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**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION - DIVISION OF
PORTFOLIO PLANNING
School for Community Research and
Learning (X540) - 1/13/11**

1 [START 181_949.MP3]

2 MS. OLIVIA ELLIS: My name is Olivia Ellis,
3 and I'm - - joint public hearing. This is the
4 joint public hearing of the Department of
5 Education community education enhancement, at -
6 - , to discuss the proposed phase-out of the
7 School for Community Research and Learning.

8 Tonight's proceeding will be recorded and
9 transcribed. Before we begin the hearing, we
10 ask that anyone who wishes to speak during the
11 public comment portion of the evening sign your
12 name at the table in the back. - - 6:15. If
13 you have any question that you want to be
14 addressed during the Q & A portion of the
15 agenda, please write that question on the index
16 cards provided at the back, and submit them to a
17 volunteer by the - - .

18 Only people who have signed up to speak will
19 be able to participate in the public comment.
20 All panel participants were asked to be here no
21 later than 5:30 p.m.. Now that we have started,
22 if a panel participant arrives late, he or she
23 will be given the time to speak at the first
24 opportunity. We want to be respectful of
25 everyone's time.

1 There may be elected officials who show up
2 at different times - - . If they wish to speak,
3 we will do our best to - - . At the comment
4 segment, - - will be asked to speak first.

5 Please look at the agenda. - - . - -
6 participants, followed by public comment.
7 Speakers should come--Should have already signed
8 up at the sign-up table in the lobby. Public
9 comments can be no longer than two minutes each.
10 The time will be strictly followed, and speakers
11 will be informed when their designated time has
12 ended.

13 There will be a question and answer segment.
14 Members of the - - have a question, - - write
15 your question on a postcard. - - . While the
16 public comments are taking place, staff members
17 will organize the questions into categories and
18 - - . Some questions will be asked directly,
19 and others will be - - , in order to - - .

20 Even though all individual questions will
21 not be addressed in the forum tonight, the
22 answers will be on the website prior to the - -
23 . If at the end of the public hearing you
24 still have questions, we encourage you to direct
25 them to us by calling the number on the bottom

1 of the fact sheet, or sending them to us via
2 email on the email address provided on the fact
3 sheets.

4 I would now like to introduce the panel
5 which was assembled for this evening's joint
6 public hearing:

7 Otis Thomas, representative of CEC 8.
8 Maxine Nodell, Millennium Art Academy principal.
9 Pablo Villavicencio, Bronx Bridges principal.
10 Sam Decker, Bronx Guild principal. Sabrina
11 Cook, Pablo Neruda principal. John Tornifolio,
12 principal for Community of Research and
13 Learning. Eric Nadelstern, Deputy Chancellor.
14 Elena Papaliberios, Superintendent. Barbara
15 Gambino, network leader. Debra Maldonado,
16 cluster leader. Shantel Patterson, SLT member -
17 - . And Steven Lee, Bronx Community SLT member.

18 I will now turn the program over to Deputy
19 Chancellor Eric Nadelstern, who will present the
20 proposal.

21 MR. ERIC NADELSTERN: Thank you, Olivia. I
22 think we can safely say that we'll have an
23 opportunity to answer all the questions that
24 you've submitted this evening, so please take
25 advantage. And good evening, ladies and

1 gentlemen.

2 Before I present the substance of the
3 proposal regarding School for Community Research
4 and Learning, I want to underscore that the
5 decision to phase out a school is not an easy
6 one, and one which we do not take lightly. Many
7 factors and data are examined, and stakeholders
8 are engaged before a final decision is rendered.

9 We count on each of our schools to provide
10 high-quality education to our students, and we
11 must hold all of our schools to the same high
12 standard. If a school isn't getting the job
13 done, we have to take action, uh, and ensure
14 that its students don't fall even further
15 behind, and new students have better options.

16 Our goal is to create a system of great
17 schools. To accomplish this goal, we have to be
18 vigilant in our efforts to constantly improve
19 the efforts we provide to our students and their
20 families.

21 The School for Community Research and
22 Learning is a grades 9 to 12 high school,
23 located here at the Adlai E. Stevenson Campus,
24 in Building 450X, 1980 Lafayette Avenue, Bronx,
25 New York 10473. Within the geographic confines

1 of Community School District 8.

