



THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

JOEL I. KLEIN, *Chancellor*

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

52 Chambers Street – New York, NY 10007

**Testimony of James S. Liebman
Chief Accountability Officer**

Progress Reports
Committee on Education
December 10, 2007

City Council Testimony of James S. Liebman
Chief Accountability Officer, New York City Department of Education
December 10, 2007

Good morning Chair Jackson and Members of the Education Committee. I am James Liebman, Chief Accountability Officer of the New York City Department of Education. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss Progress Reports, a centerpiece of Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein's efforts to provide educators and families with information they need to accelerate the learning of all New York City public school children.

Since 2002, the goal of the Mayor and Chancellor's public school reforms has been to put the learning outcomes of *children first*. Three strategies are central to this effort: Empowerment, Leadership and Accountability.

Empowerment. Because principals and teachers know best what each child needs in order to learn more, the Children First reforms give schools the decision making authority and resources they need to move every child forward. As Mayor Bloomberg said in his State of the City address this year, "we've always known that great principals make great schools. But until now, we haven't always given them the full authority they need in order to lead." Now, all school leaders have the autonomy they need to make the best decisions for every child and especially for children who have not succeeded as well as others in the past. Closing these achievement gaps, while challenging *all* students to improve, is a central mission of our empowered principals and teachers.

Leadership. Empowered educational leaders must be selected based on strong qualifications, afforded the know-how and tools needed to translate their authority and commitment to improve student outcomes into innovative solutions for each child's learning needs, and compensated in ways that recognize their contributions to kids.

Accountability. Given their enlarged span of control, responsibility for the lives of children and the public dollars entrusted to them, empowered school leaders must also be accountable for their students' actual learning outcomes. Last spring, all of our newly empowered principals signed performance terms in which they agreed that *the proof is in the pudding* – that their success is defined entirely by their students' demonstrated learning outcomes. No longer can we rely on the belief that central and regional experts can somehow identify one-size-fits all solutions for all schools and students and effectively commend the rote implementation of those solutions in schools. Nor can we rely on blind faith that solutions adopted in schools will automatically work for children. Instead, we must empower educational leaders *and* track their actual, measurable results.

This is especially so for the many children whose parents' work or other obligations keep them from effectively monitoring their children's schools and progress. If the City and the public don't track these students' outcomes, no one else will. Putting children first – privileging their learning outcomes over all else – thus requires empowered, high-capacity educational leaders in every school and classroom and accountability for each child's transparently demonstrated success or failure.

Building the capacity of empowered educational leaders and holding them accountable for results are key aspects of the work of the Office of Accountability. I am here to talk about Progress Reports, but I first want to place them in the context of my Office's dual role of evaluating and enabling the success of school leaders in moving children forward.

Evaluate. The DOE currently uses the broadest range of evaluative measures of any school system in the United States. Included in this integrated set of tools are annual on-site Quality Reviews by expert educators; Parent, Teacher and Student Surveys, nearly 600,000 of which were filled out last spring; Progress Reports; Principal Performance Reviews; and bonuses available to high-performing schools, principals and teachers.

These tools rigorously evaluate schools based on *students'* attendance; proficiency and progress in reading, writing and math; accumulation of credits and Regents tests needed to graduate; and 4- and 6-year graduation and diploma rates; on *schools'* academic expectations; quality of communication between parents, teachers and administrators; engagement of students, parents and teachers in the life of the school; leadership; teaching quality; curricular diversity; arts, physical education and extra-curricular offerings; and safety; and on *principals'* respect for teachers, *teachers'* respect for students, and *students'* respect for each other's academic accomplishments. The tools also evaluate how effectively schools differentiate education to meet the particular needs of each child, and how frequently and productively they monitor results and adjust strategies throughout the year. These City tools supplement the federal No Child Left Behind Act's and the State's designation of schools as "in good standing" or "in need of improvement."

The accountability tools are not just for educators. They also help parents exercise informed choice among schools and informed voice in shaping the schools their children attend. To acquaint families with these tools, Parent Coordinators shared survey results and Progress Reports with families at Parent-Teacher Conferences last month, and handed out written information about how parents can use the reports to improve their schools. At later Parent-Teacher Conferences, and in materials that will go home with student report cards at the end of the year, families will receive more information about their own child's progress. The Office of Family Engagement and Advocacy is discussing Quality Reviews, Survey Results and Progress Reports at family forums throughout the City and year. These reports, and aggregate results for all schools, are available online, at www.nyc.gov/schools.

The City Council, taxpayers, public and media can also use the reports to hold the Mayor, Chancellor and Department of Education accountable for the learning outcomes of City students.

Enable. The accountability tools serve another, even more important purpose: enabling empowered principals and teachers to accurately diagnose the educational needs of each student and to identify and fill the instructional gaps that otherwise let needs go unmet.

For example, after each Quality Review, an expert educator files a ten-page report describing his or her observations of the school, its strengths, and areas where improvement is possible. The reports address five overarching questions and 35 sub-criteria. The focus is on how schools can more effectively: use data to track student learning; set targets to meet and design plans to address the instructional needs of each student and group of students; use curricular,

extra-curricular, arts, physical education and other programs to meet each student's academic goals; improve leadership, professional and youth development efforts in service of achieving those goals; and generate and use finely-grained information about students throughout the year, to determine whether instructional plans are working and, if not, how they can be improved.

Survey Reports identify aspects of each school's learning environment that parents, teachers and students believe need improvement – including leadership, classroom instruction, safety, academic rigor, the amount of hands-on learning and interaction between parents and teachers. Using online tools, principals can identify schools like their own where parent, teacher and student ratings are higher and can adopt strategies that have proven effective elsewhere.

Every six to eight weeks, Periodic Assessments provide educators, parents and students with detailed information about aspects of state standards and the school's curriculum that each child and classroom has and has not mastered. Teachers can use these no-stakes, diagnostic tools to inform plans to target instruction to each student's needs, track student progress and identify strategies that work and ones that do not and adjust accordingly. Parents can use assessment results to understand their children's skills and needs, to work at home to enhance their child's learning and to track their children's progress from the start to the end of the year.

The Department's new Achievement Reporting and Innovation System, or ARIS, collects all of this information in one place, where principals and teachers can see it immediately without having to spend hours collecting and collating. ARIS presents each school's Progress Report with "drill down" functions that enable principals and teachers to instantly reference the school's Quality Review, Survey report and State Report Card, and to view, sort, print, download and statistically analyze every bit of student data underlying every Progress Report measure.

To build the capacity of principals and teachers to use this information to improve instruction, and decrease the paperwork burdens previously caused by the haphazard dispersion of information in many systems and files, the Office of Accountability has developed the Children First Intensive program. CFI began last year with approximately 12 hours of orientation and training sessions at which the principal and an instructional leader from every school were introduced in small groups to the accountability tools just described.

Over the summer, each principal selected an Inquiry Team of five instructional leaders at the school, including a data specialist. Each Team receives ongoing, hands-on support from a School Support Organization (SSO), network team and Senior Achievement Facilitator from the Office of Accountability. Together with these support personnel, each school's Inquiry Team receives intensive training in using the accountability tools to diagnose student needs, identify and fill instructional gaps and develop strategies for better mobilizing available resources to enhance student learning. This training helps educators learn from their own carefully examined experiences, and from other educators within and across school buildings.

Each Inquiry Team member receives per-session compensation for the time they devote to this work. Team members also receive laptop computers to allow them to instantaneously access data and share learning materials in the team's collaborative work space in ARIS.

To assure that the training of team members is hands-on and productive, Inquiry Teams use data in Progress Reports and Quality Reviews to identify a target population of 15 to 30 students at each school, whose learning outcomes fall outside the school's sphere of success. Under the guidance of their Network Support Team and Senior Achievement Facilitator, each team uses accountability tools to identify gaps in student learning, how the school's instructional approaches have failed students, strategies for solving these problems and benchmarks for tracking the new strategies' success. Teams at different schools that focus on similar target populations and skills can use the collaboration tools in ARIS to share ideas, materials and effective practices. Next year, Inquiry Team members will expand this process throughout their schools by creating additional teams for particular grades, departments and student populations.

Progress Reports. Like all of the accountability tools, the City's new Progress Report is both a key motivation for these improvement efforts *and* a crucial repository of diagnostic information about schools.

Before I describe the reports, let me thank the many educational and community leaders who provided valuable feedback as we designed, piloted and revised the Progress Reports and introduced them to the public. The Appendix to this testimony lists some of those consultations, and some of the important improvements we made in response to feedback. We heard from hundreds of principals and teachers and their unions; educators and experts from California to Connecticut, from Denver to the District of Columbia, and from Edmonton, Canada to London, England; City Council members and their staffs; community-based, after-school, arts, business, civic, university-based, church and other groups; Community Education Councils, Parent-Teacher Organizations and CPAC; the NAACP and various other civil rights and immigrants rights groups; editorial boards of most of the city's daily newspapers; and the NY City Student Union, the Chancellor's Student Advisory Council and other student groups. Additionally, we piloted Progress Reports twice last year – first to 300 Empowerment Schools in fall 2006 and then to all schools in spring 2007. We described them at forums attended by over 20,000 parents.

As a result of these efforts, I am confident we that have the most diverse and powerful set of measures of the contributions schools make to children in the United States today. Most New Yorkers agree. In a Quinnipiac Poll conducted in late November, over two-thirds of public school parents knew their school's Progress Report grade. By a margin of over three to one, parents thought the grade was fair (75% vs. 21%). By more than two to one, members of the *public at large* also said the system is fair (61% vs. 27%; 12% expressing no opinion.) That said, I know the Progress Reports can be improved. We are compiling suggestions for improvement, and I look forward to hearing others from this Committee.

Progress Report Rationale. Like the No Child Left Behind Act and New York State's accountability system, the Progress Reports evaluate schools based on student learning *outcomes*: how well students read and write, how proficient they are in math and whether they graduate from high school. These foundational skills are the key prerequisites for higher education, a living wage and a fulfilling life.

But existing state and federal accountability measures are limited. Most, for example, compare fourth graders this year to fourth graders last year, which is not an apples-to-apples comparison given changes in student bodies from one year to the next. Typically, existing

systems use a single measure of success: the number of students at or above proficiency in ELA or math. As valuable as this measure is (we use it in the "Performance" section of the Progress Reports), it is incomplete, because it ignores whether students already at proficiency make *additional* progress and whether students improve *within* levels, for example, from a low to a high Level 2. These are major accomplishments for many of our schools and students, but they get no credit in the state and federal systems. The only incentive those systems give schools is to focus on the few students who are just at, or below, the "proficiency" line.

Finally, existing measures compare schools only to all other schools, giving many the excuse for poor performance that their poor, low-performing or ELL and Special Education students pose greater educational challenges than the more privileged and affluent students at schools to which they are compared. The regrettable message these accountability systems send is that if a school wants to get a higher accountability rating, it should find a way to enroll more affluent students who perform well from the start. This is a recipe for leaving the neediest students behind.

Our accountability system sends a different message, that the central goal of every school is to improve the performance of any student who arrives on the first day, regardless of the student's starting performance. Rather than comparing only this year's cohort of students to last year's, our focus is on how well each child does this year compared to the *same* child's learning last year – an apples to apples indication of progress. Schools that enroll poor, minority, Special Education, ELL, and other initially low-performing students are not penalized for accepting that crucial challenge.

In short, our new accountability system rewards schools for the contribution they make to children, not for the strengths and weaknesses the children bring to schools. This applies to all children. Whether, for example, a sixth grader enters middle school learning well below, at or well above grade level, he or she deserves to leave sixth grade having learned more. It is this across-the-board growth that the Progress Reports gauge.

Progress Report Measures. The Progress Report measures four overarching criteria: the school's Learning Environment, Student Performance, Student Progress and (as a way of awarding extra credit) Exemplary Gains that Close the Achievement Gap between lowest and highest performing groups of students.

Because our central goal is to foster improved learning for all students, especially those who began the year in the lowest one-third of performers at the school, we give Student Progress just over half the weight (55%) in school grades. Because progress is sufficient only if over time it moves elementary and middle school students to and beyond proficiency in core subjects, and high school students to graduation with a Regents Diploma, we give the next largest weight (30%) to Student Performance – to success in enabling students to reach those goals. Finally, although our emphasis is on outcomes, we assign significant weight (15%) to School Environment inputs that are known to have a major effect on outcomes: attendance, safety, academic expectations, communication and engagement of members of the school community in its academic mission. Except for attendance, environment measures are based on the results of parent, teacher and student surveys, which exponentially increase the number of daily observers of schools whose direct experience we use to evaluate schools.

Currently, we have three versions of the Progress Report –for elementary and middle schools, for high schools and for schools serving transfer students. We are developing Reports for special education (District 75) and early childhood schools. The School Environment factors are the same in all versions. The Progress and Performance metrics, and those awarding additional credit for Exemplary Gains that Close the Achievement Gap, vary. All of these measures are described in detail in a chart in the Appendix to this testimony.

For elementary and middle schools, student performance and the progress of all students and those in the school's lowest one-third of performers is measured by outcomes on the New York state tests that determine whether students meet grade-level standards in reading, writing and math. Similar measures for science and social studies will be added in the future. For high schools, the focus is on graduation with a Regents Diploma in four or six years, and on the building blocks for graduation: credit accumulation and passing Regents tests. Next year we will use results on the PSAT our students take in tenth and eleventh grades to track students' year-to-year growth in college readiness. In the future, we will directly measure rates of college attendance among each high school's graduates.

We award extra credit for Closing the Achievement Gap based on the percent of elementary and middle school students in the NCLB achievement-gap categories (high poverty, special education, African-American and Hispanic students) who gain at least a half of a proficiency level in ELA or math each year. For high schools, additional credit is based on high rates of credit accumulation among these same categories of students.

Because of the focus on Student Progress, let me discuss three progress measures in detail. First is the Percentage of Elementary/Middle Students Making at Least 1 Year of Progress in ELA and in math. This asks whether students' learning levels are the same as, or higher than, they had been a year earlier. Take, for example, a fifth grader who measures a 2.5 in math this year. She is half-way between the "basic" level (Level 2.0) and the "proficient" level (Level 3.0). As a fourth grader, she also measured 2.5 in math. Because the learning we expect of fifth graders is greater than the learning expected of fourth graders, we know this student made one year's worth of progress between fourth and fifth grade. Of course, we want her to move forward even more, reaching proficiency and beyond. But we also want to recognize the work her school did in moving her from a basic fourth-grade to a basic fifth-grade level.

This is a measure of *schools* not *students*. If a student is a 3.80 in math this year and was a 3.90 last year, that difference, based on a single student, may or may indicate a significant change. But a school at which *hundreds* of children on average lost 10 percent of a proficiency level in a year almost certainly has a significant problem. As we all know from our daily lives, a single instance of an unsatisfactory result – an employee's missed deadline or a bad meal at a restaurant – may be an aberration. But hundreds of observed instances of a loss of reading and math proficiency in a year provide strong evidence that a problem exists and needs to be fixed.

A second progress measure is the Average Change in Student Proficiency – for all elementary and middle students and for those in the lowest one-third. There are schools in the City whose students *on average* improve each year by a third to a half of a proficiency level or more. At these schools, for example, students who started the year on average just beyond the

point of proficiency (say, 3.2) end the year on average very close to being advanced (say, 3.8). This metric acknowledges those gains.

A third, *high school* progress measure examines whether pass rates on each of the five Regents tests required for graduation are lower than, the same as or higher than the predicted pass rate for students at the school. These predictions are made based on the students' eighth grade proficiency levels in the same subjects. When we compare actual to predicted pass rates, we find that students at some schools pass more Regents exams than we predict they will – because of the rigorous and supportive instruction the schools provide. Regrettably, students at other schools pass fewer Regents exams than we would expect given the student' eighth grade scores: These students *lose* ground in high school.

Progress Report Comparison Groups. For each Progress Report metric, we rate every school based on two scales: a citywide scale and a peer group scale. Each scale is fixed from one year to the next. The system thus is *criterion*-referenced, not *norm* referenced: all schools can receive an A or B if they hit the established mark; there is no curve. The scales are based on the recent historical performance of schools in the City, with each scale running from the lowest to the highest performance level of schools in each cohort in the recent past (minus outliers).

The *peer* scales compare each school to the 40 other schools in the City to which its student population is most similar. Two-thirds of a school's grade is based on peer comparisons. This is a "no excuses" evaluation. It removes the excuse that a school is being compared to schools with easier-to-educate students. Under-performance means a school is helping its students learn less than similar students at other schools. For middle and high schools, peer groups are based on the average ELA and math scores of their entering students (fourth grade scores for middle school; eighth grade scores for high school). For elementary schools, for which we have no baseline assessments, peer groups are based on a set of demographic, socio-economic and educational factors (percent of special education students and English Language Learners) that are highly predictive of student outcomes.

The second scale compares each school to *all* schools of its type citywide – elementary to elementary, middle to middle, etc. Giving one-third weight to this comparison sends the message to schools that, while the short-term goal is to be as good as the best *similar* school, the goal over time is to be as good as the best schools in the City.

Schools with Many Low or High Performing Students: Our peer comparisons provide a crucial control against penalizing schools based on their students' entering performance levels. Because two-thirds of the grade is based on how a school compares to schools with students just like its own, schools are not penalized on our School Environment and Performance measures for having accepted the challenge to educate students, such as English Language Learners, who begin school less well prepared than others.

Likewise, the peer comparisons keep our Progress measures from penalizing schools with students who for the most part entered school already performing at or above proficiency. A ~~table in the Appendix illustrates the point. It compares key progress metrics for 14 actual schools~~ in the 5 boroughs, all of which (as the third to sixth columns indicate) have about the same high proportion of students performing at or above proficiency. What distinguishes the schools is how

much or little the learning of those students *improved* during the year. At School 13, which received an F, only about a third of the students made a year's worth of progress in reading and writing last year, and less than a quarter of the students did so in math. At Schools 2, 4, 10 and 12 – all "A" schools – two to four times as many children made a year's worth of progress. Clearly, it wasn't the high entering performance levels of the students at School 13 that kept them from progressing, because equally high performing students at all of the other schools on the list moved strongly forward. Instead, it was School 13's failure to engage its students, and to challenge and inspire them to learn more, that accounts for the difference.

Student outcomes at these schools differ even more dramatically when their lowest one-third of performers are considered. Here again, the comparison between School 13 and Schools 2, 4, 10 and 12 are instructive. As the last two columns on the page show, students in the lowest performing one-third at the five schools are nearly identical, with average starting proficiency levels of 3.2 to 3.5. Despite their identical *starting* points, the students' *end* points a year later were dramatically different. At Schools 2, 4, 10 and 12, these students on average gained from 21% to 40% of a proficiency level in ELA and math in a year. But at School 13, the same cohort of students on average *stayed static* in ELA and *lost* 15% of a proficiency level in math. In other words, students at School 13 who began the year at the same proficiency level as similar students at Schools 2, 4, 10 and 12 ended the year from a *third* to almost a *half* of a proficiency level behind the corresponding students at the other schools. Across-the-board differences like this, which leave students systematically and substantially behind their peers at identical schools, are the reason for the extremely rare award of a low grade to a school with relatively high performing students. Indeed, School 13 in this table is the only elementary or middle school in the City with 85 percent or more of its students at or above proficiency that received an F – because it was the only school in the City with such low levels of learning among all of its students, and among those in its lowest one-third.

Previously, parents might have been content if their child was at *any* of these schools, because most children there are at or above proficiency. What the Progress Report and its grade now reveal, however, is that as between the schools (including the last three, which are fairly near each other), children move strongly forward at most and *lose* ground at one. The Progress Reports also help explain why: on our surveys, parents and teachers rated School 13 lower than the others on how engaging its curriculum is. This dispels the myth that only "test prep" mills do well on the Progress Reports. In fact, most schools on this list have extremely varied and enriched curricula; it is only the "F" School, School 13, that parents and teachers rated as having the uninspiring kind of program that one associates with "test prep."

Progress Report Grades. Among the many ways to indicate success or failure in the school context, none is more clear and direct than a single grade of A to F. Using multiple measures without summing them to a single grade would risk the Lake Wobegone effect – the ability of every school to rely on its success on one or more measure to declare itself above average. As the examples just noted make clear, when it comes to the contributions schools make to the learning of students, and especially the poorest performing students, all schools are *not* above average, and it is our responsibility to draw attention to that fact in the clearest way. When a poorly performing school receives an unambiguous grade, its entire community is likely to ask why. The search for the answer to that question is the first crucial step towards diagnosing and curing a school's instructional weaknesses.

Progress Report Rewards and Consequences. To help motivate schools to enhance student learning, Progress Report outcomes are a basis for rewards and consequences. Schools receiving A's and B's and Quality Review scores of Proficient or better are eligible for rewards for the school as a whole and for the principals and teachers who work there. Schools can receive additional discretionary funds on a per capita basis to use to build on successes and support work as demonstration sites. Principals can receive performance bonuses of up to \$25,000 each year. Teachers at the approximately 200 high-needs schools eligible for bonuses can receive them if their schools successfully help students learn and progress. High performing schools also receive substantial extra per capita funding for each transfer student they accept from low-performing schools. Rewards generally are based on whether schools meet annual Progress Report targets for increasing overall Progress Report scores. The targets are on a graduated scale that expects more movement for lower-performing schools and less for schools already performing well.

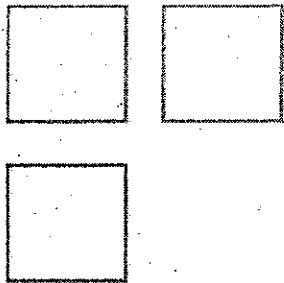
Schools receiving a D or F (and in the future, 3 C's in a row) will be provided with additional support from their School Support Organization, their SSO network, their Senior Achievement Facilitator and school improvement specialists in the Office of Accountability. Part of that support will be in creating an Action Plan to enable the school to set and meet targets for improving student outcomes sufficiently to avoid additional consequences. Improvement is defined as either meeting the school's Progress Report target or improving to a grade of C or better, and achieving a Quality Review Score of Proficient or better. Action Plans will be developed in ways that assure that they are not compliance exercises and instead align with the school's existing Comprehensive Educational Plan, are coordinated with improvement planning taking place under the state accountability system, build on the diagnoses provided by the school's most recent Quality Review report and Learning Environment Surveys and the data underlying the Progress Report, and reflect the best judgment of the school community and its School Support team about the action plan the school should live by over the coming months.

D and F schools that don't improve within two years are subject to immediate leadership change. Schools that go another two years without improvement will be closed or restructured. Even before these two- and four-year periods are over, the Chancellor will continue to exercise the discretion he has exercised repeatedly in the past to make immediate leadership changes and restructure or close schools because of their profound educational failure as shown on these and other criteria.

* * * * *

Let me end on a point I made earlier: The Progress Reports are not perfect. They can and will be improved. But without question, they along with the Quality Reviews provide the most comprehensive and sensitive measures of the learning contributions schools make to children anywhere in the nation. Through them, we can now provide powerful diagnostic information for schools to use – and we can hold schools accountable for how well they succeed – in moving children forward to the fulfilling futures we owe all of them.

~~Thank you, Chair Jackson and Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to present this testimony.~~



NYC Department of Education
Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

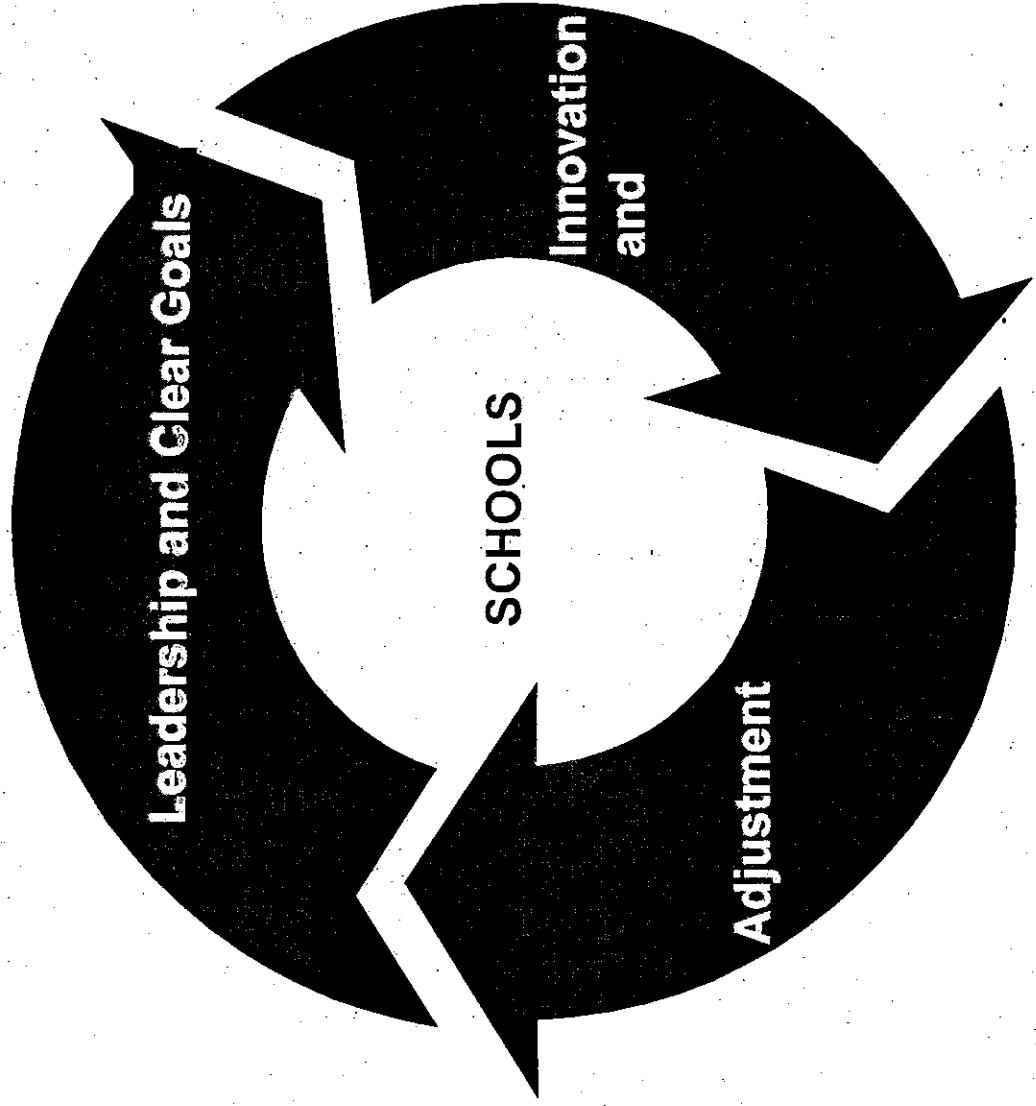
Children First Progress Reports



Testimony on Progress Reports
James Liebman, Chief Accountability Officer
New York City Department of Education, Office of Accountability
December 10, 2007

Children First – Leadership, Empowerment & Accountability

CREATING A CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN SCHOOLS



Evaluate, Enable, and Enforce Consequences

Citywide 2006-07 → Piloted 06-07, Citywide 07-08 → Starting in 07-08

Evaluate

- **Progress Reports** – all schools graded A, B, C, D, or F based on school environment, student performance, student longitudinal progress
- **Quality Reviews** – all schools scored “Outstanding, “Well-Developed,” “Proficient,” “Underdeveloped with Proficient Characteristics”, or “Underdeveloped” based on performance management criteria

Enable

- **Periodic Assessments** – 4-5 times a year to diagnose needs and track progress
- **Children First Intensive** – hands-on data training delivered through Inquiry Teams of key instructional leaders in each school
- **Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS)** – fully integrated data and knowledge management

Enforce Consequences

- **Rewards** – “A” schools with high Quality Review scores receive money bonuses; “A” and “B” schools receive additional funding for each extra student transferring from “F” school
- **Consequences** – “D” and “F” schools face 4-year cycle of target-setting → *leadership change* → more target setting → *school closure* if Progress Report grade or Quality Review score does not improve
- **Principal Bonuses** – top 20% of principals under Progress Report, Quality Review eligible for bonuses, incl. up to \$25,000 for top principals who move to challenging school

Building Capacity Through Embedded Support: The Inquiry Team Approach

An Inquiry Team is a school-based achievement team that integrates the components of the

Accountability Initiative into the life of the school.

