears flawed
21 accountability that does not take into account
22 the great work of our school; and

23 WHEREAS, according to the DOE's impact
24 statement, this system has no plan for our
25 students and the future students who would

1 attend Monroe. Other than that, it will give
2 them the opportunity to apply, which is an
3 outrage and an insult considering how few of
4 Joel Kline's new schools have the capacity to
5 serve high need children; and

6 WHEREAS, according to the DOE's impact
7 statement, the DOE has no plan for our
8 classrooms in spite of it's obligation to
9 provide a plan before it shuts down a school;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, the Monroe students, parents, staff
12 and community leaders are committed to giving
13 our students the education they need to live
14 rich and fulfilling lives.

15 And I'm asking that everyone stand in
16 solidarity with me as I ask for the following
17 resolution. Everybody up, up.

18 BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Community
19 District Educational Council and SLT opposes the
20 closure of Monroe and calls upon the New York
21 City Department of Education and Chancellor Joel
22 Kline to retract their plans for closure and
23 provide the proposed schools with the resources
24 necessary for academic success.

25

1 MR. TAVERAS: Thank you, Kelly. As you
2 heard other speakers speak tonight there is a
3 vote on this proposal and other proposals on
4 January 26th at 6:00 at Brooklyn Tech High School
5 in Brooklyn. So that is when the Panel for
6 Educational Policy will vote on this proposal
7 and others. Thank you very much for sharing
8 here tonight. Have a pleasant evening. Get
9 home safe.

10 MS. BROWNWELL: And ladies and gentlemen,
11 for those of you that want to go on the 26th,
12 there will be a bus departing from Monroe so you
13 don't have to worry about transportation and the
14 bus will bring you back.

15 [END 154_544.MP3]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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

Signature Yvonne T. Boggs_____

Date January 21, 2010_____