

Manhattan Community Board 9
Youth, Education, & Libraries Committee
February 2018 Meeting

Members present: Alec Barrett, Deirdre McIntosh-Brown, Miriam Aristy-Farer, Ken Miles

Called to order at 6:37pm.

Presentations

Nancy Drescher, The Family Annex

The Family Annex is a WHDC grant recipient. Located on 113th and Broadway, serving 39 students, running from 19 months to 5 years. As a result of grant, scholarships went up, giving between \$2,000 and \$10,000, and to a larger number of families. The option to apply for a scholarship is on the application to the school, which is administered through an external company called Smart Tuition to make recommendations based on a family's needs.

It's Nancy's 14th year at the school. The Family Annex is a Reggio Emilia-inspired school. Post-WWII, Italian parents wanted better early childhood for their children. Now recognized as a top early-childhood philosophy around the world. Staff take regular professional development trips to see the original school.

Children and teachers are co-creators of curriculum, and the environment is the third teacher. Each year the curriculum changes. Based on the interests of the children, who become researchers and co-learners with their teachers. Teachers document children's questions, and help guide investigations accordingly. Classes write blogs, which parents can read to spark conversation with children to see the learning process.

A recent field trip to Harlem sparked students' interest in wig shops. One class became very interested in different kinds of hair, visiting hair and hair shops in Harlem. Another studied food and went to Manna on 125th. These helped children to delve into culture, including their own backgrounds.

Another class adopted a neighborhood tree and made a sweater for it. Children use different materials to express themselves, referred to the Hundred Languages – children express themselves in different ways, not all verbal.

Michele Martinez-Gugerli, DOE

Historically DOE hasn't worked closely with Community Boards, in part because of formal CEC roles, and varying degrees of commitment to community engagement by mayoral administration. Team is responsible for dealing with community groups that involve parents but are not necessarily all parents: e.g., advocacy organizations providing support to immigrant parents.

Currently only 2 members of this office. Thinking of ways to help CBs build relationships with Community Education Councils. Also want to be able to reach out to CBs to take the pulse on an issue, or to spread word about a new initiative or an event.

On content, Michele is a generalist, but can refer to the appropriate office or Superintendent.

Next year, DOE is rolling out 3K in D5 in fall 2018, and in D6 in 2019.

This year the system has a record number of arts teachers throughout the DOE, and principals are committing more resources to bring in arts. They have choice over how and when – course offerings, extracurriculars. They're taking advantage of non-profit grants, teacher training resources. Michele will share a DOE arts report with district-level breakdowns.

Graduation is up and dropouts are down.

Question: why is money being spent on 3K instead of improving existing schools?

Answer: money for pre-K not necessarily money taken away from districts; there is additional money D5 and D6 have access to. DOE believes that providing 3K is a part of improving quality at later ages to reduce differences once students get to elementary, which can persist many years later.

The meeting continued with a discussion about the problem of the quality of D5 schools, and the new Superintendent's intentions to work on this based on the committee's meeting with her last summer. The committee will suggest to Superintendent Rux that she should meet with early childhood education centers in the district, who are currently helping their families with the elementary school placement process.

Michele responded that we also have to proactively educate parents about progress schools are making, rather than letting their reputations from years past linger because of long collective memories. Empowering superintendents helps them communicate to local families according to the particular local needs.

Miriam added that the rapid expansion of charter schools in D5 contributed to underfunding and damaging the reputations of public schools. DOE has to work to change the narrative around schools, and advocate for the schools with parents. And progressive, child-centered education has shown a lot of success, so it's obvious based on application numbers what parents think of the schools. Upon walking into a school, she can tell within five minutes what the school culture is like and how adults treat children based on how they treat adult visitors.

Colocation describes a couple of different situations, including district-district and district-charter. The current administration believes that while small learning communities can be valuable, a school needs a minimum number of students (usually around 200) to be viable. When schools are smaller than we want, the city pursues consolidation (i.e., merging two schools together).

The other is charter colocations. State law requires the city to find charter schools space or provide rental assistance. Finding public space saves taxpayers money because it's cheaper than private rent. The DOE's priority is ensuring the success of district schools. These are all our students, and charter schools are public schools. The city does rigorous oversight of our charter schools, but they have flexibility by design. The city is working to alleviate congestion in existing schools through new construction or reconfiguration.

Chancellor Fariña came on with the mayor and was focused on building. The next chancellor will be working on deepening and continuing that work.

Chloe Wheeler, America SCORES New York

America SCORES New York is also a WHDC grant recipient. In eight schools in D5 and D6. They're expanding in Harlem, and are also in the Bronx and Brooklyn. Chloe runs the soccer program.

The organization runs soccer and literacy (poetry and community service learning projects) programs exclusively in public schools. The poetry curriculum culminates in a poetry slam. For many kids it's their first time on stage, and it's an opportunity to participate in a team sport.

Through Writing in the Community curriculum, students create an action plan to address an issue in their community. Last year, a school raised over \$2,000 to donate to a food bank in the area. Another raised money on game days to make care packages for homeless shelters.

Their big event in the spring is a jamboree – soccer tournament and presentation of service learning projects. The grant allowed them to expand to another middle school. They continue to work together with other after school programs and CBOs serving the same kids.

A handful of their kids have tried out for and gotten to play on the FC Harlem team.

Tyler Curtis, Columbia Graduate Workers Union

Columbia released a statement saying they would ignore the NLRB decision, inviting a lawsuit which they plan to fight. The union is organizing for a strike authorization vote.

New Business

KYER project

Alec provided an update on the request for discretionary funds that was submitted to the board chair last week, and the plan for a KYER training this spring.

Adjourned at 7:58pm.