SAFs and other CFI facilitators support Inquiry Teams.

Teams collect and analyze student-level data.

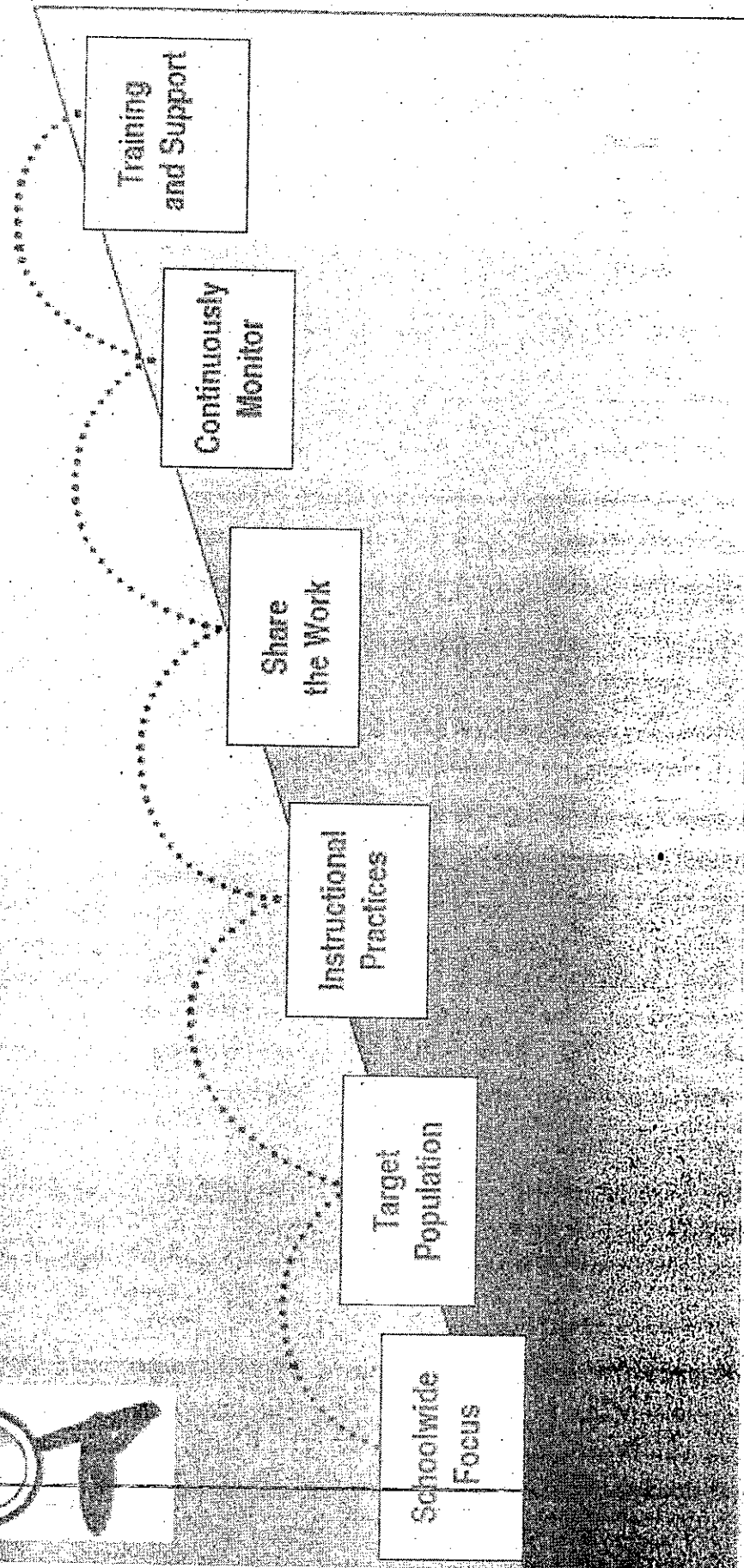
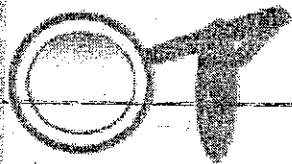
They develop collaborative instructional approaches with a target population of struggling students.

Teams develop and support ongoing grade-level and department team meetings to share the work. These conversations impact planning and decision-making school-wide.

Teams disseminate action research findings school-wide and make links to Accountability Initiative.

Inquiry Team Process

Work of the Inquiry Team



Progress Report Development

Continuous Consultation with Educators, Education Experts, and Community Leaders Throughout Design, Pilot, and Revision

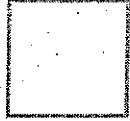
Selected Consultations with Education Experts:

- Educators and educational experts engaged in similar efforts from the states of California, Florida, and Connecticut and from school districts in Denver, Charlotte, Washington D.C., Canada, England and elsewhere provided valuable guidance on 19 occasions.
- New York City Council members and their staff provided helpful feedback on four occasions.
- Empowerment schools participated in a Fall 2006 Progress Report Pilot.
- General education schools and schools serving transfer students participated in a Spring 2007 Progress Report Pilot.
- Community-based Organizations, Community Education Councils, Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council, Parent-Teacher Organizations, District Presidents' Councils, and other organizations representing New York City families engaged in conversation about Progress Reports on at least 176 occasions.

Selected Consultations with New York City Educators:

- Arts Community Leaders and Arts-Focused High Schools
- Fall 2006 Empowerment School Network Leaders and Spring 2007 Local Instructional Superintendents
- High Schools Which Begin Administering Regents Exams in 10th, not 9th, grade
- International High Schools and High Schools with Large Populations of English Language Learners (ELLs)
- New York Performance Standards Consortium
- Principals of Schools with High Mobility Rates
- Schools Serving Transfer Students and Alternative Schools
- Specialized High Schools
- Universal Free Lunch Elementary Schools

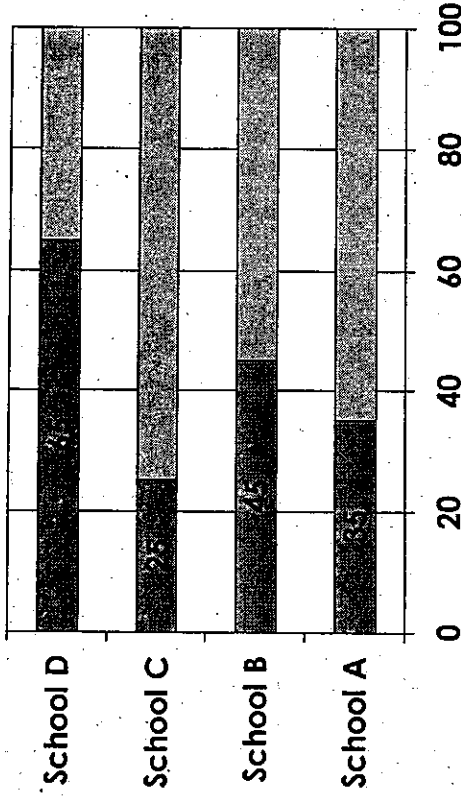
Review of New York State Accountability: Why New York City created the Progress Report



New York State Accountability:

- Compares performance rather than the progress of students within the school.
- Rewards schools only when students advance from Level 2 to Level 3.

Under State Accountability:
Percent of Students at Proficiency



Progress Report Category Weights

School Environment

Comprises 15% of the Overall Score
 This Year's Score: 0.382 x 15 = 5.7

- Survey Scores
- Safety and Respect
- Academic Rigor
- Engagement
- Communication
- Attendance

Category	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
10%										
20%										
30%										
40%										
50%										
60%										
70%										
80%										
90%										
100%										

School Environment: 15%

Student Performance

Comprises 30% of the Overall Score
 This Year's Score: 0.540 x 30 = 16.2

- English Language Arts
- Percentage of Students at Proficiency Level 3 or 4
- Median Student Proficiency 11-13
- Mathematics
- Percentage of Students at Proficiency Level 3 or 4
- Median Student Proficiency 11-15

Category	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
10%										
20%										
30%										
40%										
50%										
60%										
70%										
80%										
90%										
100%										

Student Performance: 30%

Student Progress

Comprises 55% of the Overall Score
 This Year's Score: 0.690 x 55 = 38.0

- English Language Arts
- Percentage of Students Making at Least 1 Year of Progress
- Average Change in Student Proficiency

Category	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
10%										
20%										
30%										
40%										
50%										
60%										
70%										
80%										
90%										
100%										

Student Progress: 55%

= 100%

Additional Credit: +

Comparing Elementary / Middle and High School Progress Report Metrics

	Environment (15%)	Performance (30%)	Progress (55%)	Closing the Achievement Gap (Additional Credit)
Elementary / Middle School	<p>Evaluates necessary conditions for learning, using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attendance (5%) ▪ Parent, Teacher, and Student Survey Scores (15%) 	<p>Evaluates student skill levels in ELA and Math:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Percentage of Students at Proficiency ▪ Median Student Proficiency 	<p>Measures average student improvement from last year to this year in ELA and Math:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Percentage of Students Making at Least 1 Year of Progress ▪ Average Change in Student Proficiency ▪ Average Change in Proficiency in School's Lowest 1/3 Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Percentage of high-need students who improve by at least one-half of a proficiency level in ELA or Math. ▪ High-need student groups include: English Language Learners, Special Education Students, Hispanic Students in Lowest Third Citywide, Black Students in Lowest Third Citywide, Other Students in Lowest Third Citywide
High School		<p>Evaluates a high school's success in graduating students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Graduation Rates 	<p>Evaluates annual student advancement toward graduation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Credit Accumulation ▪ Weighted Regents Pass Rate (English, Math, Science, US History, Global History) ▪ In School's Lowest Third (English, Math, Science, US History, Global History) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Percentage of high-need students earning 11 or more credits in their first, second, or third years of high-school. ▪ High-need student groups include: English Language Learners, Special Education Students, Hispanic Students in Lowest Third Citywide, Black Students in Lowest Third Citywide, Other Students in Lowest Third Citywide

Three Key Progress Metrics

Elementary/ Middle School

Student Progress

Comprises 55% of the Overall Score

This Year's Score:
 $0.285 \times 55 = 15.7$

English Language Arts	Your School's Score (a)	Your School Relative to Peer Horizon	Your School Relative to City Horizon
Percentage of Students Making at Least 1 Year of Progress:	40.6%	0.4	2.6%
Average Change in Student Proficiency:	-0.07	0.08	0.21
Average Change in Proficiency in School's Lowest 1/3 Students:	0.12	0.04	0.24
Mathematics			
Percentage of Students Making at Least 1 Year of Progress:	56.6%	0.4	2.6%
Average Change in Student Proficiency:	0.06	0.04	0.21
Average Change in Proficiency in School's Lowest 1/3 Students:	0.23	0.08	0.24

• Percentage of Students Making at Least 1 Year of Progress

• Average Change in Student Proficiency

High School

Student Progress

Comprises 55% of the Overall Score

This Year's Score:
 $0.554 \times 55 = 30.5$

Credit Accumulation	Your School's Score (a)	Your School Relative to Peer Horizon	Your School Relative to City Horizon
Percentage earning 10+ credits in first year:	77.9%	0.2	1.6%
Percentage earning 10+ credits in second year:	90.5%	0.2	1.6%
Percentage earning 10+ credits in third year:	90.2%	0.2	1.6%
Avg Change in PSAT Scores:	N/A	0.04	0.21
Average Completion Rate for remaining Regents:	53.6%	0.04	0.21
Weighted Regents Pass Rate			
English:	0.96	0.12	0.31
Mathematics:	1.53	0.07	0.21

• Weighted Regents Pass Rate

Peer and Citywide Comparisons

Peer 67% Citywide 33%

School Environment

Comprises 15% of the Overall Score

This Year's Score:
 $0.672 \times 15 = 10.1$

Your School's Score (y)

Survey Scores	Peer Avg	City Avg
Safety and Respect:	7.3	8.1
Academic Expectations:	7.6	8.2
Engagement:	6.8	7.2
Communication:	6.9	7.3
Attendance:	91.3%	87.1%

Student Performance

Comprises 30% of the Overall Score

This Year's Score:
 $0.895 \times 30 = 26.9$

Diploma Rates by type	Peer Avg	City Avg
4-year graduation rate:	96.1%	84.1%
4-year weighted diploma rate:	202.9%	100.0%
6-year graduation rate:	100.0%	100.0%
6-year weighted diploma rate:	196.1%	100.0%
Percentage of Grade-11 & 12 students taking the PSAT, SAT or ACT:	N/A	N/A

Peer Avg	Peer Max	City Avg	City Max
54.1%	73	72.8%	81
68.9%	75	70.8%	82
64.9%	68	63.4%	72
84.1%	69	83.5%	73
41.1%	81.3%	71.5%	100.0%
93.7%	96.1%	94.5%	84.1%
74.1%	202.9%	95.8%	100.0%
100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
82.0%	196.1%	104.7%	100.0%
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Determining Peer Comparisons: Peer Index

Elementary and K-8 Peer Index is determined by using the following categories:

- Percent of Special Education (10%)
- Percent of English Language Learners (10%)
- Percent of Free Lunch (40%)
- Percent of Black/Hispanic students (40%)

Middle and High Peer Index is

determined by using the following categories:

- Average of the Proficiency Ratings its actively enrolled students earned on their Grade 4 State ELA and Math exams (Middle) and Grade 8 State ELA and Math exams (High).

Example: Average combined ELA and Math Grade 4 Proficiency Rate

School A - 2.24 (the combined average 4th grade ELA and Math score of the school's students was a low level 2)

School B - 3.76 (the combined average 4th grade ELA and Math score of the school's students was a high level 3)

Schools A and B are in different peer groups.

Peer group is defined as the 20 schools whose Peer Index is immediately higher and the 20 schools whose Peer Index is immediately lower than a school.

Comparing Progress Reports Outcomes School 13 and Peer Schools

School	Grade	% of 3/4 Students in		Median Proficiency Rating in		% of Students Showing 1 Yr Progress in		Avg % of Proficiency Gained by Lowest Third in		Additional Credit for Closing Achievement Gap	Avg Proficiency Rating of Lowest Third in	
		ELA	MATH	ELA	MATH	ELA	MATH	ELA	MATH		ELA	Math
School 1 (M)	A	94	95	3.7	4.1	60	55	28	21	0	3.4	3.4
School 2 (M)	A	88	97	3.4	4.0	55	55	21	24	0.8	3.3	3.9
School 3 (M)	A	81	95	3.3	4.0	64	83	28	22	2.3	3.1	3.4
School 4 (M)	A	82	93	3.4	4.0	70	81	40	28	0.8	3.1	3.4
School 5 (X)	B	83	92	3.5	3.9	52	56	19	19	0.8	3	3.7
School 6 (K)	B	83	94	3.4	4.0	52	50	26	16	0	3.1	3.4
School 7 (Q)	B	81	92	3.4	4.0	50	52	26	25	0	2.9	3.2
School 8 (Q)	B	91	97	3.4	4.0	46	53	11	22	0	3.4	4.1
School 9 (Q)	A	79	92	3.4	3.9	58	57	38	29	5.3	3.1	3.3
School 10 (Q)	A	83	97	3.4	4.0	62	59	34	29	1.5	3.2	3.5
School 11 (Q)	A	83	91	3.5	4.1	60	54	38	11	2.3	3.1	3.3
School 12 (R)	A	81	94	3.3	3.9	60	52	31	23	3	3.2	4
School 13 (R)	F	87	98	3.4	4.0	35	23	1	-15	0	3.2	3.5
School 14 (R)	B	84	91	3.4	3.8	54	50	23	11	1.5	3.2	3.2

Rewards and Consequences

Quality Review

Over-achieved	Progression	Improvement
---------------	-------------	-------------

No rewards or consequences

Eligible to receive rewards

No rewards or consequences, unless a school receives a C for 3 consecutive years, in which case it is treated as a school who receives a D for one year.

4-year cycle of target-setting → leadership change
 → more target setting → school closure if Progress Report grade or Quality Review score does not improve

Progress Report

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E



JAMES F. BRENNAN
44TH Assembly District
Kings County

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

CHAIR
Committee on Cities

COMMITTEES
Codes
Corporations, Authorities
and Commissions
Education
Real Property Taxation

New York City Council
Committee on Education
Chair, Hon. Robert Jackson
Oversight – Examining the Department of Education’s New Progress Reports for Schools
December 10, 2007

Councilmember Jackson and members of the committee, it's a pleasure to share some thoughts with you about the Department of Education's progress reports. I'm Assemblymember Jim Brennan, representing the 44th Assembly district in Brooklyn. Currently, I chair the Assembly Standing Committee on Cities and I have served on the Assembly Education Committee for 23 years.

In a November 20th e-mail that Chancellor Joel Klein sent out to Department of Education faculty members, he stated, "After almost five and a half years as chancellor, I know you can't point to a single number, be it a test score or graduation rate, to prove success or failure. The whole picture is important." Yet, in his November 14, 2007 letter to the editor of the New York Times, he defended the school progress reports by stating, "Everyone knows what A and F mean. Summing up all relevant measure with a single, simple grade draws sharp attention to the great work at many schools and the stagnation that might otherwise escape notice elsewhere."

His first statement seems more applicable to the New York City school system. The DOE has reduced teacher, student and parent surveys, attendance, test scores, one-year changes in test scores, and weights these variables differently, to come up with one letter grade. This "reductionism" has produced results that, for many individual schools, seem on their surface to be utterly irrational and have caused bewilderment, confusion, and rejection.

The State and City of New York already have an assessment and accountability system. The State Education Department calls it the "status" model, and parents, educators and the general public all understand it simply as scores on tests, broken down into levels of proficiency or lack thereof. Whatever its shortcomings, it's generally understood. On top of this, we have the Federal and State "No Child Left Behind" standards, which already hold schools accountable for making adequate yearly progress for the whole school as well as Black and Hispanic children, Asian children, Native American children, English language learners, special education and economically disadvantaged students. The State has a system called School Under Registration Review and we also have School Report Cards, which provide lots of information for parents and educators. The Department of Education has a history of closing poorly performing schools, and principals currently already have evaluation standards in their contract that allow for their removal. The core standards in all of these accountability systems are, of course, test scores. The validity of this system has been under debate for many years.

Along come the DOE's progress report cards. Only 30% of the grade is based on the old performance test score, the remainder is based on criteria completely new to the City and State, 55% on one-year changes in test scores and 15% on surveys and attendance. The main component of the new model, the one-year test score change - the "growth model" - did not get vetted by any other public body other than the DOE. There was no public hearing on the inputs and assumptions into this statistical model, there was no vote by the Panel on Educational Policy, there was no review or approval by the State Education Department and its own division of Assessment and Accountability. I believe concerns had been expressed informally that New York City's new system would produce results

inconsistent with the existing system that might cause confusion and consternation. It is my understanding that the SED has never seen the guts of the new statistical system – the growth model, its inputs, its assumptions, its complex weighting. We have no knowledge of whether the new system controls for the probability that measuring test results within one year would fluctuate within a certain range up or down and that therefore no conclusions school quality could be drawn from such results. Last week I sent a letter to the State Education Department asking they review the validity of the statistical models used for DOE’s progress evaluations.

School Progress Reports (Elementary, Middle School and K-8) Measurement Process

The derivation of a school’s score and its corresponding grade is not exactly intuitive. There is no way to look at a school’s progress report and determine how the percentages and the scales combine in some way to generate the score. In addition, there is no publication that provides the information. The algorithm is not included in the Educator Guide. The Department of Education Assessment and Accountability staff has acknowledged this omission and will consider including it in next year’s guide.

Student Performance: A school’s performance score is calculated by comparing the school’s scores to its peer horizon and then to the city horizon. The peer horizon represents 2/3 of the score and is constructed by ranking all schools with the same grade arrangement (K-5, K-8, 6-8) according to Title I poverty rate (weighted 40%), the percentage of Black students (40%), the percentage of Hispanic students (40%), the percentage of ELL students (10%), and the percentage of Special Education students (10%). Each school’s peer group is comprised of the 20 schools ranked just above it and the 20 schools ranked just below it. **(Peer group lists are not publicly available at this time.)** The lowest and the highest scores in the peer group then set the peer horizon. The range of peer horizon varies for each school. The city horizon is the same for all schools within the same grade arrangements.

The first figure in the student performance column is the percentage of students at levels 3 and 4 on the State ELA. That number falls a certain distance up the scale on the peer horizon. That distance is then measured by how far along its continuum it falls, so that if it is halfway up the school’s proficiency score becomes a score of 50%. Then the bottom score on the peer range is subtracted from 50% and that figure is then divided by the range of the peer horizon. The same steps are taken for the scale ELA score for the school, which has the added computation of taking the scale score and converting it to a “proficiency rating” which is a scale from 1-4.50. Level 1 scale scores range from 1-1.99 proficiency rating. A 4.50 is the highest (perfect) score a student can achieve. The steps are the same for the student progress category. The progress category measures the change in individual students’ respective tests scores over the course of one year. In order to make one year’s worth of progress the student must achieve the exact same raw score as the year prior. These changes are then measure by percentage of students

making at least one year of progress, the average change in one year, and the average change in the lowest 1/3 of students.

The performance category score is then multiplied by 30 and the progress score is multiplied by 55 and these final figures represent 85% of the progress report grade. The remaining 15% stems from the measurement of parent and teacher surveys and school attendance rates. (The High School progress reports are composed similarly but, peer groups are set differently, regents test scores are used and student surveys are included.) The grade itself is curved such that schools from 64-100 receive an A; 49.9-64 receive a B; 38.8-49.9 receive a C; 30.9-38.8 receive a D and below 30.9 an F.

Mayor Bloomberg stated, "With these Progress Reports, parents no longer have to navigate a maze of statistics to determine how their child's school is doing and how it compares to others." However, these formulae are both complicated and unfounded. Under what assumptions underlie the weighting of a school's Black population to receive a 40% weight and its ELL population to receive a 10% weight. Why not weight school size? Why weight at all? Was the use of regression analysis considered to control for the many variables present in testing analysis? Furthermore, why is the peer horizon 2/3 of the score? How does the computation of one year's progress on a standardized test control for standard error or random factors? It seems that the Department of Education employed a methodology that raises as many questions as it seeks to answer.

Any assessment that the DOE provides to parents, teachers and principals should align with state and federal assessments, especially when the City's assessments are using the same tests scores. However the City's approach to the progress reports generates myriad inconsistencies.

Examples of misrepresentative letter grades:

- IS 89 in Battery Park City received a D on the school progress report. However, one month earlier it was the only intermediate school in New York City to receive a No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon award based on high test scores. This school was one of only 18 schools in the State of New York nominated for this federal distinction based on the same test scores for which the DOE granted its D grade. (Source: Editorial, *The Downtown Express*, Vol. 20, No. 29)
- PS 35 in Staten Island is nationally recognized for its high performance, but received an F. (Source: *New York Post*, *Grading Schools Fairly*, Randi Weingarten, Nov. 12, 2007) Schools branded with an F will have to offer their students the opportunity to transfer in the summer. But, why would a family want to transfer out of this school when its reading scores have come in about 20% higher than the district average since 2002. 86.5% of students at PS 35 tested at levels 3 or 4 in 2007. Would their students transfer to PS 19, which received a much better B grade but only has 57.8% of students reading at grade level?

- Last year the DOE labeled 25 schools as “persistently dangerous.” Of these 25 schools, 11 received letter grades: two As, two Bs, five Cs, one D and one F. (Source: Dan Brown, New York City Schools Receive Misleading Report Cards, November 12, 2007).
- About ½ of the schools led by the \$7 million per year Leadership Academy program received C, D or Fs. The 12 failing schools being led by Leadership Academy principals represent on quarter of all F schools in the system. (Source: New York Post, Principal Training “Leads” Nowhere, Melissa Klein and Angela Montefinise, November 11, 2007).

Statistical curiosities:

- The progress section of the report card counts for 55% of the grade. This component is based on individual students’ respective progress over the course of one year. A student must answer the same number of questions correctly on the statewide exams in order to be considered as having made one year’s worth of progress. However, according to research, 50-80 percent of annual fluctuations in a typical school’s test scores are random or due to one-time factors. (Source: Editorial, *The Downtown Express*, Vol. 20, No. 29)

Do the progress reports control for random factors/standard error?

- The possibility of getting one additional question wrong on a different test one year later would seem to fall within the standard error of measurement. While it is possible to get one more question correct on a subsequent year’s exam, the higher the score, the less likely a student will be to add to the score. In fact, a perfect raw score of 790 cannot deviate upward.

Do the progress reports control for the impossibility of improving from 100%?