2 It is currently co-located with Antonia
3 Pontoja Preparatory School, a 6 to 9 school,
4 which is expected to serve grades 6 to 12 once
5 it reaches full scale.

6 In addition, it is also co-located in the
7 6th, 9th and 12th schools, Gateway School of
8 Environmental Research and Technology, Pablo
9 Neruda Academy for Architecture and World
10 Studies, Millennium Art Academy, Bronx Community
11 High School, Bronx Guilt, and Bronx Bridges High
12 School, which is at the full process of phasing
13 in with the first - - 9th grade students, and
14 expected to serve its full compliments of
15 students in 2013 and '14. I'd like to thank the
16 principals of each of those schools for being
17 present this evening.

18 On December 10th, 2010, the New York City
19 Department of Education published a proposal to
20 phase out and eventually close the School for
21 Community Research and Learning, based on its
22 performance, and the Department of Education's
23 assessment that the school lacks the ability to
24 turn around quickly, to better support student
25 needs.

1 The School for Community Research and
2 Learning received an overall D grade on its
3 2009-10 progress report, with a D grade of the
4 student - - subsection, a D grade for student
5 progress, and a C grade for environment. In
6 December 2010, New York State Education
7 Department identified the school as persistently
8 low achieving.

9 The Department then conducted a
10 comprehensive review of the school, as a result
11 of its historical performance struggles, with a
12 goal of determining which supports and
13 interventions would best benefit its students
14 and community. During that review, DOE
15 consulted with superintendents and other
16 experienced educators who have worked closely
17 with the school, gathered community feedback and
18 looked at recent and historical performance, and
19 - - data for the school.

20 After completing that review, the DOE
21 believes that only the most serious
22 intervention, the gradual phase out and eventual
23 closure of the school, will address its long-
24 standing performance struggles, and allow for
25 existing new school options to continue to

1 expand Adlai Stevenson Campus. These new
2 school options will better serve future students
3 and the broader community.

4 If approved, the School for Community
5 Research and Learning would no longer admit new
6 9th grade students at the conclusion of this,
7 the 2010-11 school year, and will complete its
8 phase-out in June 2014.

9 Current students will be supported as they
10 progress through graduation, while remaining
11 enrolled in the school. In cases where students
12 do not complete graduation requirements by June
13 10th, 2014, the DOE will help students and
14 families, identify alternative programs or
15 schools that meet students' needs, so that they
16 may continue their education after the School
17 for Community Research and Learning completes
18 phasing out.

19 In 2009-10 the Stevenson Campus had a
20 capacity of 3,355 students, and a utilization
21 rate of 77%. This year, in 2010-11, the eight
22 schools within the building are, uh, projected
23 to enroll a total of 2,700 students, yielding a
24 utilization rate of 80%.

25 If this proposal is approved by the Panel

1 for Educational Priorities, the five fully
2 phased-in schools located in the building will
3 continue serving students at their current
4 enrollment levels, while Bronx Bridges and
5 Pontoja Prep will continue to add grades, as
6 they expand to full enrollment in 2013-14.

7 SCRL will no longer admit 9th grade at the
8 end of this school year, and will complete its
9 phase-out in June 2014. The DOE does not
10 anticipate proposing any new additional schools
11 on the Stevenson Campus at this time.

12 Thank you, and we look forward to hearing
13 your comments and questions.

14 MS. ELLIS: Thank you. At this time I'd
15 also like to introduce Denise Sullivan from
16 CCHS.

17 MS. DENISE SULLIVAN: Good evening. Denise
18 Sullivan, Citywide High School representative
19 for all Bronx high schools. It's unfortunate
20 that this school is being phased out, but
21 sometimes we have to follow the standards of the
22 Educational Department. I will do as much as I
23 can - - to improve the situation.
24 Unfortunately, I'm - - . Sorry.

25 MS. ELLIS: Okay, thank you. Also, the CEC

1 rep and SRT have noted that they do not wish
2 to make a comment.

3 We have now concluded the formal
4 presentations. I ask that the following people
5 line up for public comment: Dustin Engelken.
6 Thank you.

