



COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL 32

797 Bushwick Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11221 (Rm 319) Phone: 718-574-1203 E-mail: cec32@schools.nyc.gov

February 10, 2020

Dear Mr. Arthur Samuels and Ms. Pagee Cheung,

The CEC32 is in receipt of your letter dated February 7, 2020. We are writing to reiterate our commitment to stand strong in the face of any circumstance that may put at risk the educational resources of our children attending the Community Schools District 32.

Over the past several years, our schools have been struggling to maintain enrollment. As a result, they have lost the financial resources and supports that they need in order to continue to offer adequate opportunities to all of our children. Opening yet another middle school in District 32, whether in K291 or in any other private or public building, exposes our schools to greater losses in student enrollment and creates a peril that threatens their very existence - without students, there are no funds to keep our schools open and ready to serve our community.

As we stated in our letter to Mr. David Frank, Executive Director of the NYSED Charter School Office, dated January 27, 2020:

- We oppose the Math, Engineering and Science Academy Charter High School ("MESA")'s request for a revision to serve middle school grades
 - MESA does not serve students in our community who are experiencing the most needs. By expanding, however, MESA will recruit students attending schools in District 32 and undermine our enrollment.
 - MESA's request for a private or public space in District 32 will affect our students regardless of where the revised school is located. Once a charter school is located within our public school buildings, it can increase or decrease the grade levels they serve. Our gymnasiums, cafeterias, music rooms, laboratories, libraries, dance rooms, etc., are already being shared with charter schools. Whereas public schools share their buildings, rooms, custodial staff, and much more, charter schools are not obliged to share their resources with us - and often do not.
- District 32 contains a total of 9 public and 3 charter middle schools. Our district does not need another middle school. In fact, District 32 already has a new charter school currently serving grades 5 and 6, but "growing to 5-8", that is under-utilized. This is the Achievement First North Brooklyn Prep Middle School co-located with P.S. 377.



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We are serious about education and clearly understand that schools cannot appear in every building as - in more colloquial terms - *bodegas* do in every corner.

Our concerns are amplified by a consistent lack of accountability and transparency from charter schools. Unlike our community public schools, charter schools do not undergo the same level of scrutiny over the public funds that they utilize, nor do they abide by the same strict rules. Charter schools are independent, making their use of the same public funds unaccounted for and little transparent. To add to this, teachers in charters schools are also often teaching subjects for which they do not possess the pertinent license.

We hope that you understand that our concern is not limited to the stability of I.S. 291. We are advocating for all of the Community School District 32 and for our children who are at risk of losing the minimal resources that we are arduously working to maintain and improve for them. If any of the members of the community, New York State Education Department, Elected Officials, Community Board 4, or others, would like to talk to us, we would be happy to show you how the process of co-locating charter schools is affecting our students in public schools.

Respectfully,

Martha Bayona
President

Community Education Council for District 32

CC (electronically):

New York State Education Department Charter School Office Executive Director David M. Frank

New York State Assembly Member Maritza Dávila

New York State Senator Julia Salazar

New York City Council Member Antonio Reynoso

New York City Council District 37 Chief of Staff Lloyd Lesperance

Bushwick Community High School Principal Llermi Gonzalez

I.S. 291 Principal Janice Bruce

Director of Beacon Center for Arts and Leadership at I.S. 291 Director Ariel Argueso

Community Board 4

Community Board 4 District Manager Celestina Leon