

Youth, Education, & Libraries Committee  
Manhattan Community Board 9  
January 10, 2018

Co-Chairs: Deirdre McIntosh-Brown, Alec Barrett  
Members present: Miriam Aristy-Farer, Chaya Crowder, Ken Miles  
Public members present: Menlee Mansue

Meeting called to order at 6:45pm.

### **Presentations**

#### **Tyler Curtis, Graduate Workers Columbia**

The union consists of TAs, RAs, TFs, and graders throughout the university, a total of about 3000 members. The union won their NLRB election in a landslide, which makes them an officially certified union, but the university has refused to bargain with them. The union requests a letter of support on their behalf.

Issues that the union would negotiate on the workers' behalfs include pay, late pay, sexual harassment, students affected by the travel ban and DACA, childcare, transportation, and other benefits.

Columbia is now in violation of the law, and the union suspects they may be stalling until the NLRB, with new members appointed by the current administration, overturns the rule allowing graduate student unions. Columbia is the first Ivy League school with a certified grad student union.

#### **Maggie Craig, Hamilton Grange Library**

The library is offering workshops for parents by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene on healthy homes, including issues like lead poisoning.

The branch's third floor space has been closed since November due to malfunctioning heat. They have improvised space in their community room. This creates a hardship from a programming perspective. It has increased the importance of their outreach work, including mobile classroom visits to public schools.

#### **Maura Clifford, Morningside Heights Library**

The library has a kids and young adult events calendar, which was shared. They offer a monthly craft program and weekday playtimes and poetry for kids.

#### **Stephen Courtade, Horticultural Society of New York**

The society has a greenhouse and kitchens at Riverbank State Park. They host school groups on field trips, which are free for schools in CM Levine's district. Since October 2017, 400 students have visited. They are working on setting up a high school internship program.

They also provide free family programming, including arts/crafts, meditation, gardening workshops, and cooking classes with chefs from the community. They are open to the public on Saturdays from 10am to 2pm.

The greenhouse has permanent plants as well as rotating fruits and vegetables. Many of these are on par with what could be found at a botanic garden. They also provide resources for gardeners.

### **Reggie Higgins, Principal of PS 125**

The school was a traditional public school expected to be closed when Mr. Higgins took over seven years ago, after he had spent ten years in the classroom. He places value in building relationships with families and students.

His priority is on making the best decision for kids, not just on maximizing test scores, and has developed a well-rounded program. This approach has nevertheless resulted in strong academic results, and PS 125 is now the top performing elementary school in District 5. Effective teaching that is *not* test focused leads to learning which leads to high test scores.

The neighborhood around the school is changing. Mr. Higgins is focused on creating more child-centered spaces. However, the school is co-located with two other schools (KIPP and Columbia Secondary) so it cannot currently grow. The principals have handled this very amicably and let the DOE figure out the space arrangements rather than fighting among themselves. At PS 125 some students have lunch at 9:30 a.m. because of demands on the cafeteria. The colocation has caused other violations of state laws.

The committee discussed options for getting CSS its own dedicated space. PS 125 is the only zoned school in its building.

### **Old Business**

#### **CEC5 Meeting**

At the December 2017 CEC5 meeting, the School Construction Authority presented about their process for addressing school needs. Every year, each building is audited and the condition of facilities is evaluated on a scale from 1 (best) to 5 (worst). Locations rated 4 and 5 usually get addressed, while work on 1s and 2s is subject to funding and time and often do not get worked on. The SCA has done some successful work renovating playgrounds in CB9.

The meeting also discussed the closing of KAPPA IV, which will be voted on at the January 24 PEP meeting. Superintendent Rux announced plans to replace it with an arts focused school.

### **TCCS SLT**

Nancy Streim updated the team on the school expansion. The January 24 PEP meeting will consider the colocation proposal.

The school has had some behavioral issues and is looking at a new framework for handling behavior and discipline. This is particularly a challenge for the middle school grades. The committee discussed the success of Hamilton Grange Middle School as a model for successful discipline programs.

#### **KYER with CEE**

The committee will apply for funds from the Community Board, which are due February 16, and aim for a one-day event in May to build momentum for a five-event series in SY18-19.

Topics suggested for the event included: special needs services and delivering them in appropriate settings, space and colocation issues, school budget and how it's spent, teacher and principal effectiveness, additional resources for students in temporary housing, and language availability.

The committee also discussed holding it in a central location accessible to public transit.

Meeting adjourned at 7:54pm.