7 MR. DUSTIN ENGELKEN: Good evening to
8 parents, students, faculty and representatives
9 from Department of Education. As they already
10 said, my name is Dustin Engelken, and I'm a
11 constituent liaison for Council Member Annabel
12 Palma, who is Councilwoman in this district. I
13 want to apologize, the Councilwoman was not able
14 to attend tonight, but - - on her behalf. So,
15 again, on behalf of Councilwoman Palma:

16 The decisions that the Panel for Educational
17 Priorities will make regarding this school and
18 others are never easy, and should not be taken
19 lightly. These decisions impact not only the
20 current student body, but also future students,
21 and the community at large.

22 According to DOE statistics, the School for
23 Community Research and Learning has faced its
24 share of difficulties over the last couple of
25 years. Despite the challenges that SCRL has

1 faced, there have been great strides.
2 Graduation and Regents diploma rates have
3 improved. And a new leadership has brought
4 increased energy to this community.

5 However, our students are graduating with
6 Cs, and this is, simply put, unacceptable. All
7 children deserve the same access to quality
8 teachers, and a supportive educational
9 environment. All children deserve the same
10 level of excellence in their schools, regardless
11 of which community they come from.

12 As Councilwoman, I am deeply concerned the
13 majority of the schools closing in this City
14 are, in general, populated with children of
15 color. I feel that DOE is failing our children.
16 Simply put, it seems that we need to level the
17 educational playing field in New York City.

18 Now, hearings like tonight are a valuable
19 tool in ensuring that all stakeholders, parents,
20 community advocates, elected officials, are
21 involved in the decision-making process. And I
22 would like to thank the Department of Education
23 for bringing everyone together here tonight.

24 I trust that the Department of Education
25 will seriously consider the opinions and

1 suggestions that we hear this evening, and in
2 prior panels and public hearings. I thank you
3 again for allowing me to speak. I'm sorry for
4 interrupting. Thank you for your patience. And
5 once again, thank you all for joining us
6 tonight.

7 MS. ELLIS: Matt Ellis.

8 MR. MATT ELLIS: - - . Okay. There's not
9 much to say, except that it's pretty clear proof
10 that the Department of Education has been very
11 successful in silencing the opinion of
12 communities. Um, I remember last year there
13 were about 5, 600 people here, willing to come
14 and support us, and maybe 30 speakers. And I'm
15 only up here, my only reason to be up here is
16 just to officially state for the record that our
17 lack of presence here, and the lack of speak, is
18 not any admittance that we agree that this
19 school should be closed. Rather, we're just
20 saying that we know that we're not really being
21 listened to.

22 And I think, actually, I'm sitting here kind
23 of laughing. It still seems just such a
24 formality that you guys are checking off, going
25 through, reading the exact word-for-word

1 phrasing again, and there's three people from
2 school community actually here.

3 But anyway, I just want to say a few things,
4 again, just so that they're on the record. This
5 entire letter I felt was very negative, didn't
6 really accurately portray us, and was obviously-
7 -Even though you came in saying, your first
8 meeting, that you were here and willing to
9 listen, and you didn't make a decision yet, it
10 was pretty clear that that was a dishonest
11 statement.

12 I remember, when I first read this, laughing
13 at the fact that you said that one of the
14 negatives of the school was we got proficient on
15 our most recent quality review, which showed
16 that we needed further things to improve,
17 because we did not meet the highest level of
18 standards. A level of proficient is good.

19 Also, you claimed that, um, we've got 76% of
20 our 9th graders last year earned 10 less
21 credits, but then you cited that the 10th and
22 11th graders earned less credits, so you claimed
23 that was - - , showing that we decreased between
24 9th and 10th grade. But I mean, if anything, I
25 was really proud of that 76%. That showed that

1 we did something really well last year. That
2 showed that we did something really well last
3 year, and that's thinking positive. So, I don't
4 understand why that was - - negative.

5 Although we went down from a C to a D, our
6 graduation rate went up. Again, our 9th graders
7 went up. We have a principal, you mentioned
8 that. I mentioned that the first time at the
9 SLT, um, that there was a statement here about
10 teachers not feeling safe, because of some
11 questions on a survey. And I tried to tell you
12 that that's not what it meant, that the teachers
13 felt safe, but then the next day, you repeated
14 the same statement, so I guess you didn't take
15 into account what we were saying there. And
16 that's it, really. I mean, at least we get to
17 go home early.