- In order to compose a peer group, schools in the same grade span are ranked according to weighted averages of Title 1 poverty rate (40%), the population of Black students (40%), the population of Hispanic students (40%), the percentage of ELL students (10%), and the percentage of Special Education students (10%). How was the assignment of these weights determined? What is the rationalization for these specific weights? Why is school size not included in the construction of the peer horizon?

What were the assumptions on which the weighting system was based?

- Peer horizons range drastically. For example the range of scores on the student performance peer horizon for PS 154 is 27.7 and for PS 139 it is 39.9.
- Peer groupings do not take admission practices into account – weather a school is screened or zoned.

How can peer group listings be accessed by the public?

- Survey results were counted without adjusting for return rates. If the return rate was well below the City average, those results were not included. However there is no clear indication of what the average is. Analysis of schools in the 44th AD suggests that rates ranged drastically – from a high of 41% to a low of 7%. Were the low rates included in the average before being tossed out as being too far

below the average? Even the high rate – 41% - isn't very impressive. The average of parent surveys returned in District 2 is about 31%.

Now that parents and teachers understand how the surveys will be used, will the survey results remain valid?

- Many of the questions on the surveys have the same point value for more than one answer. For instance, the questions: *“How often during this school year have you: a) contacted a teacher...to share important information about your child’s learning? b) Talked to a teacher about how to help your child learn something (she/he) is struggling with? c) Talked to a teacher about your child’s academic progress?”* all are scores of 10 points whether the answer is “At least one a week” or “At least once a month” and 5 points whether the answer is “One every few months” or “Once or twice this year”.

The implementation of the school progress reports:

The school system can highlight success or substantial improvement for schools in a meaningful way; the school system can point out deficiencies and even close school under the existing system. When you're evaluating performance and progress, the actual standards you're using need to be transparent. In this particular case they are not. I'm hopeful that this is just the beginning of a genuine vetting of the letter grade system by the public and public bodies, a vetting that the DOE should have allowed before going public.



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

MARK S. WEPRIN
24th District
Queens County

CHAIR
Small Business Committee

COMMITTEES
Aging
Codes
Insurance
Judiciary

MEMBER
NYS Assembly
Puerto Rican/Hispanic
Task Force

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2007



THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

MARK S. WEPRIN
24th District
Queens County

CHAIR
Small Business Committee

COMMITTEES
Aging
Codes
Insurance
Judiciary

MEMBER
NYS Assembly
Puerto Rican/Hispanic
Task Force

December 10, 2007

Good morning. I am Mark Weprin and I represent the 24th Assembly District in Eastern Queens. As a father of two public school students and a champion of New York City public schools, I submit the following testimony to the New York City Council on the subject of the New York City Department of Education (DOE)'s recently released school progress reports.

The progress reports are an attempt to inform the public about the performance of New York City public schools. While I agree with DOE's focus on academic excellence, I take issue with its methodology and its failure to fully explain the assessments to the public. The grades, which were supposed to provide parents with valuable information, have mostly generated confusion, and the media has exacerbated the situation with fuzzy terminology: DOE's Progress Reports have been regularly referred to as report cards, which is a misnomer. The grades are meant to show schools' progress – which is not the same as school quality – and they do not achieve even that much. While I support evaluating public schools, I believe that DOE's recent attempt falls far short of its goals.

The first problem is that the category of "student progress" accounted for fifty-five percent of a school's grade, and the DOE equated student progress with changes in test scores from one year to the next. So a

school in which the students scored the same for two years in a row is considered to have shown no progress, even if most students did well both years, while a school in which the students' test scores increased, even if they remained low, gets points for improvement. This method of grading unfairly penalizes high-performing schools such as those in Eastern Queens.

Even worse, DOE's definition of academic progress is based on the idea that high-stakes standardized tests accurately assess how much students have learned, but there are several reasons to doubt that premise. As I have often stated, the extreme emphasis on test preparation has taken away from real learning in classrooms across the City. So if the students in a school increased their test scores from one year to the next, their "improvement" is just as likely to be a result of excessive test preparation drills as a reflection of academic progress. And if higher test scores stem from more time spent on test preparation, they may in fact indicate that less learning has taken place.

On the other hand, a decrease in test scores could mean that a few students were not feeling well on the day of the test, or that they happened to choose the wrong answers on a couple of multiple choice questions. If students' scores went down from third grade to fourth grade, maybe it's because the third graders take each State test for two days while the fourth graders spend three days per test. (New York's bar exam is only two days.) Test scores can decline for a number of reasons, but the change does not mean that students and teachers in a school are suddenly performing at a lower level than they did the previous year.

I also have serious reservations about the surveys of parents, students, and teachers that the DOE used to evaluate the portion of a school's grade that reflects "school environment." Every community has a few naysayers who are always full of criticism. Unfortunately, they are the most likely to submit surveys and to influence others to share in their negativism. Such individuals can have a disproportionate impact on the

school's grade.

The blatant inconsistencies in the grades reveal how ridiculous they really are. Some schools that did well on their Quality Reviews did poorly on the Progress Reports; some schools that were listed as among the most persistently dangerous in New York received A's and B's from DOE. What are parents to think when they receive such contradictory information?

I have no qualms about the concept of issuing progress reports for New York City schools. Any institution that uses taxpayer dollars must be accountable to the public. But a single letter grade cannot possibly represent everything the public needs to know about a school and its progress. Fair evaluations would take into account student safety, parent involvement, teacher qualifications, art and music offerings, and the school's learning environment. Feedback from parents and teachers should come from large groups of survey responders who filled out clear, intuitive questionnaires. Most of all, we should not rely on scores from high-stakes standardized tests. Changes in test results from one year to the next do not reveal what we really need to know about our schools: how hard teachers and principals have worked and how much students have learned. The Progress Reports are not report cards, and the DOE grades simply are not accurate assessments of our schools.



Council of School Supervisors & Administrators, New York City

New York State Federation of School Administrators
Local 1 American Federation of School Administrators, AFL-CIO

TESTIMONY
OF THE
COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERVISORS AND
ADMINISTRATORS (CSA)

ERNEST LOGAN, PRESIDENT

President
Ernest A. Logan

Executive Vice President
Peter J. McNally

First Vice President
Randi Herman, Ed.D.

Secretary
Michael DeStefano

Treasurer
Laverne Burrowes

Vice Presidents
Mark Cannizzaro
Alexander Castillo
Robert Kazanowitz
Richard Oppenheimer
Nilda J. Rivera

Executive Director Operations
Anita Gomez-Palacio

Executive Director Field Services
Audrey Fuentes

16 Court Street
Brooklyn, NY 11241-1003

718/ 852-3000 Tel
718/ 403-0278 Fax

www.csa-nyc.org

TO THE

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

RE: EXAMINING THE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION'S NEW PROGRESS REPORTS

DECEMBER 10, 2007

Good morning Chairman Jackson, distinguished members of the committee and respected colleagues. My name is Ernest Logan and I am the President of the *Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA)*. I want to thank each of you for your continued advocacy and support for public education.

CSA represents over 5,600 Principals, Assistant Principals, Supervisors and Education Administrators who work for the Department of Education. CSA also represents more than 400 Directors and Assistant Directors of city-funded Day Care Centers. We also proudly represent 8,000 retirees among our members.

Today, we are examining in-depth a new instrument that the Department of Education describes as "Progress Reports." In the spirit of collaboration and in our desire to work with the DOE to continually improve the system, I will share with you some of the highlights of a letter I am sending to Schools Chancellor Klein about the Progress Reports. As a long-time educator, I believe that when we evaluate a student's progress, we must look beyond a single standardized test score. We look at each child "holistically" in order to capture the full picture. We understand that test scores -- a one-day snap-shot of a child's knowledge and skill -- is merely one indicator in a host of instruments that can be used to determine if a child has shown sustained progress over the year.

CSA has always endorsed the concept of accountability. In fact, we have embraced it. All school leaders must be held accountable for their actions that impact the lives of 1.1 million students. Currently, Principals are rated not by these Progress Reports, but instead by a process called the Principal's Performance Review (PPR). In our view, the assignment of a letter grade does not provide the big picture of how well a school is progressing. In fact, the Progress Report should not be seen -- or used - as the ultimate measure of the effectiveness of a school. Without the necessary anecdotal details about a school, the Progress Report letter grade is an isolated one-shot analysis that lacks specificity. To quote State Assemblyman Mark Weprin in a recent op-ed he authored:

"A single letter grade cannot possibly represent everything the public needs to know about a school and its progress. Fair evaluations would take into account parent involvement, teacher qualifications, art and music offerings, and the school's learning environment."

When the Progress Reports were first announced, CSA did not endorse them because we knew there were shortcomings then that needed to be addressed. We were troubled by reports from the field about inaccuracies with student and demographic data, by inappropriate school groupings that led to unfair comparisons, and by the general feeling among our membership that the letter grades did not fairly represent the wonderful work going on in our schools. At this juncture, we can't un-do what has been done as a result of these Progress Reports city-wide. All we can do is to make realistic recommendations to improve them. By ONLY looking at standardized test scores, the Progress Reports should be more aptly named "Standardized Test Comparisons."

Presently, believe it or not, a student who "aces" the test in third grade and again "aces" the test in fourth grade is considered a -.01%. Therefore, this child who had a perfect

score two years in a row is tainted with a label of “not having made progress”! This is both silly and unconscionable, and DOE must address these types of obvious flaws. Even a layperson can see that the child’s score did not decline, so why the negative rating?

Let me share some of CSA’s suggestions for improvement:

- The DOE should provide professional development to all school leaders requesting it, so that they may better understand the Progress Reports, and can in turn explain them to parents. Late last spring was not a good time to prepare Principals for this new evaluative instrument, as many superintendents were job-hunting because the reorganization was displacing them. Of course, schools with poor letter grades will need even more resources and support in order to improve dramatically. CSA’s professional development department - The Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) - has been filling this training void over the past six weeks, by providing workshops about the Progress Reports in each borough to full classrooms of our members.
- Given the fact that these letter grades have a major impact on the public’s perceptions of a school, we must ensure that ALL of the data being used to evaluate schools is complete, accurate and up-to-date. While there is an appeals process, we should also make sure that the process is fair.
- The assigning of “peer groups” must be clarified. If we are going to compare schools, the comparison should be done with a “level playing field” that truly lumps schools into the same category that are very similar in nature. You can’t compare apples to oranges when the stigma of a poor grade is so devastating.
- We need to avoid the mixed messages that the public is receiving. There were numerous examples of schools with documented records of excellence and progress -- including recognition by the U.S. Department of Education as “Blue Ribbon Schools” -- that were stigmatized with a Progress Report grade of “D.” Other schools were in “good standing” according to NCLB standards and yet received a Progress Report of “F.” Whose data should we accept? It is extremely important that the Progress Report be designed to better align these instruments of accountability so that they do not conflict and create confusion, rather than insight.

- A holistic approach must be adopted for students and for school assessments. We now have tools available to us to track and analyze multiple layers of progress and achievement. Just as measuring student achievement cannot be limited to a handful of test scores, schools cannot be measured by a simplified letter grade. These stand-alone letter grades should be replaced with measures of different, specific categories so that parents and educators would know exactly where the school is strong, and what needs to improve. These areas should include facets of the school community such as music and arts programs, which are currently left out of the grading system. By putting in place multiple indicators for all types of student growth, the system would be more equitable and transparent. There does seem to be a broader collection of data for the high schools, which better reflects our call for multiple indicators.
- All schools should be part of the progress report model. If the goal is to hold our entire school system accountable, we cannot leave out D75, D79, or K-2 schools. City-funded Charter schools should also get progress reports and thereby be held to the same standards as other schools.
- A minimum of three years data should be used. We do understand the current rationale behind using only two years of data for middle and high schools, namely that the metrics used by the New York State Education Department were changed three years ago and using that data would adversely affect the city's results. The city must now be proactive, and have a plan that will address any future changes made on the state level.
- Peer groups must be revisited. Statistically speaking, the Office of Accountability can explain and justify how it determined the groupings of schools. We strongly believe that a school's demographics and a gauge of other mitigating circumstances such as the size of a school (student population) in a building should be factored in. A small school would be greatly impacted by the progress or lack of progress by a handful of students. Conversely, a large school would barely be impacted by the results of a handful of students.
- More opportunities for extra credit should be available. Currently, schools are not credited when encouraging students to take additional and more challenging courses. When a student takes AP (Advanced Placement) courses or takes additional units over the minimum of 44 required for graduation as they do in most CTE (Career and Technical Education) schools, those achievements are not

recognized or factored in. In essence, high-performing students are statistical liabilities, because they inherently have less room for improvement. The starkest example was cited earlier where a student who receives a perfect score in consecutive years, is actually counted as a “negative” towards a school’s progress. This is too egregious to continue!

- There has to be a better way to measure the progress of students with special needs. It is not a fair comparison to measure the progress of a mild Learning Disabled child with a moderately Mentally Retarded child. Different children have different disabilities and levels of disabilities and the present system does not yet account for that.
- A formal appeals process should be established. The Office of Accountability was receptive to the large volume of emails and phone calls during the four-week appeals process, and my office was happy to learn that in each case, they received a response from the DoE. However, we strongly suggest that the appeals process be formalized to allow Principals sufficient time to review the data in-house with the Inquiry Team and their Cabinet.
- Schools should get additional support to correct problems. One of the most troubling pieces to come out since these scores were announced was the fact that the DoE is not giving schools with D’s and F’s any extra resources or support. With the data now being collected at the school level, and with the CSA, UFT and DoE working together, we have a genuine opportunity here to develop solid, specific and meaningful solutions for every struggling school. Additional resources and support are appropriate and necessary. Even many of our higher-performing schools can benefit from additional assistance and resources.
- A joint committee or taskforce should be commissioned. Over the years, CSA has made the point that “one size does not fit all” when it comes to education because every school faces its unique challenges. Our members have much to offer in terms of ideas and solutions to improving the progress report system, and we believe that a committee or taskforce should be formed to include CSA, UFT, and DoE officials to further discuss the nuances of these progress reports and improve them. We already know that the repercussions for schools with poor progress report grades can be drastic, so clearly this is a serious topic that requires our collaborative efforts to “get it right.”

As the President of CSA, I want to again emphasize that our members have embraced the notion of accountability. But in order to make accountability meaningful, these progress reports must be accurate, equitable, understandable and transparent. Grades that don't make sense will impact morale negatively and stigmatize students and staff. Therefore, I urge the DoE to consider these recommendations in the spirit in which we offer them. We believe in working collaboratively to help resolve these problems so that the public will have a clear and unbiased picture of our schools. We look forward to continuing to do our part to bring about genuine and positive change.

Thank you.

Total Scores are calculated by weighting the values of the Proximity to City Horizon (x1) and Proximity to Peer Horizon (x2) measures for School Environment, Student Performance and Student Progress. As these weightings indicate, Proximity to Peer Horizon counts twice as much as Proximity to City Horizon. These weighted values are then averaged to create scores for School Environment, Student Performance and Student Progress. The school's Weighted Total Score (excluding additional credit for Exemplary Student Progress) is a weighted average of School Environment (weighted 15%), Student Performance (30%) and Student Progress (55%).

Additional recognition for schools obtaining Exemplary Student Progress as defined above is then added to the overall index using the following formula: .03 is added for each qualifying population as to which the percentage of students making exemplary gains is in the top 20% of all schools within the City and .015 is added for each qualifying population as to which the percentage of students as to which percentage of students making exemplary gains is in the top 40% of all schools in the City. A school's Weighted Total Score Plus Additional Credit is determined by adding these additional potential points, if any are awarded, to the Weighted Total Score.

$$\begin{aligned}
 &\text{School Grade (on scale A - F) =} \\
 &\overbrace{\frac{a}{100} \left(\frac{\frac{1}{3}CH + \frac{2}{3}PH}{3} \right) \left(\frac{3}{20} \right)}^{SE} + \overbrace{\frac{5b}{100} \left(\frac{\frac{1}{3}CH + \frac{2}{3}PH}{15} \right) \left(\frac{3}{10} \right)}^{SP^1} + \\
 &\overbrace{\frac{4c}{100} \left(\frac{\frac{1}{3}CH + \frac{2}{3}PH}{12} \right) + \frac{10d}{100} \left(\frac{\frac{1}{3}CH + \frac{2}{3}PH}{30} \right) \left(\frac{11}{20} \right)}^{SP^2} + \\
 &\underbrace{\phantom{\frac{4c}{100} \left(\frac{\frac{1}{3}CH + \frac{2}{3}PH}{12} \right) + \frac{10d}{100} \left(\frac{\frac{1}{3}CH + \frac{2}{3}PH}{30} \right) \left(\frac{11}{20} \right)}}_{EC} \\
 &\phantom{\frac{4c}{100} \left(\frac{\frac{1}{3}CH + \frac{2}{3}PH}{12} \right) + \frac{10d}{100} \left(\frac{\frac{1}{3}CH + \frac{2}{3}PH}{30} \right) \left(\frac{11}{20} \right)} (0.000, 0.015, 0.030, \dots, 0.150)
 \end{aligned}$$

Prof. David C. Bloomfield
Program Head, Educational Leadership, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Parent Member, Citywide Council on High Schools

Testimony before the New York City Council Education Committee
On School Report Cards and School Closings
December 10, 2007

Thank you for this opportunity to once again address the Education Committee on a matter of instructional importance. My name is David Bloomfield. I am a professor and Program Head of Educational Leadership at Brooklyn College. I am also an elected parent member of the Citywide Council on High Schools, an advisory body to the Department of Education. I am the author, most recently, of American Public Education Law, published by Peter Lang.

I have appended to this testimony my recent article for GothamGazette.com, "Report Cards Flunk the Clarity Test," and a letter to Mayor Bloomberg requesting that he immediately rescind schools' unreliable, misleading, and politicized letter grades. I will not repeat the points made in that material. Rather, I testify today on what the Report Cards and ensuing school closures tell us about the city Department of Education and the accountability that the DOE must accept for school failure.

What do the Report Cards tell us? They say that the DOE recognizes that at least 150 schools are failing. If we also count schools on the State "Schools Under Registration Review (SURR)" list and federal No Child Left Behind list of "Schools in Need of Improvement (SINI)," given the surprisingly limited overlap (55% of SURR or SINI schools got As or Bs, whereas only 14% got Ds or Fs), there are over 300 officially named failing schools in New York 6 years into this administration. And the number would be

much greater if small schools were included since they are routinely bypassed in this accounting as too new for evaluation.

In addition to widespread school failure, the DOE's vaunted new restructuring seems to have had little effect in providing support for schools that really need it. The Report Card data -- as opposed to the grades -- were not new. Schools recently announced for closure were known as problematic long before grades were announced. Yet here we are, 6 months into the reorganization, and the answer seems to be to close schools rather than to devise a successful strategy of support.

I am a strong believer in school closure as a reform strategy and wrote about speeding and strengthening the process in another Gotham Gazette column back in 2001, also appended. Before that, I championed the cause as a member of Regents Task Forces on Low Performing Schools. But leave it to the Mayor to turn a needed reform into a cynical political device. By closing schools and opening new schools, the Mayor stays ahead of the SURR and SINI clocks that would close many schools anyway, giving the impression of forward motion when so much is stagnant.

Why close these particular schools? Creating conditions to save or close a school are well within Tweed's power through enrollment and support mechanisms -- not through the demonstrably ineffective School Support Organizations (SSO's) but from concrete direct central interventions. Many of the closed schools have positive Quality Reviews. The New York Daily News has shown that most are not the "worst of the worst." Thus, the recent announcements of schools to be closed have less to do with Report Card grades and more to do with some subjective decision at Tweed to withhold resources.

These facts lead me to believe that closure of specific schools is the result of acquiring real estate for new schools rather than some objective decision based on performance. I find no other explanation to be fully persuasive. Old schools must die in order to start new schools, already on the assembly line, that are untested but untainted. The instructional cost in students' lives disrupted is incalculable but it serves the purpose of illusory improvement.

In conclusion, the new Report Cards and school closures say little reliable about individual school conditions but, taken together, speak volumes about the lack of real instructional improvement or accountability after 6 years under Mayor Bloomberg.

Thank you.

Contact:

Prof. David C. Bloomfield
Brooklyn College, CUNY
2900 Bedford Ave.
Brooklyn, NY 11210
718-951-5608 (w)
718-951-4816 (cell)
davidb@brooklyn.cuny.edu

Report Cards Flunk the Clarity Test

by David C. Bloomfield

26 Nov 2007



Many city parents reacted with puzzlement, rather than celebration or disappointment, when they saw the newly released school report cards. Instead of taking the grades at face value, discussions have centered on comparisons between expectations and final results. Parents and educators alike seem obsessed with arguing why the grades are wrong and how the Department of Education will misuse them. Hardly a show of confidence for an effort costing hundreds of millions of dollars.

Over the years, New Yorkers have seen a lot of seemingly conflicting and confusing information from the department. There have been varying accounts of the high school graduation rate from the state and city and, after years of rising scores on state standardized tests, parents learned in mid-November that student achievement had not improved much at all according to another measure, the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

This backlash to the report cards in particular results from the education department's mistaken premise: that the grades mean something to anyone but senior district officials. In fact, and fatally, these school grades symbolize nothing. They have no independent basis outside the factors and weights subjectively built into their design.

This is not true for other "report cards," which evaluate everything from student mastery to hospital mortality rates. There, we understand that the grades refer to some agreed-upon level of performance. As a society, we have a pretty good idea about the degree of acumen reflected by a third grader's "A" paper or what problems might persuade the health department to give a hospital a "D." Certainly we understand their comparative utility: that a "B" paper is worse than an "A" and that, all things being equal, we would rather have surgery at an "A" hospital.

But what are we to make of a school's rating when "environment," with its multiple variables like safety and communication, all rated according to statistically unreliable survey results, constitutes 15 percent of the grade? Or that "student progress" - measured by questionable state test results - is weighted almost twice as much as "student performance"? Where is the

social agreement on the measures that add up to school quality? The reports cards' emphasis on improvement over actual achievement has angered and befuddled many. Certainly many parents and students would prefer a "D" school with smart kids and little school-parent communication, despite the faint of that scarlet letter. If a school earns an "A" through an emphasis on test prep, with little emphasis on arts or social studies, is that where I want my child to go to school?

If this is the rubric Chancellor Joel Klein wants to use in grading principals, it is his right. Evaluation must be based on some subjective measures of performance, and Mayor Michael Bloomberg chose Klein to exercise this type of managerial judgment. But there is no consensus that the ratings on the report cards indicate what makes a good school, so spare us the judgmental rhetoric!

"These Progress Reports will give educators and parents the clear information they need to make smart decisions," said the chancellor in the press release accompanying release of the reports. "With these Progress Reports, parents no longer have to navigate a maze of statistics to determine how their child's school is doing and how it compares to others," said the mayor.

"Clear information"? No longer "a maze of statistics"? Did they try reading these things? The reports are a hodgepodge of scores, indexes, ranges, and calculations that only a statistician could love.

A Recipe for Confusion

It is as if a cook prepared a stew. A little beef, maybe some pork, potatoes, tomatoes, whatever suits the taste. The chef thinks, "It's delicious." Fine. But there is no more reason to think this is an "A" stew than another dish, equally satisfying to some, with a different mix of ingredients. Indeed, the federal government with its designations of success ("Blue Ribbon") and failure ("School in Need of Improvement") and New York State's list of low-performing "Schools Under Registration Review" have created stews of their own for parental consumption.

Klein and Bloomberg have arrived at a highly individual definition of a "good school," without any social consensus on that definition. No matter parents are confused. None of them would have mixed the ingredients in just that way were they to evaluate the school. So none of them should rely on the mayor or chancellor to determine where they send their children or how they behave toward poorly (or, for that matter, highly) graded teachers and administrators.

Fair grading requires comparison based on agreed-upon standards. In failing to establish the latter, Chancellor Klein has failed to adequately fulfill his obligation to the former. Rather than providing clarity, the chancellor has further muddied discussion of his and the mayor's success or failure.

David Bloomfield is the author of "American Public Education Law" (Peter Lang, 2007) and a parent member of the Citywide Council on High Schools.

Gotham Gazette - <http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/20071126/202/2354>

Letter to Mayor Bloomberg from David Bloomfield

To Rescind School Grades

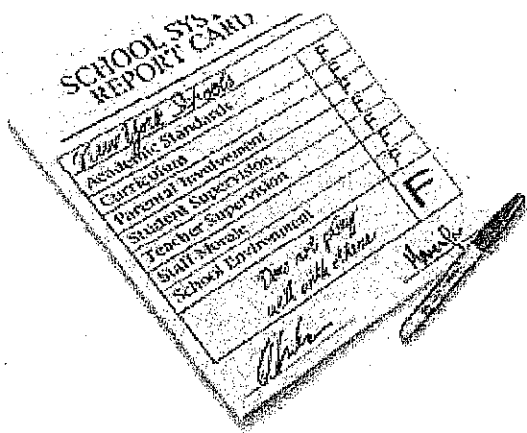
November 11, 2007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

Sufficient questions have been raised regarding the grading of New York City public schools (except charters) that it is time to rescind all recently issued letter grades. The system's unreliable data; the subjective, crazy-quilt method of computation; and the politicization of scores make useful judgments about school quality impossible.

Further, the grades bear little or no relation to other evaluations of school quality, sowing confusion rather than clarity among students, parents, educators, public officials and the general public. Perhaps you want to see this as a noble experiment gone bad. Fine. Whatever the rationale, as today's New York Times editorial suggests, it is time to replace this system since it has so obviously failed any reasonable measure of public or professional confidence.

David C. Bloomfield
Program Head, Educational Leadership at Brooklyn College
NYC public school parent and member, Citywide Council on High Schools



Issue of the Week

Flunking Schools

Printer-friendly page 

by David C. Bloomfield

19 November 01

One of the school system's most vexing problems is what to do to improve schools that are not functioning. Over the past decade, a quarter of all public schools in New York City at one time or another have been officially declared to be failing. These are called SURR schools, or schools under registration review.

At one of these schools, I visited a small elementary school art class. The class was in total chaos, with children standing on desks and jumping off them, running around and screaming. The teacher was yelling too. The teacher told us she had "only" been with the class for three months and that, as a substitute, she did not know the children's names and had never been given a roster, despite having asked for it several times.

Unfortunately, educators know this kind of situation well.

