

Citywide Council on Special Education

Thursday, November 18, 2021

Calendar Meeting Minutes

Call to Order

The Meeting was called to order by Co-President Erika Newsome at 6:08 pm.

Roll Call

Cynthia Arbulu Vacca	Present
Julie Barreto	Present
Sanyi Beckeles-Canton	Present
Carolyn Castro	Present
Wenming Chen	Present
Heather Dailey	Present
Artelia Flowers	Excused
Paulette Healy	Present
Ellen McHugh	Present
Erika Newsome	Present
Joseph Xing	Present

September 8, 2021 Minutes – Heather Dailey moved and Joseph Xing seconded to approve the minutes. There was an update to the minutes to add that the Council returned after the Executive Session. Heather Dailey moved to approve the minutes with the correction and Dr. Beckeles-Canton seconded. The Council voted – six approved, two abstained, two N/A and one absent. The vote passed.

Council Members introduced themselves, their district and child's special needs category.

Co-Presidents' Report

Erika Newsome

- Had reported in a previous CCSE meeting about attending an SLT meeting and the move to push special education students out or not expand D75 programs. Received clarification from the SLT Team that that is something that used to happen and that they were against it and worked to reform this process.
- Attended a meeting on Academic Recovery and there was concern about the lack of busing for some schools to facilitate the recovery program. There is also a concern that some parents have opted out of the recovery program either because they don't know what recovery is or don't understand that they can receive compensatory services. Working with principals set up information session for parents.
- Announced the website address and that parents can send questions through the website that will go directly to the CCSE email address. Asked Council Members to submit photos for the "Meet the Council" section of the website.

Ellen McHugh

- Attended a Zoom meeting of the Science and Skill of Writing. How to hold and use a pen to help with the sound of words. The importance of eye and hand coordination and the ability to write and comprehend what is written.
- Involved with a program called It's Our Park where parks are renovated to be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant - fully accessible to individuals in wheelchairs or who have difficulty walking. Areas for people who are deaf. A "calm area" for people who may need to relax after an episode. District Three, in partnership with Partnership for Parks will hold a grand opening this Sunday from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm of the Bloomingdale Park on Sixth Street and Amsterdam Avenue.
- Attended a meeting with Chancellor's Parents Advisory Council (CPAC) where there was a discussion about a Mosaic Curriculum being developed for the 2022-2023 term. The program is to reflect the families in the communities. Linda Chen has assured that students with special needs have been contacted to participate.
- Attended a Zoom meeting on special education recovery services.
 - Still concerns about the bussing issues.
 - Some schools have started offering the program.
 - No word on the SEED program.

- All students identified as needing special education recovery will be offered a site and the Office of Pupil Transportation will develop a process to indicate which students will need busing.
- Attended an ECC (Education Council Consortium) meeting. The ECC is now a 501(c)3. They are in the process of recruiting. If you're interested, visit their website.
- There will be issues about transitioning for special education addressed by the incoming Mayor, Eric Adams who was diagnosed with dyslexia. Hopes to be a strong advocate for students, especially children of color, to get the appropriate evaluation and access to new and improved teaching methods for literacy. His major concern is that only 64% of black & brown students do not graduate at grade level in reading or math.
- Attended a City Council call. The City Council invited attendees to present different issues for students with disabilities. Issues raised were on busing, attendance, literacy, lack of information on special education recovery services.

There was a motion to table the member reports until after the speaker. Ellen McHugh moved and Paullette Healy seconded.

Presentation – Middle & High School Admissions Process

Sarah Kleinhandler – Office of Student Enrollment – High School

- No date at this time when enrollment will open.
- All DOE High Schools are servicing students with disabilities according to their IEP. All students can apply to high schools and programs, including all programs with a screened or audition process.
- Students will be provided with testing accommodations, as long as it does not change the skill or content of the test.
- Students with 504 accommodations must also be serviced at high schools.
- Students with IEP's for D75 inclusion services, ASD Nest Horizons and ACES programs can also participate in the high school admissions process. We work closely with the D75 Inclusion Office and Specialized Programs Office to determine which students are eligible for these programs to ensure options.
- For admissions purposes only, students are admitted in two seat groups – students with disabilities or general education. A student's current classes and IEP determine which group they will be placed in. Example: if 20% or more of a student's classes are in special education (not including counseling, occupational/physical/speech therapy), then

the student is eligible for a seat in the student with disabilities group. If a student receives less than 20% special education classes, then the student is eligible for a general education seat.

- Students with disabilities fared well in the 2021 application process. 96% received offers from their first or second choice high school while 93% of their general education peers received offers from their first, second or third choice. Despite a decline in high school applications, there was a 4% increase in students with disabilities applying.

Frank Ramsay – Middle School Enrollment Process

- Middle School admissions process is similar to the high school admissions process.
- Middle School is a district-wide process as opposed to a city-wide process like the high school process.
- Students are eligible to apply to any middle school they are eligible for whether zoned or in the district in which they attended elementary school.
- There are many programs available – zoned, district, boro-wide or city-wide that each have a different focus so when applying, students should take into consideration the programs the school is offering.
- Students are admitted in two seat groups – students with disabilities or general education and is determined by the student's IEP. And again like high school, counseling, occupational/physical/speech therapy are not included.