18 I recommend that we take all the salaries,
19 you know, - - 15 people - - buy us a new
20 computer for our student center upstairs. Our
21 brand new student center, by the way. It's up
22 in Room 309 on the third floor, for those of you
23 who haven't been there, trying to close our
24 school, I could show you later.

25 MS. ELLIS: Thank you. Hector Ruez.

1 MR. HECTOR RUEZ: Good evening, everyone.
2 My name is Hector Ruez, from United Federation
3 of Teachers. The DOE has once again announced
4 the plans to close SCRL beginning of September
5 2011. Closure, rather than any other
6 intervention to help this school succeed, is a
7 mistake.

8 Closing schools disrupts the lives of the
9 students, their parents, the adults who work in
10 the schools, and the fabric of the school
11 community. A number of educational programs
12 have been implemented to improve student
13 achievement and performance. Couple that with a
14 new administration, and you would think that
15 SCRL would be given a chance.

16 The DOE has failed to provide the necessary
17 intensive support that they agreed to implement
18 in the schools intended for phase-out in
19 September of 2010. And given their lack of a
20 comprehensive plan for replacement high school
21 seats, the closure of SCRL may have a negative
22 impact on the other schools that it shares space
23 with on the Stevenson Campus.

24 The available evidence indicates that the
25 DOE's decision to close SCRL was made to fulfill

1 a school reform strategy that has not proven
2 to be effect--to effectively meet the needs of
3 our City students.

4 The entire school community of SCRL, along
5 with the United Federation of Teachers, opposes
6 this decision of closing, and we ask that you
7 reconsider. Thank you.

8 MS. ELLIS: Thank you. This is now the time
9 for question and answers. At this point in time
10 we have no questions, but remember that any
11 questions that you have, you can direct them to
12 our website - - . Okay, I'm sorry, we have two
13 more people. Iris Rodriguez.

14 MS. IRIS RODRIGUEZ: Good evening, ladies
15 and gentlemen. This is the second time that I
16 spent over here addressing a group, not the same
17 group, but the same anyway, and like Mr. Ellis
18 said, I think that it's a futile effort on our
19 part to come here and try to dissuade you from
20 doing what you already have made your mind of
21 doing.

22 I, I, I am, I was the former president of
23 the School for Community Research and Learning,
24 and I was the president for quite a few years.
25 My grandson come to this school, and I have

1 nothing to complain about the staff, the
2 teachers. While I was here, they were doing
3 their jobs, and I know that they still do their
4 job, like they are supposed to. They only
5 needed the support of the Board of Education,
6 which they did not get.

7 And if my voice, as a community member, is
8 served by any means, I'm going to ask you to
9 reconsider and please, what is going to become
10 of these students that are going to be left out
11 of this school? Thank you very much.

12 MS. ELLIS: Thank you. I understand we have
13 a few elected officials. If they'd like to
14 speak, please approach the mike.

15 MS. SHANELLE PARSONS: Thank you. Hello,
16 everyone. My name is Shanelle Parsons. I'm
17 with the office New York State Assemblyman Peter
18 Rivera, 76th Assembly District. I don't have a
19 question.

20 MS. ELLIS: Okay, thank you. Is there
21 anyone else? Thank you.

22 MR. MARK WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Good
23 evening, members and members of the audience.
24 My colleague, Shanelle Parsons, introduced
25 herself. I'm from Assemblyman Peter Rivera's

1 office. I'm his legal counsel. And obviously
2 we're here to listen and learn, and make sure
3 that if should there be a closure, that there
4 would be a smooth transition. And in fact, I've
5 been discussing that with governmental relations
6 back there. So, thank you for convening this,
7 and uh, happy new year to everybody.

8 MS. ELLIS: Thank you. All right, at this
9 point in time is the question and answer. No
10 one has submitted any questions. However,
11 please feel free, if you have any questions, to
12 submit them to our email or the website, which
13 is located on the fact sheet.

14 We've heard many significant comments this
15 evening. We appreciate your feedback and
16 contributions to this hearing. The information
17 will be shared with the Panel on Education
18 Policy, which will have their hearing on
19 February 1st, 2011, to vote on this proposal.

20 Thank you all for coming out. This joint
21 public hearing is officially adjourned. Thank
22 you.

23 [END 181_949.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 *Aimee Rubenstein*

Date January 15, 2011