WHY SCHOOLS FAIL

What makes a failing school? Many things, say state investigators, including:

- Ineffective instructional methods
- Inadequate planning
- Insufficient supplies and materials
- Uncertified and inexperienced teachers
- Inadequate instructional leadership
- Poor communication among administrators and teachers
- Low academic standards
- Curriculum deficiencies
- Insufficient parent involvement
- Lack of a consistent, uniformly applied student behavior policy
- Inadequate student supervision
- Inadequate teacher supervision
- Inadequate library resources
- Poor staff morale
- Excessive principal turnover
- Deficiencies in the English as a second language and bilingual programs
- Special education deficiencies

The Board of Education was slow to respond to these problems. There was little overall planning or accountability until former Chancellor Rudy Crew created the "Chancellor's District", also called District 85 which grouped the worst schools together to supervise their improvement. These schools roughly correspond to those on the SURR list.

TO SURR WITHOUT LOVE

In 1989, New York State devised the scheme for putting low performing schools under "registration review." The targeted schools, which get some extra funds and assistance in curriculum and planning, are those that are farthest from meeting the state's performance standards according to their students' standardized test scores, or have been identified as being "poor learning environments." If the schools do not improve, they are shut down.

Since 1989, roughly 250 New York City public schools have been placed on the SURR list. Currently, 114 schools, 98 of them in New York City, are under registration review.

Just how bad at least some of these schools must be becomes clear when one looks at school performance overall. Throughout New York State, only 60 percent of fourth graders in public schools meet state standards for both reading and math. In New York City's SURR schools, only 10 percent of the fourth graders meet the standards.

The SURR process was supposed to improve the poorly performing schools, not shut them down. Critics, though, say this is not happening.

A new study, "The Tip of the Iceberg" by Joseph Viteritti and Kevin Kosar of New York University, published by the Manhattan Institute, states that on average, schools that do not improve remain on the SURR list for nine years before finally being closed. During this time, of course, thousands of students remain enrolled in what the state itself calls a poor learning environment.

While schools that improved enough to be removed from the list continue to do better than SURR schools, the study found, the majority of students in those former SURR schools still perform well below acceptable academic levels. The report also questions whether the SURR system masks the "iceberg" of general low performance in all city schools. In sum, argues the report, 70 percent or more of the students read below state standards in over a third of city schools.

The state admits that there needs to be quicker, more accurate data collection and evaluation of schools. (The state's role in identifying and improving low-performing schools is the subject of pending litigation). But the State Education Department officially declares that "the registration review process works," according to its August 2000 "Registration Review Report. It noted that 96 schools have been removed from the list since 1990, and the removal rate is accelerating. Only 17 were taken off from 1990 to 1995, whereas 79 were removed over the next five years. In December, 2000, an additional 25 schools on the state list were removed, the most ever in a single year, because test scores had moved them above the SURR threshold.

Critics contend that the removal rate says little about the quality of the schools. A school's students can have very low scores and the school can still be above the threshold for SURR. Further, they argue, test scores are subject to fluctuation and a statistical upward "blip" is likely among schools at the very bottom. Therefore, schools might rotate off the list to be replaced by others more because of probability than progress.

While he was a state regent, Harold Levy took steps (that he has backed away from since becoming chancellor) that would require SURR schools to employ only certified teachers. (Ten percent of city teachers are not certified, and many more teach outside their area of expertise.) The school system also reached an agreement with the United Federation of Teachers that makes teachers in SURR schools eligible for extra pay. Experienced teachers, however, have been slow to respond to incentives, and so most of the certified teachers in SURR schools are new teachers, many of whom have only the minimal preparation offered under a new state program. Thus, students in failing schools still get the least experienced and least prepared teachers.

THE ALTERNATIVES

Different states have taken varying approaches to the problem of failing schools. For most of the 1990s, New York focused on painstaking school-by-school reform and generally avoided state takeovers of entire districts. Other states, such as New Jersey, took over districts, including Newark and Jersey City, but failed to significantly improve the schools.

The difficulty of finding sweeping solutions came sharply into focus early this year when Schools Chancellor Harold Levy tried to privatize five SURR schools under the auspices of the for-profit Edison Schools, Inc. Like most low performing schools, these schools had spent years on the list undergoing a long sequence of "corrective action," planning and reviews.

Acting under pressure from Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Levy declared Edison could do a better job. But for his plan to take effect under state rules, parents of at least 50 percent of the students at a given school had to approve the idea. After a heated campaign, parents at all five schools rejected Edison. Today, the schools remain on the SURR list and two of them, IS 320 and IS 111, are slated to close.

VOUCHERS

Today, some states and the federal government are coming up with other solutions.

Florida Governor Jeb Bush, for example, has called for giving vouchers to students in that state's failing schools that they could use to pay tuition at private schools. The plan resembles existing programs that cover tuition in private programs for students with disabilities who cannot receive an appropriate education in public school. A suit has been filed against the Florida plan.

In 1994 a New York State task force recommended a similar plan to help students who have been forced to attend failing schools. But vouchers have been a volatile issue throughout the country, particularly in New York. Advocates say that giving vouchers to students in bad schools would rescue students from educational neglect and provide public school systems with a clear financial incentive to improve failing schools. Opponents believe vouchers will only make a bad situation worse, taking money and talented students out of the public schools.

Earlier this year, Congress rejected giving private school vouchers to students, but other methods to deal with failing schools, including providing students with a choice of public schools and issuing vouchers for private tutoring, could be included in legislation later this year.

STANDARDIZED STANDARDS

Though the Senate and House proposals differ, bills in both houses give schools between 10 and 12 years to meet state-designated goals for all students. Progress would be assessed yearly. If schools fail to meet the targets for any student after the agreed upon time period, they would be closed.

Both bills also require schools to report on students' performance targets and call for results to be broken out by income, race and ethnicity. Advocates for poor and minority students have called for this kind of reporting on the grounds that lumping all results together can disguise discrepancies in performance and inequities in the allocation of resources. For example, 73 percent of white state public school fourth graders meet the standards in math and reading, while only 39 percent of black and Hispanic students do.

As school systems rush to meet the new reporting and performance targets, some educators fear that states may set meaningless standards, thus ensuring that all schools can meet them. As one New York State Education Department official said, the overwhelming temptation will be to "game the system and drop the standards."

Another concern is that annual high-stakes tests could drive minority students in failing schools (and elsewhere) to repeat grades and eventually drop out. New York City has already seen a rise in its dropout rate, New York having one of the worst high-school graduation rates among major cities in the country, according to a recent report. Only 54 percent of city public school students graduated on time. Many attribute the high dropout rate to the state's new emphasis on tests for promotion and graduation.

POWER TO THE PRINCIPALS

These approaches all address the problem after it has occurred. It would clearly be better to prevent students and entire schools from falling below standards in the first place. To accomplish this, according to a range of studies, superintendents and principals must be alert to the needs of at risk students, so classes should be smaller in kindergarten through

third grade. Schools should use proven instructional programs such as Reading Recovery to aid students who need extra help.

Because principals can lose their jobs if their schools consistently fail, studies suggest they should have greater discretion in hiring and firing teachers. Superintendents, too, should have greater discretion to move teachers in and out of schools, much as other government agencies can transfer staff.

As the only people in the system who can make the needed changes, principals need higher salaries, along with the ability to assemble a similarly well-compensated team. And they must be evaluated on how well their students learn, not on whether the youngsters simply mastered some short-term test-taking strategies.

The solution to the problem of low-performing schools has been summed up in three words by Adelaide Sanford, the vice chancellor of the New York State Board of Regents. There must be, she says, "outrage, resources, and action."

Other Resources:

Several thoughtful reports, in addition to those cited in the text, offer solutions to the problem of low-performing schools.

- "Schools on Notice" (1998), an evaluation of the SURR process by New York University's Institute for Education and Social Policy
- "Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: A Guide for State and Local Leaders" (May 1998) by the U.S. Department of Education
- "Getting Off the List: School Improvement in NYC" by the Educational Priorities Panel

Links:

- New York State Education Department, Office of New York City School and Community Services
- New York City Board of Education
- New York State Charter School Institute
- Educational Priorities Panel
- Institute for Education and Social Policy, New York University
- New York Urban League

David C. Bloomfield is an associate professor of educational administration at Brooklyn College, CUNY. He was a member of the New York State Regents Visiting and Advisory Committees on Low Performing Schools.

###



THE CENTER FOR ARTS EDUCATION

Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Education

Delivered by Arthur Greenberg, The Center for Arts Education

**Re: Oversight: Examining the Department of Education's New Progress Reports
for Schools**

December 10, 2007

Good Morning. Thank you Chairman Jackson and members of the committee on Education for the opportunity to testify today on the Department of Education's new Progress Reports for Schools. I am Arthur Greenberg, Board member of the Center for Arts Education and a former superintendent of Community School District 25 in Queens for over eight years.

The Center for Arts Education is committed to restoring, stimulating, and sustaining quality arts education as an essential part of every child's education. Since its founding in 1996, CAE has awarded nearly \$40 million in private and public funding to support arts education partnerships and programs. In addition, CAE is dedicated to influencing educational and fiscal policies that will support arts education in all of the city's public schools.

School Progress Reports only offer an incomplete picture of what is happening in our public schools. In fact, 85 % of a school's grade comes from results on the State's math and English language arts exams. The other 15% of a school's grade comes from school surveys, with questions on the arts having a negligible impact on a school's grade.

Tracking overall performance of a school, based overwhelmingly on standardized test scores, fails to measure a school's ability to provide a well-rounded education that includes the arts.

Over more than 10 years CAE has witnessed the power of arts education in engaging students in learning and providing alternative avenues for achievement. Research proves learning in the arts enhances learning in other subject areas and contributes to a student's overall development, provides students with opportunities to work collaboratively, develop creative and critical thinking skills, and develop innovative

solutions -- all 21st century skills that employers in New York City and around the world want.

While students may have more access to arts education now than they did 25 years ago, there is still a long way to go. According to the DOE's 2006-2007 parent survey 32% of parents indicated that their child did not participate in any arts during the school day. A 2006 DOE study found that hundreds of schools did not have a single certified arts teacher. Other studies have indicated that, even in schools where arts are offered, only a fraction of the students receive the instruction.

New York State has a minimum set of state requirements that, if adhered to, would be an improvement on the current instruction in the arts. In response, the city has launched ArtsCount, and promises to issue an annual "Arts in Schools Report" in January. We are concerned though that since it will be reported separately from the progress reports principals will not be held to the same level of accountability.

The DOE has also eliminated Project Arts' categorical funding for the arts. Principals and teachers are feeling pressured to sacrifice instruction that does not directly relate to standardized test results. Not only will failing schools reduce access for children to art, music, drama and theater, among other disciplines, but C or B schools will scale back these elements of a well-rounded education to increase standardized test scores, ensure bonuses and win administrators' praise.

As a matter of equity and access, we ask the City and the Council to ensure that all our public schools at least meet the state requirements. We also urge the council members to engage in building demand and support for arts education in their schools and to hold both principals and the DOE accountable for making sure that arts access is available to every student across the city.

Thank you.

Dr. Arthur Greenberg is an accomplished educator and administrator having enjoyed an extensive career in the New York City Public School system serving as teacher, principal and superintendent. Dr. Greenberg was hand picked by former Schools Chancellor Dr. Rudy Crew to oversee and mentor the city's 32 community superintendents and push them to vigorously enforce standards for their principals. He is the winner of the Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education for Achievements in Arts Education and Community College Development for his successful integration of arts education into the district's curriculum, resulting in higher academic achievement among the district's diverse student population.

A lifelong resident of New York City, Dr. Greenberg earned his doctorate in education from Teachers College, Columbia University, a master's degree in English education from New York University, a master's of Science and Professional diploma (Administration and Supervision) from Pace University and a bachelor's of Business Administration degree from City College of New York.

Comments by parents, teachers, and at least one ex-principal on the DOE school grading system:

Another waste of money by the DOE. This money should be better spent on smaller class size and building new schools.

You've been trying for years to improve the system, and it's not about the system. It's about one-on-one contact, teacher to student. No system will improve that; only smaller class sizes!

As a co-president of the Parents Association at PS 87 I participated in the evaluation and have followed the whole process closely. I find it suspect at best. I wish the money were being used to increase class size, bring more arts and science and physical education to our children, and less standardized testing as well.

The focus should be less on evaluating the school as a whole and more on teaching the individual child to ensure his or her progress. More focus and resources to the teacher for better teaching in the classroom.

It is easy to read that desperation grips the DOE. They have failed time and time again in their efforts to improve our school system. Each change has brought chaos. They are looking any where and everywhere for someone else to blame. This latest attempt to grade schools shows how deep there lack of understanding and knowledge goes.

This system rewards test-prep mills while damaging good programs. I see this in my own CUNY students. This system has got to go.

Enough money waisted !! Reduce class size NOW !

DOE money is more effectively used in reducing class size rather than grading schools with faulty measures. Money should be used in reducing class size and in teaching real math, language arts, history, science, music, art and physical fitness.

The dependence on criteria linked to improving test scores is misleading. A meaningful evaluation must include all aspects of a schools performance.

It should be clear by the number of "failing schools" by other criteria that got high grades, that this methodology is flawed.

Please don't waste our precious financial resources and time and energy on this absurd and meaningless system. This ill-conceived program is abusive of our schools, children and families by directing funds into a meaningless nonsensical waste of time that deprives children of what they really need--smaller classes and more teachers.

When does the DOE is going to really work on behalf of the students, parents and teachers?

Please focus on smaller class sizes. This is especially important for children who are labeled

Leonie
Harrison-
Class Size
Matters

average but really have above-average potential that they will never reach without the additional attention.

Reduce class size and expand the capital plan now!

Let's put our emphasis on real education and developing curriculum instead of on incessant testing and unfair grading systems for our schools. My 2nd grade daughter says she doesn't want to go to school anymore because school is not fun and learning is drudgery. The DOE is killing the schools, intimidating teachers and principals, and turning our kids into test-taking robots. Enough is enough!

My children's school received a B, which would be a fine grade if I believed it meant anything. But it doesn't. It is a grossly oversimplified assessment of the complex process of education. The obsession with testing--and grading schools on testing--has got to stop if we are to truly improve the quality of public education.

your focus must first be on reducing class size and all that entails. Until that is achieved you cannot even begin to devise a plan to evaluate schools!

As Always our education system is backwards and makes learn difficult. If our kids are only going to school to pass your tests how can we ask our teachers to be creative thinkers so our children can go to school and learn in new fresh ways???????

The time that we prep students for testing, leaves less time for valuable school work such as students learning critical thinking! Please rethink this valueless system!

The new grading system is inane and ultimately flawed in hundreds of ways. To spend all of that precious money that could be used in the classroom to better our kids' education is criminal. Fancy computer crunching of data (some of the data is faulty) and grouping schools together based on the broadest criteria is just bizarre. Once again, what are the credentials of the "genius" who came up with such a system? The DOE relies too much on outside policy wonks who have little or no prior knowledge or experience in the public school system. The public school system is not a big business and should not be run as such. And yet, I highly doubt that any big business would use such a convoluted grading system to keep their workers in line.

Class size is scientifically demonstrated to improve learning. It is the only thing.

I am not as opposed to the grading as I am FOR class size reduction and capital improvements. I KNOW that class size reduction and capital improvements would improve test scores. Why won't they give it a try?

I personally know of good schools that received a C & D and schools I would not send my child an A or B.

Smaller class size is the MOST important contribution you can make to our school system.

More testing is the WORST CONTRIBUTION. Why go down this path? Good education will never come of this plan.

The failure to address the real needs of education and all other social programs while both major political parties continue to maintain the war for control of the oil rich regions and enable the continuing attacks on jobs, standards of living, and democratic rights, show that this petition needs to be a tool not for continuing down the path of pleading for our children but to create an independent party of the working people on the basis of social needs rather than the interests of the profit system.

The whole grading system is made by and for the pleasure and advancement of statisticians and their corporate bosses. It doesn't reflect the reality in the school, it doesn't help students learn, and it doesn't help teachers teach. The non-educator people running our schools want to create a chaotic, obscure system so that they can eventually rid the country of public education.

In a way it's a good thing this happened. It seems to be opening people's eyes about the reality of how the schools are being run.

There is no way to summarize the culture, effectiveness, and spirit of a school in one letter. Resources should be put into reducing class size, giving students the personal attention they need, in order to improve achievement.

My son's enthusiasm in doing his homework has markedly diminished with this school system. The problem is some teachers do not meticulously check the work the kids did mostly at home with their parents. At times the teachers never checked the work. When I asked my son why he is not as motivated in doing his homework as before he told me : "THE TEACHER DOES NOT CHECK IT ANYWAY". He is now in fourth grade. He had a wonderful teacher in the second grade. That second grade teacher always checked the works on a daily basis and my son liked her comments like : "... you did well. But you can still do better. How about...?..Try it again...". This time all the teachers do is just put a check mark on top of the page of the assignment. Many times there are wrong answers on the page. I spoke with my son's teacher, she told me that they check the homework collectively because she has no assistant and with about 26 pupils in the classroom she could not check all the works individually in the allotted time. The main issue is class size. We need improvement or change.

Class size has a lot to do with how much our children get out of a lesson plan. If a child doesn't catch what is being taught in a class of over 25 how are they ever going to advance?

I am so happy that someone is doing something about this. It really is ridiculous the way they do these things to us, and expect us not to react.

I agree that a better use can be made of this money. I would like to see more schools built to house the thousands of children who will be occupying the new residential units being created by developers.. instead of crowding more children into ill-equipped, aged and decrepit school buildings.

do the right thing and stop the nonsense.

I want all children in all neighborhoods to get the best education they can get. Not just in neighborhoods where money talk.

Testing makes a lot of people in the testing industry wealthy. Testing is used to justify neglect of schools and neighborhoods badly in need. It is used to demoralize and disempower teachers, teacher unions, and any other organization legitimately devoted to improving education. Testing does not improve education for our children or prepare them for the future. It does not improve the quality of our school systems. Rather, it dismantles them. There are better ways to assess students' progress without interfering with their education.

I am a former pta VP - very involved in schools. Now my 2 grandchildren attend PS 41 and Salk Science Middle school. I was educated in 3 countries in Europe and the only exam I ever took was the Oxford, Cambridge and London University entrance exam in 1940. I am appalled at the class time wasted in preparation for the absurd exams which have no connection to true education and intellectual stimulation. I am shocked by the ignorance of the scientific method and the delay in teaching hands-on science. Science textbooks are no substitute for laboratory work. The Board of Education spends a fortune on outside "advisers" and a huge bureaucracy - presumably needed for testing. And what happened to Latin - a great help in language development, sentence structure, logic - very popular in Great Neck and good private schools.

If we have enough collective sense not to give students a single letter grade each year for their entire year's work in different areas, why would anyone think doing so for an institution as variously tasked as an entire school should be rated in such a way? These letter grades are at best meaningless to parents (often even ridiculously counter to their own judgments) and, at worst, confusing in their horrendous oversimplification. In most respects, they simply represent one more way this Chancellor and Mayor can impose their obviously politicized vision of standardized test scores as THE measures of school success onto school principals and teachers. Shame on the Mayor and Chancellor for all of this, and shame on the Borough Presidents and City Councils for not leading the opposition.

I have been struggling to find any meaning in this grading system. The grades many schools have received do not seem to reflect what is going on inside those schools. The grades therefore become meaningless and confusing, rather than offering any transparency to a complex issue.

The school grading system is too inflexible and says nothing about the school. Demanding a school "improve" year after year is ridiculous... what happens when a school is already at the top of its game? Schools that really need help need the flexibility to teach to their kids, not to tests... and smaller class sizes and financial support for arts, gym and music. School grading systems do not give teachers the leeway they need to teach effectively. On top of that, the program is a mammoth waste of money. Spend it on smaller classes.

Mr. Mayor stop trying to turn the schools into businesses and just turn them into places where children are encouraged to learn by providing more resources to the districts with the higher number of low performing schools.

The grading system tells you nothing about the school. It only indicates results for one year improvement on test results. Thus schools with very high test results have less room to improve than schools with very poor test results the year before. Thus, the only thing being emphasized in the schools are test prep aimed at improving test results. The children begin to feel the only thing they have to worry about is passing the ridiculous test,

Spend our money on new schools and smaller class size.

Testing students and grading schools is not the answer to the problems of NYC schools. Children learn better in smaller classes with highly trained teachers....

Please terminate the school grading system and spend the hundreds of millions of dollars focused on standardized testing and test scores instead on reducing class size and expanding the capital plan.

This grading system reminds me of the terror alert color codes that were established after 9/11. In the end, these school grades will become what the color codes have become now: meaningless.

Stop spending the schools funding on devising systems that do not work! For once lets focus on whats important, Our Children!
Providing smaller classes is key to academic success.

This misguided grading system is a disgrace. Please suspend it immediately and focus on real solutions-- such as reducing class size and eliminating high-stakes testing--that will make a difference to the children and families of New York City.

I am absolutely opposed to the grading system for schools. Test prep and scores are already too dominant a force in classrooms, and this system is putting the wrong pressure in the wrong places. Please, please, please help to eliminate the system.

"Test taking as a genre" is part of our learning plan for school, and my 3rd grader has no spelling words until after the ELA test. It is WRONG WRONG WRONG. Spelling is a subject. Bubble sheets as a subject is bull sheet.

Please abolish the school report card system, with its misplaced emphasis on testing, and spend the money--which come from taxpayers, who vote--on reducing class size and improving the schools.

Reducing class sizes and/or obtaining the funding to have more teacher's aids in classes to focus on and address the individual needs/learning patterns of a child would be far more productive!! it's time to learn how to focus on teaching the child how to be THERE best --

starting from where they are right NOW and less on how they "compare" with others. we are all different yet alike where it matters. we all have something equally important to offer to the world. let's begin to value that instead of this ridiculous competition of "standardized testing" that benefits no one.

Most of the parents I know feel the Board of Education could care less about what parents think, but hopefully this petition can help change this. Forget testing. Reduce class size. Maintain the G&T program - the 95% cutoff will discourage more diversity, is statistically irrelevant and will limit the number of students who qualify for the G&T program. Encourage teacher/program creativity.

I am both a public high school teacher and a parent of a public school student. I have seen first hand the damage that your spending policy has done.

Spend money where it's needed- the education of our children. i.e. books, teacher training, more educated staff, smaller class size, etc.

This grading system does not take into account the uniqueness and individual nuances of different schools and creates undue pressure on students, teachers, and administrators.

The DOE " Report Cards" and their reliance on standardized test scores penalize schools with innovative programs that think outside the box and rewards schools that teach to the test. They are an unfair way to measure schools.

Smaller classes are needed as well as restore Art, Music, Typing and Keyboarding skills to JHS Students. Stop wasting our taxpayer dollars on grading schools. It will not change anything!!!

Smaller class sizes are essential to improving children's test scores and learning.

This system is misleading and does nothing to assist parents on how their schools are doing or where to send their children. One cannot compare apples and oranges.

This is accountability run amok. Mayoral control should not be traded off for school/principal accountability alone. Where is the accountability of the Central policy making authorities? All systems need checks and balances, opportunities for input and buy-in from the key constituencies. The progress reports are a symbol of everything that is wrong with this administration's attempt to improve schools. They are disconnected from reality and live in a data maniacal statisticians ivory tower. We need more support and resources in the classroom, not phony numbers- false CFE budgets, manipulated graduation rates and test scores that show meaningless " progress." We need to help all schools help all children to learn and thrive. Overemphasis on data tracking, especially test scores, that replace curriculum and opportunities for learning are not the answer.

The money being wasted on this bogus testing system is outrageous. There is not a single parent, teacher or principal who thinks this is a valid evaluation system. Everyone who is

actually in the public school system has made it clear what is most important in improving all NYC public schools: REDUCE CLASS SIZE. Instead the mayor and Klein waste our million on corporate testers and rob our kids of the education they deserve, that we have sued to get and that the judges have said they must be given. Still they do nothing to reduce class size. I'm a parent of two NYC public school students and it makes me sick.

The overheated pace of testing, coupled with teacher, principal, and school ratings pegged to test results has warped the approach to education and is placing our kids under tremendous, unproductive, non-educational pressure. We still have teachers in underserved classrooms without seats, books, supplies, etc. Why are we not focusing on providing them the tools they need? Do we really need 7th and 8th graders suffering under extreme stress and pressure to make grades, with consequences for their teacher and school if they 'fail'?

This grading system is an incredible distraction for the schools and the students alike and have thus far not provided any positive feedback to either groups. Today, I learned that there will be 6 NYC schools closing due to poor school report cards (with more to closures to come) and I find this shocking. In a time where there is evidence that families are choosing to stay in New York city, and the schools in the city have reached over capacity and there is a huge need to ADD new schools, wouldn't it be more prudent to help the schools in trouble by offering real support instead of further taxing the schools that will be left behind to take care of the children tossed out by these closures?

Klein still refuses to obey the law and focus on lowering class size. Shutting down schools and replacing them with a charter school accomplishes nothing. we need to build more schools and reduce class size.

Using report cards to close schools deemed failing by a flawed grading system is not only a cynical means to increase the number of charter schools in the city, but is a terrible blow to children and their families who are suddenly cut off from the ties they have made within the now doomed schools. Imagine the effects on children and staff waking up everyday to go to an school that they know will not be there next year? Children need stability, and uprooting them in this way will cause chaos both in the new schools that they will be sent to, and in the psyches of the children who are sent to them.

It just doesn't seem like a very good way of grading a schoolif the end grade is not an accurate reflection of the reality of the school. It makes me suspicious and I don't put any validity into the grade. I don't trust it. Therefore why spend all that money on it?.... It just doesn't make sense. All these intelligent business people should have been able to come up with something better. Perhaps that's the problem.....business people and not educators.

I am the PTA president and we made a motion to stand behind the petition as a whole school. We, the Douglaston School of Literature, PS 98 are opposed to the DOE grading system. We love our school & are still proud of who we are & what we recieved has nothing to do with the quality of education & respect our children receive and deserve. Feel free to ask for my minutes to the meeting, dated 11-27-07

On the elementary level, children have lost at least a full month of learning because of test prep sessions, teaching to the test, and all the added pretests, diagnostic tests, and periodic tests. We have extended the school year and the school day to accommodate the testing industry. Students -- especially ELLs and children in areas of economic distress -- will benefit more from smaller classes and individual attention as human beings by professional educators.