There was a very emotional and important discussion about the 20% rule of admitting students with disabilities into high school or middle school. Please refer to the recording of this meeting to get the full impact.

Member Reports

Paulette Healy

- November 10 - District 20 DPAC and District 20 President's Council hosted a Special Education Forum. Kim Ramones, Rachel Rippey, Jose Rios and Suzanne Sanchez were in attendance to present and answer questions regarding academic recovery. There will be a part two in the new year.
- November 5 – joined forces with CEC's across the city along with (Paulette please provide the names of the other two organizations involved. Zoom and CC is not making sense. Thanks!) to provide a forum on pupil transportation. Over 150 people attended. They were provided a lot of information. Shared CCSE's resolution on the demand for pupil transportation. Received a lot of feedback and hoping to do another forum soon.
- Attended a Mosaic Curriculum Tow Hall to discuss a culturally responsive, sustainable curriculum. Raised the issue that ableism has not been addressed and wanted to make

sure that our community was represented in the conversation. Addressed the biases that exist when it comes to evaluations, recognizing behaviors, tracking placement.

- Attended an information session on students in temporary housing. Which was held virtually and one of the major concerns that came out of this was the students' need for reliable WiFi and technology. If students don't have this, then how can we reach this population if you're only offering a virtual platform. Suggested that the Students in Temporary Housing Department tour family shelters in the five boroughs to get feedback from the residents on the challenges they are facing.
- Attended the City Council's Education Committee's hearing about special education recovery, busing and COVID. Kevin Moran of Office of Pupil Transportation reported that the department will look at data after the academic recovery services start on December 6 to determine busing services. Strongly disagreed and suggested that the OPT pupil transportation in for the 80% of the Tier I D75 students, who are supposed to be prioritized now and re-route them if they have to later.
- Also, the Panel for Educational Policy approved two contracts for OPT – \$9.4 million for the Call Center and \$39 million for Reliant Bus Company.
- OPT still has not reimbursed families for travel expenses, including travel expenses from the summer session because of busing issues.

Heather Dailey

- Attended the same D75 OPT Town Hall meeting. It was very heartbreaking and frustrating to hear parent after parent share the same busing issues only to be told the same thing from OPT "can't really answer question without more details or we'll look into it." Parents have been told this for two months.
- There was also some confusion that OPT would not provide busing for recovery services. There was a glitch in the recording to confirm what was said. Once that is fixed, we will get confirmation.
- Had a meeting with the Brain Injury Rights Group who also have concerns about the busing issues. They set up a forum on their website for parents. Will be in Spanish soon. The Protect NYC Special Education group will work on a template to provide the info in other languages. Also sending out info to parents to be a part of a class lawsuit.

Carolyn Castro

- Attended a meeting on related services authorizations and an issue came up regarding the Chancellor's Regulations for parents who received RSA's because the school can't provide speech therapists. Parents receive a 400-page document to look through to find a therapist. Once a therapist is found, there may be certain restrictions. They must have a special waiver requested through RSA. Then that has to go to COID for review and then sent to the borough office for final approval. This is a long process and if any other parents are going through the same and have questions, please reach out to me.

- Attended a (DESA meeting – Carolyn is this correct and what is it?).
- Attended a Bronx Borough Equity Team meeting. The purpose was to elevate and make sure that IEP/D75students' voices are heard.
- Special Education Recovery has been rescheduled from November 16 to December 6 because of shortage of providers. Another problem is that many parents are not in favor of the programs in after school and Saturdays.
- Attended a Brilliant NYC meeting to understand what the program was about. Also reached out to them via to ask how students with an IEP or D75 would benefit from the program. They didn't have an answer but will be back to me. I will continue to follow up.
- Also attended the Mosaic Curriculum Town Hall. Again, the purpose to make sure that make sure that IEP/D75students' voices are heard. I will continue to follow up with them as well.

Cynthia Arbulu Vacca

- Following up on the Brilliant NYC program. There will be an event with the Chancellor and an expert panel to discuss the pre-planning process for the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT) and Gifted & Talented Programs. Will post link in chat.
- The Dyslexia community recently won a case against Clark County Schools. Parents were awarded close to \$500,000 for a methodology specific curriculum that their student did not receive. The program - Orton-Gillingham – is a specific program for students with dyslexia/dyspraxia that the school denied the student because they didn't have the money to train the teachers. With the winning of this case, the school was required to provide the student with the Orton program. Parent groups in our community are hoping that we can get the Orton program in our schools.

Letter of Introduction to Incoming Mayor Adams

Paullette Healy moved and Cynthia Arbulu Vacca seconded to table the review of the letter of Introduction to incoming Mayor Adams until the December meeting so that everyone has a chance to read it and make changes. There was voice vote and all members in attendance voted yes to table the letter.

December Meeting Schedule

The Council discussed having a combined meeting on Friday, December 17. Paullette Healy moved and Carolyn Castro seconded. There was a roll call vote and eight voted yes.

Ellen McHugh moved and Cynthia Arbulu Vacca seconded to adjourn the meeting. There was voice vote and all members in attendance voted yes to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned – 8:52 pm

DRAFT