I am very confused. My daughter's school got a "D," and a DOE rep came to the school to explain that we should not be upset because the grades really mean VERY LITTLE, and that our school got the grade it did because there was so little room for improvement. . . . So, now they are using the grade to close schools. I am seeing thousands of families who counted on the City's schools moving away from here fast if something is not changed. The message I get from all of this is that the DOE cannot be trusted, and political machination takes precedence to education and the children.

(Parent at PS 220) As a victim of the current grading system (our wonderful school was closed)- I see the terrible damage that occurs when you look solely at data and ignore the children. If anyone had walked the halls and classrooms of our school they would have seen engaged, happy students, grateful to be in their learning environment and very devoted teachers and administrators. No one visited us- they only looked at numbers (which, by the way, have vastly improved). The pain and suffering that will now ensue cannot be justified. The heart and soul of our community can never be measured by tests or surveys. If it could we would have received an "A".

The waste of time and money being spent on testing is outrageous. Kids could actually learn something if teachers weren't forced to teach test skills.

It is very discouraging when innovative schools which teach our children to think critically, debate, read and analyze difficult literature, and really learn are targetted with an inequitable grading system. Our hard working teachers, school leaders, and families deserve our gratitude and admiration, they don't deserve a C.

Just as children are not A,B or c nor are schools. Schools need to be looked at as the holsitic beings that they ae, reducing them to a letter or number is counter-intuitive to educating children.

The new school report cards place an unfair amount of emphasis on standardized testing and progress on such testing from year to year, and measure progress in an overly narrow way. This method of measurement fails to accurately measure student progress or performance since it ignores assessments over the course of the year and ignores the quality of teaching in the classroom. The recent results of NAPE test scores showing that NY state English and math scores are poor indicators of student performance provides proof that using these state tests as the main criteria for measuring school success is fatally flawed. As the parent of a child at an A school I also note that the method of measuring progress is particularly unfair to A schools with testing already at a very high level of success since it is virtually impossible to stay an A school since too difficult to keep up the level of improvement required by this. One of the biggest problems with this new report card in addition to the inherent unfairness of this

method of measurement is that this system virtually guarantees that schools will focus too much energy on teaching to the tests rather than teaching in a creative way for the sake of learning. That is not good for any schools. In schools with low scores it provides more incentives to eliminate important courses in the arts to focus on test prep and in schools like PS 77 where the success level is already very high it creates unnecessary stress and test anxiety, poses the risk of taking away time from enrichment activities and learning which is not test focused, and requires teachers to spend unnecessary time on analyzing test result data for certain children which they could better spend on other more valuable classroom instruction.

I would like to see the DOE go into (our overcrowded) classes and observe them, as many parents have during Open School Week. Perhaps then they would come up with constructive ways to work with schools and educators to support them instead of humiliating them, as these meaningless grades have done.

As one of the richest cities in the country - why can't we spend some of these resources - wisely on our future - our children!!!

The overheated pace of testing, coupled with teacher, principal, and school ratings pegged to test results has warped the approach to education and is placing our kids under tremendous, unproductive, non-educational pressure. We still have teachers in underserved classrooms without seats, books, supplies, etc. Why are we not focusing on providing them the tools they need? Do we really need 7th and 8th graders suffering under extreme stress and pressure to make grades, with consequences for their teacher and school if they 'fail'?

This grading system is an incredible distraction for the schools and the students alike and have thus far not provided any positive feedback to either groups. Today, I learned that there will be 6 NYC schools closing due to poor school report cards (with more to closures to come) and I find this shocking. In a time where there is evidence that families are choosing to stay in New York city, and the schools in the city have reached over capacity and there is a huge need to ADD new schools, wouldn't it be more prudent to help the schools in trouble by offering real support instead of further taxing the schools that will be left behind to take care of the children tossed out by these closures?

Klein still refuses to obey the law and focus on lowering class size. Shutting down schools and replacing them with a charter school accomplishes nothing. we need to build more schools and reduce class size.

Using report cards to close schools deemed failing by a flawed grading system is not only a cynical means to increase the number of charter schools in the city, but is a terrible blow to children and their families who are suddenly cut off from the ties they have made within the now doomed schools. Imagine the effects on children and staff waking up everyday to go to a school that they know will not be there next year? Children need stability, and uprooting them in this way will cause chaos both in the new schools that they will be sent to, and in the psyches of the children who are sent to them.

It just doesn't seem like a very good way of grading a schoolif the end grade is not an accurate reflection of the reality of the school. It makes me suspicious and I don't put any validity into the grade. I don't trust it. Therefore why spend all that money on it?.... It just doesn't make sense. All these intelligent business people should have been able to come up with something better. Perhaps that's the problem.....business people and not educators.

I am the PTA president and we made a motion to stand behind the petition as a whole school. We, the Douglaston School of Literature, PS 98 are opposed to the DOE grading system. We love our school & are still proud of who we are & what we recieved has nothing to do with the quality of education & respect our children receive and deserve. Feel free to ask for my minutes to the meeting, dated 11-27-07.

On the elementary level, children have lost at least a full month of learning because of test prep sessions, teaching to the test, and all the added pretests, diagnostic tests, and periodic tests. We have extended the school year and the school day to accommodate the testing industry. Students -- especially ELLs and children in areas of economic distress -- will benefit more from smaller classes and individual attention as human beings by professional educators.

I am very confused. My daughter's school got a "D," and a DOE rep came to the school to explain that we should not be upset because the grades really mean VERY LITTLE, and that our school got the grade it did because there was so little room for improvement. . . . So, now they are using the grade to close schools. I am seeing thousands of families who counted on the City's schools moving away from here fast if something is not changed. The message I get from all of this is that the DOE cannot be trusted, and political machination takes precedence to education and the children.

As a victim of the current grading system (our wonderful school was closed)- I see the terrible damage that occurs when you look solely at data and ignore the children. If anyone had walked the halls and classrooms of our school they would have seen engaged, happy students, grateful to be in their learning environment and very devoted teachers and administrators. No one visited us- they only looked at numbers (which, by the way, have vastly improved). The pain and suffering that will now ensue cannot be justified. The heart and soul of our community can never be measured by tests or surveys. If it could we would have received an "A".

The waste of time and money being spent on testing is outrageous. Kids could actually learn something if teachers weren't forced to teach test skills.

It is very discouraging when innovative schools which teach our children to think critically, debate, read and analyze difficult literature, and really learn are targetted with an inequitable grading system. Our hard working teachers, school leaders, and families deserve our gratitude and admiration, they don't deserve a C.

Just as children are not A,B or C nor are schools. Schools need to be looked at as the holistic beings that they are, reducing them to a letter or number is counter-intuitive to educating children.

The new school report cards place an unfair amount of emphasis on standardized testing and progress on such testing from year to year, and measure progress in an overly narrow way. This method of measurement fails to accurately measure student progress or performance since it ignores assessments over the course of the year and ignores the quality of teaching in the classroom. The recent results of NAEP test scores showing that NY state English and math scores are poor indicators of student performance provides proof that using these state tests as the main criteria for measuring school success is fatally flawed. As the parent of a child at an A school I also note that the method of measuring progress is particularly unfair to A schools with testing already at a very high level of success since it is virtually impossible to stay an A school since too difficult to keep up the level of improvement required by this. One of the biggest problems with this new report card in addition to the inherent unfairness of this method of measurement is that this system virtually guarantees that schools will focus too much energy on teaching to the tests rather than teaching in a creative way for the sake of learning. That is not good for any schools. In schools with low scores it provides more incentives to eliminate important courses in the arts to focus on test prep and in schools like PS 77 where the success level is already very high it creates unnecessary stress and test anxiety, poses the risk of taking away time from enrichment activities and learning which is not test focused, and requires teachers to spend unnecessary time on analyzing test result data for certain children which they could better spend on other more valuable classroom instruction.

I would like to see the DOE go into (our overcrowded) classes and observe them, as many parents have during Open School Week. Perhaps then they would come up with constructive ways to work with schools and educators to support them instead of humiliating them, as these meaningless grades have done.

As one of the richest cities in the country - why can't we spend some of these resources - wisely on our future - our children!!!

As a former NYC public school teacher (at a school that actually received a "B"), I have been continually dismayed to see the road that Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein have decided to take with educational reform. With very little input from the people who are affected the most by the public schools--students, families, and teachers--they continue to cater to the interests of private foundations, corporate entities, and self-serving, self-important university researchers.

We're touring middle schools right now and can hardly believe the class sizes we are faced with !!! 33+?!?!

Please stop using the current method of grading the schools with such a large emphasis on one year gains in test scores. The school system in New York City has become too political and it is

difficult to assume your school reforms are genuinely focused on helping kids. This corporate, cut throat mentality will not work in our schools.

Reducing class size gives the biggest bang for the buck. The Tennessee STAR study and many others confirm that. That's where money should be invested.

The overemphasis on testing is a reflection of a total focus on problem schools at the expense of good schools. If it's not broken don't fix it. You had many high functioning schools that were doing an excellent job of educating students despite huge classes and inadequate budgets. These schools were often the product of work by the concerned, involved middle class parents that are the backbone of any good school system. These schools are quickly being converted to test prep centers. If this process is allowed to continue the NYC school system will lose these families to private schools or NYC will lose these families altogether to the suburbs. A system that penalizes schools that have always been high performing and already have most of their students performing to high standards is only serving to accelerate the deterioration. The people that are running the school system have so little faith in it that they send their children to private schools. At least, don't be so arrogant as to think you have all the answers and don't need to listen to parental input from the people you are supposedly trying to serve.

The grading system is a disgrace for all educators who must submit to the demeaning exercise of a single letter grade on a single examination to assess very sustained complex work of ten months' duration. In no way can it be seen as a legitimate means to demonstrate school-wide proficiency for anyone, children, teachers, or staff.

I absolutely do not agree with the answer for failing schools being to just close the school down.

Focus on making all schools good schools

We have a great school but I am sad to see that the curriculum is getting narrower year by year and the entire focus becomes reading/writing/math and test preparation. I think our student also deserve to learn a second language, history, geography, computers (yes, our students lost that last year!). class size would be more beneficial to everyone.

It is time to start concentrating on our children's needs and their teachers - let's reduce class size, take the emphasis OFF TESTING and wasting money and make learning an inspired endeavor! Grades do not accurately reflect the total value of a school community.

You have taken this grading system to close down schools when it was said there would be 2 years before action was taken to give time to improve. The DOE has a habit of taking one test or grade and placing all importance on that one factor.

Please reduce class size and stop the endless testing.

Until when the government is going to pay more attention to fill out papers instead of teaching our children to become great citizens and better human beings.

When my child has a citywide test coming up all their focus is on that one subject. Ex. SS test was just taken all they were taught is SS. Now ELA is coming up so SS is forgotten about and all the focus is on ELA, etc.

The way the grades are currently assigned is unfair. Teaching is very complex and effectiveness cannot be communicated by assigning a letter grade.

Teacher: The DOE school grading system will further deny our students resources that are essential. The chancellor can skew data until he leaves, but one truth stands out. No real improvement will occur until the chancellor converts these wasted funds to the classroom where it always belonged.

If you want the scores to go up you must lower class size.

Closing all these schools will put a burden on other schools and make class sizes larger. Reopen the closed school with new faculties immediately. It has been proven time and again that smaller class size produces well prepared students.

School grades are based on inappropriate data and used for inappropriate purposes--children and schools are not widgets or products. Human beings are not gradable. Would you like us to put a grade on the NYCDOE, using your same criteria?

We need to rehumanize the NYC system by investing in students and teachers and by allowing communities to participate and help. I have seen so many students denied the delight of learning because of the requirement of test practice, interrupt tests, batteries and batteries of tests. And that is an appropriate word for it: battery. Someday, educationists and historians will look back and note how abusive and counterproductive educational practices, mandated by bureaucracy and authored by private industry profiteers, were on the most promising/underserving/neediest of American youth!!

My child will graduate this year from PPAS. For elementary school she attended the Muscota New School one of the schools to receive a failing grade. So many of Muscota students have gone on to top ranking high schools and colleges, something is not right with the grading system

This new report card has made a mockery of a once proud and productive public school system. Parents are no longer responsible for anything their child/children do or don't do. Principals are panicked and are forbidding teachers to actually teach in the content areas. All we are allowed to do is teach to the test. This mayor and chancellor should be brought up on charges of educational neglect!

As a recently retired principal of PS 78Q, I am fully aware of how sensitive the students, parents and staff are to evaluations of the school that unfairly deflate the worth of the quality of education that the children are receiving. The school report card is a potentially destructive not constructive tool that does not reflect the fine learning that many NYC schools are providing.

Stop the school grading system- reduce class size!

We are vehemently opposed to the new DOE school grading system. These grades are unfair, simplistic and arbitrary, are based on statistically unreliable measures, and will hurt rather than help our schools.

By awarding each school a grade from A to F, the progress report trivializes the complexity of teaching, and will drive schools towards even more test prep and less learning, as well as further deprive our children of art, music, and physical education.

We demand that the energy, focus, personnel and millions of dollars that have been spent on devising this system, as well as the entire data collection system known as ARIS, interim assessments, financial incentives for high test scores, and "data inquiry teams" in the name of "differentiated instruction" be instead invested in reducing class size and expanding the capital plan, so that all NYC children can be provided with smaller classes and an equitable and adequate chance to learn.

Signatures as of December 9, 2007

NAME	SCHOOL AND DISTRICT
1 Leonie Haimson	PS 116 and NYC Lab School - District 2 - Manhattan
2 Sherry Frier	Marine Park JHS 278, Madison HS District 22
3 Aileen Belcastro	TSMS, Dist.1; LaGuardia Arts H.S.
4 Gerry Griffin	John Bowne HS, Flushing, Queens
5 Karen Koenig	PS 116, Dist. 2
6 Erik Palma	John Bowne HS, Flushing, Queens
7 Ralph Fuentes	Midtown West PS212 D2
8 Julie Drake	
9 David Francis	
10 David Bloom	MS 54 (D3), La Guardia Arts
11 Walter Goodman	P.S 3 dist. 2 and LaGuardia HS
12 Sara Kimbell	PS 41 - district 2
13 David Wolfson	
14 Richard Kaplan	PS 87 + MS 54 > D3
15 Debbie Halperin	D2
16 yolanda santos	D6
17 Linda Levy	
18 David Kosh	PS 187
19 Linda Gritsch	
20 Beth Bernett	
21 Ann Chitwood	
Patricia S.	
22 Rudden PhD	
23 Joan Petrere	PS 144 Q
24 Carol Hanna	PS 144 Q
25 A. S. Evans	Manhattan, District 2

26 Michael Snyder	PS 230 (D15) & NEST (D1)
27 john wetherhold	district 2
28 Barbara Somlo	NEST+m, District 1
29 Phyllis E. Hulen	NYCMS District 2
30 Patricia Rohrer	
31 Bernard Aquilino	PS 18 District 26
32 Maritza	Secondary School of Research
33 Marilyn Kaggen Elizabeth &	
34 Stuart Servetar	PS87 - Dist. 3 Manhattan
35 Ellen Bilofsky	Stuyvesant H.S.
36 Lee Levin Guadalupe	Beacon High School
37 Rodriguez	District #6
38 gayle raskin	district 1 and 2 Nest and Lab
39 lynn kaplan Simone	PS 39 District 15
40 Weissman	PS41, MS255/D2
41 Peter Levitt	PS41, MS255/D2
42 Mansfield Rivera	
43 Kegsy	
44 Daniel Millstone	Bronx Science
45 Kegsy Castillo	
46 randi cohen	ps 87 district 3
47 Federico Abreu	
48 suzanna hylar Theresa	ps166 manhattan upper west side
49 Passarelli	
50 john elfrank-dana	
51 Belkis Morales	IS 125/ 24Q and Aviation HS/Q
52 Barbara Nunziata	Benjamin N Cardozo, HS - 26
53 Rhonda Brauer	PS 41 and MS 104 in old District 2
54 Madeleine Sinor	ps 41
55 Emily Fano	PS 166, District 3
56 Donna B.	
57 Amy Weiner lenora	
58 champagne	Salk, District 2
59 Gia Machlin	PS 166 District 3
60 avi jacobi	
61 brandi jacobi	D2
62 Karl Seidenwurm	IS 167, Dist 2
63 Nina Frieman	Booker T. Washington, District 3
64 Michelle Ryang	PS 187/District 6
65 Ron Berkowitz	
66 Jane Ludlam	ms 54, District 3
67 Robin Moore	MS 54 District 3
68 Carrie Stern	
69 David Rogow	BHSEC Dist 1
70 Kathy Semble	
71 Nancy Cauthen	PS/IS 187, district 6

72	Katie Morse	PS166/district 3
73	Rochelle Hestnas Susan Levee-	PS 9
74	Berger	PS 77 - District 2
75	Kirsten Brashares	
76	Gary Babad	
77	Eileen Strauss	PS 290 & Wagner MI
78	terry	
79	Nella Pramberger	
80	John Kroner	PS 166
81	Ellen DeNicola Stephanie	PS 77 / District 2
82	Connell	
83	Stuart Antell	
84	Laura Kennedy	PS/IS 266 26
85	Marie Pollicino	CDEC District 26, PS98Q
86	karyn Gooden	manhattan, dist 3
87	gerard marsicano	csd30
88	H. Stolper	
89	Allison Gold	MNS PS 290 District 2
90	Beth Windsor	PS 41 District 2
91	Ines Aslan	
92	Robin Belfer	
93	Bijou Miller	MS 54, District 3
94	Fariba Behnegar	PS166 - District 3
95	toby poser	ps 41
96	Bruce Markens	
97	Laura Allen Mary Amoon-	District 2
98	Hickey	PS 166 District 3 region 10
99	Melissa Bell Maria Dapontes-	PS 212 District 2
100	Dougherty	227Q D30
101	Sandra Wavrick	PS 146/Brooklyn New School district 15
102	Elizabeth Halsted	Lab School Dist 2
103	robin bady	
104	Susan Reilly	
105	Jean Plaisir	
106	Jeffrey Martin	PS 166 Dist 3
107	Harvey Lichtman	L.D. Brandeis High School
108	Linda Silverman	Francis Lewis HS
109	Laura Williams	PS41, District 2
110	J. Woodward	Truman HS, Bronx
111	andree sanders	
112	L Tehseldar CHOLING	
113	WONG	MS 158 District 26
114	Joseph Pinto	PS 166
115	Celine Labaune	PS 166 District 3
116	Geraldine Gelber	PS159 Dist26
117	joan o'mahoney	ps194 is278 district22

118	JOANNA MINOS	
119	Benna Golub	South Shore HS
120	marian trupiano	Fort Hamilton High D-21
121	Andrea Lewis MARIUS R.	
122	TITUS	D 30
123	Victoria Barroso Colleen Gill-	
124	Walker	PS150Q/D30
125	Lola Fischel	P.S.197 Dist.22
126	janet gordillo	D 30
127	Becky mitchell	MNS - 2
128	John Lawhead Marina	Samuel J. Tilden High School
129	Cappelletto	
130	Ira Goldfine	Retired Teacher Midtown West, School of the Future, District 2
131	Phyllis Kamysek	
132	Minerva Fabian	
133	Melanie Nelson Mrs Jacqueline	PS 11 30
134	Adams	P.S. 171Q District 30
135	Terri Cannicott	East Side Middle 2
136	Peter Shavitz	East Side Middle 2
137	Teri Schlesinger	IS 227, Dist. 30, HS 440, Dist 28
138	Lilian Weissman Jeannie	178 District 26
139	Maldonado	district 10
140	Marissa Effman Katherine	PS 166, District 2
141	Thompson	ps 116 d2
142	Heleen Adam	PS 89, Dist. 2
143	Glenn Tepper Eugenia	
144	Simmons-Taylor	TYWLS ~ District 4
145	Donna A. Steele Manuel Sanchez,	I.S.227Q
146	Jr.	
147	Steve Koss	MCSM, D4
148	Carole Zollo	PS 89/2
149	Elena Feliciano	Tompkins Sq. MS Dist. 1
150	Dialy Williams Deborah S.	
151	Moore	NEST+m, D1
152	Yuri Yanchyshyn Mary Anne	NEST+m, D1
153	Regan	
154	Cheryl Geremia Alma	ps 41 dist. 2
155	Karassavidis	D 30
156	Pat	
157	tytisa Garcia	
158	Rachel Glube	PS 11

159	Gloria Brandman	
160	Eunice T. Folla Bonnie	HS 485, HS 430, MS 312
161	Steinsnyder	PS 29, Brooklyn
162	Frank LoCicero	
163	Robert Schwartz	PS 75 - District 3
164	Eugene Falik	LaGuardia High School
165	Cari Fershing Kiki Panos-	PS 314, Dist. 6
166	Sperazza	PS 122Q and Beacon HS
167	Sheba Abrahamim	Frederick Douglass Academy II 3
168	nina birnbaum	ICE, district 2
169	Lisa Johnston	district 14
170	Elana Seaman	Lower Lab PS77
171	Robert Osman	P.S. 87
172	Maureen Quinn	PS 194K D22
173	David Quintana	District 27 CPAC Rep
174	Le' Roi L. Gill SUSAN	D 17
175	SCHERMEYER	P.S.196Q,J.H.S.157
176	Heather Blau	PS 41 / East Side Middle School
177	Joel Moss	PS169 D15
178	Anne Shultz	ps 166
179	Claire Abenante	
180	Barbara Scott	PS 290 D2
181	betty	ps122 district30
182	cheryl Moch	Millennium HS/2
183	Ruth Lilienstein	PS 187, District 6
184	Michael Gatton	PS 187, District 6
185	Julie Rozar	NYC Lab School / D2? 9?
186	Judith Goldston	
187	Padma Ganesh	
188	Kate Herz	
189	Mary Kane	PS166 NYC
190	Angela Zaharakis	
191	violet ramis	ps 166
192	Meredith Stone	PS 166 District 3
193	Sonia Quinones	PS166
194	Diana O'Brien	PS 59 District 2
195	Diana Heusel	PS/IS 192 District 20
196	Stephanie LaTour	PS 321 William Penn
197	Kristen Borg	
198	Andrea Lomanto Evie	
199	Hantzopoulos	PS 122 D 30
200	noel steinberger	ps 166
201	Liz Rosenberg	
202	Dara Furlow	PS20/ District 13 Brooklyn
203	Maria Spencer Maria Renata	District 13
204	Gangemi	PS 087 District 3

205 Katherine Cooke	PS 102 - Bay Ridge Brooklyn
206 Michelle Biggins	
207 Mary Silver	PS116 District 2
208 Ellen Raider	
209 Natalie Udall	PS 222 District 22
210 Nancy Chin	PS 41 District 2
211 Esther Ramos	D 75
212 Lyndall Callan	PS 87 District 3
213 Janet Kalson	Louis Armstrong Middle school
214 Lila Deis Lauby	LaGuardia HS
215 dina	
216 Dorothy Giglio	
217 Ruth Katcher	PS 8, Dist. 13
218 Dolores Schaefer	City as School HS
219 Jennifer Sirey	ps 154
220 tanya	ps261 district 15
221 rebecca caban	
222 Liz Wedlan	ps166/district 3
223 Greg McCaslin	
224 mary munk	
225 Frank Toner	ps 18 district 26
226 Kori Goldberg	
227 Marcy Roman	P.S. 228Q
228 Joann Wojcik	District 31
Victoria	
DallasStephenso	
229 n	
230 Rachel Cohn	PS 38, District 15
231 Rachel Kaplan	EVCS / PS 315 District 1
232 Evie Koufakis	
233 john fielder	ms298/7
234 Kathy Malcomson	PS122 D30
235 Gina	ps166-3
236 Stana Weisburd	D 15
237 Susan Schreiber	
238 Emily Horowitz	ps 314, district 6, manhattan
ROSANNA	
239 QUINONES	D 14
240 Mary Damato	
241 daniela schroeder	ps 8 district 31
242 Lisa Ilario	ps 20/ district 13
	Columbia Secondary School for Math
243 Damaris Padilla	Science and Engineering --Dist 5
244 Kassim Hinds	PS 139/ D 22
245 Martha L. Brown	IS383K District 32
246 Elanor Brand	PS 158 District 2
247 Paul Heller	PS 321 15
248 Wendy Williams	PS 184M district 1
249 Omar Lopez	
250 Lisa Donlan	TSMS M839 Dist One
251 Katherine Nugent	PS166

252	Benita Lovett- Rivera	01M292 - Henry St. School
253	Bryna Levin	PS 212, district 2
254	Mike Willner	MS51 District 15
255	Kelley McIntyre	PS41 and SOF district 2
256	Brandi Walters	
257	Michele Herman Andrea	Stuyvesant
258	Annunziato	P.S. 58 District 15
259	John Wetherhold	district 2
260	Alice Alcalá	
261	Ken Cohen	
262	Julann Gebbie	Wagner District 2
263	Bree Picower, Ph.D. Jacqueline	
264	Montgomery	PS 98 Dst 26
265	Micahael Bendit	
266	Sara E. Pyle Jennifer L.	P.S. 206M, CSD 4
267	Johnson Luis O. Reyes, Ph.D.	PS 154, D-15 Brooklyn
268	Claudia	CEEELL
269	Kimberley Hall	D21
270	Susan Kotansky	district 3
271	Dee Barnes	PS 220 district 7
272	Lynne	M.S. 584/ 16
273	Robert Epstein	Lower Lab School
274	Kathy Inukai	
275	Barbara Sherman	district 15
276	Mary Stallone	ms 577 7 ps 84 in D 14
277	Gennie Perez	Bard High School Early College
278	Amy Silverman	BCS--15
279	Nancy Miranda	BNS/BCS
280	Anna Vega	Mott Hall II, District 3
281	Frank Tang	New York University
282	Debra Freeman	PS 77 District 2
283	Sandy Wavrick	PS 146/Brooklyn New School district 15
284	Jan Carr	Salk School of Science, D2
285	Maja Lorkovic	
286	Patricia Pan	PS 84 Q D30
287	A. Aguiar	PS 166, 3
288	MARCIA	01M292 - Henry Street School for Int'l
289	Lorraine Elkosiry	
290	Robert Schwartz	PS 75 - District 3
291	J. Marino	
292	LAshEpa	District 27
293	Louisa	PS 314 - 6
294	Carmen Santana	D 24
295	Christina Foster	Jesse Owens School 26-District 16
296	David Demnitz	IS 260

298	Keith Catone	
299	Tricia Nash	Bard and PS6 district 2
300	Yolanda Medina	
301	Meredith Fisher	MS54
302	Merry Tucker	retired
303	joan bocina	ps 166, dist 3
	Yvette Hines -	P.s329 Dist. 21 & Art & Design H.S. dist. 2
304	Moustaffa	and Vanguard H.S. Dist. 2
305	m victory-stewart	PS58 District 15
		Beacon HS, District 3; and Clinton Middle
306	Brian Ellerbeck	School, District 2
307	erika	District 21
308	M MOORE	PS/IS 268 29Q R3
309	Melinda Perkins	IS 383 - District 32
	Theresa	
310	Westerdahl	district 17
311	Liz Papadopoulos	
312	Ase Popovic	ps183
313	Richard Zaslou	
314	Akinlabi Mackall	D 3
315	Isabel Kyriacou	P.S. 146 District 15
316	Mary piotrowski	d30 78q
317	Ellen Weisman	JHS 157Q District 28
318	sherri harnick	
	Richard	
319	Rappaport	is381
320	Heidi Daneshvar	
	Suzanne Lanier	
321	Phillips	PS 33 District 2
322	stephanie klapper	district 2
323	James Hill	District #5
324	Susan Albrecht	
325	Fariba Behnegar	PS 166 - District 3
326	Majid Nassiri	PS 166 - District 3
327	priscilla Marco	
328	geoffrey sharp	ps87
329	Gail Murray	P.S. 33 - 13
330	Linda Aizer	
331	Jillian Miller	District 6
332	Beth Forrest	PS/IS 266, MS 172, and X696
333	Andrea Glickson	Center/D3 and Stuyvestant
334	Beth Windsor	PS 41 District 2
335	Chris O'Brien	PS 59 district 2
	Melvin G.	
336	Thomas	
337	Valarie Bennett	La Guardia High School
338	Taya Bass	01M292
339	Eileen Darcy	PS 183
	German	
340	Gutierrez	SOF D2
341	Barbara Nunziata	Benjamin N. Cardozo HS - 26
342	Sandra	

	Blackwood	
343	Anthony F. Allia	CCHS rep Queens
344	Thomas Forbes	Harlem Renaissance HS, District 5
345	danielle	
346	DAVID LABOY	BCSHS-d15
347	Rose Dubitsky	
348	don shaffer	
349	Faith Schwartz	
350	Deborah Rubien	
351	Ron Berkowitz	
352	Jane Reiff	IS 25/ John Bowne HS
353	suzanna hyl	ps166
354	Nora Perkowsky	Ps200Q 25
355	Belkis Morales	IS 125Q District 24
356	Clara	D 25
357	jason perkowskw	ps200q 25
358	Marilyn Balassi	PS 183, District 2
359	margie szpicek	
360	Gregg Lundahl	Washington Irving High School 2
361	Carol Kennedy	Satellite Academy HS
362	Ellen Rafel	guidance counselor /retired
	Deborah	
363	Sherlock	PS 58/D24
364	Veda Bell	PS158
365	Diane Taublieb	
366	Meivyn Meer	PS 188Q Dist. 26
367	Celia	
368	Susan Dietrich	Port Richmond HS, Staten Island
	Dr. Loren	
369	Weybright	ICE Middle and High School
370	Cheryl L. Morris	
371	Valerie Kaplan	PS209&JHS194 - District25(Q)
372	Linda Xu Zi	district 2
373	Julie Applebaum	Dist. 2
374	susan dowling	
375	Peter Shavitz	District 2
376	Doris Brosnan	
377	delores thomas	
378	Lesley Halliday	PPAS
379	hweitin chu	
380	Helaine Bernholz	
381	Lynda Costagliola	PS 3/D. 13
382	Susan Crawford	Stuyvesant HS, D-2
383	Neil friedman	K497 CSD 15
384	Gerard Brown	P.S. 3 ; district 13
385	Terry Delis	
	Sandra Stratton-	
386	Gonzalez	PS 372 Empowerment Zone
387	Joann Smallwood	



class size matters

124 Waverly Place, NY, NY 10011

phone: 212-674-7320

www.classsizematters.org

email: leonie@att.net

Testimony before the City Council Education Committee on the DOE school grades
Leonie Haimson, Class Size Matters

December 10, 2007

The new school grading system is a fiasco. Rather than helping our schools succeed, it yields inaccurate results, and will harm both our highest and lowest performing schools.

In part, this is because ⁵⁵ 45 percent of each school's grade depends on gains or losses in one year's test scores alone – which, according to experts, is highly unreliable, statistically speaking. Researchers have found that 34 to 80 percent of the annual fluctuations in a typical school's scores are random or due to one-time factors, unrelated to the amount of actual learning taking place. Thus, under this system, a school's grade is based more on chance than anything else.¹ Like throwing darts at a dart board, or rolling dice, this is no way to determine a school's reputation, or its future.

As a result, the grading system has produced outlandish results. IS 89 in Tribeca was the only middle school in NYC to be honored this fall by the federal Department of Education. It was given an award because it does consistently well despite having more than 40% economically disadvantaged students.² Yet the school received a "D".³

While the example of a few excellent schools have been highlighted that got Ds or Fs, including Center School in D3, PS 35 in PS 35 in Staten Island, and Muscota in D6, **there are a hundred schools in good standing with the state and federal government that received Ds or Fs, as a result of the bizarre grading formula concocted by Tweed.** Another school so far unnoticed is the Bronx School for Law, Govt. and Justice -- just cited by US News and World Report as one of the top high schools in the nation, despite receiving an "F" from Tweed.⁴

¹ Thomas J. Kane, Douglas O. Staiger, "The Promise and Pitfalls of Using Imprecise School Accountability Measures," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 16, No. 4. (Autumn, 2002), pp. 91-114.
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=089>

² Downtown Express, "I.S. 89 earns national award, leaving other middle schools behind," Oct. 12, 2007;
http://www.downtownexpress.com/de_231/is89earnsnational.html

³ "Schools Brace to Be Scored on a Scale of A to F", NY Times, November 4, 2007;
http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/04/education/04reportcard.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

⁴ http://www.usnews.com/listings/high-schools/new_york/bronx_school_for_law_government

That a school's future could be determined on the basis of such unreliable grades is scandalous. Six out of the thirteen schools now slated for closure on the basis of their low grades are schools in good standing with the state and federal government, including PS 79 and Bronx Community Coalition HS in the Bronx, PS 101 and the Academy of Environmental Sciences in Manhattan, and PS 304 and PS 183 in Brooklyn." Several of these schools also received "Proficient" on their quality reviews. Why threaten to close schools that are doing relatively well on the basis of such an unreliable grade, especially when there are nearly 350 schools on the state or federal failing list?⁶

Moreover, the DOE website says this about the "consequences" of getting a low grade:

*Schools that receive an overall grade of D or F will be subject to school improvement measures and target setting and, if no progress is made over time, possible leadership change (subject to contractual obligations), restructuring, or closure. ... Decisions about the consequences a school will face will be based on.... Whether the school's Progress Report grade is an F, D, or C (for several years running); Over time, school organizations receiving an overall grade of F are likely to be closed.*⁶

So why didn't Tweed follow its own guidelines and give schools a chance to improve before closing them, especially given the fallibility of these results? Or at least remove its principal, rather than taking the even more drastic step of eliminating the school itself?

While many good schools were unjustly stigmatized on the basis their grades, others on the state's list of failing schools were given high grades. In fact, 50 schools on the state SINI or SURR list received "A"s and more than half – or 54% – of all SINI and SURR schools received either "A"s or "B"s.⁷ With results like these, the new system has little credibility and does no service to parents. Does the DOE really believe that parents should flock to a SURR school, just because it may have been awarded an A or a B?

The problematic nature of this formula is further underscored by the fact that in determining grades, schools were compared to other schools in so-called "peer groups." And yet these peer groups appear to have been assembled in an extremely haphazard fashion, with highly selective schools mixed in among schools that have to accept every student in their zone.

⁶ <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/ProgressReports/Consequences/default.htm>

⁷ For a chart of overall results, and a list of SURR and SINI schools that received As, see Appendix. http://www.all4ed.org/about_the_crisis/schools/state_and_local_info/promotingpower

An example of a poor performing high school that received a high grade is New Utrecht HS, which got an A. Not only is it a school that is **Requiring Academic Progress - Year 4**, but it also one of the state's top "dropout factories" – with a promoting power over three years ranging from 41-47%. See http://www.all4ed.org/about_the_crisis/schools/state_and_local_info/promotingpower

PS 35 in Staten Island was given an "F" after being compared to the Anderson School, a gifted and talented school that is even more highly selective and that received an "A".⁸ The mixing of these different types of schools is especially problematic, especially for elementary schools, in which only rough demographic characteristics were taken into account. If Kindergarten students at some schools are already being screened through testing, that obviously gives selective schools an unfair advantage.

Moreover, two of the elementary schools slated for closure on the basis of low grades have very special populations, according to their descriptions in InsideSchools. Here is the description of PS 156, in the Bronx:

PS 156 faces numerous challenges, beginning with the health of its children. The school nurse estimates one-third suffer from asthma, and a number of children have serious emotional difficulties as well. Several times a month staffers have to call an ambulance to handle medical emergencies that include treating a child who has lost control, according to the school nurse. More than 25 percent of the students receive special education services.⁹

Here is the description of PS 304 in Brooklyn:

PS 304 is a small, friendly neighborhood school in Bedford Stuyvesant, which enrolls not only kids who reside in the neighborhood but also those staying in one of four nearby shelters for victims of domestic violence. We saw two such families touring the school, seeking to enroll their children. The children are met and welcomed by an understanding office staff and administration -- and many times even after they have found permanent housing, the children choose to remain -- but the nature of their problems and transience, makes it challenging for the school to teach them and ensure that they keep up their attendance.¹⁰

Despite this difficult and transient population, PS 304 remains in good standing with the state and federal government. Was any of this taken account in the simplistic formula used to determine these school grades? No. Where will these children go when the schools are closed? Will they be any better off? Who knows?

Here are the words of a parent at PS 220 in the Bronx, yet another school slated for closure, despite the fact that the school was rated Proficient in all five of the categories in its Quality Review:

As a victim of the current grading system ...I see the terrible damage that occurs when you look solely at data and ignore the children. If anyone had walked the halls and

⁸ Another example is my son's school, PS 41, a neighborhood school in District 2 that received a "B" was compared to Lower Lab that got an "A". Lower Lab is a Gifted and Talented school that selects students primarily on the basis of their test scores.

⁹ http://www.insideschools.org/fs/school_profile.php?id=211

¹⁰ http://www.insideschools.org/fs/school_profile.php?id=472

classrooms of our school they would have seen engaged, happy students, grateful to be in their learning environment and very devoted teachers and administrators. No one visited us- they only looked at numbers (which, by the way, have vastly improved). The pain and suffering that will now ensue cannot be justified. The heart and soul of our community can never be measured by tests or surveys. If it could we would have received an "A".

Another problem with the peer group formulation is that schools that cap their class sizes at much lower levels were compared to other schools that have much larger classes. If a school is low-performing in large part because it is at 200% capacity, with class sizes of 30 or more because it was assigned more students by Tweed, should it be blamed if it achieves much smaller gains than another school that was allowed to cap class sizes at 25 or less?

Some examples: Canarsie HS is in the same peer group as Bushwick School for Social Justice, though it had average class sizes of 28, while Bushwick averaged 23 students per class. Not surprisingly, Canarsie got an F, and Bushwick got an A.

The HS for Violin and Dance, with average class sizes of 25 was compared to Cobble Hill School of American Studies, with class sizes averaging 29, and some classes as large as 32. Meanwhile, the HS of Violin and Dance got an "A", and Cobble Hill got a D.

But even if the factor of class size was controlled for, the rankings would not be reliable, because of the inherent limitations of the particular outcomes being used to define success. The official graduation rate and the passing rate on Regents exams are the primary determinants of a high school's grade, while its discharge, transfer, and suspension rates are all ignored – all methods that NYC schools commonly use to rid themselves of troublesome or low-performing students.

Indeed, the numbers of such students are rising in recent years, and are currently in the tens of thousands citywide. Wouldn't it be better to judge a school on how many of its entering 9th grades end up graduating at the school four or five years later,? By leaving these factors out, Tweed is simply encouraging schools to get rid of more of their low-performing students in the future.

Finally, if a school is labeled failing, what then? A perfect example is Washington Irving High School, an overcrowded school that has been on the state failing list for several years and just received a "F" from DOE. Last year, class sizes remained 29-32 students in all subjects and grades.¹¹ Has the administration done anything to allow the school to cap enrollment at lower level, which would allow for smaller classes and a better education for its students? No. According to the DOE accountability system, it will instead be the schools that receive "A"s that will receive more resources – as "rewards."

The predictable effects of this system will be to harm our lowest performing students, by giving incentives to schools to exclude them, any way they can. It will also hurt our highest performing students, by encouraging more test prep and more crowding out of real learning at the school level. My son's school started with test prep the second week

¹¹ http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/39E40D1B-74A8-4F44-A1FF-6DDFF42148DF/0/AvgClassSizeReport_prelim_School.xls

of September this year, even though nearly all students already score at grade level. Why? Because the new system is designed to penalize schools if scores fall a few points, or fail to rise even higher.

In short, it would be difficult to design a less reliable and informative system for determining school grades than the one that has been designed, and one more likely to undermine the success of all our schools. Real progress cannot be meaningfully determined by test scores alone, particularly without looking at sustained trends over several years. Other measurements and factors must be considered before branding a school with an "F" or closing it down.

Most importantly, it should be the responsibility of the Department of Education to figure out what makes certain schools successful and try to replicate these conditions elsewhere. Unfortunately, Tweed has off-loaded this critical accountability onto principals, teachers, and parents – and no longer accepts any responsibility for the systemic problems that remain, such as excessive class sizes.

For a school that is clearly failing its students, nothing in the experience of receiving an "F" will help it improve, and this will instead further demoralize teachers who are doing their best under difficult circumstances. ***In short, these grades are merely another simplistic, misleading attempt by this administration to look tough – and evade its duty to improve our schools.***

Appendix: NYC school grades and SINI status

GRADE	non-sini	sini	Total
A	232	50	282
	82.27	17.73	100.00
	26.39	14.45	23.02
B	329	140	469
	70.15	29.85	100.00
	37.43	40.46	38.29
C	216	104	320
	67.50	32.50	100.00
	24.57	30.06	26.12
D	67	33	100
	67.00	33.00	100.00
	7.62	9.54	8.16
F	33	18	51
	64.71	35.29	100.00
	3.75	5.20	4.16
Under Review	2	1	3
	66.67	33.33	100.00
	0.23	0.29	0.24
Total	879	346	1,225

The 50 SINI or SURR schools that received "As"

2. SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS |
6. | NEWCOMERS HIGH SCHOOL |
12. | PS 153 ADAM CLAYTON POWELL |
13. | NEW UTRECHT HIGH SCHOOL |
16. | MS 247M DUAL LANGUAGE MID. SCH |
19. | PS 007 KINGSBRIDGE |
23. | SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR JOURNALISM |
24. | EAST SIDE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL |
31. | JHS 265 SUSAN S. MCKINNEY |
32. | IS 211 JOHN WILSON |
42. | JHS 050 JOHN D WELLS |
45. | PS 014 FAIRVIEW |
48. | URBAN SCIENCE ACADEMY |
52. | EAST SIDE COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL |
69. | WADLEIGH SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR THE PERFORMING & VIS |
84. | MS 256 ACAD. & ATHL. EXCELLENC |
90. | PS 024 |
94. | PS 046 EDGAR ALLAN POE |
98. | PS 310 MARBLE HILL |
99. | JHS 080 THE MOSHOLU PARKWAY |
118. | JHS 098 HERMAN RIDDER |
122. | IS 303 Herbert S. Eisenberg |
124. | JHS 123 JAMES M. KIERNAN |
125. | JHS 223 THE MONTAUK |
126. | PS 279 CAPT MANUEL RIVERA, JR |
130. | SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES |
134. | FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL |
135. | I.S. 254 |
136. | BRONX WRITING ACADEMY |
138. | HIGH SCHOOL FOR ARTS AND BUSINESS |
139. | IS 229 ROLAND PATTERSON |
140. | PS 081 THADDEUS STEVENS |
153. | EAST NEW YORK FAMILY ACADEMY |
157. | PS 157 GROVE HILL |
158. | IS 303 LEADERSHIP & COMM. SER |
159. | PS 152 EVERGREEN |
168. | UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS SECONDARY SCHOOL AT BRONX COMMU |
186. | PS 161 PONCE DE LEON |
198. | PS 086 QUEENS |
206. | IS 141 THE STEINWAY |
213. | GREGORIO LUPERON HIGH SCHOOL FOR SCIENCE AND MATHE |
237. | IS 093 RIDGEWOOD |
244. | PS 143 LOUIS ARMSTRONG |
245. | PS 165 ROBERT E SIMON |
246. | PS 149 DANNY KAYE |
257. | PS 155 WILLIAM PACA |
259. | JHS 054 BOOKER T. WASHINGTON |
260. | JHS 088 PETER ROUGET |
266. | JHS 022 JORDAN L MOTT |

The 100 schools in good standing that received "D"s or "F"s:

-> grade = D

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 1. | BROOKLYN COLLEGIATE: A COLLEGE BOARD SCHOOL |
| 2. | PS 8 SHIRLEE SOLOMON |
| 3. | PS 016 WAKEFIELD |
| 5. | YOUNG WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SCHOOL, BRONX CAMPUS |
| 6. | PS 002 MORRISANIA |
| ----- | |
| 7. | LIFE SCIENCES SECONDARY SCHOOL |
| 9. | MAGNET SCHOOL FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY |
| 10. | MS 243 CENTER SCHOOL |
| 11. | PABLO NERUDA ACADEMY FOR ARCHITECTURE AND WORLD ST |
| 12. | PS 007 ABRAHAM LINCOLN |
| ----- | |
| 13. | PS 307 DANIEL HALE WILLIAMS |
| 14. | PS 396 |
| 16. | I. S. 381 |
| 18. | P.S. 225 THE EILEEN E ZAGLIN |
| 20. | EAST BRONX ACADEMY FOR THE FUTURE |
| ----- | |
| 21. | PS 123 SUYDAM |
| 23. | PS 059 WILLIAM FLOYD |
| 24. | PS 016 LEONARD DUNKLY |
| 25. | PS 178 ST. CLAIR MCKELWAY |
| 26. | SATELLITE EAST MIDDLE SCHOOL |
| ----- | |
| 27. | JHS 166 GEORGE GERSHWIN |
| 29. | PS 114 RYDER ELEMENTARY |
| 30. | PS 011 HIGHBRIDGE |
| 31. | PS 150 CHRISTOPHER |
| 34. | PS 056 LEWIS H LATIMER |
| ----- | |
| 35. | PS 031 WILLIAM T DAVIS |
| 39. | PS 163 ARTHUR A SCHOMBURG |
| 40. | PS 165 IDA POSNER |
| 43. | PS 291 |
| 45. | PS 167 THE PARKWAY |
| ----- | |
| 46. | PS 112 DUTCH KILLS |
| 48. | PS 058 THE CARROLL |
| 49. | PS 123 |
| 52. | PS 055 HENRY M BOEHM |
| 53. | BROOKLYN COLLEGE ACADEMY |
| ----- | |
| 54. | PS 041 NEW DORP |
| 55. | PS 022 |
| 56. | PS 136 ROY WILKINS |
| 57. | HOSTOS-LINCOLN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE |
| 58. | PS 166 HENRY GRADSTEIN |
| ----- | |
| 59. | SCIENCE SKILLS CENTER HIGH SCHOOL FOR SCIENCE, TEC |
| 60. | IS 289 |
| 62. | PS 273 WORTMAN |
| 63. | PS 309 GEORGE E WIBECAN |
| 65. | PS 078 ANNE HUTCHINSON |
| ----- | |
| 66. | CENTRAL PARK EAST I |
| 70. | BRONX HIGH SCHOOL FOR LAW AND COMMUNITY SERVICE |
| 72. | PS 245 |
| 73. | PS 110 THEODORE SCHOENFELD |
| 74. | IS 206 ANN MERSEREAU |
| ----- | |
| 75. | NEW DAY ACADEMY |
| 76. | PS/MS 029 MELROSE SCHOOL |

- 77. | PS 044 DAVID C FARRAGUT |
- 80. | PS 014 SEN JOHN CALANDRA |
- 81. | PS 014 CORNELIUS VANDERBILT |
- 83. | PS 105 THE BAY SCHOOL |
- 84. | PS 047 JOHN RANDOLPH |
- 85. | PS 206 JOSE CELSO BABOSA |
- 87. | IS 340 |
- 88. | PS 033 TIMOTHY DWIGHT |
- 89. | PS 190 SHEFFIELD |
- 91. | BRONX COALITION COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL |
- 92. | PS 084 JOSE DE DIEGO |
- 94. | PS 030 QUEENS |
- 95. | PS 277 |
- 98. | ISAAC NEWTON JHS FOR SCIENCE & MATH |
- 99. | JHS 291 ROLAND HAYES |

67

-> grade = F

- 2. | PS 137 RACHEL JEAN MITCHELL |
- 3. | PS 304 CASIMIR PULASKI |
- 6. | PS 194 COUNTEE CULLEN |
- 8. | THE SCHOOL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS |
- 9. | ACADEMY OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE SECONDARY HIGH SC |
- 11. | SCHOOL FOR DEMOCRACY AND LEADERSHIP |
- 13. | PS 272 CURTIS ESTABROOK |
- 14. | PS 35 The Clove Valley School |
- 16. | PS 046 ALBERT V. MANISCALCO |
- 17. | HIGH SCHOOL FOR LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC SERVICE |
- 19. | PS 023 CARTER C WOODSON |
- 21. | FANNIE LOU HAMER MIDDLE SCHOOL |
- 22. | 47 THE AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE AND ENGLISH DUAL LAN |
- 26. | PS 155 |
- 28. | PS 028 THE WARREN |
- 29. | PS 101 ANDREW DRAPER |
- 30. | PS 106 PARKCHESTER |
- 31. | PS 179 |
- 32. | PS 182 |
- 34. | ~~PS 204 The Sunnyside~~ |
- 35. | PS 11 Thomas Dongan School |
- 36. | MUSCOTA |
- 37. | PS 033 CHELSEA PREP |
- 38. | PS 005 DR. RONALD MCNAIR |
- 40. | PS 036 J C DRUMGOOLE |
- 41. | 47 THE AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE AND ENGLISH DUAL LAN |
- 43. | PS 287 BAILEY K ASHFORD |
- 44. | PS 050 FRANK HANKINSON |
- 45. | PS 183 DANIEL CHAPPIE JAMES |
- 46. | BRONX SCHOOL FOR LAW, GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE |
- 47. | PS 130 ABRAM STEVENS HEWITT |
- 48. | PS 270 JOHANN DEKALB |
- 49. | PS 079 CRESTON |

Testimony Before the Education Committee of the New York City Council

Hearings on the DOE's School Progress Reports – December 10, 2007

Martha Foote, Public School Parent and Education Researcher

Thank you, Chairman Jackson and Members of the Education Committee, for granting me this opportunity to speak. My name is Martha Foote. I am a New York City public school parent; I am also an education researcher who specializes in the areas of high-stakes testing, assessment and school reform.

Simply put – the Department of Education, under Chancellor Joel Klein and Accountability Chief Jim Liebman, with blessings from Mayor Bloomberg, has devised a patently flawed system for judging schools. As other speakers have testified, this system overly relies on the state's standardized tests, uses a statistically unsound definition of progress, and ignores myriad important factors that make up a good school. I could go on and on. But I want to bring up one point that Klein and Liebman repeatedly gloss over – the devastating effect this system of grades has had, and will continue to have, on our schools, principals, teachers and children.

Schools have now been branded with a simple-minded letter grade. Has anyone ^{at the Department of} even ^{Education} contemplated how such branding affects a school community? Bloomberg, Klein and Liebman all declare that this is a good thing, that these grades are a way to prod principals into improving their schools. Regardless of the fact that their formula is riddled with ^{problems} ~~errors~~ and many excellent schools are now bearing the weight of an

and teachers promise that the DOE will improve the standards does nothing to mitigate the damage to schools now, this year —
erroneous judgment, public humiliation combined with a perpetual threat of school

closure is NOT the way to improve schooling. If anyone at the DOE had taken the time to review the research on Florida's system for grading schools — the inspiration for this new policy — they would have discovered that it has failed. Researchers Debra Touchton and Michele Acker-Hocevar concluded in their in-depth study on Florida's system that “Stigmatizing labels hurt, not help, improving school performance. The labels of ‘A’ through ‘F’ are demoralizing and punitive.” They also write, “High-stakes testing and accountability have taken a toll on teachers in high-poverty, low-performing schools.... Teachers are often perceived as ‘failing teachers’ in these schools as a direct result of the school receiving a failing grade. One must ask why would a teacher want to stay at a school that demoralizes him or her as a professional?” Why, indeed. The researchers found that as a result of these grades, principals in F schools could not hold onto their teachers, who left for schools with better grades.

And what about our children? What is the effect on them? Even if they do not know their school's grade — though that is certainly not the case in schools that have now been slated for closing — our children are now facing even more relentless and deadening test prep in the hopes of improved scores on the state tests, scores, mind you, that do NOT reflect increased learning, but instead reflect increased preparation for a specific test. It is no surprise, as was just reported, that New York City's performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress — the NAEP — has, except for 4th grade math, stagnated or declined over the last several years. Let me repeat — all this emphasis on preparing our children for the New York State tests has not translated into improved

learning on any other measure! Yet, Klein and Liebman base 85% of the school report card on these state tests, further inflating their importance. And it is our children who must suffer the consequences.

Please help put an end to this invidious policy that is hurting our schools and hurting our children. Help the schools that truly need help, but stop this political game that serves to humiliate and punish. Thank you.

Martha Foote
303 Sixth Avenue, #2
Brooklyn, NY 11215
718-788-2070

Ethnicity_Gap

ScI	Title 1 %	White %	Spec/Ed	ELL%	06category	06tested	06pctLevel34	06 gap	07category	07tested	07pctLevel34	07 gap
ELA												
29					Hispanic	85	75.3	-16.2	Hispanic	84	75.0	-14.2
29					Black	71	78.9	-12.6	Black	57	80.7	-8.5
29					white	200	91.5		White	176	89.2	
29	29.3	53.5	11.7	2.9	Total	375	85.3		Total	338	84.6	
58					Hispanic	43	67.4	-13.9	Hispanic	57	57.9	-24.3
58					Black	24	79.2	-2.1	Black	34	64.7	-17.5
58					white	48	81.3		White	73	82.2	
58	37.6	49.5	18.6	6.2	Total	121	76.0		Total	176	72.2	
107					Hispanic	75	68.0	-22.0	Hispanic	76	69.7	-27.6
107					Black	33	63.6	-26.4	Black	35	57.1	-40.2
107					white	50	90.0		White	73	97.3	
107	23.6	53.1	10.2	2.2	Total	172	75.0		Total	193	78.8	
MATH												
29					Hispanic	89	77.5	-15.7	Hispanic	77	81.8	-13.7
29					Black	74	79.7	-13.5	Black	48	87.5	-8.0
29					White	205	93.2		White	176	95.5	
29	29.3	53.5	11.7	2.9	Total	387	86.8		Total	322	91.0	
58					Hispanic	61	80.3	-4.9	Hispanic	52	78.8	-9.0
58					Black	36	83.3	-1.9	Black	33	87.9	0.1
58					White	61	85.2		White	74	87.8	
58	37.6	49.5	18.6	6.2	Total	166	83.7		Total	171	86.0	
107					Hispanic	79	70.9	-20.8	Hispanic	75	80.0	-18.6
107					Black	33	63.6	-28.1	Black	31	77.4	-21.2
107					White	48	91.7		White	73	98.6	
107	23.6	53.1	10.2	2.2	Total	175	76.6		Total	187	87.2	

**UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
HUMANE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
52 Broadway, 12th Floor
New York, N.Y. 10004
212-410-3095**

December 10, 2007

**Testimony on Resolution No. 497, the Humane Education Resolution
by Sheila Schwartz, Ed.D., Chairperson, UFT Humane Education Committee**

In April 1989, the United Federation of Teachers created a Humane Education Committee. Our goal has been to increase teacher and student knowledge concerning animals and related environmental issues while enhancing student academic skills.

From inception to the present, we have offered conferences for teachers and contests for students. Speakers, including Cleveland Amory, Jane Goodall, representatives of the ASPCA, the Urban Park Rangers and the Audubon Society have addressed our members.

Our programs show teachers how to infuse humane education into literacy programs, science and the arts. Students in grades pre-kindergarten to twelve read humane books and develop their own big-books and essays on humane themes ranging from responsibility toward companion animals to the lives of the Great Apes. Each year since 1990, we have helped judge the New York Academy of Sciences annual high school Science Expo. We have selected projects reflecting humane standards for awards including projects on:

- the benefits of pets in nursing homes and
- how to help keep birds from flying into our skyscrapers at night.

In 1985, a lobbying effort which I led resulted in the NYC Board of Education developing a 90-page *Humane Education Resource Guide* and distributing thousands of copies to New York City educators free of charge. It has been twenty-two years since the NYC Department of Education has provided additional tangible citywide support for programming at the elementary school level.

In recent years, most of our conferences have drawn only 50 UFT teachers in contrast to the 100 to 250 in the years when the NYC Board of Education was still distributing free copies of the Humane Education manual. Teachers attending our recent programs report that their principals have never mentioned humane education at staff meetings and that colleagues do not carry out units of instruction.

There may be individuals who do not believe that "instruction in the humane care and treatment of animals" is important. They might ask themselves if the goal of helping to develop a generation of New Yorkers less likely to abuse or abandon their companion

animals is worthwhile. There may be individuals who do not want the humane point of view to be part of classroom discussion. They might ask themselves if learning tolerance for varying personal lifestyle choices should be part of everyday school life in New York City. The fact that it is often academically motivational for students to learn about the intriguing world of animals should also be considered.

The United Federation of Teachers Humane Education Committee urges support from the Education Committee and from the entire City Council for immediate passage of Resolution # 497.

Thank you for your consideration.

**TESTIMONY OF MEENA ALAGAPPAN
IN SUPPORT OF RESOLUTION 497**



My name is Meena Alagappan and I am the Executive Director of HEART, Humane Education Advocates Reaching Teachers, a non-profit organization based in New York. HEART's mission is to foster compassion and respect for all living beings and the environment by educating youth and teachers in Humane Education. We are a full service provider of humane education offering: in-classroom instructional programs for students; training workshops for teachers; consulting services to teachers and administrators; and advocacy to raise awareness about humane education. We are dedicated to helping schools in the New York area comply with the state humane and character education laws.

HEART enthusiastically supports passage of Resolution 497, especially because we have found that educators and administrators in NYC, while receptive to incorporating humane education in their curricula, are usually unaware of the existence of the humane education mandate in Section 809 of the State Education Law. Resolution 497 with its notification provision will help to ensure that humane education is taught in our city's elementary schools.

Effective humane education programs provide students with accurate factual information, instill a sense of responsibility, and empower students by giving them the tools to make compassionate and informed choices that benefit other people, animals and the environment. Humane education helps students become caring members of society and assists them in developing their critical thinking, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills.

Furthermore, numerous research studies have documented that childhood animal abuse is a predictor and indicator of interpersonal violence, so by cultivating compassion for animals, as Section 809 requires, humane education makes our communities safer for both people and animals.

While our experience in the classroom convinces us of the effectiveness of humane education, we know empirical evidence is needed. Thanks in part to support from the Manhattan Delegation and individual Council Members, HEART recently completed an 18-month assessment of our comprehensive humane education initiative, which was implemented in 5 public schools in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx in 2006-2007, reaching about 1,000 students. The study was conducted by a leading moral development expert at Fordham University.

We are pleased to report that the first 6 months of data have been analyzed so far and the results have been very promising. In a nutshell, the comparison of pre and post test interventions demonstrated a majority of statistically significant positive results:

- Students' knowledge increased significantly, for example, in the areas of the needs of animals, habitat destruction, global warming, and the causes of bullying.
- Students' concern also increased for companion animals and farm animals and about air and water pollution.
- Students were also presented with a moral dilemma involving helping a friend cheat on homework. Before the intervention, 60% thought that helping a friend cheat was the most important issue while after the intervention almost no student said that and 60% reported that not copying was most important. The changes shown in thinking about a moral problem tangential to our curriculum indicate the appropriateness and potential impact of humane education as an important aspect of character and social education programs.
- We found particularly interesting two findings showing that students' interest in joining a group to help animals and the environment, and their urging their friends to do the same, both increased significantly.

I share these initial results to help demonstrate that such large and difficult issues such as moral dilemmas, animal neglect and harm, and pollution can be taught in ways that enliven and empower children as they learn how their individual actions can make a positive difference in the world.

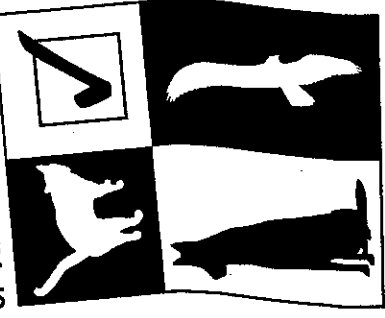
Please support Resolution 497 to help enforce the existing humane education law and ensure that our city's children receive this vital education in their schools. Thank you very much.

about animals?



Council Member Rosie Mendez (D-Manhattan) with Peco, a rescued kitty.

LEAGUE OF HUMANE VOTERS OF NEW YORK CITY



WWW.HUMANENYC.ORG

We're in the news.

The New York Times
The City

Sunday, December 18, 2005
OP-ED

Keep the Big Wheels Turning

By Carl Sautter
If you get nothing out of "The City" on a Friday night and find every yellow cab in the city is a mess, it's not just the cab. It's the mess of the city. The cab is a mess because it's a mess of the city. The cab is a mess because it's a mess of the city. The cab is a mess because it's a mess of the city.

What's the harm of having pedicabs in Midtown?

Michael A. Sautter
I'm a former chief counsel to the City Council, and I'm a former chief counsel to the City Council. I'm a former chief counsel to the City Council, and I'm a former chief counsel to the City Council. I'm a former chief counsel to the City Council, and I'm a former chief counsel to the City Council.

NEW YORK POST
Pooch politics

Pet owners take their causes to the polls
When it comes to pet politics, New York City is a hotbed of activity. Pet owners are taking their causes to the polls, and they are winning. They are winning because they are taking their causes to the polls, and they are winning.



DAILY NEWS
Fatal pet shop fire renews safety push

A fire at a pet shop in New York City has renewed calls for stricter safety regulations. The fire, which killed several people, was caused by a gas leak. The fire was caused by a gas leak, and it was caused by a gas leak.



ABOUT LOHV-NYC

The League of Humane Voters of New York City (LOHV-NYC) mobilizes public concern for animals through the democratic political process. Recognizing that animal protection is a political issue as well as a moral issue, we campaign for the election of humane candidates to public office. Founded in 2001, LOHV-NYC has become the political arm of the local animal protection movement by building support amongst citizens, activists, political parties, candidates and elected representatives all over the city.

BECOME A MEMBER OF LOHV-NYC...OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

YES, I want to become a member of the League of Humane Voters of New York City (LOHV-NYC) today and help elect candidates to office who care about animals. As a member, I will receive LOHV-NYC's quarterly newsletter, Humane Times, plus action alerts and announcements by email (if I provide an email address).

Please mail this form with your check to:
LOHV-NYC
151 First Avenue, Suite 237, NY, NY 10003

Enclosed is my gift of:
 \$35 \$50 \$250 \$500 Other: \$ _____

First name _____ Last name _____
Street address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Also become a member online at www.humanenyc.org. Questions? Comments? Call LOHV-NYC at 212-889-0303 for assistance.
Please note: The outcome of elections, donations to LOHV-NYC are not tax-deductible as charitable contributions and contributions from

The League of Humane Voters of New York City (LOHV-NYC) is fundamentally unlike most other animal advocacy organizations in the country in that we work to elect candidates who support the protection of animals. We are a political organization which works to translate existing support for animal welfare initiatives into law.

Since our founding in 2001, LOHV-NYC has helped to elect (and re-elect) dozens of pro-animal candidates to City and State office. LOHV-NYC-endorsed officials have gone on to introduce and pass groundbreaking legislation; secure funding for animal charities and expose animal cruelty.

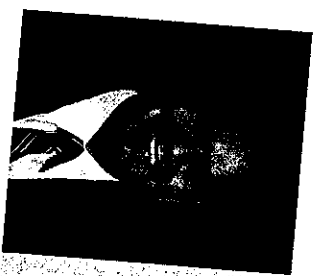


John Phillips, LOHV-NYC's executive director, with the Governor of New York State, Eliot Spitzer.

Political action for animals means reaching millions of people who care about animals in New York State; holding elected officials accountable on animal issues and electing pro-animal candidates to political office.

A Few of Our Victories and Accomplishments

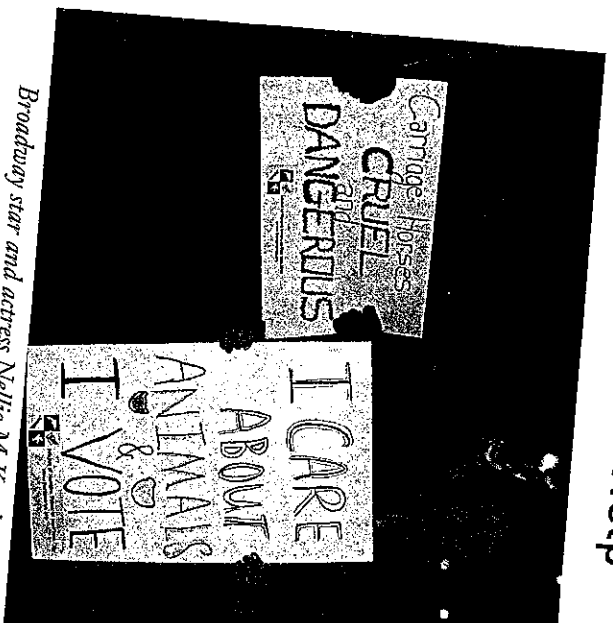
- * We helped to enact a groundbreaking law which allows victims of domestic abuse to include their companion animals in court orders of protection.
- * In a historic and precedent-setting move, the New York State Democratic Party adopted a resolution—which we wrote—affirming its commitment to the humane treatment of animals.
- * We endorsed against an incumbent State Assembly member who had received cash from Ringling Bros. Circus; we shocked the establishment when we defeated her by fewer than 200 votes!
- * We created a stir in political circles when we launched the landmark first ever humane scorecard for the New York City Council. The scorecard sheds light on legislators' votes for/against animals and holds them accountable on Election Day.
- * We helped to secure thousands in City funding for humane education programs in public schools in Manhattan and the South Bronx.



"LOHV-NYC... continues to lead the way in educating many on the importance of animal rights."

—Jose M. Serrano, New York State Senator, 28th District

How You Can Help



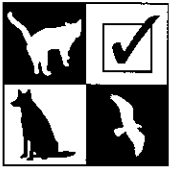
Broadway star and actress Nellie McKay hosts our vigil for Spotty the carriage horse.

- * Become a member today for \$35! You'll receive our quarterly newsletter, *Humane Times*, our Election Day reminders and endorsements by mail and our e-newsletter (if you provide an e-mail address).
- * **Vote!** On Election Day, make sure you know whom we are endorsing. Let the candidates know why you are voting for them and then vote accordingly. Individually, we can do very little. Together, as a voting bloc, we can get stronger laws to protect animals.
- * **Volunteer!** Volunteering with LOHV-NYC is fun and rewarding. For details, e-mail info@humanenyc.org or call us at 212-889-0303.



LEAGUE OF HUMANE VOTERS OF NEW YORK CITY
WWW.HUMANENYC.ORG

Caring is not enough. It's time to get political for animals.



**LEAGUE OF HUMANE VOTERS
OF NEW YORK CITY**

WWW.HUMANENYC.ORG

151 First Avenue, Suite 237
New York, NY 10003-2965

Phone: 212-889-0303
Email: info@HumaneNYC.org

Testimony by LOHV-NYC executive director John Phillips in support of Resolution 497

Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairman Jackson for holding this hearing today. Thank you also to the members of this committee for your time.

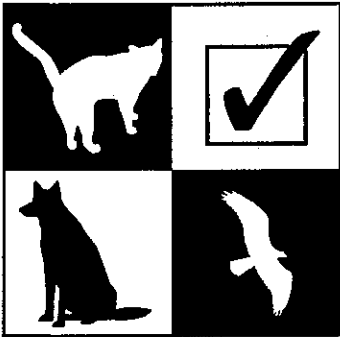
My name is John Phillips and I'm the executive director of the League of Humane Voters of New York City. On behalf of our nearly 7,000 politically active members in New York City, we urge the committee to support and pass Council Member Avella's Resolution 497, the HEART/Humane Education resolution.

60 years after the state legislature enacted a humane education law, we wonder: What happened? This law has been forgotten or ignored. Today, few schools have anything resembling humane education. How did this happen? New York City, especially, is a city of animal lovers and pet owners. The Council has a tremendous opportunity with Resolution 497 to right this error and to help potentially millions of children and animals in the process.

This past summer, our organization spoke to thousands of New Yorkers about humane education. We campaigned in front of subway stops and supermarkets and the response was overwhelmingly positive. New Yorkers recognize the need for humane education in our schools. They see dog fights in their neighborhoods and they see kids bully each other and hurt each other. They know, in their hearts, something that the FBI has known for a long time: these things are connected; cruelty to animals is a great predictor of human-on-human violence.

60 years after the state legislature enacted a humane education law, we find: New Yorkers still want humane education in the classroom. We have a responsibility to our children to ensure that they have the best education possible, and that means including humane education as part of the curriculum.

Thank you.



2006 NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL HUMANE SCORECARD

A project of the
LEAGUE OF HUMANE VOTERS OF NEW YORK CITY

WWW.HUMANENYC.ORG



ABOUT THIS SCORECARD

Dear Humane Voter,

There's been more buzz about animal protection issues at City Hall this year than ever before. Among the issues city legislators were talking about: the abuse of wild and exotic animals in circuses; New York State's humane education mandate; the 30,000 pets killed in city-funded shelters; the slaughter of animals for their fur; the force-feeding of ducks for foie gras; and the suffering endured by horses used for carriage rides in Central Park.

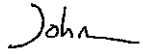
Despite this ongoing dialogue among the Council Members, Christine Quinn, the newly-elected Speaker of the City Council, has essentially ignored the plight of animals in New York City. Under her leadership, not a single bill of concern to animal advocates reached the floor for a vote. Prior to becoming Speaker in January 2006, Quinn received a zero on our City Council Humane Scorecard in 2004 and 2005. Her score for 2006 remains zero.

Some City Council Members, including Quinn, publicly claim to be "animal people." In a letter explaining her opposition to a bill to protect wild/exotic animals (Intro. 389, see below), for example, Quinn says she is a "staunch advocate for animal rights." *We wish.*

The purpose of our City Council Humane Scorecard is to hold legislators accountable. New Yorkers care about animals and so too should their representatives.

Luckily, the legislative session ends December 31st, 2007. We still have time. With your help, we will enact into law the important animal protective measures you'll read about below. Please call, write, meet and follow-up with your Council Member. Let her or him know that you are paying attention to their score.

Thanks for taking political action for animals,



John Phillips
Executive Director

PS: Please note that every legislator was contacted numerous times about the proposals in question—by letter, phone, and in-person meetings—prior to the release of this scorecard. All scores are accurate as of December 31st, 2006.

THE SCORE

The following four bills and one resolution were used to determine the score for each member. For more information, visit our webpage at www.humanenyc.org or call us at 212-889-0303.

Pets in Housing

(Intro. 13 sponsored by Council Member Tony Avella)

Put simply, the pets in housing bill states that once a landlord has waived the no-pet clause in a rental tenant's lease, it is waived for the duration of the tenant's occupancy, not just for the lifetime of one individual animal.

In December 2004, former City Council Speaker Gifford Miller scheduled a version of this bill for a hearing and it passed in the Housing & Buildings Committee by a vote of 7-4 (see 2004-2005 City Council Humane Scorecard for committee votes). Unfortunately, after it was passed, Mayoral-hopeful Miller sent the bill back to committee, where it languished until the end of the session in December 2005.

In early 2006, the bill was re-introduced and has not moved since. It awaits a hearing in the City Council Housing & Buildings Committee now chaired by Council Member Erik Dilan (D-Brooklyn, 2006 score: 0). Sources at City Hall tell us that Speaker Quinn, who may harbor some Mayoral ambition herself, is opposed to the legislation.

Wild Animals are Not Performers

(Intro. 389 by Council Member Rosie Mendez)

The elephants, tigers and other wild animals commonly used in circuses perform not out of a love for show business but because they are beaten into submission. Trainers use bullhooks, whips, electrical shock, and other devices to turn wild animals into unwilling daredevils and performers in the Cruellest Show on Earth.

During the winter off season, animals such as bears and elephants are crammed into cages, stalls, and even trucks. Elephants—who walk up to 30 miles a day in nature—spend 90 percent of their day chained and confined in small areas.

This legislation would prohibit the use of wild animals—such as elephants, sea mammals, non-human primates, lions, tigers, and many other species of exotic animals—in circuses and other performances. It currently awaits a hearing in the City Council Health Committee chaired by Council Member Joel Rivera (D-Bronx, 2006 score: 0).

Humane Education Resolution

(Reso. 497 by Council Member Tony Avella)

Many—including educators—are surprised to learn that current New York State law requires instruction in the humane care and treatment of animals in all public schools. LOHV-NYC is working with Humane Education Advocates Reaching Teachers (HEART, www.teachhumane.org) to raise awareness about this law which was designed to teach children the character-building virtues of compassion, kindness and respect.

This resolution calls on the Department of Education to issue a memorandum to all NYC public schools to help increase compliance with the law. The memo would notify them of the humane education mandate and instruct all elementary school principals direct their teachers to act in accordance with this requirement. This resolution currently awaits a hearing in the City Council Education Committee chaired by Council Member Robert Jackson (D-Manhattan, 2006 score: 20).

Pedicabs: A Humane Alternative

(Intro. 75 by Council Member Alan Gerson)

The proposed ban on human-powered pedicabs in Midtown Manhattan, which we reported on in our 2004-2005 City Council Humane Scorecard, has been defeated—thanks in part to our efforts. LOHV-NYC's Executive Director John Phillips was included in an op-ed in the New York Times and testified at City Hall. The attention helped to persuade members to remove their names from the legislation, which was proposed by Council Member Christine Quinn, before she was Speaker, and backed heavily by the horse-drawn carriage industry.

The Horse & Carriage Association of NY rightly fears the continued success of the pedicab industry. In equal parts because of the efforts of horse advocates and because the "bicycle taxis" are really fun, they continue to provide relief for the horses. As an added bonus, an industry which harms animals becomes less profitable.

This legislation would provide sensible and fair regulations for the pedicab industry and is backed by the Pedicab Owners Association as well as LOHV-NYC. Intro. 75 has had three hearings at City Hall and could become law soon, with a final push from animal advocates. The bill is currently assigned to the Consumer Affairs Committee chaired by Council Member Leroy Comrie (D-Queens, 2006 score: 0).

Pet Shop Sprinklers

(Intro. 417 by Council Member Alan Gerson)

The pet shop sprinkler bill would require pet shops and other facilities which shelter animals for more than 24 hours to install fire sprinklers for their protection. Over the past few years, fires have killed thousands of animals.

LOHV-NYC has been campaigning on this issue for several years. In 2005, we earned the support of more than 30 members of the 51-member body (see 2004-2005 scorecard for sponsorship record) Unfortunately, former Council Member Madeline Provenzano (D-Bronx) refused to hold a hearing and it died in her committee.

In early 2006, we sought a new sponsor. Tragically, in August 2006, there was another fire at a pet shop which killed an untold number of animals.

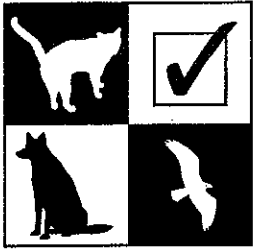
The bill is once again stuck in the City Council's Housing & Buildings Committee, now chaired by Council Member Erik Dilan (D-Brooklyn, 2006 score: 0), despite having the support of a majority of the Council Members.

2006 NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL HUMANE SCORECARD

Council Member	Party	Dist.	2005 Score	2006 Score	Pets in Housing (+20)	Wild/Exotic Animal Ban (+20)	Humane Education (+20)	Pedicabs (+20)	Sprinklers (+20)
Manhattan Average: 60									
Gerson	D	1	60	80	Sponsor		Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor
Mendez	D	2	N/A	100	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor
Quinn	D	3	0	0					
Garodnick	D	4	N/A	60	Sponsor		Sponsor		Sponsor
Lappin	D	5	N/A	60	Sponsor		Sponsor		Sponsor
Brewer	D	6	80	80	Sponsor		Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor
Jackson	D	7	60	20	Sponsor				
Mark-Viverito	D	8	N/A	100	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor
Dickens	D	9	N/A	40			Sponsor		Sponsor
Martinez	D	10	60	60	Sponsor	Sponsor			Sponsor
Bronx Average: 35									
Koppell	D	11	60	60	Sponsor		Sponsor		Sponsor
Seabrook	D	12	40	20			Sponsor		
Vacca	D	13	N/A	40	Sponsor				Sponsor
Baez	D	14	40	0					
Rivera	D	15	0	0					
Foster	D	16	80	0					
Arroyo	D	17	60	80	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor		Sponsor
Palma	D	18	80	80	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor		Sponsor
Queens Average: 33									
Avella	D	19	80	80	Sponsor		Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor
Liu	D	20	80	40		Sponsor		Sponsor	
Monserate	D	21	40	0					
Vallone, Jr.	D	22	80	60		Sponsor	Sponsor		Sponsor
Weprin	D	23	60	60	Sponsor			Sponsor	Sponsor
Gennaro	D	24	80	80		Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor
Sears	D	25	40	20			Sponsor		
Gioia	D	26	60	40			Sponsor		Sponsor
Comrie	D	27	20	0					
White, Jr.	D	28	N/A	20		Sponsor			
Katz	D	29	80	20					Sponsor
Gallagher	R	30	20	0					
Sanders	D	31	80	40			Sponsor		Sponsor
Addabbo, Jr.	D	32	80	20					Sponsor
Brooklyn Average: 31									
Yassky	D	33	60	0					
Reyna	D	34	80	20		Sponsor			
James	W	35	100	60	Sponsor		Sponsor		Sponsor
Vann	D	36	40	0					
Dilan	D	37	20	0					
Gonzalez	D	38	100	100	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor
DeBlasio	D	39	60	20				Sponsor	
Clarke	D	40	40	20					Sponsor
Mealy	D	41	N/A	60	Sponsor		Sponsor		Sponsor
Barron	D	42	40	0					
Gentile	D	43	80	80	Sponsor		Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor
Felder	D	44	20	0					
Stewart	D	45	40	0					
Fidler	D	46	40	40			Sponsor		Sponsor
Recchia	D	47	40	0					
Nelson	D	48	60	100	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor
Staten Island Average: 27									
McMahon	D	49	20	20	Sponsor				
Oddo	R	50	60	60			Sponsor	Sponsor	Sponsor
Lanza	R	51	20	0					

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Meet with, write or call your Council Member and urge her/him to co-sponsor the bills in this scorecard. If he/she is doing well on our scorecard, call to say thank you. Need help finding out who represents you? Call us at 212-889-0303 or visit www.humanenyc.org. Sample letters are also available.
2. Write and call Speaker Christine Quinn and urge her to support the humane bills in this scorecard. Leave a message for her at 212-788-5615. Letters should be sent to her attention at City Hall, New York, NY 10007.
3. Spread the word! Distribute this scorecard in your neighborhood. Leave a stack in your vet's office or your favorite vegetarian restaurant, hand them out at the local dog run—you get the idea. Holding legislators accountable is essential to success. You can call us to request printed copies or print your own copies by downloading the PDF version of this scorecard at <http://www.humanenyc.org/scorecards.htm>



ABOUT LOHV-NYC

The League of Humane Voters of New York City (LOHV-NYC) mobilizes public concern for animals through the democratic political process. Recognizing that animal protection is a political issue as well as a moral issue, we campaign for the election of humane candidates to public office. Founded in 2001, LOHV-NYC has become the political arm of the local animal protection movement by building support amongst citizens, activists, political parties, candidates and elected representatives all over the city.

LOHV-NYC's membership numbers more than six thousand citywide.

BECOME A MEMBER OF LOHV-NYC...OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

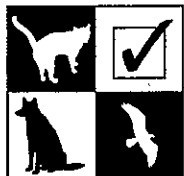
YES, I want to become a member of the League of Humane Voters of New York City (LOHV-NYC) today and help elect candidates to office who care about animals. As a member, I will receive LOHV-NYC's quarterly newsletter, Humane Times, plus action alerts and announcements by email (if I provide an email address).

Enclosed is my gift of:		Please mail this form with your check to:	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$35	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: \$_____		LOHV-NYC 151 First Avenue, Suite 237, New York, NY 10003	
First name _____		Last name _____	
Street address _____		City _____	State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____	Fax _____	Email _____	

You can also become a member online at www.humanenyc.org

Please remember that because we work to influence the outcome of elections, donations to LOHV-NYC are not tax-deductible as charitable contributions and contributions from individuals are limited to a maximum of \$5,000 per year.

Questions? Comments? Call LOHV-NYC at 212-889-0303 for assistance.



**LEAGUE OF HUMANE VOTERS
OF NEW YORK CITY**

151 First Avenue, Suite 237
New York, NY 10003

ELIOT L. ENGEL

17TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

CHAIRMAN
WESTERN HEMISPHERE
SUBCOMMITTEE

OTHER SUBCOMMITTEES:

EUROPE

MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE

SUBCOMMITTEES:

HEALTH

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND THE INTERNET

ASSISTANT DEMOCRATIC WHIP

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3217

December 10, 2007

2161 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3217
(202) 225-2464

DISTRICT OFFICES:

3655 JOHNSON AVENUE
BRONX, NY 10463
(718) 796-9700

8 GRAMATAN AVENUE
SUITE 205
MOUNT VERNON, NY 10550
(914) 699-4100

261 WEST NYACK ROAD
WEST NYACK, NY 10994
(845) 735-1000

WEBSITE: <http://engel.house.gov>

New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

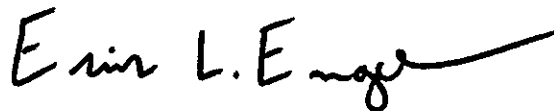
Dear Council Members:

The New York City School district, the largest in the country, excels in teaching our young students the core essential subjects such as reading, math, history, and writing. However, one important subject is missing to help students to round out their education and become responsible members of today's society—humane education. Civility, integrity, respect for others and compassion for all things, be they human or nonhuman, should be included in the education of our young children.

Over 60 years ago, New York State recognized the importance of humane education and now requires elementary schools to teach about the humane treatment of animals and to teach character education for all students in grades K-12. I encourage all school districts to implement a program to teach students about treating animals humanely, why it is important to treat their classmates with respect, and how protecting the environment affects and benefits their own lives. We can and must teach students about how they can make a positive difference.

We need to teach young students, who are the future of our society, the importance of respecting ourselves and others, showing kindness towards animals, and protecting the environment. As a former teacher in the New York City School system, I am proud to support humane and character education in New York's schools.

Sincerely,



Eliot L. Engel
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



NY City Council Education Committee- December 10, 2007

My name is Joanne Pentangelo, and I work in the Humane Education department of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

The ASPCA is the oldest animal welfare organization in this country, we began 142 years ago, and we are based right here in NYC. In 1916, we began a formal Humane Education program, educating children all over the city on topics such as responsible pet care, as well as community service to NYC's animals. One of the first service projects students performed was raising money to care for the nearly 1,000,000 veteran horses used by our US Army soldiers during WWI.

Community service and service learning are at the core of humane education.

DoSomething.org, a very popular website that challenges teens and adolescents to *do something* to make a difference in their communities, regularly polls their audience about issues of concern and animal welfare has consistently ranked as one of the top 3 concerns of kids today.

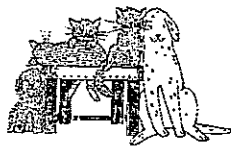
Character education and service learning are cornerstones of the curriculum in NYC. The ASPCA has recently partnered with the LEAGUE, a national organization which offers character and philanthropic education to schools and students all over the country. At their recent national launch right here in Manhattan, Chancellor Joel Klein, along with the US Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, confirmed their commitment to character and service learning for NYC students. Humane education and character education go hand in hand.

Our classroom materials, lesson plans and activities provide a simple way for teachers to introduce humane education to their students. All of our lessons are standards based, and meet the curriculum goals for all subject areas, including Math, English Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Art and Applied Learning. Applied Learning means the students' work has an application beyond the classroom--service learning projects which benefit animals also benefit the entire community.

Please join all of us in the humane community in supporting humane education principles in the NYC schools. As a humane educator, a mother, a NYC public school PTA member and a NYC community board member, I know first hand how important it is to our city that we raise responsible, kind, caring and empathetic children.

Thank you for your time.

**Joanne Pentangelo, Humane Education Specialist
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
110 Fifth Avenue
New York NY 10011
212-876-7700 Extension 4400
917-678-8450 (cell)
joannep@aspc.org**



Humane Society of New York

ANIMAL CLINIC / VLADIMIR HOROWITZ AND WANDA TOSCANINI HOROWITZ ADOPTION CENTER
306 East 59th Street, NYC 10022 / tel: (212) 752-4842 fax: (212) 752-2803

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF RESOLUTION NO. 497

The Humane Society of New York wholeheartedly supports Resolution No. 497 which seeks to encourage compliance with New York's humane education law. Not only does humane education teach young people to understand the importance of caring for animals with whom they live but also promotes an ethic that extends far beyond. Teaching empathy for those who cannot speak for themselves encourages kindness, compassion and respect. These are qualities that will benefit the youngsters, the animals with whom we share our planet, and our society.

When we teach children about animal protection, we teach them empathy, a quality that is so important not only in their interaction with animals but also in their interaction with each other. All too often we hear horrific stories of children abusing animals. It is also a fact that there is a nexus between those who abuse animals as children and those who commit violent crimes against humans. The reasons for this behavior is complicated but to the extent that we can teach respect for all living beings, the better off we will all be.

New York's humane education law was enacted in 1947. Unfortunately, many schools are unaware of it. Resolution 497 will facilitate compliance with this humane law. The law does not require a specific course in humane education but instead specifically states that humane education can be taught in conjunction with work in literature, reading, nature, and other subjects.

We have sponsored humane essay contests in various schools and have found that teachers and children appreciate the opportunity to focus on animal protection issues. There is a voluminous amount of material available to schools which makes compliance with section 809 of the Education Law very manageable.

The humane education law has been in effect for 60 years. Resolution 497 is an important step to ensure that schools are aware of this law and comply with it. Teaching kindness should be supported and your vote for Resolution 497 will help to accomplish this.

Elinor Molbegott
Legal Counsel
December 7, 2007

ESTABLISHED 1904

Supported by: Private & corporate contributions • Foundations • Benefits • Bequests
Matching gifts • Non-cash contributions • Workplace giving campaigns

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS AND GIFTS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

Email: info.hsny@verizon.net / Website: www.HumaneSocietyNY.org

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to help increase compliance with Section 809 of the New York State Education Law, which requires instruction on the humane treatment and protection of animals, by issuing a memorandum to all New York City public schools that notifies them of the humane education mandate in Section 809 and by requiring that all elementary school principals direct their teachers to act in accordance with this requirement.

This Resolution is Approved

The Committee on Legal Issues Pertaining to Animals would like to express its enthusiastic support for Resolution 497, which calls upon the New York City Department of Education to help increase compliance with Section 809 of the New York State Education Law by issuing a memorandum to all New York City public schools notifying them of the humane education mandate in Section 809, and by requiring that all elementary school principals direct their teachers to act in accordance with this requirement.

New York State Education Law Section 809 requires that every elementary school under State control, or supported wholly or partly by public money of the State, provide instruction in the "humane treatment and protection of animals and the importance of the part they play in the economy of nature as well as the necessity of controlling the proliferation of animals which are subsequently abandoned and caused to suffer extreme cruelty." Failure to provide such mandated instruction will result in a school being disentitled from participating in public school money.

In spite of this mandate, many schools across the state, including those in New York City, have not provided the requisite "humane education." This appears to be a result of a lack of awareness of the requirement, rather than any reluctance on the part of school administrators to provide such instruction. Notably, the statute permits such instruction to be integrated with other topics, including literature, reading, language, and nature study, and thus such instruction would not interfere with, or reduce the time available for, the provision of instruction in other topics.

While this instruction should be provided by City schools merely because it is mandated by state statute, it is worth noting that there are significant benefits that will result from such instruction. Such education is an important tool in the effort to reduce violence among youth (*see, e.g.,* Lydia Antoncic, "A New Era of Humane Education: How Troubling Youth Trends and a Call for Character Education Are Breathing New Life into Efforts to Educate Our Youth about the Value of All Life," 9 *Animal Law* 183 (2003); Frank R. Ascione, "Enhancing Children's Attitudes About the Humane Treatment of Animals: Generalization to Human-Directed Empathy," 5 (3) *Anthrozoos* 176-181 (1992). Moreover, the provision of the statute requiring that children be taught the necessity of controlling animal overpopulation will be of great benefit in raising awareness City-wide regarding this issue and will aid New York City's efforts to end the ongoing practice of killing dogs and cats in the City's shelters.

For these reasons, this Committee supports the Council's efforts to encourage the New York City Department of Education to comply fully with Section 809.

NYS Democratic Committee Resolution in Support of Animal Protection Legislation

Whereas, Mohandas Gandhi once said a civilized society can be judged by the way it treats its animals; and,

Whereas, We cannot call ourselves civilized while hundreds of thousands of animals are tortured and killed each year in New York State; and,

Whereas, There are too few laws to protect animals in New York State; and,

Whereas, Millions of New Yorkers care about the welfare and rights of animals, and share their lives with animal companions; and,

Whereas, Sharing one's life with a companion animal has been shown to have beneficial health effects, particularly with the elderly; and,

Whereas, New York State should lead the fight against cruelty in all its forms; and,

Whereas, Around the state in "wildlife killing contests", often sponsored by bars, customers kill the largest number of animals they can in the shortest period of time, with the winner getting a free case of beer;

Whereas, Students should know that they are legally permitted to opt out of dissection courses; and,

Whereas, Fires have killed thousands of animals at pet stores and other facilities which shelter animals for extended periods simply because the establishment failed to install sprinkler systems; and,

Whereas, In so-called "canned shoots," reviled even by hunters, "retired" circus animals and others are fenced-in and drugged, and customers are guaranteed a trophy for their wall;

Be it resolved that the New York State Democratic Committee is committed to the humane treatment of animals.

Be it further resolved that the New York State Democratic Committee calls on the New York State Legislature to pass legislation to ban wildlife killing contests and canned shoots ; notify students of their right to opt out of dissection courses; include humane education in schools and require the installation of fire sprinklers in pet stores and other facilities which shelter animals;



farmsanctuary
rescue • education • advocacy

National Office • P.O. Box 150 • Watkins Glen, NY 14891 • 607-583-2225
www.farmsanctuary.org

December 10, 2007

Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today. My name is Carol Moon, and I am a humane educator for Farm Sanctuary, the nation's leading farm animal protection organization. I am here today on behalf of more than 150,000 dedicated supporters in support of Resolution 497 concerning Humane Education. I received a graduate degree through the Institute for Humane Education and have been teaching humane education in all five of the city's boroughs since the inception of Farm Sanctuary's Cultivating Compassion humane education program in 1999. Since then, I have visited hundreds of classrooms from 3rd grade through high school, and consulted with numerous teachers and administrators on kindness, compassion, respect for animals and respect for the earth.

New Yorkers are fortunate to have one of the strongest humane education laws in the country. In 1947, NY State legislators saw fit to insert Section 809 into Article 17 of the NY State Education Law, requiring that state-funded schools provide instruction on "the humane treatment and protection of animals and the part they play in the economy of nature". It is of critical importance that schools be provided with the information and tools necessary to comply with this law. Resolution 497 takes a huge step forward in advancing this goal.

Humane education teaches children how to live lightly on our earth with respect and compassion for all living beings and for the environment. It encourages individuals to think critically about how their actions affect others. Humane education raises awareness of the interconnectedness of all life and helps to instill respect, empathy and compassion. This strengthens values and makes students more caring, responsible and independent members of society.

Having personally provided humane education presentations in many schools, I see clearly the enormous benefit that it can have on these children. Rather than growing up fearing animals or considering them insignificant, humane education helps them learn respect for animals and, similarly, for each other.

Farm Sanctuary, and our supporters, are grateful to Councilmember Tony Avella for introducing this humane resolution and we strongly urge the council to support and adopt this measure. Further, Farm Sanctuary's program of Cultivating Compassion provides much of the information needed by educators to comply with current law and we would welcome the opportunity to assist teachers.

Through the adoption of Resolution 497, New York City's elementary schools can lead the nation in exemplifying students with respect for others, caring responsibility, and peaceful interactions. Please support Resolution 497. Thank you again for your time and consideration.



LEWIS H. GOLDSTEIN, 2015 ST. PAUL AVENUE. BRONX. N.Y. 10461

STATEMENT BY LEWIS GOLDSTEIN ON HUMANE EDUCATION

MY NAME IS LEWIS GOLDSTEIN. OVER THE YEARS I HAVE BEEN VERY INVOLVED IN NOT ONLY PROTESTING HATE AND DISCRIMINATION BUT IN ADVOCATING FOR THE ERADICATION OF HATE THROUGH EDUCATION. I AM PROUD OF MY ACTIVITIES IN FIGHTING AGAINST HATE CRIMES AGAINST THE GAY, LESBIAN AND TRANSGENDERED COMMUNITY. I AM PROUD OF MY WORK WITH THE LEAGUE OF HUMANE VOTERS. THERE ARE MANY TITLES I HAVE HAD OVER THE YEARS: MEMBER, NYS DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE, VICE CHAIR, BRONX COUNTY DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE, MEMBER, STONEWALL DEMOCRATIC CLUB, MEMBER, CONGREGATION BETH SIMCHAT TORAH, MEMBER, LEAGUE OF HUMANE VOTERS AND MANY OTHERS. NO TITLE IS MORE IMPORTANT THEN THAT OF EDUCATOR. FOR THIRTY FIVE YEARS I WORKED FOR THE NYC BOARD OF EDUCATION. I HAVE A MASTER'S DEGREE IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE. DURING MY YEARS AS A TEACHER I TAUGHT HUMANE AND ENVIROMENTAL EDUCATION. TO ME, WE AS HUMAN BEINGS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO TEACH ALL THAT THE PROTECTION OF ALL CREATURES OF G_D, BE THEY HUMAN OR NONHUMAN, IS MOST IMPORTANT. ACTS OF HATE AND ABUSE AGAINST ANY LIVING CREATURE IS THE GREATEST OF ABOMINATIONS

THE RESPECT FOR LIFE CANNOT BE LEGISLATED. IT MUST BE TAUGHT. IGNORANCE IS THE GREATEST ENEMY OF UNDERSTANDING AND OF RESPECT. IGNORANCE IS THE GREATEST CATALYST FOR ACTS OF HATE. STUDENTS MUST NOT ONLY BE EXPOSED TO WORDS IN A CLASSROOM BUT ALSO GET TO KNOW ANIMALS AS BEING LIVING CREATURES. DURING MY DAYS AS A TEACHER MY STUDENTS LEARNED FIRST HAND HOW TO RESPECT AND TREAT ANIMALS IN A HUMANE MANNER.



LEWIS H. GOLDSTEIN, 2015 ST. PAUL AVENUE. BRONX. N.Y. 10461

MY STUDENTS AND I PARTICIPATED IN MANY ECOLOGICAL PROGRAMS. THIS INCLUDED GOING TO FARM SANTUARIES, ENVIRONMENTAL CENTERS AND OTHER SITES WHERE ANIMALS ARE TREATED IN A HUMANE WAY.

BY LEARNING THAT ANIMALS, LIKE HUMANS, HAVE FEELINGS THEY LEARNED TO RESPECT THEM. THIS ALSO ALLOWED THEM TO MORE CLEARLY UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS LIKE TO HAVE FEELINGS FOR A SPECIES, GENDER, RACE, ETC. DIFFERENT FROM THEIR OWN. THESE EXPERIENCES GAVE THE STUDENTS THE SKILLS TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES, GET MOTIVATED TO INVESTIGATE ISSUES INDEPENDENTLY AND TO THINK ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR CHOICES.

THIS PAST MAY THE NEW YORK STATE DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE PASSED A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE TEACHING OF HUMANE EDUCATION IN OUR SCHOOLS AND IN SUPPORT OF ANIMAL PROTECTION. A COPY OF THAT RESOLUTION IS IN YOUR PACKET.

THIS CITY WHICH IS KNOWN FOR ITS DIVERSITY, COMPASSION AND DESIRE TO PROTECT THE UNPROTECTED MUST GIVE HUMANE EDUCATION A TOP PRIORITY IN ITS PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THANK YOU.

Testimony of Stephen L. Koss
New York City Council Education Committee
December 10, 2007

Thank you for this opportunity to speak before the Education Committee. My name is Steve Koss, and I come before you today as a former management consultant, former NYC high school math teacher, former teacher in mainland China, former member of the District 2 Community Education Council, current parent of a high school sophomore at Manhattan Center for Science and Math, and current President of that school's PTA.

Regretably, I have written far more about the DOE's Progress Report system than I can possibly fit into two minutes, so please allow me instead to make three brief points and follow it with a hypothetical situation. I will leave the rest for you to read, and I hope you will do so.

Point #1: It is undeniably true at the elementary and middle school levels that standardized tests are the most heavily weighted component of a school's letter grade. Thirty years ago, sociologist Donald Campbell made a seemingly obvious observation that became known as Campbell's Law. Simply put, Campbell said, "The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor." The history of high stakes testing throughout the U.S. has proved Campbell's Law correct in the education sphere time and again. NYC is not and will not be immune from manipulations of the test content (what we call dumbing down) or in the test administration (what we call cheating). When 85% of a school's Progress Report rating derives from test scores, you can be sure schools will focus on those tests to a fault, even to the detriment of other subject areas, and that the resulting pressures will lead to broken rules and broken trust.

Point #2: The first and most fundamental rule of organizational and individual performance measurement is that what is measured must be both controllable and actionable by the persons being held accountable. I submit to you that a single letter grade, A to F, rating a phenomenon as complex, multilayered, and difficult to measure as human learning is so laughably oversimplified as to be barely controllable and utterly not actionable by the school administrators who are being held accountable. Sure – raise daily attendance, reach out to the parent community, score higher on standardized tests, increase graduation rates, provide appropriate services to those most in need. Do we need a contentious letter grade, misleading in its simplicity, for school principals to understand such basic things? Particularly egregious in this regard is the DOE's publicizing and emphasizing these letter grades while having directly at hand the far more sophisticated, in-depth, and actionable results of the Quality Reviews at each school.

Point #3: You cannot help experiencing a sense of cognitive dissonance when you learn that 80.4% of the schools that received D's or F's on this year's Progress Report, 119 out of 148, had ratings of Proficient (97 – 65.5%) or Well Developed (22 – 14.9%) in

their last year's Quality Reviews, or that 5.5% (61) of the schools receiving A's, B's, or C's were rated Undeveloped in their Quality Reviews. Of the ~~thirteen~~^{thirteen} new school closings announced by the DOE just last week, five of those targeted schools received Proficient ratings and very positive write-ups in their Quality Reviews. These studies were performed by independent, professional education consultants and involved three full days of in-depth observation, interviewing, and analysis. I have attached the Quality Reviews for three of those five schools (P.S. 79, P.S. 101, and P.S. 220) in their entirety for your convenience. I implore you to read them, and as you do so, imagine yourself the parent of a child at one of these schools and ask yourself how and why your child's school earned such a summary closure.

Point #4: My son's school received an A rating, albeit barely. Regardless, my sense of his school as both a well-educated parent and former teacher is that his school is not an A performer – more likely a B. One individual employed at my son's school confessed as much, commenting that the school "takes in 4's and puts out 3's." While you have undoubtedly heard complaints from parents who believe their schools were unfairly rated too low, I am concerned that these letter grades can also encourage complacency where it is not warranted. Few "A" schools, even the vaunted Stuyvesant, are what they seem from outside the doors.

Point #5: It may be that the DOE believes a single letter grade is the most easily understandable way for public school parents in NYC to gauge their children's schools. However, a rating scheme that frequently flies in the face of parents' own knowledge of their children's schools can only be seen as arbitrary and irrelevant. No parent I know would assess their school or choose a school based on this metric. At best, it simply muddies the water for parents who must already often struggle to navigate a Byzantine school choice system.

Point #6: NYC parents will quickly come to see letter grades of D and F as signals of likely school closings. Such closings appear already to be taking place, with ~~ten~~^{thirteen} announced just last week. These closings appear to the public as having been effectuated summarily, without warning or public discussion in the affected communities. No time appears to have been granted for the responsible school administrators to propose or take corrective measures to save their schools by increasing their performance against this assessment rubric. To the contrary, the DOE's focus appears to be on shuttering and reconstituting schools (often with new student populations) rather than supporting them. Public school parents will increasingly shun low-rated schools whenever they can rather than see it closed while their child is in attendance, compounding and accelerating the deleterious effects of the low rating until the closure is a *fait accompli*. Editorials like that in the Daily News last Friday, December 7, that inferred a direct linkage between D or F ratings on the Progress Reports and the ten announced school closings will undoubtedly only further inflame parents' hesitancy to commit their children to schools under such apparent threat of closure. On Friday, December 7, NY1 television news reported at 5:30 p.m. that three more schools were slated to be closed "after they failed to make the grade on their recent report cards," further reinforcement of the Progress Report - school closure linkage. The circularity of this process makes school closure a self-fulfilling prophecy once the D or F rating is assigned.

Point #7: Why should the NYC DOE not develop a school report card that summarizes in one place the information parents need to understand what a school is about, the nature of its enrollment and faculty, its relevant performance metrics (attendance, test scores, graduation rates, etc.) without resorting to an evaluative and overly simplistic single letter grade? Why can the DOE not prepare and disseminate school report cards like those available on-line to any parent in New Jersey? An example is attached – I simply chose the first school listed alphabetically in the State of New Jersey.

My thought experiment questions to the Council members follow.

Situation 1: Imagine you were each to be rated by an independent outside commission for your effectiveness on the City Council, the results to be widely promoted and published in the local media. You will be assessed for your attendance and voting participation at Council meetings, the number of resolutions you sponsor or co-sponsor, the number of community meetings you attend, your favorability rating as determined by public polling and surveying of your constituents, and several other metrics, all then summarized into a single letter grade of A to F. How would you respond, and how would this letter grade influence your going forward actions if you received a C, D, or F? Do you believe that such a one-letter metric can capture your worth as a City Council member?

Situation 2: Imagine that every public school child in grades 1 – 8 in NYC was a 3 or a 4 and every school an A or B. What would that tell us about those children's ability to reason mathematically or read with understanding? What would it tell us about their enthusiasm for learning, for seeing knowledge acquisition as an adventure in unlocking closed doors? What would it tell us about their knowledge of science or history, their appreciation and enthusiasm for art and music? What would it tell us about the school as a community of social beings, and about children's skills in being tolerant and considerate toward one another? What would it tell us about their intuitive understanding of learning as coming from many sources, through many senses, in many ways? What would it tell us about how two A schools are the same, and how they are different? What would it tell us, in the end, other than that our children have been well prepared by their schools to take a particular testing company's standardized tests?

I submit to you that parents, teachers, and school administrators in Westchester, Nassau, Suffolk, and Fairfield counties and northeastern New Jersey are looking at the NYC public school system with the same open-mouthed disbelief they would have passing a multi-fatality highway accident. That is, if they're not busy thanking their respective deities for their good fortune in not having to endure this educational nightmare. I humbly beg the City Council to step forward, speak up, and help put a stop to this perversion of public education in New York City.

Attachments

Quality Review reports for P.S. 79, P.S. 101, and P.S. 220
Sample School Report Card from A A Anastasia School, Long Branch, NJ

Stephen L. Koss
109 W. 89th Street, PH-A
New York, NY 10024

Phone: 212-579-9909
Email: mathman180@aol.com

Lisbet Chiriboga – Testimony in Support of Resolution No. 497

I am a New York City (NYC) teacher representing C.S. 50, a Pre-K to 5th grade elementary school in Bronx, NY. I am testifying here today in support of Resolution No. 497.

This resolution seeks to raise awareness among educators about a very important New York State (NYS) law that requires instruction in the humane treatment and protection of animals at the elementary school level.

The resolution is necessary for the following reasons:

Firstly, most of my colleagues are unaware of this NYS mandate, the resources available to implement it into the existing curriculum, and its importance in helping to create a caring learning environment.

Secondly, the NYS law pertains specifically to animals but easily expands to a discussion on how we treat other people and the environment. This type of instruction is beneficial to children because it helps to build empathy, which translates into compassionate behavior in the classroom and beyond.

In my own classroom, I have seen students take to heart lessons on the humane treatment of animals by rescuing the smallest insect from harm's way. It is no surprise that these same children become more humane to other people.

To help see how this mandate can be integrated into the existing curriculum, I'd like to describe some ways that I have easily implemented it in my own classroom.

Our Social Studies curriculum directs us to provide lessons on "Movers & Shakers" of our world. A unit of study on the famous ethologist, Jane Goodall provides a wonderful springboard to the study of chimpanzees and the efforts to protect them. Many teachers may have their classes study Jane Goodall's life in honor of women's history month, but fail to take it a step further. Once they are directed by principals to incorporate instruction on the humane treatment of animals, it will be a logical next step to discuss the chimpanzee's current plight in the world.

Another good example is the 100th day of school. This day is celebrated with a variety of activities pertaining to the number 100 throughout city schools. My students have in the past collected 100 cans of dog food to donate to a local rescue organization. Then, I have brought in a representative from the organization to speak to the children about the work they do and how they can help dogs.

Once teachers are cognizant of this mandate, there are ample ways to incorporate it daily.

These days, when many city schools have an epidemic of violent incidents reported, we need programs that can help us to be proactive in our efforts to create a compassionate

12/10/07

environment that is conducive to learning. How children feel about their learning environment is connected to how well they will achieve academically. So even if you have no interest in animals, you would need only spend time as an educator in our city schools to understand what a positive impact Resolution 497 would have on NYC schoolchildren.

Schools have been far too reactive in our efforts to reduce violence. I have no doubt that spreading more awareness of Section 809 of NYS Education Law is a proactive step in combating much of the apathy and violence we see today. I join with other educators today to urge you to pass Resolution 497.